

Portrait of the USA

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Chapter One

ONE FROM MANY

Immigration patterns and ethnic composition

The story of the American people is a story of immigration and diversity. The United States has welcomed more immigrants than any other country -- more than 50 million in all -- and still admits almost 700,000 persons a year. In the past many American writers emphasized the idea of the melting pot, an image that suggested newcomers would discard their old customs and adopt American ways. Typically, for example, the children of immigrants learned English but not their parents' first language. Recently, however, Americans have placed greater value on diversity, ethnic groups have renewed and celebrated their heritage, and the children of immigrants often grow up being bilingual.

NATIVE AMERICANS

The first American immigrants, beginning more than 20,000 years ago, were intercontinental wanderers: hunters and their families following animal herds from Asia to America, across a land bridge where the Bering Strait is today. When Spain's Christopher Columbus "discovered" the New World in 1492, about 1.5 million Native Americans lived in what is now the continental United States, although estimates of the number vary greatly. Mistaking the place where he landed -- San Salvador in the Bahamas -- for the Indies, Columbus called the Native Americans "Indians."

During the next 200 years, people from several European countries followed Columbus across the Atlantic Ocean to explore America and set up trading posts and colonies. Native Americans suffered greatly from the influx of Europeans. The transfer of land from Indian to European -- and later American -- hands was accomplished through treaties, wars, and coercion, with Indians constantly giving way as the newcomers moved west. In the 19th century, the government's preferred solution to the Indian "problem" was to force tribes to inhabit specific plots of land called reservations. Some tribes fought to keep from giving up land they had traditionally used. In many cases the reservation land was of poor quality, and Indians came to depend on government assistance. Poverty and joblessness among Native Americans still exist today.

The territorial wars, along with Old World diseases to which Indians had no built-up immunity, sent their population plummeting, to a low of 350,000 in 1920. Some tribes disappeared altogether; among them were the Mandans of North Dakota, who had helped Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in exploring America's unsettled northwestern wilderness in 1804-06. Other tribes lost their languages and most of their culture. Nonetheless, Native Americans have proved to be resilient. Today they number about two million (0.8 percent of the total U.S. population), and only about one-third of Native Americans still live on reservations.

Countless American place-names derive from Indian words, including the states of Massachusetts, Ohio, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, and Idaho. Indians taught Europeans how to cultivate crops that are now staples throughout the world: corn, tomatoes, potatoes, tobacco. Canoes, snowshoes, and moccasins are among the Indians' many inventions.

THE GOLDEN DOOR

The English were the dominant ethnic group among early settlers of what became the United States, and English became the prevalent American language. But people of other nationalities were not long in following. In 1776 Thomas Paine, a spokesman for the revolutionary cause in the colonies and himself a native of England, wrote that "Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America." These words described the settlers who came not only from Great Britain, but also from other European countries, including Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, Germany, and Sweden. Nonetheless, in 1780 three out of every four Americans were of English or Irish descent.

Between 1840 and 1860, the United States received its first great wave of immigrants. In Europe as a whole, famine, poor harvests, rising populations, and political unrest caused an estimated 5 million people to leave their homelands each year. In Ireland, a blight attacked the potato crop, and upwards of 750,000 people starved to death. Many of the survivors emigrated. In one year alone, 1847, the number of Irish immigrants to the United States reached 118,120. Today there are about 39 million Americans of Irish descent.

The failure of the German Confederation's Revolution of 1848-49 led many of its people to emigrate. During the American Civil War (1861-65), the federal government helped fill its roster of troops by encouraging emigration from Europe, especially from the German states. In return for service in the Union army, immigrants were offered grants of land. By 1865, about one in five Union soldiers was a wartime immigrant. Today, 22 percent of Americans have German ancestry.

Jews came to the United States in large numbers beginning about 1880, a decade in which they suffered fierce pogroms in eastern Europe. Over the next 45 years, 2 million Jews moved to the United States; the Jewish-American population is now more than 5 million.

During the late 19th century, so many people were entering the United States that the government operated a special port of entry on Ellis Island in the harbor of New York City. Between 1892, when it opened, and 1954, when it closed, Ellis Island was the doorway to America for 12 million people. It is now preserved as part of Statue of Liberty National Monument.

The Statue of Liberty, which was a gift from France to the people of America in 1886, stands on an island in New York harbor, near Ellis Island. The statue became many immigrants' first sight of their homeland-to-be. These inspiring words by the poet Emma Lazarus are etched on a plaque at Liberty's base: "Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

UNWILLING IMMIGRANTS

Among the flood of immigrants to North America, one group came unwillingly. These were Africans, 500,000 of whom were brought over as slaves between 1619 and 1808, when importing slaves into the United States became illegal. The practice of owning slaves and their descendants continued, however, particularly in the agrarian South, where many laborers were needed to work the fields.

The process of ending slavery began in April 1861 with the outbreak of the American Civil War between the free states of the North and the slave states of the South, 11 of which had left the Union. On January 1, 1863, midway through the war, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which abolished slavery in those states that had seceded. Slavery was abolished throughout the United States with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the country's Constitution in 1865.

Even after the end of slavery, however, American blacks were hampered by segregation and inferior education. In search of opportunity, African Americans formed an internal wave of immigration, moving from the rural South to the urban North. But many urban blacks were unable to find work; by law and custom they had to live apart from whites, in run-down neighborhoods called ghettos.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, African Americans, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., used boycotts, marches, and other forms of nonviolent protest to demand equal treatment under the law and an end to racial prejudice.

A high point of this civil rights movement came on August 28, 1963, when more than 200,000 people of all races gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to hear King say: "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveholders will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood....I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by

the content of their character." Not long afterwards the U.S. Congress passed laws prohibiting discrimination in voting, education, employment, housing, and public accommodations.

Today, African Americans constitute 12.7 percent of the total U.S. population. In recent decades blacks have made great strides, and the black middle class has grown substantially. In 1996, 44 percent of employed blacks held "white-collar" jobs -- managerial, professional, and administrative positions rather than service jobs or those requiring manual labor. That same year 23 percent of blacks between ages 18 and 24 were enrolled in college, compared to 15 percent in 1983. The average income of blacks is lower than that of whites, however, and unemployment of blacks -- particularly of young men -- remains higher than that of whites. And many black Americans are still trapped by poverty in urban neighborhoods plagued by drug use and crime.

In recent years the focus of the civil rights debate has shifted. With antidiscrimination laws in effect and blacks moving steadily into the middle class, the question has become whether or not the effects of past discrimination require the government to take certain remedial steps. Called "affirmative action," these steps may include hiring a certain number of blacks (or members of other minorities) in the workplace, admitting a certain number of minority students to a school, or drawing the boundaries of a congressional district so as to make the election of a minority representative more likely. The public debate over the need, effectiveness, and fairness of such programs became more intense in the 1990s.

In any case, perhaps the greatest change in the past few decades has been in the attitudes of America's white citizens. More than a generation has come of age since King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Younger Americans in particular exhibit a new respect for all races, and there is an increasing acceptance of blacks by whites in all walks of life and social situations.

LANGUAGE AND NATIONALITY

It is not uncommon to walk down the streets of an American city today and hear Spanish spoken. In 1950 fewer than 4 million U.S. residents were from Spanish-speaking countries. Today that number is about 27 million. About 50 percent of Hispanics in the United States have origins in Mexico. The other 50 percent come from a variety of countries, including El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia. Thirty-six percent of the Hispanics in the United States live in California. Several other states have large Hispanic populations, including Texas, New York, Illinois, and Florida, where hundreds of thousands of Cubans fleeing the Castro regime have settled. There are so many Cuban Americans in Miami that the *Miami Herald*, the city's largest newspaper, publishes separate editions in English and Spanish.

The widespread use of Spanish in American cities has generated a public debate over language. Some English speakers point to Canada, where the existence of two languages (English and French) has been accompanied by a secessionist movement. To head off such a development in the United States, some citizens are calling for a law declaring English the official American language.

Others consider such a law unnecessary and likely to cause harm. They point to differences between America and Canada (in Canada, for example, most speakers of French live in one locale, the province of Quebec, whereas speakers of Spanish are dispersed throughout much of the United States) and cite Switzerland as a place where the existence of multiple languages does not undermine national unity. Recognition of English as the official language, they argue, would stigmatize speakers of other languages and make it difficult for them to live their daily lives.

LIMITS ON NEWCOMERS

The Statue of Liberty began lighting the way for new arrivals at a time when many native-born Americans began to worry that the country was admitting too many immigrants. Some citizens feared that their culture was being threatened or that they would lose jobs to newcomers willing to accept low wages.

In 1924 Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act. For the first time, the United States set limits on how many people from each country it would admit. The number of people allowed to emigrate from a given country each year was based on the number of people from that country already living in the United States. As a result, immigration patterns over the next 40 years reflected the existing immigrant population, mostly Europeans and North Americans.

Prior to 1924, U.S. laws specifically excluded Asian immigrants. People in the American West feared that the Chinese and other Asians would take away jobs, and racial prejudice against people with Asian features was widespread. The law that kept out Chinese immigrants was repealed in 1943, and legislation passed in 1952 allows people of all races to become U.S. citizens.

Today Asian Americans are one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the country. About 10 million people of Asian descent live in the United States. Although most of them have arrived here recently, they are among the most successful of all immigrant groups. They have a higher income than many other ethnic groups, and large numbers of their children study at the best American universities.

A NEW SYSTEM

The year 1965 brought a shakeup of the old immigration patterns. The United States began to grant immigrant visas according to who applied first; national quotas were replaced with hemispheric ones. And preference was given to relatives of U.S. citizens and immigrants with job skills in short supply in the United States. In 1978, Congress abandoned hemispheric quotas and established a worldwide ceiling, opening the doors even wider. In 1990, for example, the top 10 points of origin for immigrants were Mexico (57,000), the Philippines (55,000), Vietnam (49,000), the Dominican Republic (32,000), Korea (30,000), China (29,000), India (28,000), the Soviet Union (25,000), Jamaica (19,000), and Iran (18,000).

The United States continues to accept more immigrants than any other country; in 1990, its population included nearly 20 million foreign-born persons. The revised immigration law of 1990 created a flexible cap of 675,000 immigrants each year, with certain categories of people exempted from the limit. That law attempts to attract more skilled workers and professionals to the United States and to draw immigrants from countries that have supplied relatively few Americans in recent years. It does this by providing "diversity" visas. In 1990 about 9,000 people entered the country on diversity visas from such countries as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Peru, Egypt, and Trinidad and Tobago.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service estimates that some 5 million people are living in the United States without permission, and the number is growing by about 275,000 a year. Native-born Americans and legal immigrants worry about the problem of illegal immigration. Many believe that illegal immigrants (also called "illegal aliens") take jobs from citizens, especially from young people and members of minority groups. Moreover, illegal aliens can place a heavy burden on tax-supported social services.

In 1986 Congress revised immigration law to deal with illegal aliens. Many of those who had been in the country since 1982 became eligible to apply for legal residency that would eventually permit them to stay in the country permanently. In 1990, nearly 900,000 people took advantage of this law to obtain legal status. The law also provided strong measures to combat further illegal immigration and imposed penalties on businesses that knowingly employ illegal aliens.

THE LEGACY

The steady stream of people coming to America's shores has had a profound effect on the American character. It takes courage and flexibility to leave your homeland and come to a new country. The American people have been noted for their willingness to take risks and try new things, for their independence and optimism. If Americans whose families have been here longer tend to take their

material comfort and political freedoms for granted, immigrants are at hand to remind them how important those privileges are.

Immigrants also enrich American communities by bringing aspects of their native cultures with them. Many black Americans now celebrate both Christmas and Kwanzaa, a festival drawn from African rituals. Hispanic Americans celebrate their traditions with street fairs and other festivities on Cinco de Mayo (May 5). Ethnic restaurants abound in many American cities. President John F. Kennedy, himself the grandson of Irish immigrants, summed up this blend of the old and the new when he called America "a society of immigrants, each of whom had begun life anew, on an equal footing. This is the secret of America: a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dare to explore new frontiers...."

Chapter Two

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

Geography and regional characteristics

The French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has written of the "mental click" he feels when arriving in the United States: an adjustment to the enormous landscapes and skylines. The so-called lower 48 states (all but Alaska and Hawaii) sprawl across 4,500 kilometers and four time zones. A car trip from coast to coast typically takes a minimum of five days -- and that's with almost no stops to look around. It is not unusual for the gap between the warmest and coldest *high* temperatures on a given day in the United States to reach 70 degrees Fahrenheit (about 40 degrees Celsius).

The United States owes much of its national character -- and its wealth -- to its good fortune in having such a large and varied landmass to inhabit and cultivate. Yet the country still exhibits marks of regional identity, and one way Americans cope with the size of their country is to think of themselves as linked geographically by certain traits, such as New England self-reliance, southern hospitality, midwestern wholesomeness, western mellowness.

This chapter examines American geography, history, and customs through the filters of six main regions:

- **New England**, made up of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.
- **The Middle Atlantic**, comprising New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland.
- **The South**, which runs from Virginia south to Florida and west as far as central Texas. This region also includes West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and parts of Missouri and Oklahoma.
- **The Midwest**, a broad collection of states sweeping westward from Ohio to Nebraska and including Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, parts of Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, and eastern Colorado.
- **The Southwest**, made up of western Texas, portions of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and the southern interior part of California.
- **The West**, comprising Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, California, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Note that there is nothing official about these regions; many other lineups are possible. These groupings are offered simply as a way to begin the otherwise daunting task of getting acquainted with the United States.

REGIONAL VARIETY

How much sense does it make to talk about American regions when practically all Americans can watch the same television shows and go to the same fast-food restaurants for dinner? One way to answer the question is by giving examples of lingering regional differences.

Consider the food Americans eat. Most of it is standard wherever you go. A person can buy packages of frozen peas bearing the same label in Idaho, Missouri, and Virginia. Cereals, candy bars, and many other items also come in identical packages from Alaska to Florida. Generally, the quality of fresh fruits and vegetables does not vary much from one state to the next. On the other hand, it would be unusual to be served hush puppies (a kind of fried dough) or grits (boiled and ground corn prepared in a variety of ways) in Massachusetts or Illinois, but normal to get them in Georgia. Other regions have similar favorites that are hard to find elsewhere.

While American English is generally standard, American *speech* often differs according to what part of the country you are in. Southerners tend to speak slowly, in what is referred to as a "Southern drawl." Midwesterners use "flat" a's (as in "bad" or "cat"), and the New York City patois features a number of Yiddish words ("schlepp," "nosh," "nebbish") contributed by the city's large Jewish population.

Regional differences also make themselves felt in less tangible ways, such as attitudes and outlooks. An example is the attention paid to foreign events in newspapers. In the East, where people look out across the Atlantic Ocean, papers tend to show greatest concern with what is happening in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and western Asia. On the West Coast, news editors give more attention to events in East Asia and Australia.

To understand regional differences more fully, let's take a closer look at the regions themselves.

NEW ENGLAND

The smallest region, New England has not been blessed with large expanses of rich farmland or a mild climate. Yet it played a dominant role in American development. From the 17th century until well into the 19th, New England was the country's cultural and economic center.

The earliest European settlers of New England were English Protestants of firm and settled doctrine. Many of them came in search of religious liberty. They gave the region its distinctive political format -- the town meeting (an outgrowth of meetings held by church elders) in which citizens gathered to discuss issues of the day. Only men of property could vote. Nonetheless, town meetings afforded New Englanders an unusually high level of participation in government. Such meetings still function in many New England communities today.

New Englanders found it difficult to farm the land in large lots, as was common in the South. By 1750, many settlers had turned to other pursuits. The mainstays of the region became shipbuilding, fishing, and trade. In their business dealings, New Englanders gained a reputation for hard work, shrewdness, thrift, and ingenuity.

These traits came in handy as the Industrial Revolution reached America in the first half of the 19th century. In Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, new factories sprang up to manufacture such goods as clothing, rifles, and clocks. Most of the money to run these businesses came from Boston, which was the financial heart of the nation.

New England also supported a vibrant cultural life. The critic Van Wyck Brooks called the creation of a distinctive American literature in the first half of the 19th century "the flowering of New England." Education is another of the region's strongest legacies. Its cluster of top-ranking universities and colleges -- including Harvard, Yale, Brown, Dartmouth, Wellesley, Smith, Mt. Holyoke, Williams, Amherst, and Wesleyan -- is unequaled by any other region.

As some of the original New England settlers migrated westward, immigrants from Canada, Ireland, Italy, and eastern Europe moved into the region. Despite a changing population, much of the original spirit of New England remains. It can be seen in the simple, woodframe houses and white church steeples that are features of many small towns, and in the traditional lighthouses that dot the Atlantic coast.

In the 20th century, most of New England's traditional industries have relocated to states or foreign countries where goods can be made more cheaply. In more than a few factory towns, skilled workers have been left without jobs. The gap has been partly filled by the microelectronics and computer industries.

MIDDLE ATLANTIC

If New England provided the brains and dollars for 19th-century American expansion, the Middle Atlantic states provided the muscle. The region's largest states, New York and Pennsylvania, became centers of heavy industry (iron, glass, and steel).

The Middle Atlantic region was settled by a wider range of people than New England. Dutch immigrants moved into the lower Hudson River Valley in what is now New York State. Swedes went to Delaware. English Catholics founded Maryland, and an English Protestant sect, the Friends (Quakers), settled Pennsylvania. In time, all these settlements fell under English control, but the region continued to be a magnet for people of diverse nationalities.

Early settlers were mostly farmers and traders, and the region served as a bridge between North and South. Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania, midway between the northern and southern colonies, was home to the Continental Congress, the convention of delegates from the original colonies that organized the American Revolution. The same city was the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the U.S. Constitution in 1787.

As heavy industry spread throughout the region, rivers such as the Hudson and Delaware were transformed into vital shipping lanes. Cities on waterways -- New York on the Hudson, Philadelphia on the Delaware, Baltimore on Chesapeake Bay -- grew dramatically. New York is still the nation's largest city, its financial hub, and its cultural center.

Like New England, the Middle Atlantic region has seen much of its heavy industry relocate elsewhere. Other industries, such as drug manufacturing and communications, have taken up the slack.

THE SOUTH

The South is perhaps the most distinctive and colorful American region. The American Civil War (1861-65) devastated the South socially and economically. Nevertheless, it retained its unmistakable identity.

Like New England, the South was first settled by English Protestants. But whereas New Englanders tended to stress their differences from the old country, Southerners tended to emulate the English. Even so, Southerners were prominent among the leaders of the American Revolution, and four of America's first five presidents were Virginians. After 1800, however, the interests of the manufacturing North and the agrarian South began to diverge.

Especially in coastal areas, southern settlers grew wealthy by raising and selling cotton and tobacco. The most economical way to raise these crops was on large farms, called plantations, which required the work of many laborers. To supply this need, plantation owners relied on slaves brought from Africa, and slavery spread throughout the South.

Slavery was the most contentious issue dividing North and South. To northerners it was immoral; to southerners it was integral to their way of life. In 1860, 11 southern states left the Union intending to form a separate nation, the Confederate States of America. This rupture led to the Civil War, the

Confederacy's defeat, and the end of slavery. (For more on the Civil War, see chapter 3.) The scars left by the war took decades to heal. The abolition of slavery failed to provide African Americans with political or economic equality: Southern towns and cities legalized and refined the practice of racial segregation.

It took a long, concerted effort by African Americans and their supporters to end segregation. In the meantime, however, the South could point with pride to a 20th-century regional outpouring of literature by, among others, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, Robert Penn Warren, Katherine Anne Porter, Tennessee Williams, Eudora Welty, and Flannery O'Connor.

As southerners, black and white, shook off the effects of slavery and racial division, a new regional pride expressed itself under the banner of "the New South" and in such events as the annual Spoleto Music Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, and the 1996 summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. Today the South has evolved into a manufacturing region, and high-rise buildings crowd the skylines of such cities as Atlanta and Little Rock, Arkansas. Owing to its mild weather, the South has become a mecca for retirees from other U.S. regions and from Canada.

THE MIDWEST

The Midwest is a cultural crossroads. Starting in the early 1800s easterners moved there in search of better farmland, and soon Europeans bypassed the East Coast to migrate directly to the interior: Germans to eastern Missouri, Swedes and Norwegians to Wisconsin and Minnesota. The region's fertile soil made it possible for farmers to produce abundant harvests of cereal crops such as wheat, oats, and corn. The region was soon known as the nation's "breadbasket."

Most of the Midwest is flat. The Mississippi River has acted as a regional lifeline, moving settlers to new homes and foodstuffs to market. The river inspired two classic American books, both written by a native Missourian, Samuel Clemens, who took the pseudonym Mark Twain: *Life on the Mississippi* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Midwesterners are praised as being open, friendly, and straightforward. Their politics tend to be cautious, but the caution is sometimes peppered with protest. The Midwest gave birth to one of America's two major political parties, the Republican Party, which was formed in the 1850s to oppose the spread of slavery into new states. At the turn of the century, the region also spawned the Progressive Movement, which largely consisted of farmers and merchants intent on making government less corrupt and more receptive to the will of the people. Perhaps because of their geographic location, many midwesterners have been strong adherents of isolationism, the belief that Americans should not concern themselves with foreign wars and problems.

The region's hub is Chicago, Illinois, the nation's third largest city. This major Great Lakes port is a connecting point for rail lines and air traffic to far-flung parts of the nation and the world. At its heart stands the Sears Tower, at 447 meters, the world's tallest building.

THE SOUTHWEST

The Southwest differs from the adjoining Midwest in weather (drier), population (less dense), and ethnicity (strong Spanish-American and Native-American components). Outside the cities, the region is a land of open spaces, much of which is desert. The magnificent Grand Canyon is located in this region, as is Monument Valley, the starkly beautiful backdrop for many western movies. Monument Valley is within the Navajo Reservation, home of the most populous American Indian tribe. To the south and east lie dozens of other Indian reservations, including those of the Hopi, Zuni, and Apache tribes.

Parts of the Southwest once belonged to Mexico. The United States obtained this land following the Mexican-American War of 1846-48. Its Mexican heritage continues to exert a strong influence on the region, which is a convenient place to settle for immigrants (legal or illegal) from farther south. The

regional population is growing rapidly, with Arizona in particular rivaling the southern states as a destination for retired Americans in search of a warm climate.

Population growth in the hot, arid Southwest has depended on two human artifacts: the dam and the air conditioner. Dams on the Colorado and other rivers and aqueducts such as those of the Central Arizona Project have brought water to once-small towns such as Las Vegas, Nevada; Phoenix, Arizona; and Albuquerque, New Mexico, allowing them to become metropolises. Las Vegas is renowned as one of the world's centers for gambling, while Santa Fe, New Mexico, is famous as a center for the arts, especially painting, sculpture, and opera. Another system of dams and irrigation projects waters the Central Valley of California, which is noted for producing large harvests of fruits and vegetables.

THE WEST

Americans have long regarded the West as the last frontier. Yet California has a history of European settlement older than that of most midwestern states. Spanish priests founded missions along the California coast a few years before the outbreak of the American Revolution. In the 19th century, California and Oregon entered the Union ahead of many states to the east.

The West is a region of scenic beauty on a grand scale. All of its 11 states are partly mountainous, and the ranges are the sources of startling contrasts. To the west of the peaks, winds from the Pacific Ocean carry enough moisture to keep the land well-watered. To the east, however, the land is very dry. Parts of western Washington State, for example, receive 20 times the amount of rain that falls on the eastern side of the state's Cascade Range.

In much of the West the population is sparse, and the federal government owns and manages millions of hectares of undeveloped land. Americans use these areas for recreational and commercial activities, such as fishing, camping, hiking, boating, grazing, lumbering, and mining. In recent years some local residents who earn their livelihoods on federal land have come into conflict with the land's managers, who are required to keep land use within environmentally acceptable limits.

Alaska, the northernmost state in the Union, is a vast land of few, but hardy, people and great stretches of wilderness, protected in national parks and wildlife refuges. Hawaii is the only state in the union in which Asian Americans outnumber residents of European stock. Beginning in the 1980s large numbers of Asians have also settled in California, mainly around Los Angeles.

Los Angeles -- and Southern California as a whole -- bears the stamp of its large Mexican-American population. Now the second largest city in the nation, Los Angeles is best known as the home of the Hollywood film industry. Fueled by the growth of Los Angeles and the "Silicon Valley" area near San Jose, California has become the most populous of all the states.

Western cities are known for their tolerance. Perhaps because so many westerners have moved there from other regions to make a new start, as a rule interpersonal relations are marked by a live-and-let-live attitude. The western economy is varied. California, for example, is both an agricultural state and a high-technology manufacturing state.

THE FRONTIER SPIRIT

One final American region deserves mention. It is not a fixed place but a moving zone, as well as a state of mind: the border between settlements and wilderness known as the frontier. Writing in the 1890s, historian Frederick Jackson Turner claimed that the availability of vacant land throughout much of the nation's history has shaped American attitudes and institutions. "This perennial rebirth," he wrote, "this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character."

Numerous present-day American values and attitudes can be traced to the frontier past: self-reliance, resourcefulness, comradeship, a strong sense of equality. After the Civil War a large number of black

Americans moved west in search of equal opportunities, and many of them gained some fame and fortune as cowboys, miners, and prairie settlers. In 1869 the western territory of Wyoming became the first place that allowed women to vote and to hold elected office.

Because the resources of the West seemed limitless, people developed wasteful attitudes and practices. The great herds of buffalo (American bison) were slaughtered until only fragments remained, and many other species were driven to the brink of extinction. Rivers were dammed and their natural communities disrupted. Forests were destroyed by excess logging, and landscapes were scarred by careless mining.

A counterweight to the abuse of natural resources took form in the American conservation movement, which owes much of its success to Americans' reluctance to see frontier conditions disappear entirely from the landscape. Conservationists were instrumental in establishing the first national park, Yellowstone, in 1872, and the first national forests in the 1890s. More recently, the Endangered Species Act has helped stem the tide of extinctions.

Environmental programs can be controversial; for example, some critics believe that the Endangered Species Act hampers economic progress. But, overall, the movement to preserve America's natural endowment continues to gain strength. Its replication in many other countries around the world is a tribute to the lasting influence of the American frontier.

Chapter Three

TOWARD THE CITY ON A HILL

A brief history of the United States

The first Europeans to reach North America were Icelandic Vikings, led by Leif Ericson, about the year 1000. Traces of their visit have been found in the Canadian province of Newfoundland, but the Vikings failed to establish a permanent settlement and soon lost contact with the new continent.

Five centuries later, the demand for Asian spices, textiles, and dyes spurred European navigators to dream of shorter routes between East and West. Acting on behalf of the Spanish crown, in 1492 the Italian navigator Christopher Columbus sailed west from Europe and landed on one of the Bahama Islands in the Caribbean Sea. Within 40 years, Spanish adventurers had carved out a huge empire in Central and South America.

THE COLONIAL ERA

The first successful English colony was founded at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. A few years later, English Puritans came to America to escape religious persecution for their opposition to the Church of England. In 1620, the Puritans founded Plymouth Colony in what later became Massachusetts. Plymouth was the second permanent British settlement in North America and the first in New England.

In New England the Puritans hoped to build a "city upon a hill" -- an ideal community. Ever since, Americans have viewed their country as a great experiment, a worthy model for other nations to follow. The Puritans believed that government should enforce God's morality, and they strictly punished heretics, adulterers, drunks, and violators of the Sabbath. In spite of their own quest for religious freedom, the Puritans practiced a form of intolerant moralism. In 1636 an English clergyman named Roger Williams left Massachusetts and founded the colony of Rhode Island, based on the principles of religious freedom and separation of church and state, two ideals that were later adopted by framers of the U.S. Constitution.

Colonists arrived from other European countries, but the English were far better established in America. By 1733 English settlers had founded 13 colonies along the Atlantic Coast, from New Hampshire in the North to Georgia in the South. Elsewhere in North America, the French controlled Canada and Louisiana, which included the vast Mississippi River watershed. France and England fought several wars during the 18th century, with North America being drawn into every one. The end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 left England in control of Canada and all of North America east of the Mississippi.

Soon afterwards England and its colonies were in conflict. The mother country imposed new taxes, in part to defray the cost of fighting the Seven Years' War, and expected Americans to lodge British soldiers in their homes. The colonists resented the taxes and resisted the quartering of soldiers. Insisting that they could be taxed only by their own colonial assemblies, the colonists rallied behind the slogan "no taxation without representation."

All the taxes, except one on tea, were removed, but in 1773 a group of patriots responded by staging the Boston Tea Party. Disguised as Indians, they boarded British merchant ships and dumped 342 crates of tea into Boston harbor. This provoked a crackdown by the British Parliament, including the closing of Boston harbor to shipping. Colonial leaders convened the First Continental Congress in 1774 to discuss the colonies' opposition to British rule. War broke out on April 19, 1775, when British soldiers confronted colonial rebels in Lexington, Massachusetts. On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted a Declaration of Independence.

At first the Revolutionary War went badly for the Americans. With few provisions and little training, American troops generally fought well, but were outnumbered and overpowered by the British. The turning point in the war came in 1777 when American soldiers defeated the British Army at Saratoga, New York. France had secretly been aiding the Americans, but was reluctant to ally itself openly until they had proved themselves in battle. Following the Americans' victory at Saratoga, France and America signed treaties of alliance, and France provided the Americans with troops and warships.

The last major battle of the American Revolution took place at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781. A combined force of American and French troops surrounded the British and forced their surrender. Fighting continued in some areas for two more years, and the war officially ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783, by which England recognized American independence.

A NEW NATION

The framing of the U.S. Constitution and the creation of the United States are covered in more detail in chapter 4. In essence, the Constitution alleviated Americans' fear of excessive central power by dividing government into three branches -- legislative (Congress), executive (the president and the federal agencies), and judicial (the federal courts) -- and by including 10 amendments known as the Bill of Rights to safeguard individual liberties. Continued uneasiness about the accumulation of power manifested itself in the differing political philosophies of two towering figures from the Revolutionary period. George Washington, the war's military hero and the first U.S. president, headed a party favoring a strong president and central government; Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, headed a party preferring to allot more power to the states, on the theory that they would be more accountable to the people.

Jefferson became the third president in 1801. Although he had intended to limit the president's power, political realities dictated otherwise. Among other forceful actions, in 1803 he purchased the vast Louisiana Territory from France, almost doubling the size of the United States. The Louisiana Purchase added more than 2 million square kilometers of territory and extended the country's borders as far west as the Rocky Mountains in Colorado.

SLAVERY AND THE CIVIL WAR

In the first quarter of the 19th century, the frontier of settlement moved west to the Mississippi River and beyond. In 1828 Andrew Jackson became the first "outsider" elected president: a man from the

frontier state of Tennessee, born into a poor family and outside the cultural traditions of the Atlantic seaboard.

Although on the surface the Jacksonian Era was one of optimism and energy, the young nation was entangled in a contradiction. The ringing words of the Declaration of Independence, "all men are created equal," were meaningless for 1.5 million slaves. (For more on slavery and its aftermath, see chapters 1 and 4.)

In 1820 southern and northern politicians debated the question of whether slavery would be legal in the western territories. Congress reached a compromise: Slavery was permitted in the new state of Missouri and the Arkansas Territory but barred everywhere west and north of Missouri. The outcome of the Mexican War of 1846-48 brought more territory into American hands -- and with it the issue of whether to extend slavery. Another compromise, in 1850, admitted California as a free state, with the citizens of Utah and New Mexico being allowed to decide whether they wanted slavery within their borders or not (they did not).

But the issue continued to rankle. After Abraham Lincoln, a foe of slavery, was elected president in 1860, 11 states left the Union and proclaimed themselves an independent nation, the Confederate States of America: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The American Civil War had begun.

The Confederate Army did well in the early part of the war, and some of its commanders, especially General Robert E. Lee, were brilliant tacticians. But the Union had superior manpower and resources to draw upon. In the summer of 1863 Lee took a gamble by marching his troops north into Pennsylvania. He met a Union army at Gettysburg, and the largest battle ever fought on American soil ensued. After three days of desperate fighting, the Confederates were defeated. At the same time, on the Mississippi River, Union General Ulysses S. Grant captured the city of Vicksburg, giving the North control of the entire Mississippi Valley and splitting the Confederacy in two.

Two years later, after a long campaign involving forces commanded by Lee and Grant, the Confederates surrendered. The Civil War was the most traumatic episode in American history. But it resolved two matters that had vexed Americans since 1776. It put an end to slavery, and it decided that the country was not a collection of semi-independent states but an indivisible whole.

THE LATE 19TH CENTURY

Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, depriving America of a leader uniquely qualified by background and temperament to heal the wounds left by the Civil War. His successor, Andrew Johnson, was a southerner who had remained loyal to the Union during the war. Northern members of Johnson's own party (Republican) set in motion a process to remove him from office for allegedly acting too leniently toward former Confederates. Johnson's acquittal was an important victory for the principle of separation of powers: A president should not be removed from office because Congress disagrees with his policies, but only if he has committed, in the words of the Constitution, "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors."

Within a few years after the end of the Civil War, the United States became a leading industrial power, and shrewd businessmen made great fortunes. The first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869; by 1900 the United States had more rail mileage than all of Europe. The petroleum industry prospered, and John D. Rockefeller of the Standard Oil Company became one of the richest men in America. Andrew Carnegie, who started out as a poor Scottish immigrant, built a vast empire of steel mills. Textile mills multiplied in the South, and meat-packing plants sprang up in Chicago, Illinois. An electrical industry flourished as Americans made use of a series of inventions: the telephone, the light bulb, the phonograph, the alternating-current motor and transformer, motion pictures. In Chicago, architect Louis Sullivan used steel-frame construction to fashion America's distinctive contribution to the modern city: the skyscraper.

But unrestrained economic growth brought dangers. To limit competition, railroads merged and set standardized shipping rates. Trusts -- huge combinations of corporations -- tried to establish monopoly control over some industries, notably oil. These giant enterprises could produce goods efficiently and

sell them cheaply, but they could also fix prices and destroy competitors. To counteract them, the federal government took action. The Interstate Commerce Commission was created in 1887 to control railroad rates. The Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 banned trusts, mergers, and business agreements "in restraint of trade."

Industrialization brought with it the rise of organized labor. The American Federation of Labor, founded in 1886, was a coalition of trade unions for skilled laborers. The late 19th century was a period of heavy immigration, and many of the workers in the new industries were foreign-born. For American farmers, however, times were hard. Food prices were falling, and farmers had to bear the costs of high shipping rates, expensive mortgages, high taxes, and tariffs on consumer goods.

With the exception of the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867, American territory had remained fixed since 1848. In the 1890s a new spirit of expansion took hold. The United States followed the lead of northern European nations in asserting a duty to "civilize" the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. After American newspapers published lurid accounts of atrocities in the Spanish colony of Cuba, the United States and Spain went to war in 1898. When the war was over, the United States had gained a number of possessions from Spain: Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam. In an unrelated action, the United States also acquired the Hawaiian Islands.

Yet Americans, who had themselves thrown off the shackles of empire, were not comfortable with administering one. In 1902 American troops left Cuba, although the new republic was required to grant naval bases to the United States. The Philippines obtained limited self-government in 1907 and complete independence in 1946. Puerto Rico became a self-governing commonwealth within the United States, and Hawaii became a state in 1959 (as did Alaska).

THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

While Americans were venturing abroad, they were also taking a fresh look at social problems at home. Despite the signs of prosperity, up to half of all industrial workers still lived in poverty. New York, Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco could be proud of their museums, universities, and public libraries -- and ashamed of their slums. The prevailing economic dogma had been *laissez faire*: let the government interfere with commerce as little as possible. About 1900 the Progressive Movement arose to reform society and individuals through government action. The movement's supporters were primarily economists, sociologists, technicians, and civil servants who sought scientific, cost-effective solutions to political problems.

Social workers went into the slums to establish settlement houses, which provided the poor with health services and recreation. Prohibitionists demanded an end to the sale of liquor, partly to prevent the suffering that alcoholic husbands inflicted on their wives and children. In the cities, reform politicians fought corruption, regulated public transportation, and built municipally owned utilities. States passed laws restricting child labor, limiting workdays, and providing compensation for injured workers.

Some Americans favored more radical ideologies. The Socialist Party, led by Eugene V. Debs, advocated a peaceful, democratic transition to a state-run economy. But socialism never found a solid footing in the United States -- the party's best showing in a presidential race was 6 percent of the vote in 1912.

WAR AND PEACE

When World War I erupted in Europe in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson urged a policy of strict American neutrality. Germany's declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare against all ships bound for Allied ports undermined that position. When Congress declared war on Germany in 1917, the American army was a force of only 200,000 soldiers. Millions of men had to be drafted, trained, and shipped across the submarine-infested Atlantic. A full year passed before the U.S. Army was ready to make a significant contribution to the war effort.

By the fall of 1918, Germany's position had become hopeless. Its armies were retreating in the face of a relentless American buildup. In October Germany asked for peace, and an armistice was declared on November 11. In 1919 Wilson himself went to Versailles to help draft the peace treaty. Although he was cheered by crowds in the Allied capitals, at home his international outlook was less popular. His idea of a League of Nations was included in the Treaty of Versailles, but the U.S. Senate did not ratify the treaty, and the United States did not participate in the league.

The majority of Americans did not mourn the defeated treaty. They turned inward, and the United States withdrew from European affairs. At the same time, Americans were becoming hostile to foreigners in their midst. In 1919 a series of terrorist bombings produced the "Red Scare." Under the authority of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, political meetings were raided and several hundred foreign-born political radicals were deported, even though most of them were innocent of any crime. In 1921 two Italian-born anarchists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were convicted of murder on the basis of shaky evidence. Intellectuals protested, but in 1927 the two men were electrocuted. Congress enacted immigration limits in 1921 and tightened them further in 1924 and 1929. These restrictions favored immigrants from Anglo-Saxon and Nordic countries.

The 1920s were an extraordinary and confusing time, when hedonism coexisted with puritanical conservatism. It was the age of Prohibition: In 1920 a constitutional amendment outlawed the sale of alcoholic beverages. Yet drinkers cheerfully evaded the law in thousands of "speakeasies" (illegal bars), and gangsters made illicit fortunes in liquor. It was also the Roaring Twenties, the age of jazz and spectacular silent movies and such fads as flagpole-sitting and goldfish-swallowing. The Ku Klux Klan, a racist organization born in the South after the Civil War, attracted new followers and terrorized blacks, Catholics, Jews, and immigrants. At the same time, a Catholic, New York Governor Alfred E. Smith, was a Democratic candidate for president.

For big business, the 1920s were golden years. The United States was now a consumer society, with booming markets for radios, home appliances, synthetic textiles, and plastics. One of the most admired men of the decade was Henry Ford, who had introduced the assembly line into automobile factories. Ford could pay high wages and still earn enormous profits by mass-producing the Model T, a car that millions of buyers could afford. For a moment, it seemed that Americans had the Midas touch.

But the superficial prosperity masked deep problems. With profits soaring and interest rates low, plenty of money was available for investment. Much of it, however, went into reckless speculation in the stock market. Frantic bidding pushed prices far above stock shares' real value. Investors bought stocks "on margin," borrowing up to 90 percent of the purchase price. The bubble burst in 1929. The stock market crashed, triggering a worldwide depression.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

By 1932 thousands of American banks and over 100,000 businesses had failed. Industrial production was cut in half, wages had decreased 60 percent, and one out of every four workers was unemployed. That year Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president on the platform of "a New Deal for the American people."

Roosevelt's jaunty self-confidence galvanized the nation. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," he said at his inauguration. He followed up these words with decisive action. Within three months -- the historic "Hundred Days" -- Roosevelt had rushed through Congress a great number of laws to help the economy recover. Such new agencies as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration created millions of jobs by undertaking the construction of roads, bridges, airports, parks, and public buildings. Later the Social Security Act set up contributory old-age and survivors' pensions.

Roosevelt's New Deal programs did not end the Depression. Although the economy improved, full recovery had to await the defense buildup preceding America's entry into World War II.

WORLD WAR II

Again neutrality was the initial American response to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. But the bombing of Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawaii by the Japanese in December 1941 brought the United States into the war, first against Japan and then against its allies, Germany and Italy.

American, British, and Soviet war planners agreed to concentrate on defeating Germany first. British and American forces landed in North Africa in November 1942, proceeded to Sicily and the Italian mainland in 1943, and liberated Rome on June 4, 1944. Two days later -- D-Day -- Allied forces landed in Normandy. Paris was liberated on August 24, and by September American units had crossed the German border. The Germans finally surrendered on May 5, 1945.

The war against Japan came to a swift end in August of 1945, when President Harry Truman ordered the use of atomic bombs against the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nearly 200,000 civilians were killed. Although the matter can still provoke heated discussion, the argument in favor of dropping the bombs was that casualties on both sides would have been greater if the Allies had been forced to invade Japan.

THE COLD WAR

A new international congress, the United Nations, came into being after the war, and this time the United States joined. Soon tensions developed between the United States and its wartime ally the Soviet Union. Although Soviet leader Joseph Stalin had promised to support free elections in all the liberated nations of Europe, Soviet forces imposed Communist dictatorships in eastern Europe. Germany became a divided country, with a western zone under joint British, French, and American occupation and an eastern zone under Soviet occupation. In the spring of 1948 the Soviets sealed off West Berlin in an attempt to starve the isolated city into submission. The western powers responded with a massive airlift of food and fuel until the Soviets lifted the blockade in May 1949. A month earlier the United States had allied with Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom to form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

On June 25, 1950, armed with Soviet weapons and acting with Stalin's approval, North Korea's army invaded South Korea. Truman immediately secured a commitment from the United Nations to defend South Korea. The war lasted three years, and the final settlement left Korea divided.

Soviet control of eastern Europe, the Korean War, and the Soviet development of atomic and hydrogen bombs instilled fear in Americans. Some believed that the nation's new vulnerability was the work of traitors from within. Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy asserted in the early 1950s that the State Department and the U.S. Army were riddled with Communists. McCarthy was eventually discredited. In the meantime, however, careers had been destroyed, and the American people had all but lost sight of a cardinal American virtue: toleration of political dissent.

From 1945 until 1970 the United States enjoyed a long period of economic growth, interrupted only by mild and brief recessions. For the first time a majority of Americans enjoyed a comfortable standard of living. In 1960, 55 percent of all households owned washing machines, 77 percent owned cars, 90 percent had television sets, and nearly all had refrigerators. At the same time, the nation was moving slowly to establish racial justice.

In 1960 John F. Kennedy was elected president. Young, energetic, and handsome, he promised to "get the country moving again" after the eight-year presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the aging World War II general. In October 1962 Kennedy was faced with what turned out to be the most drastic crisis of the Cold War. The Soviet Union had been caught installing nuclear missiles in Cuba, close enough to reach American cities in a matter of minutes. Kennedy imposed a naval blockade on the island. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev ultimately agreed to remove the missiles, in return for an American promise not to invade Cuba.

In April 1961 the Soviets capped a series of triumphs in space by sending the first man into orbit around the Earth. President Kennedy responded with a promise that Americans would walk on the moon before the decade was over. This promise was fulfilled in July of 1969, when astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped out of the Apollo 11 spacecraft and onto the moon's surface.

Kennedy did not live to see this culmination. He had been assassinated in 1963. He was not a universally popular president, but his death was a terrible shock to the American people. His successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, managed to push through Congress a number of new laws establishing social programs. Johnson's "War on Poverty" included preschool education for poor children, vocational training for dropouts from school, and community service for slum youths.

During his six years in office, Johnson became preoccupied with the Vietnam War. By 1968, 500,000 American troops were fighting in that small country, previously little known to most of them. Although politicians tended to view the war as part of a necessary effort to check communism on all fronts, a growing number of Americans saw no vital American interest in what happened to Vietnam. Demonstrations protesting American involvement broke out on college campuses, and there were violent clashes between students and police. Antiwar sentiment spilled over into a wide range of protests against injustice and discrimination.

Stung by his increasing unpopularity, Johnson decided not to run for a second full term. Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968. He pursued a policy of Vietnamization, gradually replacing American soldiers with Vietnamese. In 1973 he signed a peace treaty with North Vietnam and brought American soldiers home. Nixon achieved two other diplomatic breakthroughs: re-establishing U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China and negotiating the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty with the Soviet Union. In 1972 he easily won re-election.

During that presidential campaign, however, five men had been arrested for breaking into Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate office building in Washington, D.C. Journalists investigating the incident discovered that the burglars had been employed by Nixon's re-election committee. The White House made matters worse by trying to conceal its connection with the break-in. Eventually, tape recordings made by the president himself revealed that he had been involved in the cover-up. By the summer of 1974, it was clear that Congress was about to impeach and convict him. On August 9, Richard Nixon became the only U.S. president to resign from office.

DECADES OF CHANGE

After World War II the presidency had alternated between Democrats and Republicans, but, for the most part, Democrats had held majorities in the Congress -- in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. A string of 26 consecutive years of Democratic control was broken in 1980, when the Republicans gained a majority in the Senate; at the same time, Republican Ronald Reagan was elected president. This change marked the onset of a volatility that has characterized American voting patterns ever since.

Whatever their attitudes toward Reagan's policies, most Americans credited him with a capacity for instilling pride in their country and a sense of optimism about the future. If there was a central theme to his domestic policies, it was that the federal government had become too big and federal taxes too high.

Despite a growing federal budget deficit, in 1983 the U.S. economy entered into one of the longest periods of sustained growth since World War II. The Reagan administration suffered a defeat in the 1986 elections, however, when Democrats regained control of the Senate. The most serious issue of the day was the revelation that the United States had secretly sold arms to Iran in an attempt to win freedom for American hostages held in Lebanon and to finance antigovernment forces in Nicaragua at a time when Congress had prohibited such aid. Despite these revelations, Reagan continued to enjoy strong popularity throughout his second term in office.

His successor in 1988, Republican George Bush, benefited from Reagan's popularity and continued many of his policies. When Iraq invaded oil-rich Kuwait in 1990, Bush put together a multinational coalition that liberated Kuwait early in 1991.

By 1992, however, the American electorate had become restless again. Voters elected Bill Clinton, a Democrat, president, only to turn around two years later and give Republicans their first majority in both the House and Senate in 40 years. Meanwhile, several perennial debates had broken out anew -- between advocates of a strong federal government and believers in decentralization of power, between advocates of prayer in public schools and defenders of separation of church and state, between those who emphasize swift and sure punishment of criminals and those who seek to address the underlying causes of crime. Complaints about the influence of money on political campaigns inspired a movement to limit the number of terms elected officials could serve. This and other discontents with the system led to the formation of the strongest Third-Party movement in generations, led by Texas businessman H. Ross Perot.

Although the economy was strong in the mid-1990s, two phenomena were troubling many Americans. Corporations were resorting more and more to a process known as downsizing: trimming the work force to cut costs despite the hardships this inflicted on workers. And in many industries the gap between the annual compensations of corporate executives and common laborers had become enormous. Even the majority of Americans who enjoy material comfort worry about a perceived decline in the quality of life, in the strength of the family, in neighborliness and civility. Americans probably remain the most optimistic people in the world, but with the century drawing to a close, opinion polls showed that trait in shorter supply than usual.

Chapter Four

A RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

Separation of powers and the democratic process

The early American way of life encouraged democracy. The colonists were inhabiting a land of forest and wilderness. They had to work together to build shelter, provide food, and clear the land for farms and dwellings. This need for cooperation strengthened the belief that, in the New World, people should be on an equal footing, with nobody having special privileges.

The urge for equality affected the original 13 colonies' relations with the mother country, England. The Declaration of Independence in 1776 proclaimed that all men are created equal, that all have the right to "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

The Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution after it, combined America's colonial experience with the political thought of such philosophers as England's John Locke to produce the concept of a democratic republic. The government would draw its power from the people themselves and exercise it through their elected representatives. During the Revolutionary War, the colonies had formed a national congress to present England with a united front. Under an agreement known as the Articles of Confederation, a postwar congress was allowed to handle only problems that were beyond the capabilities of individual states.

THE CONSTITUTION

The Articles of Confederation failed as a governing document for the United States because the states did not cooperate as expected. When it came time to pay wages to the national army or the war debt to France, some states refused to contribute. To cure this weakness, the congress asked each state to send a delegate to a convention. The so-called Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia in May of 1787, with George Washington presiding.

The delegates struck a balance between those who wanted a strong central government and those who did not. The resulting master plan, or Constitution, set up a system in which some powers were given to the national, or federal, government, while others were reserved for the states. The

Constitution divided the national government into three parts, or branches: the legislative (the Congress, which consists of a House of Representatives and a Senate), the executive (headed by the president), and the judicial (the federal courts). Called "separation of powers," this division gives each branch certain duties and substantial independence from the others. It also gives each branch some authority over the others through a system of "checks and balances."

Here are a few examples of how checks and balances work in practice.

- If Congress passes a proposed law, or "bill," that the president considers unwise, he can veto it. That means that the bill is dead unless two-thirds of the members of both the House and the Senate vote to enact it despite the president's veto.
- If Congress passes, and the president signs, a law that is challenged in the federal courts as contrary to the Constitution, the courts can nullify that law. (The federal courts cannot issue advisory or theoretical opinions, however; their jurisdiction is limited to actual disputes.)
- The president has the power to make treaties with other nations and to make appointments to federal positions, including judgeships. The Senate, however, must approve all treaties and confirm the appointments before they can go into effect.

Recently some observers have discerned what they see as a weakness in the tripartite system of government: a tendency toward too much checking and balancing that results in governmental stasis, or "gridlock."

BILL OF RIGHTS

The Constitution written in Philadelphia in 1787 could not go into effect until it was ratified by a majority of citizens in at least 9 of the then 13 U.S. states. During this ratification process, misgivings arose. Many citizens felt uneasy because the document failed to explicitly guarantee the rights of individuals. The desired language was added in 10 amendments to the Constitution, collectively known as the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights guarantees Americans freedom of speech, of religion, and of the press. They have the right to assemble in public places, to protest government actions, and to demand change. There is a right to own firearms. Because of the Bill of Rights, neither police officers nor soldiers can stop and search a person without good reason. Nor can they search a person's home without permission from a court to do so. The Bill of Rights guarantees a speedy trial to anyone accused of a crime. The trial must be by jury if requested, and the accused person must be allowed representation by a lawyer and to call witnesses to speak for him or her. Cruel and unusual punishment is forbidden. With the addition of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution was ratified by all 13 states and went into effect in 1789.

Since then 17 other amendments have been added to the Constitution. Perhaps the most important of these are the Thirteenth and Fourteenth, which outlaw slavery and guarantee all citizens equal protection of the laws, and the Nineteenth, which gives women the right to vote.

The Constitution can be amended in either of two ways. Congress can propose an amendment, provided that two-thirds of the members of both the House and the Senate vote in favor of it. Or the legislatures of two-thirds of the states can call a convention to propose amendments. (This second method has never been used.) In either case a proposed amendment does not go into effect until ratified by three-fourths of the states.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The legislative branch -- the Congress -- is made up of elected representatives from each of the 50 states. It is the only branch of U.S. government that can make federal laws, levy federal taxes, declare war, and put foreign treaties into effect.

Members of the House of Representatives are elected to two-year terms. Each member represents a district in his or her home state. The number of districts is determined by a census, which is conducted

every 10 years. The most populous states are allowed more representatives than the smaller ones, some of which have only one. In all, there are 435 representatives in the House.

Senators are elected to six-year terms. Each state has two senators, regardless of population. Senators' terms are staggered, so that one-third of the Senate stands for election every two years. There are 100 senators.

To become a law, a bill must pass both the House and the Senate. After the bill is introduced in either body, it is studied by one or more committees, amended, voted out of committee, and discussed in the chamber of the House or Senate. If passed by one body, it goes to the other for consideration. When a bill passes the House and the Senate in different forms, members of both bodies meet in a "conference committee" to iron out the differences. Groups that try to persuade members of Congress to vote for or against a bill are called "lobbies." They may try to exert their influence at almost any stage of the legislative process. Once both bodies have passed the same version of a bill, it goes to the president for approval.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The chief executive of the United States is the president, who together with the vice president is elected to a four-year term. As a result of a constitutional amendment that went into effect in 1951, a president may be elected to only two terms. Other than succeeding a president who dies or is disabled, the vice president's only official duty is presiding over the Senate. The vice president may vote in the Senate only to break a tie.

The president's powers are formidable but not unlimited. As the chief formulator of national policy, the president proposes legislation to Congress. As mentioned previously, the president may veto any bill passed by Congress. The president is commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The president has the authority to appoint federal judges as vacancies occur, including justices of the Supreme Court. As head of his political party, with ready access to the news media, the president can easily influence public opinion.

Within the executive branch, the president has broad powers to issue regulations and directives carrying out the work of the federal government's departments and agencies. The president appoints the heads and senior officials of those departments and agencies. Heads of the major departments, called "secretaries," are part of the president's cabinet. The majority of federal workers, however, are selected on the basis of merit, not politics.

JUDICIAL BRANCH

The judicial branch is headed by the U.S. Supreme Court, which is the only court specifically created by the Constitution. In addition, Congress has established 13 federal courts of appeals and, below them, about 95 federal district courts. The Supreme Court meets in Washington, D.C., and the other federal courts are located in cities throughout the United States. Federal judges are appointed for life or until they retire voluntarily; they can be removed from office only via a laborious process of impeachment and trial in the Congress.

The federal courts hear cases arising out of the Constitution and federal laws and treaties, maritime cases, cases involving foreign citizens or governments, and cases in which the federal government is itself a party.

The Supreme Court consists of a chief justice and eight associate justices. With minor exceptions, cases come to the Supreme Court on appeal from lower federal or state courts. Most of these cases involve disputes over the interpretation and constitutionality of actions taken by the executive branch and of laws passed by Congress or the states (like federal laws, state laws must be consistent with the U.S. Constitution).

THE COURT OF LAST RESORT

Although the three branches are said to be equal, often the Supreme Court has the last word on an issue. The courts can rule a law unconstitutional, which makes it void. Most such rulings are appealed to the Supreme Court, which is thus the final arbiter of what the Constitution means. Newspapers commonly print excerpts from the justices' opinions in important cases, and the Court's decisions are often the subject of public debate. This is as it should be: The decisions may settle longstanding controversies and can have social effects far beyond the immediate outcome. Two famous, related examples are *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954).

In *Plessy* the issue was whether blacks could be required to ride in separate railroad cars from whites. The Court articulated a "separate but equal" doctrine as its basis for upholding the practice. The case sent a signal that the Court was interpreting the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments narrowly and that a widespread network of laws and custom treating blacks and whites differently would not be disturbed. One justice, John Marshall Harlan, dissented from the decision, arguing that "the Constitution is color-blind."

Almost 60 years later the Court changed its mind. In *Brown* the court held that deliberately segregated public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause. Although the Court did not directly overrule its *Plessy* decision, Justice Harlan's view of the Constitution was vindicated. The 1954 ruling applied directly only to schools in the city of Topeka, Kansas, but the principle it articulated reached every public school in the nation. More than that, the case undermined segregation in all governmental endeavors and set the nation on a new course of treating all citizens alike.

The *Brown* decision caused consternation among some citizens, particularly in the South, but was eventually accepted as the law of the land. Other controversial Supreme Court decisions have not received the same degree of acceptance. In several cases between 1962 and 1985, for example, the Court decided that requiring students to pray or listen to prayer in public schools violated the Constitution's prohibition against establishing a religion. Critics of these decisions believe that the absence of prayer in public schools has contributed to a decline in American morals; they have tried to find ways to restore prayer to the schools without violating the Constitution. In *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the Court guaranteed women the right to have abortions in certain circumstances -- a decision that continues to offend those Americans who consider abortion to be murder. Because the *Roe v. Wade* decision was based on an interpretation of the Constitution, opponents have been trying to amend the Constitution to overturn it.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

Americans regularly exercise their democratic rights by voting in elections and by participating in political parties and election campaigns. Today, there are two major political parties in the United States, the Democratic and the Republican. The Democratic Party evolved from the party of Thomas Jefferson, formed before 1800. The Republican Party was established in the 1850s by Abraham Lincoln and others who opposed the expansion of slavery into new states then being admitted to the Union.

The Democratic Party is considered to be the more liberal party, and the Republican, the more conservative. Democrats generally believe that government has an obligation to provide social and economic programs for those who need them. Republicans are not necessarily opposed to such programs but believe they are too costly to taxpayers. Republicans put more emphasis on encouraging private enterprise in the belief that a strong private sector makes citizens less dependent on government.

Both major parties have supporters among a wide variety of Americans and embrace a wide range of political views. Members, and even elected officials, of one party do not necessarily agree with each other on every issue. Americans do not have to join a political party to vote or to be a candidate for public office, but running for office without the money and campaign workers a party can provide is difficult.

Minor political parties -- generally referred to as "third parties" -- occasionally form in the United States, but their candidates are rarely elected to office. Minor parties often serve, however, to call attention to an issue that is of concern to voters, but has been neglected in the political dialogue. When this happens, one or both of the major parties may address the matter, and the third party disappears.

At the national level, elections are held every two years, in even-numbered years, on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November. State and local elections often coincide with national elections, but they also are held in other years and can take place at other times of year.

Americans are free to determine how much or how little they become involved in the political process. Many citizens actively participate by working as volunteers for a candidate, by promoting a particular cause, or by running for office themselves. Others restrict their participation to voting on election day, quietly letting their democratic system work, confident that their freedoms are protected.

Chapter Five

THE BUSINESS OF AMERICA

Agriculture, mass production, the labor movement, and the economic system

"The business of America," President Calvin Coolidge said in 1925, "is business." This formulation is actually cannier than it may appear. Substitute "preoccupation" for the first "business," and you have a capsule summary of the entrepreneurial spirit behind America's prosperity.

This chapter examines agriculture, the first American industry; the American style of mass production; the labor movement; and the nation's economic system.

A NATION OF FARMERS

Agriculture in the United States has changed dramatically over the last 200 years. At the time of the American Revolution (1775-83), 95 percent of the population was engaged in farming. Today that figure is less than 2 percent. Although individuals or families own 85 percent of all farms in the United States, they own only 64 percent of the farmland. The remainder is owned by corporations, large and small, and farming and its related industries have become big business -- "agribusiness." Yet for all the changes, agriculture is a constant in American life, and the food produced is safe, abundant, and affordable.

Early in American history, farmers set the tone for the rest of the nation. Farmers have never been as self-sufficient as myth would have it, dependent as they are on the uncertainties of weather and the marketplace. Nonetheless, they have exhibited an individualism and an egalitarianism admired and emulated by the rest of society.

As settlement advanced from east to west, U.S. agriculture attained a richness and variety unmatched in most other parts of the world. This is true still today, in large part owing to the quantity of land and the generosity of nature. Only in a relatively small portion of the western United States is rainfall so limited that deserts exist. Elsewhere, rainfall ranges from modest to abundant, and rivers and underground water allow for irrigation where needed. Large stretches of level or gently rolling land, especially in the Midwest, provide ideal conditions for large-scale agriculture.

In most sections of the United States, land was too abundant and labor too scarce for the English system -- in which a landed gentry owned vast estates and most farmers were tenants -- to take hold. North American agriculture came to be based on a multitude of family farms. Moreover, these farms

tended to be scattered and isolated, rather than clustered around villages, thus enhancing the farmer's individualism and self-reliance.

Readiness to embrace new technology has been characteristic of American farmers, and throughout the 19th century one new tool or invention followed another in rapid succession. For example, the scythe and cradle replaced the sickle for harvesting grain, then gave way to Cyrus McCormick's mechanical reaper in the 1830s. By the time of the American Civil War (1861-65), machines were taking over the work of haying, threshing, mowing, cultivating, and planting -- and, in doing so, spurring big increases in productivity.

Another factor in the rise of agricultural output was the rapid flow of settlers across the Mississippi River in the late 19th century. The federal government promoted the internal migration in several ways, including the Homestead Act. Enacted in 1862, the act perpetuated the existing pattern of small family farms by offering a "homestead" of 65 hectares to each family of settlers for a nominal fee.

For a time inventions and pro-farming policies were almost too successful. Overproduction became a serious problem after the Civil War. With demand unable to keep pace with supply, the prices farmers received for their products fell. The years from the 1870s until about 1900 were especially hard for the American farmer.

GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

Beginning with the creation of the Department of Agriculture in 1862, the federal government took a direct role in agricultural affairs, going so far as to teach farmers how to make their land more productive. After a period of prosperity in the early 20th century, farm prices declined in the 1920s. The Great Depression of the 1930s drove prices still lower, and by 1932 farm prices had dropped, on average, to less than one-third of their 1920 levels. Farmers went bankrupt by the tens of thousands. Many present-day farm policies have their roots in the desperate decade of the 1930s and the rescue effort contained in the New Deal.

Today a maze of legislation embodies U.S. farm policies. On the theory that overproduction is a chief cause of low farm prices, in some circumstances the government pays farmers to plant fewer crops. Certain commodities can be used as collateral to secure federal loans, or "price supports." Deficiency payments reimburse farmers for the difference between the "target price" set by Congress for a given crop and the actual price paid when the crop is sold. And a federal system of dams and irrigation canals delivers water at subsidized prices to farmers in western states.

Price supports and deficiency payments apply only to such basic commodities as grains, dairy products, and cotton; many other crops are not federally subsidized. Farm subsidy programs have been criticized on the grounds that they benefit large farms most and accelerate the trend toward larger -- and fewer -- farms. In one recent year, for example, farms with more than \$250,000 in sales -- only 5 percent of the total number of farms -- received 24 percent of government farm payments. There is a growing movement to cut back the government's role in agriculture and to reduce subsidies paid to farmers. Important economic interests defend current farm policy, however, and proposals for change have stirred vigorous debate in Congress.

THE LONG VIEW

Overall, American agriculture has been a notable success story. American consumers pay less for their food than those in many other industrial countries, and one-third of the cropland in the United States produces crops destined for export. In 1995 agricultural exports exceeded imports by nearly two to one.

But agricultural success has had its price. Conservationists assert that American farmers have damaged the environment by excessive use of artificial fertilizers and chemicals to kill weeds and pests. Toxic farm chemicals have at times found their way into the nation's water, food, and air,

although government officials at the state and federal levels are vigilant in their efforts to protect these resources.

In the meantime, scientists at research centers across the United States search for long-term solutions. Employing such innovative techniques as gene-splicing, they hope to develop crops that grow rapidly and resist pests without the use of toxic chemicals.

THE AMERICAN STYLE OF MASS PRODUCTION

When U.S. automaker Henry Ford published his autobiography, *My Life and Work*, in 1922, he used his chapter headings to frame a series of questions: "How Cheaply Can Things Be Made?" "Money -- Master or Servant?" "Why Be Poor?"

These are the very questions that have fascinated generations of American business and industrial leaders. In their drive to find answers, business people have sought to make and distribute more goods for less money and at greater profit. To a remarkable extent, they have done so.

Thanks to several waves of immigration, America gained population rapidly throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, when business and industry were expanding. Population grew fast enough to provide a steady stream of workers, but not so fast as to overwhelm the economy.

Industrial expansion was also powered by something in the American character: a strong dose of the entrepreneurial spirit. Some have traced this impulse to religious sources: the Puritan or Protestant ethic that considers hard work pleasing to God. But others have questioned whether the ruthlessness of some American businessmen, especially in the era of the "robber barons" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is consistent with deep religious feeling.

In the late 18th century, American manufacturers adopted the factory system, which gathered many workers together in one place. To this was added something new, the "American system" of mass production, which originated in the firearms industry about 1800. The new system used precision engineering to transform manufacturing into the assembly of interchangeable parts. This, in turn, allowed the final product to be made in stages, with each worker specializing in a discrete task.

The construction of railroads, beginning in the 1830s, marked the start of a new era for the United States. The pace of building accelerated after 1862, when Congress set aside public land for the first transcontinental railroad. The railroads linked far-flung sections of the country into the world's first transcontinental market and facilitated the spread of settlements. Railroad construction also generated a demand for coal, iron, and steel -- heavy industries that expanded rapidly after the Civil War.

AN INDUSTRIAL NATION

The census of 1890 was the first in which the output of America's factories exceeded the output of its farms. Afterwards U.S. industry went through a period of rapid expansion. By 1913, more than one-third of the world's industrial production came from the United States.

In that same year, automaker Henry Ford introduced the moving assembly line, a method in which conveyor belts brought car parts to workers. By improving efficiency, this innovation made possible large savings in labor costs. It also inspired industrial managers to study factory operations in order to design even more efficient and less costly ways of organizing tasks.

Lower costs made possible both higher wages for workers and lower prices for consumers. More and more Americans became able to afford products made in their own country. During the first half of the 20th century, mass production of consumer goods such as cars, refrigerators, and kitchen stoves helped to revolutionize the American way of life.

The moving assembly line was criticized, however, for its numbing effect on workers, and it was satirized in Charlie Chaplin's movie *Modern Times* (1936). In more recent years, factory managers

have rediscovered that the quality of the product made is as important as the speed and efficiency with which it is made and that bored, depressed workers tend to do inferior work. The assembly line has been modified in many U.S. factories, including automobile-manufacturing plants, where "quality circles" put together an entire car from start to finish, with workers sometimes performing different tasks.

A POSTINDUSTRIAL ECONOMY

It was America's good fortune to be spared the devastation suffered by other nations during the 20th century's two world wars. By the end of World War II in 1945, the United States had the greatest productive capacity of any country in the world, and the words "Made in the U.S.A." were a seal of high quality.

The 20th century has seen the rise and decline of several industries in the United States. The auto industry, long the mainstay of the American economy, has struggled to meet the challenge of foreign competition. The garment industry has declined in the face of competition from countries where labor is cheaper. But other manufacturing industries have appeared and flourished, including airplanes and cellular telephones, microchips and space satellites, microwave ovens and high-speed computers.

Many of the currently rising industries tend to be highly automated and thus need fewer workers than traditional industries. As high-tech industries have grown and older industries have declined, the proportion of American workers employed in manufacturing has dropped. Service industries now dominate the economy, leading some observers to call America a "postindustrial" society. Selling a service rather than making a product, these industries include entertainment and recreation, hotels and restaurants, communications and education, office administration, and banking and finance.

Although there have been times in its history when the United States pursued an isolationist foreign policy, in business affairs it has generally been strongly internationalist. The presence of American business has drawn a mixed response in the rest of the world. People in some countries resent the Americanization of their cultures; others accuse American firms of pressuring foreign governments to serve U.S. political and economic interests rather than local interests. On the other hand, many foreigners welcome American products and investment as a means of raising their own standards of living.

By injecting new capital into other economies, American investors can set in motion forces impossible to predict. Some Americans are concerned that by investing abroad, American business is nurturing future competitors. They note that U.S. government policies fostered Japan's economic resurgence after World War II and that American corporations shared technology and sent experts to teach the Japanese such practices as quality control -- practices that the Japanese have since carried to new and highly profitable heights. The ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993, however, confirmed the continuing American commitment to robust international trade.

LABOR UNIONS

The factory system that developed around 1800 changed working conditions markedly. The employer no longer worked side-by-side with his employees. He became an executive, and, as machines took over manufacturing tasks, skilled workmen saw themselves relegated to the status of common laborers. In bad times they could be replaced by newcomers at lower wages.

As the factory system grew, workers began to form labor unions to protect their interests. The first union to hold regular meetings and collect dues was organized by Philadelphia shoemakers in 1792. Soon after, carpenters and leather workers in Boston and printers in New York organized too. Union members would agree on the wages they thought were fair, pledge to stop working for employers who paid less, and pressure employers to hire union members only.

Employers fought back in the courts, which commonly ruled that concerted action by workers was an illegal conspiracy against their employer and the community. But in 1842 the Massachusetts Supreme

Court held that it was not illegal for workers to engage peacefully in union activity. This ruling was widely accepted, and for many years afterwards unions did not have to worry about conspiracy charges. Unions extended their efforts beyond wages to campaign for a 10-hour workday and against child labor. Several state legislatures responded favorably.

STRUGGLES AND SUCCESSES

During the great surge of industrial growth between 1865 and 1900, the work force expanded enormously, especially in the heavy industries. But the new workers suffered in times of economic depression. Strikes, sometimes accompanied by violence, became commonplace. Legislatures in many states passed new conspiracy laws aimed at suppressing labor.

In response, workers formed organizations with national scope. The Knights of Labor grew to a membership of 150,000 in the 1880s, then collapsed quickly when newspapers portrayed the Knights as dangerous radicals. More enduring was the American Federation of Labor (AFL), founded in 1886 by Samuel Gompers, a leader of the Cigarmakers Union. Comprising craft unions and their members, the AFL had swollen to 1.75 million members by 1904, making it the nation's dominant labor organization.

At a time when many workers in Europe were joining revolutionary unions that called for the abolition of capitalism, most American workers followed the lead of Gompers, who sought to give workers a greater share in the wealth they helped produce. A radical alternative was offered by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a union started in 1905 by representatives of 43 groups that opposed the AFL's policies. The IWW demanded the overthrow of capitalism through strikes, boycotts, and sabotage. It opposed U.S. participation in World War I and sought to tie up U.S. copper production during the war. After reaching a peak of 100,000 members in 1912, the IWW had almost disappeared by 1925, because of federal prosecutions of its leaders and a national sentiment against radicalism during and after World War I.

In the early 1900s, an alliance formed between the AFL and representatives of the American Progressive Movement (see chapter 3). Together they campaigned for state and federal laws to aid labor. Their efforts resulted in the passage of state laws prohibiting child labor, limiting the number of hours women could work, and establishing workers' compensation programs for people who were injured on the job. At the federal level, Congress passed laws to protect children, railroad workers, and seamen, and established the Department of Labor in the president's cabinet. During World War I labor unions made great strides, and by January of 1919, the AFL had more than 3 million members.

RED SCARES AND DEPRESSION

At the start of the 1920s, organized labor seemed stronger than ever. But a Communist revolution in Russia triggered a "Red Scare," a fear that revolution might also break out in the United States. Meanwhile, workers in many parts of the country were striking for higher wages. Some Americans assumed that these strikes were led by Communists and anarchists. During the Progressive Era, Americans had tended to sympathize with labor; now they were hostile to it. Once again, the courts restricted union activity.

The pendulum swung back toward unions during the Great Depression. As part of his New Deal, President Franklin Roosevelt vowed to help "the forgotten man," the farmer who had lost his land or the worker who had lost his job. Congress guaranteed workers the right to join unions and bargain collectively, and established the National Labor Relations Board to settle disputes between unions and employers.

Not long after, tensions within the AFL between skilled craftspersons and industrial workers led to the founding of a new labor organization, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The new organization grew rapidly; by the late 1930s it had more members than the AFL.

The Depression's effect on employment did not end until after the United States entered World War II in 1941. Factories needed more workers to produce the airplanes, ships, weapons, and other supplies for the war effort. By 1943, with 15 million American men serving in the armed forces, the United States had a labor shortage, which women (in a reversal of societal attitudes) were encouraged to fill. Before long, one out of four workers in defense plants was a woman.

THE WORK FORCE TODAY

After the war a wave of strikes for higher wages swept the nation. Employers charged that unions had too much power, and Congress agreed. It passed laws outlawing the "closed shop" agreement, by which employers were required to hire only union members, and permitted states to enact "right-to-work" laws, which ban agreements requiring workers to join a union after being hired. In 1955 the AFL and CIO merged as a new organization, the AFL-CIO.

In recent decades there has been a decrease in the percentage of workers who join a union. Among the reasons are the decline of heavy industries, which were union strongholds, and the steady replacement of "blue-collar" workers by automation. Even so, organized labor remains a strong force in the U.S. economy and politics, and working conditions have steadily improved.

Meanwhile, the work force includes more women than ever before. And although the American work week typically amounts to between 35 and 40 hours, there are many departures from the norm: people working part-time or on "flexi-time" (for example, for four days they may work 10 hours a day instead of 7 or 8 and take the fifth day off) or "telecommuting" from their homes with the assistance of phone, computer, and facsimile (fax) machine.

THE AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The United States declared its independence in the same year, 1776, that Scottish economist Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations*, a book that has had an enormous influence on American economic development. Like many other thinkers, Smith believed that in a capitalist system people are naturally selfish and are moved to engage in manufacturing and trade in order to gain wealth and power. Smith's originality was to argue that such activity is beneficial because it leads to increased production and sharpens competition. As a result, goods circulate more widely and at lower prices, jobs are created, and wealth is spread. Though people may act from the narrow desire to enrich themselves, Smith argued, "an invisible hand" guides them to enrich and improve all of society.

Most Americans believe that the rise of their nation as a great economic power could not have occurred under any system except capitalism, also known as free enterprise after a corollary to Smith's thinking: that government should interfere in commerce as little as possible.

THE STOCK MARKET

Very early in America's history, people saw that they could make money by lending it to those who wanted to start or expand a business. To this day, small American entrepreneurs usually borrow the money they need from friends, relatives, or banks. Larger businesses, however, are more likely to acquire cash by selling stocks or bonds to unrelated parties. These transactions usually take place through a stock exchange, or stock market.

Europeans established the first stock exchange in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1531. Brought to the United States in 1792, the institution of the stock market flourished, especially at the New York Stock Exchange, located in the Wall Street area of New York City, the nation's financial hub.

Except for weekends and holidays, the stock exchanges are very busy every day. In general, prices for shares of stock are rather low, and even Americans of modest means buy and sell shares in hopes of making profits in the form of periodic stock dividends. They also hope that the price of the stock will go up over time, so that in selling their shares they will make an additional profit. There is no

guarantee, of course, that the business behind the stock will perform well. If it does not, dividends may be low or nonexistent, and the stock's price may go down.

THE SYSTEM MODIFIED

Adam Smith would easily recognize the foregoing aspects of American business, but other aspects he would not. As we have seen, American industrial development in the 19th century took a toll on working men and women. Factory owners often required them to put in long hours for low wages, provided them with unsafe and unhealthy workplaces, and hired the children of poor families. There was discrimination in hiring: Black Americans and members of some immigrant groups were rejected or forced to work under highly unfavorable conditions. Entrepreneurs took full advantage of the lack of government oversight to enrich themselves by forming monopolies, eliminating competition, setting high prices for products, and selling shoddy goods.

In response to these evils and at the insistence of labor unions and the Progressive Movement, in the late 19th century Americans began to modify their faith in unfettered capitalism. In 1890, the Sherman Antitrust Act took the first steps toward breaking up monopolies. In 1906, Congress enacted laws requiring accurate labeling of food and drugs and the inspection of meat. During the Great Depression, President Roosevelt and Congress enacted laws designed to ease the economic crisis. Among these were laws regulating the sale of stock, setting rules for wages and hours in various industries, and putting stricter controls on the manufacture and sale of food, drugs, and cosmetics.

In recent decades, concerned Americans have argued that Adam Smith's philosophy did not take into account the cumulative effect of individual business decisions on the natural environment. New federal agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, have come into being. And new laws and regulations have been designed to ensure that businesses do not pollute air and water and that they leave an ample supply of green space for people to enjoy.

The sum total of these laws and regulations has changed American capitalism, in the words of one writer, from a "freely running horse to one that is bridled and saddled." There is scarcely anything a person can buy in the United States today that is not affected by government regulation of some kind.

Political conservatives believe there is too much government regulation of business. They argue that some of the rules that firms must follow are unnecessary and costly. In response to such complaints, the government has tried to reduce the paperwork required of businesses and to set overall goals or standards for businesses to reach, as opposed to dictating detailed rules of operation.

If sometimes cumbersome, the rules and regulations governing business conduct today do not seem to prevent ambitious Americans from realizing their dreams -- and occasionally of surpassing them. One such entrepreneur is Bill Gates. Gates started a computer software company called Microsoft in 1975, when he was 20 years old. Just two decades later, Microsoft was the world's largest software company, with 20,000 employees worldwide and annual net income of more than \$2 thousand million a year.

Chapter Six

A DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Structure, standards, and challenges

American education is a complex topic because a single school can draw upon resources from several different public and private institutions. For example, a student may attend a private high school whose

curriculum must meet standards set by the state, some of whose science courses may be financed by federal funds, and whose sports teams may play on local, publicly owned fields.

Despite this complexity, however, it is possible to describe the broad contours of American education.

MANY CHOICES

Almost 90 percent of American students below the college level attend public elementary and secondary schools, which do not charge tuition but rely on local and state taxes for funding. Traditionally, elementary school includes kindergarten through the eighth grade. In some places, however, elementary school ends after the sixth grade, and students attend middle school, or junior high school, from grades seven through nine. Similarly, secondary school, or high school, traditionally comprises grades nine through twelve, but in some places begins at the tenth grade.

Most of the students who do not attend public elementary and secondary schools attend private schools, for which their families pay tuition. Four out of five private schools are run by religious groups. In these schools religious instruction is part of the curriculum, which also includes the traditional academic courses. (Religious instruction is not provided in public schools. The issue of prayer in public schools is discussed in chapter 4.) There is also a small but growing number of parents who educate their children themselves, a practice known as home schooling.

The United States does not have a national school system. Nor, with the exception of the military academies (for example, the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland), are there schools run by the federal government. But the government provides guidance and funding for federal educational programs in which both public and private schools take part, and the U.S. Department of Education oversees these programs.

In American parlance, a college is a four-year institution of higher learning that offers courses in related subjects. A liberal arts college, for example, offers courses in literature, languages, history, philosophy, and the sciences, while a business college offers courses in accounting, investment, and marketing. Many colleges are independent and award bachelor's degrees to those completing a program of instruction that typically takes four years. But colleges can also be components of universities. A large university typically comprises several colleges, graduate programs in various fields, one or more professional schools (for example, a law school or a medical school), and one or more research facilities. (Americans often use the word "college" as shorthand for either a college or a university.)

Every state has its own university, and some states operate large networks of colleges and universities: The State University of New York, for instance, has more than 60 campuses in New York State. Some cities also have their own public universities. In many areas, junior or community colleges provide a bridge between high school and four-year colleges for some students. In junior colleges, students can generally complete their first two years of college courses at low cost and remain close to home.

Unlike public elementary and secondary schools, public colleges and universities usually charge tuition. However, the amount often is much lower than that charged by comparable private institutions, which do not receive the same level of public support. Many students attend college -- whether public or private -- with the benefit of federal loans that must be repaid after graduation.

About 25 percent of colleges and universities are privately operated by religious groups. Most of these are open to students of all faiths. There are also many private institutions with no religious ties. Whether public or private, colleges depend on three sources of income: student tuition, endowments (gifts made by benefactors), and government funding.

There is no clear distinction between the quality of education provided at public and private colleges or institutions. The public universities of California and Virginia, for example, are generally rated on a par with the Ivy League, an association of eight prestigious private schools in the northeastern United States. This does not mean that all institutions are equal, however. A student who has graduated from

a highly regarded college may have a distinct advantage as he or she seeks employment. Thus, competition to get into the more renowned schools can be intense.

A college student takes courses in his or her "major" field (the area of study in which he or she chooses to specialize), along with "electives" (courses that are not required but chosen by the student). It has been estimated that American colleges and universities offer more than 1,000 majors.

EDUCATION, A LOCAL MATTER

From Hawaii to Delaware, from Alaska to Louisiana, each of the 50 states has its own laws regulating education. From state to state, some laws are similar while others are not. For example:

- All states require young people to attend school. The age limit varies, however. Most states require attendance up to age 16, some up to 18. Thus, every child in America receives at least 11 years of education. This is true regardless of a child's sex, race, religion, learning problems, physical handicaps, ability to speak English, citizenship, or status as an immigrant. (Although some members of Congress have advocated permitting the states to deny public education to children of illegal immigrants, such a proposal has not become law.)
- Some states play a strong central role in the selection of learning material for their students. For example, state committees may decide which textbooks can be purchased with state funds. In other states, such decisions are left to local school officials.

Although there is no national curriculum in the United States, certain subjects are taught in virtually all elementary and secondary schools throughout the country. Almost every elementary school, for example, teaches mathematics; language arts (including reading, grammar, writing, and literature); penmanship; science; social studies (including history, geography, citizenship, and economics); and physical education. In many schools, children are taught how to use computers, which have also become integral parts of other courses.

In addition to required courses -- for example, a year of American history, two years of literature, etc. -- secondary schools, like colleges, typically offer electives. Popular electives include performing arts, driver's education, cooking, and "shop" (use of tools, carpentry, and repair of machinery).

CHANGING STANDARDS

Until the 1950s required courses were many, electives few. In the 1960s and 1970s, the trend was to give students more choices. By the 1980s, however, parents and educators were taking a second look at this practice. The primary reason for their concern was the possible connection between the growth of electives and the slow but steady decline of American students' average scores on standardized tests of mathematics, reading, and science.

At the same time, college administrators and business executives began to complain that some high school graduates needed remedial courses in the so-called three R's: reading, writing, and arithmetic. About 99 percent of American adults reported in the 1980 census that they could read and write. But critics claimed that about 13 percent of America's 17-year-olds were "functionally illiterate." That is, they were unable to carry out such everyday tasks as understanding printed instructions and filling out a job application.

Experts scrutinized every conceivable cause for the decline in average scores in the early 1980s. One target was television, which was accused of producing mediocre programs. And American children, critics said, watched too much TV, an average of 25 hours a week. School boards were criticized for paying teachers too little, with the result that good ones tended to leave the field of education, and for giving students easier material to work with so that all of them could get a diploma -- a phenomenon known as "dumbing down" the curriculum.

No single cause was identified for what ailed American secondary education. Similarly, there was no one solution. The U.S. Department of Education established a national commission to examine the

question. In 1983 the commission made several recommendations: lengthen the school day and year, formulate a new core curriculum for all students (four years of English; three years each of math, science, and social studies; a half-year of computer science), and raise the standards of performance in each subject. As a result, many schools have tightened their requirements, and test scores for American children have been rising.

In 1989 President George Bush and the governors of all 50 states gave the movement to reform American education a new impetus when they set six goals to be achieved by the year 2000:

- That all children will start school ready to learn.
- That 90 percent of all high school students will graduate.
- That all students will achieve competence in core subjects at certain key points in their progress.
- That American students will be first in the world in math and science achievement.
- That every American adult will be literate and have the skills to function as a citizen and a worker.
- That all schools will be free of drugs and violence and offer a disciplined environment that is conducive to learning.

Congress established a program called Goals 2000, by which the states receive federal grants to help them reach the goals. By 1996, progress had been made -- 86 percent of American students completed high school, scores on national math and science tests had gone up one full grade, and half of all four-year-olds attended programs to prepare them for school.

Meanwhile, there has been an effort to establish national standards in math, science, English, and history -- an endeavor that President Bill Clinton strongly supports. Speaking to the National Governors Association education summit in 1996, he said, "I believe the most important thing you can do is to have high expectations for students -- to make them believe they can learn,...to assess whether they're learning or not, and to hold them accountable as well as to reward them."

SOCIAL ISSUES IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

In addition to the challenge to be excellent, American schools have been facing novel problems. They must cope with an influx of immigrant children, many of whom speak little or no English. They must respond to demands that the curriculum reflect the various cultures of all children. Schools must make sure that students develop basic skills for the job market, and they must consider the needs of nontraditional students, such as teen-age mothers.

Schools are addressing these problems in ways that reflect the diversity of the U.S. educational system. They are hiring or training large numbers of teachers of English as a second language and, in some communities, setting up bilingual schools. They are opening up the traditional European-centered curriculum to embrace material from African, Asian, and other cultures.

Schools are also teaching cognitive skills to the nearly 40 percent of American students who do not go on to higher education. In the words of a recent report by the Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, "A strong back, the willingness to work, and a high school diploma were once all that was necessary to make a start in America. They are no longer. A well-developed mind, a continued willingness to learn and the ability to put knowledge to work are the new keys to the future of our young people, the success of our business, and the economic well-being of the nation."

A SNAPSHOT OF AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The United States leads the industrial nations in the proportion of its young people who receive higher education. For some careers -- law, medicine, education, engineering -- a college education is a necessary first step. More than 60 percent of Americans now work in jobs that involve the handling of information, and a high school diploma is seldom adequate for such work. Other careers do not strictly

require a college degree, but having one often can improve a person's chances of getting a job and can increase the salary he or she is paid.

The widespread availability of a college education in America dates back to 1944, when Congress passed a law popularly known as the GI Bill. (GI -- meaning "government issue" -- was a nickname for an American soldier, and the law provided financial aid to members of the armed forces after World War II was over.) By 1955 more than 2 million veterans of World War II and the Korean War had used the GI Bill to go to college. Many of them came from poor families and would not have had the chance to go to college without the law. The program's success changed the American image of who should attend college.

About the same time, the percentage of women in American colleges began to grow steadily; in 1993 women received 54 percent of all degrees awarded, compared to 24 percent in 1950. With the end of racial segregation in the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans also entered colleges in record numbers. The percentage of African Americans who go on to college, however, is still lower than the general population. In 1992, 47.9 percent of African-American high school graduates were enrolled in college, compared with 61.7 percent of all high school graduates.

LIBERAL OR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

Like high schools, American colleges are sometimes criticized for discarding required courses and offering too many electives. In the mid-1980s the Association of American Colleges issued a report that called for teaching a body of common knowledge to all college students. A similar report, "Involvement in Learning," issued by the National Institute of Education, concluded that the college curriculum had become "excessively...work-related." The report also warned that college education may no longer be developing in students "the shared values and knowledge" that traditionally bind Americans together.

These reports coincided with a trend away from the liberal arts. Instead, students were choosing major fields designed to prepare them for specific jobs. In 1992, 51 percent of the bachelor's degrees were conferred in the fields of business and management, communications, computer and information sciences, education, engineering, and health sciences.

This trend raises questions that apply to the educational philosophy of all industrialized countries. In an age of technological breakthroughs and highly specialized disciplines, is there still a need for the generalist with a broad background and well-developed abilities to reason and communicate? And if the answer to that question is yes, should society take steps to encourage its colleges and universities to produce more such generalists? Like their counterparts in other countries, American educators continue to debate these questions.

Chapter Seven

A REPUBLIC OF SCIENCE

Inquiry and innovation in science and medicine

The United States came into being during the Age of Enlightenment (circa 1680 to 1800), a period in which writers and thinkers rejected the superstitions of the past. Instead, they emphasized the powers of reason and unbiased inquiry, especially inquiry into the workings of the natural world. Enlightenment philosophers envisioned a "republic of science," where ideas would be exchanged freely and useful knowledge would improve the lot of all citizens.

From its emergence as an independent nation, the United States has encouraged science and invention. It has done this by promoting a free flow of ideas, by encouraging the growth of "useful knowledge," and by welcoming creative people from all over the world.

The United States Constitution itself reflects the desire to encourage scientific creativity. It gives Congress the power "to promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries." This clause formed the basis for the U.S. patent and copyright systems, which ensured that inventions and other creative works could not be copied or used without the creator's receiving some kind of compensation.

A GOOD CLIMATE FOR SCIENCE

In the early decades of its history, the United States was relatively isolated from Europe and also rather poor. Nonetheless, it was a good place for science. American science was closely linked with the needs of the people, and it was free from European preconceptions.

Two of America's founding fathers were scientists of some repute. Benjamin Franklin conducted a series of experiments that deepened human understanding of electricity. Among other things, he proved what had been suspected but never before shown: that lightning is a form of electricity. Franklin also invented such conveniences as bifocal eyeglasses and a stove that bears his name. (The Franklin stove fits into a fireplace and circulates heat into the adjacent room.)

Thomas Jefferson was a student of agriculture who introduced various types of rice, olive trees, and grasses into the New World. He stressed the scientific aspect of the Lewis and Clark expedition (1804-06), which explored the Pacific Northwest, and detailed, systematic information on the region's plants and animals was one of that expedition's legacies.

Like Franklin and Jefferson, most American scientists of the late 18th century were involved in the struggle to win American independence and forge a new nation. These scientists included the astronomer David Rittenhouse, the medical scientist Benjamin Rush, and the natural historian Charles Willson Peale.

During the American Revolution, Rittenhouse helped design the defenses of Philadelphia and built telescopes and navigation instruments for the United States' military services. After the war, Rittenhouse designed road and canal systems for the state of Pennsylvania. He later returned to studying the stars and planets and gained a worldwide reputation in that field.

As surgeon general, Benjamin Rush saved countless lives of soldiers during the Revolutionary War by promoting hygiene and public health practices. By introducing new medical treatments, he made the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia an example of medical enlightenment, and after his military service, Rush established the first free clinic in the United States.

Charles Willson Peale is best remembered as an artist, but he also was a natural historian, inventor, educator, and politician. He created the first major museum in the United States, the Peale Museum in Philadelphia, which housed the young nation's only collection of North American natural history specimens. Peale excavated the bones of an ancient mastodon near West Point, New York; he spent three months assembling the skeleton, and then displayed it in his museum. The Peale Museum started an American tradition of making the knowledge of science interesting and available to the general public.

American political leaders' enthusiasm for knowledge also helped ensure a warm welcome for scientists from other countries. A notable early immigrant was the British chemist Joseph Priestley, who was driven from his homeland because of his dissenting politics. Priestley, who came to the United States in 1794, was the first of thousands of talented scientists who emigrated in search of a free, creative environment. Others who came more recently have included the German theoretical physicist Albert Einstein, who arrived in 1933; Enrico Fermi, who came from Italy in 1938 and who produced the world's first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction; and Vladimir K. Zworykin, who left Russia in 1919 and later invented the television camera.

Other scientists had come to the United States to take part in the nation's rapid growth. Alexander Graham Bell, who arrived from Scotland by way of Canada in 1872, developed and patented the telephone and related inventions. Charles P. Steinmetz, who came from Germany in 1889, developed new alternating-current electrical systems at General Electric Company. Later, other scientists were drawn by America's state-of-the-art research facilities. By the early decades of the 20th century, scientists working in the United States could hope for considerable material, as well as intellectual, rewards.

AMERICAN KNOW-HOW

During the 19th century, Britain, France, and Germany were at the forefront of new ideas in science and mathematics. But if the United States lagged behind in the formulation of theory, it excelled in using theory to solve problems: applied science. This tradition had been born of necessity. Because Americans lived so far from the well-springs of Western science and manufacturing, they often had to figure out their own ways of doing things. When Americans combined theoretical knowledge with "Yankee ingenuity," the result was a flow of important inventions. The great American inventors include Robert Fulton (the steamboat); Samuel F.B. Morse (the telegraph); Eli Whitney (the cotton gin); Cyrus McCormick (the reaper); and Thomas Alva Edison, the most fertile of them all, with more than a thousand inventions credited to his name.

Edison was not always the first to devise a scientific application, but he was frequently the one to bring an idea to a practical finish. For example, the British engineer Joseph Swan built an incandescent electric lamp in 1860, almost 20 years before Edison. But Edison's was better. Edison's light bulbs lasted much longer than Swan's, and they could be turned on and off individually, while Swan's bulbs could be used only in a system where several lights were turned on or off at the same time. Edison followed up his improvement of the light bulb with the development of electrical generating systems. Within 30 years, his inventions had introduced electric lighting into millions of homes.

Another landmark application of scientific ideas to practical uses was the innovation of the brothers Wilbur and Orville Wright. In the 1890s they became fascinated with accounts of German glider experiments and began their own investigation into the principles of flight. Combining scientific knowledge and mechanical skills, the Wright brothers built and flew several gliders. Then, on December 17, 1903, they successfully flew the first heavier-than-air, mechanically propelled airplane.

An American invention that was barely noticed in 1947 went on to usher in a new age of information sharing. In that year John Bardeen, William Shockley, and Walter Brattain of Bell Laboratories drew upon highly sophisticated principles of theoretical physics to invent the transistor, a small substitute for the bulky vacuum tube. This and a device invented 10 years later, the integrated circuit, made it possible to package enormous amounts of electronic circuitry in tiny containers. As a result, book-sized computers of today can outperform room-sized computers of the 1960s, and there has been a revolution in the way people live -- in how they work, study, conduct business, and engage in research.

In the second half of the 20th century American scientists became known for more than their practical inventions and applications. Suddenly, they were being recognized for their contributions to "pure" science, the formulation of concepts and theories. The changing pattern can be seen in the winners of the Nobel Prizes in physics and chemistry. During the first half-century of Nobel Prizes -- from 1901 to 1950 -- American winners were in a distinct minority in the science categories. Since 1950, Americans have won approximately half of the Nobel Prizes awarded in the sciences.

THE ATOMIC AGE

One of the most spectacular -- and controversial -- accomplishments of U.S. technology has been the harnessing of nuclear energy. The concepts that led to the splitting of the atom were developed by the scientists of many countries, but the conversion of these ideas into the reality of nuclear fission was the achievement of U.S. scientists in the early 1940s.

After German physicists split a uranium nucleus in 1938, Albert Einstein, Enrico Fermi, and Leo Szilard concluded that a nuclear chain reaction was feasible. In a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt, Einstein warned that this breakthrough would permit the construction of "extremely powerful bombs." His warning inspired the Manhattan Project, the U.S. effort to be the first to build an atomic bomb. The project bore fruit when the first such bomb was exploded in New Mexico on July 16, 1945.

The development of the bomb and its use against Japan in August of 1945 initiated the Atomic Age, a time of anxiety over weapons of mass destruction that has lasted through the Cold War and down to the antiproliferation efforts of today. But the Atomic Age has also been characterized by peaceful uses of atomic energy, as in nuclear power and nuclear medicine.

The first U.S. commercial nuclear power plant started operation in Illinois in 1956. At the time, the future for nuclear energy in the United States looked bright. But opponents criticized the safety of power plants and questioned whether safe disposal of nuclear waste could be assured. A 1979 accident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania turned many Americans against nuclear power. The cost of building a nuclear power plant escalated, and other, more economical sources of power began to look more appealing. During the 1970s and 1980s, plans for several nuclear plants were cancelled, and the future of nuclear power remains in a state of uncertainty in the United States.

Meanwhile, American scientists have been experimenting with other renewable sources of energy, including solar power. Although solar power generation is still not economical in much of the United States, two recent developments might make it more affordable.

In 1994 Subhendu Guha, executive vice president of United Solar Systems in Troy, Michigan, was lecturing on the benefits of solar energy and showing a picture of solar cells arrayed on the roof of a house. An architect in the audience said, "But it's so ugly. Who would want that on their house?" That remark got Guha thinking about how to make the photovoltaics look more like the roof, instead of mounting the solar cells on frames that jut skyward.

Two years later, Guha's innovation came off the assembly line -- solar shingles that can be nailed directly onto the roof. The shingles are made from stainless steel sheeting, coated with nine layers of silicon, a semiconducting film, and protective plastic. Roofers install the shingles just as they do normal ones, but they must drill a hole in the roof for electrical leads from each shingle. On average, one-third of a home's roof covered with solar shingles should provide enough power to meet all electrical needs when the sun is shining. Guha believes that his shingles will be economical in some parts of the United States and that they will be even more promising in Japan, where energy prices are high and the government subsidizes solar energy.

Another solar power invention that came to fruition in 1996 is the Solar Two power plant that began operation in the Mojave Desert in California, generating enough electricity for 10,000 homes. On a 38-hectare site, nearly 2,000 huge mirrors point toward a 90-meter "power tower" that heats molten salt, which flows to a steam generator that turns a turbine. The molten salt stores heat energy more effectively than water, and proponents of Solar Two believe this innovation can make large, commercial plants economically feasible in areas with plenty of sun and high energy costs.

THE SPACE AGE

Running almost in tandem with the Atomic Age has been the Space Age. American Robert H. Goddard was one of the first scientists to experiment with rocket propulsion systems. In his small laboratory in Worcester, Massachusetts, Goddard worked with liquid oxygen and gasoline to propel rockets into the atmosphere. In 1926 he successfully fired the world's first liquid-fuel rocket, which reached a height of 12.5 meters. Over the next 10 years, Goddard's rockets achieved modest altitudes of nearly two kilometers, and interest in rocketry increased in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union.

Expendable rockets provided the means for launching artificial satellites, as well as manned spacecraft. In 1957 the Soviet Union launched the first satellite, Sputnik I, and the United States

followed with Explorer I in 1958. The first manned space flights were made in the spring of 1961, first by Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin and then by American astronaut Alan B. Shepard, Jr.

From those first tentative steps to the 1969 moon landing to today's reusable space shuttle, the American space program has brought forth a breathtaking display of applied science. Communications satellites transmit computer data, telephone calls, and radio and television broadcasts. Weather satellites furnish the data necessary to provide early warnings of severe storms. Space technology has generated thousands of products for everyday use -- everything from lightweight materials used in running shoes to respiratory monitors used in hospitals.

MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE

As in physics and chemistry, Americans have dominated the Nobel Prize for physiology or medicine since World War II. The National Institutes of Health, the focal point for biomedical research in the United States, has played a key role in this achievement. Consisting of 24 separate institutes, the NIH occupies 75 buildings on more than 120 hectares in Bethesda, Maryland. Its budget in 1997 was almost \$13 thousand million.

The goal of NIH research is knowledge that helps prevent, detect, diagnose, and treat disease and disability -- everything from the rarest genetic disorder to the common cold. At any given time, grants from the NIH support the research of about 35,000 principal investigators, working in every U.S. state and several foreign countries. Among these grantees have been 91 Nobel Prize-winners. Five Nobelists have made their prize-winning discoveries in NIH laboratories.

NIH research has helped make possible numerous medical achievements. For example, mortality from heart disease, the number-one killer in the United States, dropped 41 percent between 1971 and 1991. The death rate for strokes decreased by 59 percent during the same period. Between 1991 and 1995, the cancer death rate fell by nearly 3 percent, the first sustained decline since national record-keeping began in the 1930s. And today more than 70 percent of children who get cancer are cured.

With the help of the NIH, molecular genetics and genomics research have revolutionized biomedical science. In the 1980s and 1990s, researchers performed the first trial of gene therapy in humans and are now able to locate, identify, and describe the function of many genes in the human genome. Scientists predict that this new knowledge will lead to genetic tests for susceptibility to diseases such as colon, breast, and other cancers and to the eventual development of preventive drug treatments for persons in families known to be at risk.

Perhaps the most exciting scientific development under way in the United States is the NIH's human genome project. This is an attempt to construct a genetic map of humans by analyzing the chemical composition of each of the 50,000 to 100,000 genes making up the human body. The project is expected to take 15 years to complete, at a cost of at least \$3 thousand million.

Research conducted by universities, hospitals, and corporations also contributes to improvement in diagnosis and treatment of disease. NIH funded the basic research on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), for example, but many of the drugs used to treat the disease have emerged from the laboratories of the American pharmaceutical industry; those drugs are being tested in research centers across the country.

One type of drug that has shown promise in treating the AIDS virus is the protease inhibitor. After several years of laboratory testing, protease inhibitors were first given to patients in the United States in 1994. One of the first tests (on a group of 20 volunteers) showed that not only did the drug make the amount of virus in the patients' blood almost disappear, but that their immune systems rebounded faster than anyone had thought possible.

Doctors have combined protease inhibitors with other drugs in "combination therapy." While the results are encouraging, combination therapy is not a cure, and, so far, it works only in the blood; it does not reach into the other parts of the body -- the brain, lymph nodes, spinal fluid, and male testes -- where

the virus hides. Scientists continue to experiment with combination therapy and other ways to treat the disease, while they search for the ultimate solution -- a vaccine against it.

EMPHASIS ON PREVENTION

While the American medical community has been making strides in the diagnosis and treatment of disease, the American public also has become more aware of the relationship between disease and personal behavior. Since the U.S. surgeon general first warned Americans about the dangers of smoking in 1964, the percentage of Americans who smoke has declined from almost 50 percent to approximately 25 percent. Smoking is no longer permitted in most public buildings or on trains, buses, and airplanes traveling within the United States, and most American restaurants are divided into areas where smoking is permitted and those where it is not. Studies have linked a significant drop in the rate of lung cancer to a nationwide decline in cigarette smoking.

The federal government also encourages Americans to exercise regularly and to eat healthful diets, including large quantities of fruits and vegetables. More than 40 percent of Americans today exercise or play a sport as part of their regular routine. The per capita consumption of fruits and vegetables has increased by about 20 percent since 1970.

Donna E. Shalala, secretary of health and human services in the Clinton administration, frequently speaks out in support of scientific research and preventive medicine. Addressing a conference of medical and public health professionals in 1996 she said, "We must continue to unlock the incremental mysteries in basic science that culminate in blockbuster discoveries over time. But, we must cast our net wider than that. It must encompass behavioral research, occupational research, health services and outcomes research, and environmental research -- all of which hold the potential to prevent disease -- and help Americans live healthier lives."

Chapter Eight

SEPARATING CHURCH AND STATE

Freedom of Religion

Early in their history, Americans rejected the concept of the established or government-favored religion that had dominated -- and divided -- so many European countries. Separation of church and state was ordained by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which provides in part that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

The First Amendment sounds straightforward, but at times it is difficult even for American constitutional scholars to draw a distinct line between government and religion in the United States. Students in public schools may not pray publicly as part of the school day, yet sessions of the U.S. Congress regularly begin with a prayer by a minister. Cities may not display a Christmas crèche on public property, but the slogan "In God We Trust" appears on U.S. currency, and money given to religious institutions can be deducted from one's income for tax purposes. Students who attend church-affiliated colleges may receive federal loans like other students, but their younger siblings may not receive federal monies specifically to attend religious elementary or secondary schools.

It may never be possible to resolve these apparent inconsistencies. They derive, in fact, from a tension built into the First Amendment itself, which tells Congress neither to establish nor to interfere with religion. Trying to steer a clear course between those two dictates is one of the most delicate exercises required of American public officials.

INTERPRETING THE FIRST AMENDMENT

One of the first permanent settlements in what became the North American colonies was founded by English Puritans, Calvinists who had been outsiders in their homeland, where the Church of England was established. The Puritans settled in Massachusetts, where they grew and prospered. They considered their success to be a sign that God was pleased with them, and they assumed that those who disagreed with their religious ideas should not be tolerated.

When the colony's leaders forced out one of their members, Roger Williams, for disagreeing with the clergy, Williams responded by founding a separate colony, which became the state of Rhode Island, where everyone enjoyed religious freedom. Two other states originated as havens for people being persecuted for their religious beliefs: Maryland as a refuge for Catholics and Pennsylvania for the Society of Friends (Quakers), a Protestant group whose members espouse plain living and pacifism.

Even after the adoption of the Constitution in 1787 and the Bill of Rights (which includes the First Amendment) in 1791, Protestantism continued to enjoy a favored status in some states. Massachusetts, for example, did not cut its last ties between church and state until 1833. (As written, the First Amendment applies only to the federal government, not to the states. The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, forbids states to "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." This clause has been interpreted to mean that the states must protect the rights -- including freedom of religion -- that are guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.)

In the 20th century, the relationship between church and state reached a new stage of conflict -- that between civic duty and individual conscience. The broad outlines of an approach to that conflict took shape in a number of Supreme Court rulings.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of these was *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* (1943). The suit stemmed from the refusal of certain members of the Jehovah's Witness religion to salute the American flag during the school day, as commanded by state law. Because their creed forbade such pledges of loyalty, the Witnesses argued, they were being forced to violate their consciences. Three years earlier, the Supreme Court had upheld a nearly identical law -- a decision that had been roundly criticized. In the 1943 case, the Court in effect overruled itself by invoking a different clause in the First Amendment, the one guaranteeing freedom of speech. Saluting the flag was held to be a form of speech, which the state could not force its citizens to perform.

Since then the Supreme Court has carved out other exceptions to laws on behalf of certain religious groups. There remains, however, a distinction between matters of private conscience and actions that adversely affect other people. Thus, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) were jailed in the 19th century for practicing polygamy (subsequently the Mormon Church withdrew its sanction of polygamy). More recently, parents have been convicted of criminal negligence for refusing to obtain medical help for their ailing children, who went on to die, even though the parents' religious beliefs dictated that they refuse treatment because faith would provide a cure.

PROTESTANTS -- LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE

Americans have been swept up in many waves of religious excitement. One that occurred in the 1740s, called the Great Awakening, united several Protestant denominations in an effort to overcome a sense of complacency that had afflicted organized religion. A second Great Awakening swept through New England in the early 19th century.

Not all of New England's clergymen, however, were sympathetic to the call for revival. Some had abandoned the Calvinist idea of predestination, which holds that God has chosen those who will be saved -- the "elect" -- leaving humans no ability to affect their destinies through good works or other means. Some ministers preached that all men had free will and could be saved. Others took even more liberal positions, giving up many traditional Christian beliefs. They were influenced by the idea of progress that had taken hold in the United States generally. Just as science adjusted our understanding of the natural world, they suggested, reason should prompt reassessments of religious doctrine.

Liberal American Protestantism in the 19th century was allied with similar trends in Europe, where scholars were reading and interpreting the Bible in a new way. They questioned the validity of biblical miracles and traditional beliefs about the authorship of biblical books. There was also the challenge of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to contend with. If human beings were descended from other animals, as most scientists came to believe, then the story of Adam and Eve, the biblical first parents, could not be literally true.

What distinguished 19th-century liberal Protestants from their 20th-century counterparts was optimism about the human capacity for improvement. Some of the early ministers believed that the church could accelerate progress by trying to reform society. In the spirit of the gospels, they began to work on behalf of the urban poor. Today's liberal clergymen -- not just Protestants but Catholics and others, too -- may be less convinced that progress is inevitable, but many of them have continued their efforts on behalf of the poor by managing shelters for homeless people, feeding the hungry, running day-care centers for children, and speaking out on social issues. Many are active in the ecumenical movement, which seeks to bring about the reunion of Christians into one church.

While liberal Protestants sought a relaxation of doctrine, conservatives believed that departures from the literal truth of the Bible were unjustified. Their branch of Protestantism is often called "evangelical," after their enthusiasm for the gospels of the New Testament.

Evangelical Christians favor an impassioned, participatory approach to religion, and their services are often highly charged, with group singing and dramatic sermons that evoke spirited responses from the congregation. The South, in particular, became a bastion of this "old-time religion," and the conservative Baptist church is very influential in that region. In recent decades some preachers have taken their ministry to television, preaching as "televangelists" to large audiences.

In 1925 the conflict between conservative faith and modern science crystallized in what is known as the Scopes trial in Tennessee. John Scopes, a high school biology teacher, was indicted for violating a state law that forbade teaching the theory of evolution in public schools. Scopes was convicted after a sensational trial that featured America's finest criminal lawyer of the time, Clarence Darrow, for the defense and the renowned populist and former presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan, for the prosecution.

Since then the Supreme Court has ruled that laws banning the teaching of evolution violate the First Amendment's prohibition of establishing religion. Subsequently the state of Louisiana tried a different approach: It banned the teaching of evolution unless the biblical doctrine of special creation was taught as an alternative. This, too, the Court invalidated as an establishment of religion.

Despite the Supreme Court's clear rulings, this and similar issues pitting reason versus faith remain alive. Religious conservatives argue that teaching evolution alone elevates human reason above revealed truth and thus is antireligious. And even some thinkers who might otherwise be considered liberals have argued that the media and other American institutions foster a climate that tends to slight, if not ridicule, organized religion. Meanwhile, the trend toward removing religious teaching and practices from public schools has prompted some parents to send their children to religious schools and others to educate their children at home.

CATHOLICS AND RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

By the time of the Civil War, over one million Irish Catholics had come to the United States. In a majority Protestant country, they and Catholics of other backgrounds were subjected to prejudice. As late as 1960, some Americans opposed Catholic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy on the grounds that, if elected, he would do the Pope's bidding. Kennedy confronted the issue directly, pledging to be an American president, and his election did much to lessen anti-Catholic prejudice in the United States.

Although Catholics were never denied access to public schools or hospitals, beginning in the 19th century they built institutions of their own, which met accepted standards while observing the tenets of Catholic belief and morality. On the other hand, the Catholic Church does not require its members to go to church-run institutions. Many Catholic students attend public schools and secular colleges. But

Catholic schools still educate many Catholic young people, as well as a growing number of non-Catholics, whose parents are attracted by the discipline and quality of instruction.

Catholics have long recognized that the separation of church and state protects them, like members of other religions, in the exercise of their faith. But as the costs of maintaining a separate educational system mounted, Catholics began to question one application of that principle. Catholic parents reasoned that the taxes they pay support public schools, but they save the government money by sending their children to private schools, for which they also pay tuition. They sought a way in which they might obtain public funds to defray their educational expenses. Parents who sent their children to other private schools, not necessarily religious, joined in this effort.

The legislatures of many states were sympathetic, but the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional most attempts to aid religious schools. Too much "entanglement" between state and church, the Court held, violated the First Amendment's ban on establishing religion. Attempts to alter the separation of church and state by amending the Constitution have not been successful.

LAND OF MANY FAITHS

Like Catholics, Jews were a small minority in the first years of the American republic. Until the late 19th century, most Jews in America were of German origin. Many of them belonged to the Reform movement, a liberal branch of Judaism which had made many adjustments to modern life. Anti-Semitism, or anti-Jewish prejudice, was not a big problem before the Civil War. But when Jews began coming to America in great numbers, anti-Semitism appeared. Jews from Russia and Poland, who as Orthodox Jews strictly observed the traditions and dietary laws of Judaism, clustered in city neighborhoods when they first arrived in the United States.

Usually, Jewish children attended public schools and took religious instruction in special Hebrew schools. The children of Jewish immigrants moved rapidly into the professions and into American universities, where many became intellectual leaders. Many remained religiously observant, while others continued to think of themselves as ethnically Jewish, but adopted a secular, nonreligious outlook.

To combat prejudice and discrimination, Jews formed the B'nai Brith Anti-Defamation League, which has played a major role in educating Americans about the injustice of prejudice and making them aware of the rights, not only of Jews, but of all minorities.

By the 1950s a three-faith model had taken root: Americans were described as coming in three basic varieties -- Protestant, Catholic, and Jew. The order reflects the numerical strength of each group: In the 1990 census, Protestants of all denominations numbered 140 million; Catholics, 62 million; and Jews, 5 million.

Today the three-faith formula is obsolete. The Islamic faith also has 5 million U.S. adherents, many of whom are African-American converts. It is estimated that the number of mosques in the United States -- today, about 1,200 -- has doubled in the last 15 years. Buddhism and Hinduism are growing with the arrival of immigrants from countries where these are the majority religions. In some cases, inner-city Christian churches whose congregations have moved to the suburbs have sold their buildings to Buddhists, who have refitted them to suit their practices.

PRINCIPLES OF TOLERANCE

America has been a fertile ground for new religions. The Mormon and Christian Science Churches are perhaps the best-known of the faiths that have sprung up on American soil. Because of its tradition of noninterference in religious matters, the United States has also provided a comfortable home for many small sects from overseas. The Amish, for example, descendants of German immigrants who reside mostly in Pennsylvania and neighboring states, have lived simple lives, wearing plain clothes and shunning modern technology, for generations.

Some small groups are considered to be religious cults because they profess extremist beliefs and tend to glorify a founding figure. As long as cults and their members abide by the law, they are generally left alone. Religious prejudice is rare in America, and interfaith meetings and cooperation are commonplace.

The most controversial aspect of religion in the United States today is probably its role in politics. In recent decades some Americans have come to believe that separation of church and state has been interpreted in ways hostile to religion. Religious conservatives and fundamentalists have joined forces to become a powerful political movement known as the Christian right. Among their goals is to overturn, by law or constitutional amendment, Supreme Court decisions allowing abortion and banning prayer in public schools. Ralph Reed, former executive director of the Christian Coalition, estimates that one-third of delegates to the 1996 Republican Convention were members of his or similar conservative Christian groups, an indication of the increased involvement of religion in politics.

While some groups openly demonstrate their religious convictions, for most Americans religion is a personal matter not usually discussed in everyday conversation. The vast majority practice their faith quietly in whatever manner they choose -- as members of one of the traditional religious denominations, as participants in nondenominational congregations, or as individuals who join no organized group. However Americans choose to exercise their faith, they are a spiritual people. Nine out of ten Americans express some religious preference, and approximately 70 percent are members of religious congregations.

Chapter Nine

THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Public assistance and health care

The American economic system is based on private, free enterprise, and the "self-reliance" that writer and lecturer Ralph Waldo Emerson advocated is a virtue much valued by Americans. In fact, most make it a point of honor to take care of themselves. But government help in many forms is available to those who are temporarily or permanently in need. This chapter examines two areas in which aid may be provided: public welfare and health care.

HISTORY OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Traditionally in America, helping the poor was a matter for private charity or local government. Arriving immigrants depended mainly on predecessors from their homeland to help them start a new life. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, several European nations instituted public-welfare programs. But such a movement was slow to take hold in the United States because the rapid pace of industrialization and the ready availability of farmland seemed to confirm the belief that anyone who was willing to work could find a job.

The Great Depression, which began in 1929, shattered that belief. For the first time in history, substantial numbers of Americans were out of work because of the widespread failures of banks and businesses. President Herbert Hoover believed that business, if left alone to operate without government interference, would correct the economic conditions. In the meantime, he relied on state and local governments to provide relief to the needy, but those governments did not have enough money to do so. Most Americans believed that Hoover did not do enough to fight the Depression, and they elected Franklin D. Roosevelt president in 1932.

Within days after taking office, Roosevelt proposed recovery and reform legislation to the U.S. Congress. Congress approved almost all the measures the president requested, and soon the government was creating jobs for hundreds of thousands of people. They were employed in huge

public works projects such as dam construction, road repair, renovation of public buildings, building electrical systems for rural communities, and conservation of natural areas.

Most of the programs started during the Depression era were temporary relief measures, but one of the programs -- Social Security -- has become an American institution. Paid for by deductions from the paychecks of working people, Social Security ensures that retired persons receive a modest monthly income and also provides unemployment insurance, disability insurance, and other assistance to those who need it. Social Security payments to retired persons can start at age 62, but many wait until age 65, when the payments are slightly higher. Recently, there has been concern that the Social Security fund may not have enough money to fulfill its obligations in the 21st century, when the population of elderly Americans is expected to increase dramatically. Policy-makers have proposed various ways to make up the anticipated deficit, but a long-term solution is still being debated.

In the years since Roosevelt, other American presidents, particularly Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s, have established assistance programs. These include Medicaid and Medicare, which are discussed later; food stamps, certificates that people can use to purchase food; and public housing, which is built at federal expense and made available to persons with low incomes.

Needy Americans can also turn to sources other than government for help. A broad spectrum of private charities and voluntary organizations is available. Volunteerism is on the rise in the United States, especially among retired persons. It is estimated that almost 50 percent of Americans over age 18 do volunteer work, and nearly 75 percent of U.S. households contribute money to charity.

AFFORDING THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE

The majority of Americans can live comfortable lives on the salaries they earn, without the support of a universal public-welfare system. These so-called middle-class Americans generally own their own homes and cars, spend some time each year on vacation, and can pay -- at least in part -- for a college education for their children. Most Americans set aside money in savings accounts to help pay major expenses; many invest in the stock market in hopes of earning a healthy return on their investments.

Most buy insurance, especially life and medical insurance, frequently with contributions from the companies for which they work. Many companies also have retirement plans by which they and their employees put aside money for their retirement pensions. When added to Social Security payments, pensions enable many retired Americans to live comfortably. On the other hand, for older Americans who require long-term care outside of a hospital, a nursing home can be very expensive.

In 1993, a family of four with a yearly income of \$14,763 or less was considered poor by American standards; 15.1 percent of American families fell into this category. In addition to the benefits discussed above, many families below the poverty line receive welfare payments, sums of money provided by the government each month to those whose income is too low to obtain such necessities as food, clothing, and shelter. The most common form of welfare payment has been through a program called Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC). Originally designed to help children whose fathers had died, AFDC evolved into the main source of regular income for millions of poor American families.

The total cost of all federal assistance programs -- including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and various welfare programs -- accounts for nearly one-half of all money spent by the federal government. That is a doubling of the percentage that obtained in the 1960s.

THE DEBATE OVER WELFARE

Certain aspects of the American welfare system -- especially AFDC payments -- came under criticism in the 1980s and 1990s, and the system itself became an issue in national elections. In his 1992 presidential campaign, for example, then-Governor Bill Clinton promised to "end welfare as we know it." Many middle-class Americans resent the use of their tax dollars to support those whom they regard

(rightly or wrongly) as unwilling to work. Some critics argue that dependency on welfare tends to become a permanent condition, as one generation follows another into the system. Some people believe the system encourages young women to have children out of wedlock, because welfare payments increase with each child born. Other experts maintain that unless the root causes of poverty -- lack of education and opportunity -- are addressed, the welfare system is all that stands between the poor and utter destitution.

The charge that social programs tend to trap the poor in dependency and deny them the power to control their lives has led to the redesign of certain federal programs. For example, the government has been allowing tenants of public housing projects to buy the buildings and take over their management.

A consensus in favor of more broad-gauged action came together in 1996. A new law overhauled welfare by replacing AFDC with state-run assistance programs financed by federal grants. The law also limits lifetime welfare assistance to five years, requires most able-bodied adults to work after two years on welfare, eliminates welfare benefits for legal immigrants who have not become U.S. citizens, and limits food stamps to a period of three months unless the recipients are working.

AMERICAN MEDICAL PRACTICE

Self-employed private physicians who charge a fee for each visit by a patient have been the norm for American medical practice. Most physicians have a contractual relationship with one or more hospitals in their community. They refer their patients as needed to the hospital, which usually charges according to the number of days a patient stays and the facilities -- X-rays, operating rooms, tests -- he or she uses. Some hospitals are run by a city, a state, or, in the case of hospitals for military veterans, the federal government. Others are run by religious orders or other nonprofit groups. Still others are run by companies intending to make a profit.

In the last 30 years, the cost of medical care in the United States has skyrocketed. Health expenditures rose from \$204 per person in 1965 to \$3,299 per person in 1993. One reason for rising health costs is that physicians are among the highest-paid professionals in the United States. As justification for their high incomes, they cite the long and expensive preparation they must undergo. Most potential doctors attend four years of college, which can cost \$25,000 a year, before going on to four expensive years of medical school. By the time they have a medical degree, many young doctors are deeply in debt. They still face three to five years of residency in a hospital, where the hours are long and the pay relatively low. Setting up a medical practice can be costly too.

The new machines and technologies for diagnosing and treating illness also are expensive, and the technicians who operate them must be well-trained. Physicians and hospitals must buy malpractice insurance to protect themselves against lawsuits by patients who believe they have received inadequate care. The rates charged for this insurance rose sharply during the 1970s and 1980s.

PAYING MEDICAL BILLS

The United States has evolved a mixed system of private and public responsibility for health care. The vast majority of Americans pay some portion of their medical bills through insurance obtained at work. About five out of six American workers, along with their families, are covered by group health insurance plans, paid for either jointly by the employer and employee or by the employee alone. Under the most common type of plan, the employee pays a monthly premium, or fee. In return, the insurance company pays a percentage of the employee's medical costs above a small amount known as a deductible. Insurance plans vary considerably. Some include coverage for dental work and others for mental health counseling and therapy; others do not.

Another type of health care plan available to many workers is the health maintenance organization (HMO). An HMO is staffed by a group of physicians who provide all of a person's medical care for a set fee paid in advance. HMOs emphasize preventive care because the HMO must pay the bill when a person needs services that the HMO cannot provide, such as specialized treatment, surgery, or hospitalization. HMOs have grown in popularity and are widely viewed as a means of holding down

medical costs. Some Americans, however, are wary of HMOs because they limit the patient's freedom to choose his or her doctor.

Meanwhile, American physicians have helped slow the increase in costs by reassessing the need for hospitalization. Many surgical procedures that once involved staying in a hospital, for example, are now performed on an "out-patient" basis (the patient comes to the hospital for part of the day and returns home at night). The percentage of hospital surgeries performed on out-patients increased from 16 percent in 1980 to 55 percent in 1993. Even when a hospital stay is prescribed, it is typically shorter than in the past.

MEDICAID AND MEDICARE

Although most Americans have some form of private health insurance, some people cannot afford insurance. They can get medical coverage through two social programs established in 1965.

Medicaid is a joint federal-state program that funds medical care for the poor. The requirements for receiving Medicaid and the scope of care available vary widely from state to state. At a cost of about \$156 thousand million a year, Medicaid is the nation's largest social-welfare program.

Medicare, another form of federal health insurance, pays a large part of the medical bills incurred by Americans who are 65 and older or who are disabled, regardless of age. Medicare is financed by a portion of the Social Security tax, by premiums paid by recipients, and by federal funds. Everyone who receives Social Security payments is covered by Medicare.

One of the most troubling health care problems facing the United States has been providing care for those who cannot afford health insurance and who are not eligible for either Medicaid or Medicare. It has been estimated that one in seven Americans is without health insurance at least part of the year. They may be persons who are unemployed or have jobs without medical coverage or who live just above the poverty line. They can go to public hospitals, where they will get treatment in an emergency, but they often fail to obtain routine care that might prevent illness.

Assisting these uninsured Americans was one of President Bill Clinton's priorities when he came into office in 1993. After widespread discussion and debate across the country and at all levels of the citizenry, in 1996 Congress passed legislation designed to make health insurance more available to working families and their children. The new law expands access to health insurance for workers who lose their jobs or who apply for insurance with a pre-existing medical condition, and it sets up a pilot program of tax-deferred savings accounts for use in paying medical bills.

Although health care costs continue to rise, the rate of increase has leveled off in recent years, because of the proliferation of HMOs and other factors. In 1990 health expenses increased 9 percent over the previous year, and by 1994 that rate had fallen to 4.8 percent.

Chapter Ten

DISTINCTIVELY AMERICAN ARTS

Music, dance, architecture, visual arts, and literature

The development of the arts in America -- music, dance, architecture, the visual arts, and literature -- has been marked by a tension between two strong sources of inspiration: European sophistication and domestic originality. Frequently, the best American artists have managed to harness both sources. This chapter touches upon a number of major American figures in the arts, some of whom have grappled with the Old World-New World conflict in their work.

MUSIC

Until the 20th century, "serious" music in America was shaped by European standards and idioms. A notable exception was the music of composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869), son of a British father and a Creole mother. Gottschalk enlivened his music with plantation melodies and Caribbean rhythms that he had heard in his native New Orleans. He was the first American pianist to achieve international recognition, but his early death contributed to his relative obscurity.

More representative of early American music were the compositions of Edward MacDowell (1860-1908), who not only patterned his works after European models but stoutly resisted the label of "American composer." He was unable to see beyond the same notion that hampered many early American writers: To be wholly American, he thought, was to be provincial.

A distinctively American classical music came to fruition when such composers as George Gershwin (1898-1937) and Aaron Copland (1900-1990) incorporated homegrown melodies and rhythms into forms borrowed from Europe. Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" and his opera *Porgy and Bess* were influenced by jazz and African-American folk songs. Some of his music is also self-consciously urban: The opening of his "An American in Paris," for example, mimics taxi horns.

As Harold C. Schonberg writes in *The Lives of the Great Composers*, Copland "helped break the stranglehold of the German domination on American music." He studied in Paris, where he was encouraged to depart from tradition and indulge his interest in jazz (for more on jazz, see chapter 11). Besides writing symphonies, concertos, and an opera, he composed the scores for several films. He is best known, however, for his ballet scores, which draw on American folk songs; among them are "Billy the Kid," "Rodeo," and "Appalachian Spring."

Another American original was Charles Ives (1874-1954), who combined elements of popular classical music with harsh dissonance. "I found I *could not* go on using the familiar chords early," he explained. "I *heard* something else." His idiosyncratic music was seldom performed while he was alive, but Ives is now recognized as an innovator who anticipated later musical developments of the 20th century. Composers who followed Ives experimented with 12-tone scales, minimalism, and other innovations that some concertgoers found alienating.

In the last decades of the 20th century, there has been a trend back toward music that pleases both composer and listener, a development that may be related to the uneasy status of the symphony orchestra in America. Unlike Europe, where it is common for governments to underwrite their orchestras and opera companies, the arts in America get relatively little public support. To survive, symphony orchestras depend largely on philanthropy and paid admissions.

Some orchestra directors have found a way to keep mainstream audiences happy while introducing new music to the public: Rather than segregate the new pieces, these directors program them side-by-side with traditional fare. Meanwhile, opera, old and new, has been flourishing. Because it is so expensive to stage, however, opera depends heavily on the generosity of corporate and private donors.

DANCE

Closely related to the development of American music in the early 20th century was the emergence of a new, and distinctively American, art form -- modern dance. Among the early innovators was Isadora Duncan (1878-1927), who stressed pure, unstructured movement in lieu of the positions of classical ballet.

The main line of development, however, runs from the dance company of Ruth St. Denis (1878-1968) and her husband-partner, Ted Shawn (1891-1972). Her pupil Doris Humphrey (1895-1958) looked outward for inspiration, to society and human conflict. Another pupil of St. Denis, Martha Graham (1893-1991), whose New York-based company became perhaps the best known in modern dance, sought to express an inward-based passion. Many of Graham's most popular works were produced in

collaboration with leading American composers -- "Appalachian Spring" with Aaron Copland, for example.

Later choreographers searched for new methods of expression. Merce Cunningham (1919-) introduced improvisation and random movement into performances. Alvin Ailey (1931-1989) incorporated African dance elements and black music into his works. Recently such choreographers as Mark Morris (1956-) and Liz Lerman (1947-) have defied the convention that dancers must be thin and young. Their belief, put into action in their hiring practices and performances, is that graceful, exciting movement is not restricted by age or body type.

In the early 20th century U.S. audiences also were introduced to classical ballet by touring companies of European dancers. The first American ballet troupes were founded in the 1930s, when dancers and choreographers teamed up with visionary lovers of ballet such as Lincoln Kirstein (1907-1996). Kirstein invited Russian choreographer George Balanchine (1904-1983) to the United States in 1933, and the two established the School of American Ballet, which became the New York City Ballet in 1948. Ballet manager and publicity agent Richard Pleasant (1909-1961) founded America's second leading ballet organization, American Ballet Theatre, with dancer and patron Lucia Chase (1907-1986) in 1940.

Paradoxically, native-born directors like Pleasant included Russian classics in their repertoires, while Balanchine announced that his new American company was predicated on distinguished music and new works in the classical idiom, not the standard repertory of the past. Since then, the American ballet scene has been a mix of classic revivals and original works, choreographed by such talented former dancers as Jerome Robbins (1918-), Robert Joffrey (1930-1988), Eliot Feld (1942-), Arthur Mitchell (1934-), and Mikhail Baryshnikov (1948-).

ARCHITECTURE

America's unmistakable contribution to architecture has been the skyscraper, whose bold, thrusting lines have made it the symbol of capitalist energy. Made possible by new construction techniques and the invention of the elevator, the first skyscraper went up in Chicago in 1884.

Many of the most graceful early towers were designed by Louis Sullivan (1856-1924), America's first great modern architect. His most talented student was Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959), who spent much of his career designing private residences with matching furniture and generous use of open space. One of his best-known buildings, however, is a public one: the Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

European architects who emigrated to the United States before World War II launched what became a dominant movement in architecture, the International Style. Perhaps the most influential of these immigrants were Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) and Walter Gropius (1883-1969), both former directors of Germany's famous design school, the Bauhaus. Based on geometric form, buildings in their style have been both praised as monuments to American corporate life and dismissed as "glass boxes." In reaction, younger American architects such as Michael Graves (1945-) have rejected the austere, boxy look in favor of "postmodern" buildings with striking contours and bold decoration that alludes to historical styles of architecture.

THE VISUAL ARTS

America's first well-known school of painting -- the Hudson River school -- appeared in 1820. As with music and literature, this development was delayed until artists perceived that the New World offered subjects unique to itself; in this case the westward expansion of settlement brought the transcendent beauty of frontier landscapes to painters' attention.

The Hudson River painters' directness and simplicity of vision influenced such later artists as Winslow Homer (1836-1910), who depicted rural America -- the sea, the mountains, and the people who lived

near them. Middle-class city life found its painter in Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), an uncompromising realist whose unflinching honesty undercut the genteel preference for romantic sentimentalism.

Controversy soon became a way of life for American artists. In fact, much of American painting and sculpture since 1900 has been a series of revolts against tradition. "To hell with the artistic values," announced Robert Henri (1865-1929). He was the leader of what critics called the "ash-can" school of painting, after the group's portrayals of the squalid aspects of city life. Soon the ash-can artists gave way to modernists arriving from Europe -- the cubists and abstract painters promoted by the photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) at his Gallery 291 in New York City.

In the years after World War II, a group of young New York artists formed the first native American movement to exert major influence on foreign artists: abstract expressionism. Among the movement's leaders were Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), and Mark Rothko (1903-1970). The abstract expressionists abandoned formal composition and representation of real objects to concentrate on instinctual arrangements of space and color and to demonstrate the effects of the physical action of painting on the canvas.

Members of the next artistic generation favored a different form of abstraction: works of mixed media. Among them were Robert Rauschenberg (1925-) and Jasper Johns (1930-), who used photos, newsprint, and discarded objects in their compositions. Pop artists, such as Andy Warhol (1930-1987), Larry Rivers (1923-), and Roy Lichtenstein (1923-), reproduced, with satiric care, everyday objects and images of American popular culture -- Coca-Cola bottles, soup cans, comic strips.

Today artists in America tend not to restrict themselves to schools, styles, or a single medium. A work of art might be a performance on stage or a hand-written manifesto; it might be a massive design cut into a Western desert or a severe arrangement of marble panels inscribed with the names of American soldiers who died in Vietnam. Perhaps the most influential 20th-century American contribution to world art has been a mocking playfulness, a sense that a central purpose of a new work is to join the ongoing debate over the definition of art itself.

LITERATURE

Much early American writing is derivative: European forms and styles transferred to new locales. For example, *Wieland* and other novels by Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810) are energetic imitations of the Gothic novels then being written in England. Even the well-wrought tales of Washington Irving (1783-1859), notably "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," seem comfortably European despite their New World settings.

Perhaps the first American writer to produce boldly new fiction and poetry was Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). In 1835, Poe began writing short stories -- including "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" -- that explore previously hidden levels of human psychology and push the boundaries of fiction toward mystery and fantasy.

Meanwhile, in 1837, the young Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) collected some of his stories as *Twice-Told Tales*, a volume rich in symbolism and occult incidents. Hawthorne went on to write full-length "romances," quasi-allegorical novels that explore such themes as guilt, pride, and emotional repression in his native New England. His masterpiece, *The Scarlet Letter*, is the stark drama of a woman cast out of her community for committing adultery.

Hawthorne's fiction had a profound impact on his friend Herman Melville (1819-1891), who first made a name for himself by turning material from his seafaring days into exotic novels. Inspired by Hawthorne's example, Melville went on to write novels rich in philosophical speculation. In *Moby-Dick*, an adventurous whaling voyage becomes the vehicle for examining such themes as obsession, the nature of evil, and human struggle against the elements. In another fine work, the short novel *Billy Budd*, Melville dramatizes the conflicting claims of duty and compassion on board a ship in time of war. His more profound books sold poorly, and he had been long forgotten by the time of his death. He was rediscovered in the early decades of the 20th century.

In 1836, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), an ex-minister, published a startling nonfiction work called *Nature*, in which he claimed it was possible to dispense with organized religion and reach a lofty spiritual state by studying and responding to the natural world. His work influenced not only the writers who gathered around him, forming a movement known as Transcendentalism, but also the public, who heard him lecture.

Emerson's most gifted fellow-thinker was Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), a resolute nonconformist. After living mostly by himself for two years in a cabin by a wooded pond, Thoreau wrote *Walden*, a book-length memoir that urges resistance to the meddling dictates of organized society. His radical writings express a deep-rooted tendency toward individualism in the American character.

Mark Twain (the pen name of Samuel Clemens, 1835-1910) was the first major American writer to be born away from the East Coast -- in the border state of Missouri. His regional masterpieces, the memoir *Life on the Mississippi* and the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, were noted in chapter 2. Twain's style -- influenced by journalism, wedded to the vernacular, direct and unadorned but also highly evocative and irreverently funny -- changed the way Americans write their language. His characters speak like real people and sound distinctively American, using local dialects, newly invented words, and regional accents.

Henry James (1843-1916) confronted the Old World-New World dilemma by writing directly about it. Although born in New York City, he spent most of his adult years in England. Many of his novels center on Americans who live in or travel to Europe. With its intricate, highly qualified sentences and dissection of emotional nuance, James's fiction can be daunting. Among his more accessible works are the novellas "Daisy Miller," about an enchanting American girl in Europe, and "The Turn of the Screw," an enigmatic ghost story.

America's two greatest 19th-century poets could hardly have been more different in temperament and style. Walt Whitman (1819-1892) was a working man, a traveler, a self-appointed nurse during the American Civil War (1861-1865), and a poetic innovator. His magnum opus was *Leaves of Grass*, in which he uses a free-flowing verse and lines of irregular length to depict the all-inclusiveness of American democracy. Taking that motif one step further, the poet equates the vast range of American experience with himself -- and manages not to sound like a crass egotist. For example, in "Song of Myself," the long, central poem in *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman writes: "These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they are not original with me...."

Whitman was also a poet of the body -- "the body electric," as he called it. In *Studies in Classic American Literature*, the English novelist D.H. Lawrence wrote that Whitman "was the first to smash the old moral conception that the soul of man is something 'superior' and 'above' the flesh."

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), on the other hand, lived the sheltered life of a genteel unmarried woman in small-town Massachusetts. Within its formal structure, her poetry is ingenious, witty, exquisitely wrought, and psychologically penetrating. Her work was unconventional for its day, and little of it was published during her lifetime.

Many of her poems dwell on death, often with a mischievous twist. "Because I could not stop for Death," one begins, "He kindly stopped for me." The opening of another Dickinson poem toys with her position as a woman in a male-dominated society and an unrecognized poet: "I'm nobody! Who are you? / Are you nobody too?"

At the beginning of the 20th century, American novelists were expanding fiction's social spectrum to encompass both high and low life. In her stories and novels, Edith Wharton (1862-1937) scrutinized the upper-class, Eastern-seaboard society in which she had grown up. One of her finest books, *The Age of Innocence*, centers on a man who chooses to marry a conventional, socially acceptable woman rather than a fascinating outsider. At about the same time, Stephen Crane (1871-1900), best known for his Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage*, depicted the life of New York City prostitutes in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. And in *Sister Carrie*, Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) portrayed a country girl who moves to Chicago and becomes a kept woman.

Experimentation in style and form soon joined the new freedom in subject matter. In 1909, Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), by then an expatriate in Paris, published *Three Lives*, an innovative work of fiction influenced by her familiarity with cubism, jazz, and other movements in contemporary art and music.

The poet Ezra Pound (1885-1972) was born in Idaho but spent much of his adult life in Europe. His work is complex, sometimes obscure, with multiple references to other art forms and to a vast range of literature, both Western and Eastern. He influenced many other poets, notably T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), another expatriate. Eliot wrote spare, cerebral poetry, carried by a dense structure of symbols. In "The Waste Land" he embodied a jaundiced vision of post-World War I society in fragmented, haunted images. Like Pound's, Eliot's poetry could be highly allusive, and some editions of "The Waste Land" come with footnotes supplied by the poet. Eliot won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948.

American writers also expressed the disillusionment following upon the war. The stories and novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) capture the restless, pleasure-hungry, defiant mood of the 1920s. Fitzgerald's characteristic theme, expressed poignantly in *The Great Gatsby*, is the tendency of youth's golden dreams to dissolve in failure and disappointment.

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) saw violence and death first-hand as an ambulance driver in World War I, and the senseless carnage persuaded him that abstract language was mostly empty and misleading. He cut out unnecessary words from his writing, simplified the sentence structure, and concentrated on concrete objects and actions. He adhered to a moral code that emphasized courage under pressure, and his protagonists were strong, silent men who often dealt awkwardly with women. *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* are generally considered his best novels; he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954.

In addition to fiction, the 1920s were a rich period for drama. There had not been an important American dramatist until Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) began to write his plays. Winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936, O'Neill drew upon classical mythology, the Bible, and the new science of psychology to explore inner life. He wrote frankly about sex and family quarrels, but his preoccupation was with the individual's search for identity. One of his greatest works is *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, a harrowing drama, small in scale but large in theme, based largely on his own family.

Another strikingly original American playwright was Tennessee Williams (1911-1983), who expressed his southern heritage in poetic yet sensational plays, usually about a sensitive woman trapped in a brutish environment. Several of his plays have been made into films, including *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

Five years before Hemingway, another American novelist had won the Nobel Prize: William Faulkner (1897-1962). Faulkner managed to encompass an enormous range of humanity in Yoknapatawpha, a Mississippi county of his own invention. He recorded his characters' seemingly unedited ramblings in order to represent their inner states -- a technique called "stream of consciousness." (In fact, these passages are carefully crafted, and their seeming randomness is an illusion.) He also jumbled time sequences to show how the past -- especially the slave-holding era of the South -- endures in the present. Among his great works are *The Sound and the Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, *Go Down, Moses*, and *The Unvanquished*.

Faulkner was part of a southern literary renaissance that also included such figures as Truman Capote (1924-1984) and Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964). Although Capote wrote short stories and novels, fiction and nonfiction, his masterpiece was *In Cold Blood*, a factual account of a multiple murder and its aftermath, which fused dogged reporting with a novelist's penetrating psychology and crystalline prose. Other practitioners of the "nonfiction novel" have included Norman Mailer (1923-), who wrote about an antiwar march on the Pentagon in *Armies of the Night*, and Tom Wolfe (1931-), who wrote about American astronauts in *The Right Stuff*.

Flannery O'Connor was a Catholic -- and thus an outsider in the heavily Protestant South in which she grew up. Her characters are Protestant fundamentalists obsessed with both God and Satan. She is best known for her tragicomic short stories.

The 1920s had seen the rise of an artistic black community in the New York City neighborhood of Harlem. The period called the Harlem Renaissance produced such gifted poets as Langston Hughes

(1902-1967), Countee Cullen (1903-1946), and Claude McKay (1889-1948). The novelist Zora Neale Hurston (1903-1960) combined a gift for storytelling with the study of anthropology to write vivid stories from the African-American oral tradition. Through such books as the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* -- about the life and marriages of a light-skinned African-American woman -- Hurston influenced a later generation of black women novelists.

After World War II, a new receptivity to diverse voices brought black writers into the mainstream of American literature. James Baldwin (1924-1987) expressed his disdain for racism and his celebration of sexuality in *Giovanni's Room*. In *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison (1914-1994) linked the plight of African Americans, whose race can render them all but invisible to the majority white culture, with the larger theme of the human search for identity in the modern world.

In the 1950s the West Coast spawned a literary movement, the poetry and fiction of the "Beat Generation," a name that referred simultaneously to the rhythm of jazz music, to a sense that post-war society was worn out, and to an interest in new forms of experience through drugs, alcohol, and Eastern mysticism. Poet Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997) set the tone of social protest and visionary ecstasy in "Howl," a Whitmanesque work that begins with this powerful line: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness...." Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) celebrated the Beats' carefree, hedonistic life-style in his episodic novel *On the Road*.

From Irving and Hawthorne to the present day, the short story has been a favorite American form. One of its 20th-century masters was John Cheever (1912-1982), who brought yet another facet of American life into the realm of literature: the affluent suburbs that have grown up around most major cities. Cheever was long associated with *The New Yorker*, a magazine noted for its wit and sophistication.

Although trend-spotting in literature that is still being written can be dangerous, the recent emergence of fiction by members of minority groups has been striking. Here are only a few examples. Native American writer Leslie Marmon Silko (1948-) uses colloquial language and traditional stories to fashion haunting, lyrical poems such as "In Cold Storm Light." Amy Tan (1952-), of Chinese descent, has described her parents' early struggles in California in *The Joy Luck Club*. Oscar Hijuelos (1951-), a writer with roots in Cuba, won the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for his novel *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*. In a series of novels beginning with *A Boy's Own Story*, Edmund White (1940-) has captured the anguish and comedy of growing up homosexual in America. Finally, African-American women have produced some of the most powerful fiction of recent decades. One of them, Toni Morrison (1931-), author of *Beloved* and other works, won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993, only the second American woman to be so honored.

Chapter Eleven

EXPORTING POPULAR CULTURE

Baseball, basketball, movies, jazz, rock and roll, and country music

Mickey Mouse, Babe Ruth, screwball comedy, G.I. Joe, the blues, "The Simpsons," Michael Jackson, the Dallas Cowboys, *Gone With the Wind*, the Dream Team, Indiana Jones, Catch-22 -- these names, genres, and phrases from American sports and entertainment have joined more tangible American products in traveling the globe. For better or worse, many nations now have two cultures: their indigenous one and one consisting of the sports, movies, television programs, and music whose energy and broad-based appeal are identifiably American.

This chapter concentrates on a few of America's original contributions to world entertainment: the sports of baseball and basketball; movies; and three kinds of popular music -- jazz, rock and roll, and country.

BASEBALL

The sport that evokes more nostalgia among Americans than any other is baseball. So many people play the game as children (or play its close relative, softball) that it has become known as "the national pastime." It is also a democratic game. Unlike football and basketball, baseball can be played well by people of average height and weight.

Baseball originated before the American Civil War (1861-1865) as rounders, a humble game played on sandlots. Early champions of the game fine-tuned it to include the kind of skills and mental judgment that made cricket respectable in England. In particular, scoring and record-keeping gave baseball gravity. "Today," notes John Thorn in *The Baseball Encyclopedia*, "baseball without records is inconceivable." More Americans undoubtedly know that Roger Maris's 61 home runs in 1961 broke Babe Ruth's record of 60 in 1927 than that President Ronald Reagan's 525 electoral-college votes in 1984 broke President Franklin Roosevelt's record of 523 in 1936.

In 1871 the first professional baseball league was born. By the beginning of the 20th century, most large cities in the eastern United States had a professional baseball team. The teams were divided into two leagues, the National and American; during the regular season, a team played only against other teams within its league. The most victorious team in each league was said to have won the "pennant;" the two pennant winners met after the end of the regular season in the World Series. The winner of at least four games (out of a possible seven) was the champion for that year. This arrangement still holds today, although the leagues are now subdivided and pennants are decided in post-season playoff series between the winners of each division.

Baseball came of age in the 1920s, when Babe Ruth (1895-1948) led the New York Yankees to several World Series titles and became a national hero on the strength of his home runs (balls that cannot be played because they have been hit out of the field). Over the decades, every team has had its great players. One of the most noteworthy was the Brooklyn Dodgers' Jackie Robinson (1919-1972), a gifted and courageous athlete who became the first African-American player in the major leagues in 1947. (Prior to Robinson, black players had been restricted to the Negro League.)

Starting in the 1950s, baseball expanded its geographical range. Western cities got teams, either by luring them to move from eastern cities or by forming so-called expansion teams with players made available by established teams. Until the 1970s, because of strict contracts, the owners of baseball teams also virtually owned the players; since then, the rules have changed so that players are free, within certain limits, to sell their services to any team. The results have been bidding wars and stars who are paid millions of dollars a year. Disputes between the players' union and the owners have at times halted baseball for months at a time. If baseball is both a sport and a business, late in the 20th century many disgruntled fans view the business side as the dominant one.

Baseball became popular in Japan after American soldiers introduced it during the occupation following World War II. In the 1990s a Japanese player, Hideo Nomo, became a star pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Baseball is also widely played in Cuba and other Caribbean nations. In the 1996 Olympics, it was a measure of baseball's appeal outside the United States that the contest for the gold medal came down to Japan and Cuba (Cuba won).

BASKETBALL

Another American game that has traveled well is basketball, now played by more than 250 million people worldwide in an organized fashion, as well as by countless others in "pick-up" games. Basketball originated in 1891 when a future Presbyterian minister named James Naismith (1861-1939) was assigned to teach a physical education class at a Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) training school in Springfield, Massachusetts. The class had been noted for being disorderly, and Naismith was told to invent a new game to keep the young men occupied. Since it was winter and very cold outside, a game that could be played indoors was desirable.

Naismith thought back to his boyhood in Canada, where he and his friends had played "duck on a rock," which involved trying to knock a large rock off a boulder by throwing smaller rocks at it. He also

recalled watching rugby players toss a ball into a box in a gymnasium. He had the idea of nailing up raised boxes into which players would attempt to throw a ball. When boxes couldn't be found, he used peach baskets. According to Alexander Wolff, in his book *100 Years of Hoops*, Naismith drew up the rules for the new game in "about an hour." Most of them still apply in some form today.

Basketball caught on because graduates of the YMCA school traveled widely, because Naismith disseminated the rules freely, and because there was a need for a simple game that could be played indoors during winter. Naismith's legacy included the first great college basketball coach, Forrest "Phog" Allen (1885-1974), who played for Naismith at the University of Kansas and went on to win 771 games as a coach at Kansas himself. Among Allen's star players was Wilt Chamberlain, who became one of professional basketball's first superstars -- one night in 1962, he scored a record 100 points in a game.

The first professional basketball league was formed in 1898; players earned \$2.50 for home games, \$1.25 for games on the road. Not quite 100 years later, Juwan Howard, a star player for the Washington Bullets (now called the Washington Wizards), had competing offers of more than \$100 million over seven seasons from the Bullets and the Miami Heat.

Many teams in the National Basketball Association now have foreign players, who return home to represent their native countries during the Olympic Games. The so-called Dream Team, made up of the top American professional basketball players, has represented the United States in recent Olympic Games. In 1996 the Dream Team trailed some opponents until fairly late in the games -- an indication of basketball's growing international status.

THE MOVIES

The American film critic Pauline Kael gave a 1968 collection of her reviews the title *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*. By way of explanation, she said that the words, which came from an Italian movie poster, were "perhaps the briefest statement imaginable of the basic appeal of movies." Certainly, they sum up the raw energy of many American films.

If moving pictures were not an American invention, they have nonetheless been the preeminent American contribution to world entertainment. In the early 1900s, when the medium was new, many immigrants, particularly Jews, found employment in the U.S. film industry. Kept out of other occupations by racial prejudice, they were able to make their mark in a brand-new business: the exhibition of short films in storefront theaters called nickelodeons, after their admission price of a nickel (five cents). Within a few years, ambitious men like Samuel Goldwyn, Carl Laemmle, Adolph Zukor, Louis B. Mayer, and the Warner Brothers -- Harry, Albert, Samuel, and Jack -- had switched to the production side of the business. Soon they were the heads of a new kind of enterprise: the movie studio.

The major studios were located in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles, California. Before World War I, movies were made in several U.S. cities, but filmmakers gravitated to southern California as the industry developed. They were attracted by the mild climate, which made it possible to film movies outdoors year-round, and by the varied scenery that was available.

Other moviemakers arrived from Europe after World War I: directors like Ernst Lubitsch, Alfred Hitchcock, Fritz Lang, and Jean Renoir; actors like Rudolph Valentino, Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Ronald Colman, and Charles Boyer. They joined a homegrown supply of actors -- lured west from the New York City stage after the introduction of sound films -- to form one of the 20th century's most remarkable growth industries. At motion pictures' height of popularity in the mid-1940s, the studios were cranking out a total of about 400 movies a year, seen by an audience of 90 million Americans per week.

During the so-called Golden Age of Hollywood, the 1930s and 1940s, movies issued from the Hollywood studios rather like the cars rolling off Henry Ford's assembly lines. No two movies were exactly the same, but most followed a formula: Western, slapstick comedy, *film noir*, musical, animated cartoon, biopic (biographical picture), etc. Yet each movie was a little different, and, unlike the craftsmen who made cars, many of the people who made movies were artists. *To Have and Have*

Not (1944) is famous not only for the first pairing of actors Humphrey Bogart (1899-1957) and Lauren Bacall (1924-) but also for being written by two future winners of the Nobel Prize for literature: Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), author of the novel on which the script was based, and William Faulkner (1897-1962), who worked on the screen adaptation.

Moviemaking was still a business, however, and motion picture companies made money by operating under the so-called studio system. The major studios kept thousands of people on salary -- actors, producers, directors, writers, stuntmen, craftspersons, and technicians. And they owned hundreds of theaters in cities and towns across the nation -- theaters that showed their films and that were always in need of fresh material.

What is remarkable is how much quality entertainment emerged from such a regimented process. One reason this was possible is that, with so many movies being made, not every one had to be a big hit. A studio could gamble on a medium-budget feature with a good script and relatively unknown actors: *Citizen Kane* (1941), directed by Orson Welles (1915-1985) and widely regarded as the greatest of all American movies, fits that description. In other cases, strong-willed directors like Howard Hawks (1896-1977) and Frank Capra (1897-1991) battled the studios in order to achieve their artistic visions. The apogee of the studio system may have been the year 1939, which saw the release of such classics as *The Wizard of Oz*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Stagecoach*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (directed by Capra), *Only Angels Have Wings* (Hawks), *Ninotchka* (Lubitsch), and *Midnight*.

The studio system succumbed to two forces in the late 1940s: (1) a federal antitrust action that separated the production of films from their exhibition; and (2) the advent of television. The number of movies being made dropped sharply, even as the average budget soared, because Hollywood wanted to offer audiences the kind of spectacle they couldn't see on television.

This blockbuster syndrome has continued to affect Hollywood. Added to the skyrocketing salaries paid actors, studio heads, and deal-making agents, it means that movies released today tend to be either huge successes or huge failures, depending on how well their enormous costs match up with the public taste.

The studios still exist, often in partnership with other media companies, but many of the most interesting American movies are now independent productions. The films of Woody Allen (1935-), for example, fall into this category. Critics rate them highly and most of them make a profit, but since good actors are willing to work with Allen for relatively little money, the films are inexpensive to make. Thus, if one happens to fail at the box office, the loss is not crushing. In contrast, a movie featuring Tom Cruise or Arnold Schwarzenegger typically begins with a cost of \$10 million or more just for the star's salary. With multiples of a sum like that at stake, Hollywood studio executives tend to play it safe.

POPULAR MUSIC

The first major composer of popular music with a uniquely American style was Stephen Foster (1826-1864). He established a pattern that has shaped American music ever since -- combining elements of the European musical tradition with African-American rhythms and themes. Of Irish ancestry, Foster grew up in the South, where he heard slave music and saw minstrel shows, which featured white performers in black make-up performing African-American songs and dances. Such material inspired some of Foster's best songs, which many Americans still know by heart: "Oh! Susanna," "Camptown Races," "Ring the Banjo," "Old Folks at Home" (better known by its opening line: "Way down upon the Swanee River").

Before the movies and radio, most Americans had to entertain themselves or wait for the arrival in town of lecturers, circuses, or the traveling stage revues known as vaudeville. Dozens of prominent American entertainers got their starts in vaudeville -- W.C. Fields, Jack Benny, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Buster Keaton, Sophie Tucker, Fanny Brice, Al Jolson, and the Three Stooges, to name just a few -- and the medium demanded a steady supply of new songs. Late in the 19th century, music publishing became a big business in the United States, with many firms clustered in New York City, on a street that became known as Tin Pan Alley.

Vaudeville and the European genre of operetta spawned the Broadway musical, which integrates songs and dancing into a continuous story with spoken dialogue. The first successful example of the new genre -- and still one of the best -- was Jerome Kern's *Showboat*, which premiered in 1927. Interestingly, *Showboat* pays tribute to the black influence on mainstream American music with a story centered on miscegenation and, as its most poignant song, the slave lament "Ol' Man River."

Songwriter Irving Berlin (1888-1989) made a smooth transition from Tin Pan Alley to Broadway. An immigrant of Russian-Jewish extraction, he wrote some of the most popular American songs: "God Bless America," "Easter Parade," "White Christmas," "There's No Business Like Show Business," and "Cheek to Cheek." Cole Porter (1891-1964) took the Broadway show song to new heights of sophistication with his witty lyrics and rousing melodies, combined in such songs as "Anything Goes," "My Heart Belongs to Daddy," "You're the Top," "I Get a Kick Out of You," and "It's De-Lovely."

Black composers such as Scott Joplin (1868-1917) and Eubie Blake (1883-1983) drew on their own heritage to compose songs, ragtime pieces for piano, and, in Joplin's case, an opera. Joplin was all but forgotten after his death, but his music made a comeback starting in the 1970s. Blake wrote the music for *Shuffle Along*, the first Broadway musical by and about blacks, and continued to perform well into his 90s. Blues songs, which had evolved from slaves' work songs, became the rage in New York City and elsewhere during the 1920s and 1930s; two of the blues' finest practitioners were Ma Rainey (1886-1939) and Bessie Smith (c.1898-1937).

JAZZ

W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues" is one of the most frequently recorded songs written in the 20th century. Of all those recordings, one stands out: Bessie Smith's 1925 version, with Louis Armstrong (1900-1971) accompanying her on the cornet -- a collaboration of three great figures (composer, singer, instrumentalist) in a new kind of music called jazz. Though the meaning of "jazz" is obscure, originally the term almost certainly had to do with sex. The music, which originated in New Orleans early in the 20th century, brought together elements from ragtime, slave songs, and brass bands. One of the distinguishing elements of jazz was its fluidity: in live performances, the musicians would almost never play a song the same way twice but would improvise variations on its notes and words.

Blessed with composers and performers of genius -- Jelly Roll Morton (1885-1941) and Duke Ellington (1899-1974), Louis Armstrong and Benny Goodman (1909-1986) and Bix Beiderbecke (1903-1931), Billie Holiday (1915-1959), and Ella Fitzgerald (1918-1996) -- jazz was the reigning popular American music from the 1920s through the 1940s. In the 1930s and 1940s the most popular form of jazz was "big-band swing," so called after large ensembles conducted by the likes of Glenn Miller (1909-1944) and William "Count" Basie (1904-1984). In the late 1940s a new, more cerebral form of mostly instrumental jazz, called be-bop, began to attract audiences. Its practitioners included trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993) and saxophonist Charlie Parker (1920-1955). Trumpeter Miles Davis (1926-1991) experimented with a wide range of musical influences, including classical music, which he incorporated into such compositions as "Sketches from Spain."

ROCK AND ROLL AND COUNTRY

By the early 1950s, however, jazz had lost some of its appeal to a mass audience. A new form of pop music, rock and roll, evolved from a black style known as rhythm and blues: songs with strong beats and often risqué lyrics. Though written by and for blacks, rhythm and blues also appealed to white teenagers, for whom listening to it over black-oriented radio stations late at night became a secret pleasure. To make the new music more acceptable to a mainstream audience, white performers and arrangers began to "cover" rhythm and blues songs -- singing them with the beat toned down and the lyrics cleaned up. A typical example is "Ain't That a Shame," a 1955 hit in a rock version by its black composer, Antoine "Fats" Domino, but an even bigger hit as a ballad-like cover by a white performer, Pat Boone.

Shrewd record producers of the time realized that a magnetic white man who could sing with the energy of a black man would have enormous appeal. Just such a figure appeared in the person of Elvis Presley (1935-1977), who had grown up poor in the South. Besides an emotional singing voice,

Presley had sultry good looks and a way of shaking his hips that struck adults as obscene but teenagers as natural to rock and roll. At first, Presley, too, covered black singers: One of his first big hits was "Hound Dog," which had been sung by blues artist Big Mama Thornton. Soon, however, Presley was singing original material, supplied by a new breed of rock-and-roll songwriters.

A few years after its debut, rock and roll was well on its way to becoming the American form of pop music, especially among the young. It spread quickly to Great Britain, where the Beatles and the Rolling Stones got their starts in the early 1960s. In the meantime, however, a challenge to rock had appeared in the form of folk music, based largely on ballads brought over from Scotland, England, and Ireland and preserved in such enclaves as the mountains of North Carolina and West Virginia. Often accompanying themselves on acoustic guitar or banjo, such performers as the Weavers, Joan Baez, Judy Collins, and Peter, Paul, and Mary offered a low-tech alternative to rock and roll.

Bob Dylan (1941-) extended the reach of folk music by writing striking new songs that addressed contemporary social problems, especially the denial of civil rights to black Americans. The division between the two camps -- rock enthusiasts and folk purists -- came to a head when Dylan was booed for "going electric" (accompanying himself on electric guitar) at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. Far from being deterred, Dylan led virtually the entire folk movement into a blend of rock and folk.

This merger was a watershed event, setting a pattern that holds true to this day. Rock remains the prevalent pop music of America -- and much of the rest of the world -- largely because it can assimilate almost any other kind of music, along with new varieties of outlandish showmanship, into its strong rhythmical framework. Whenever rock shows signs of creative exhaustion, it seems to get a transfusion, often from African Americans, as happened in the 1980s with the rise of rap: rhyming, often rude lyrics set to minimalist tunes.

Like folk, country music descends from the songs brought to the United States from England, Scotland, and Ireland. The original form of country music, called "old-time" and played by string bands (typically made up of fiddle, banjo, guitar, and base fiddle), can still be heard at festivals held each year in Virginia, North Carolina, and other southern states.

Modern country music -- original songs about contemporary concerns -- developed in the 1920s, roughly coinciding with a mass migration of rural people to big cities in search of work. Country music tends to have a melancholy sound, and many classic songs are about loss or separation -- lost homes, parents left behind, lost loves. Like many other forms of American pop music, country lends itself easily to a rock-and-roll beat, and country rock has been yet another successful American merger. Overall, country is second only to rock in popularity, and country singer Garth Brooks (1962-) has sold more albums than any other single artist in American musical history -- including Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson.

CRITIQUE

Some countries resent the American cultural juggernaut. The French periodically campaign to rid their language of invading English terms, and the Canadians have placed limits on American publications in Canada. Many Americans, too, complain about the media's tendency to pitch programs toward the lowest common denominator.

And yet the common denominator need not be a low one, and the American knack for making entertainment that appeals to virtually all of humanity is no small gift. In his book *The Hollywood Eye*, writer and producer Jon Boorstin defends the movies' orientation to mass-market tastes in terms that can be applied to other branches of American pop culture: "In their simple-minded, greedy, democratic way Hollywood filmmakers know deep in their gut that they can have it both ways -- they can make a film they are terrifically proud of that masses of people will want to see, too. That means tuning out their more rarefied sensibilities and using that part of themselves they share with their parents and their siblings, with Wall Street lawyers and small-town Rotarians and waiters and engineering students, with cops and pacifists and the guys at the car wash and perhaps even second graders and junkies and bigots;...the common human currency of joy and sorrow and anger and excitement and loss and pain and love."

Chapter Twelve

THE MEDIA AND THEIR MESSAGES

Freedom of the press, newspapers, radio, and television

The average American, according to a recent study, spends about eight hours a day with the print and electronic media -- at home, at work, and traveling by car. This total includes four hours watching television, three hours listening to radio, a half hour listening to recorded music, and another half hour reading the newspaper.

The central role of information in American society harks back to a fundamental belief held by the framers of the U.S. Constitution: that a well-informed people is the strongest guardian of its own liberties. The framers embodied that assumption in the First Amendment to the Constitution, which provides in part that "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech or of the press." A corollary to this clause is that the press functions as a watchdog over government actions and calls attention to official misdeeds and violations of individual rights.

The First Amendment and the political philosophy behind it have allowed the American media extraordinary freedom in reporting the news and expressing opinions. In the 1970s, American reporters uncovered the Watergate scandal, which ended with the resignation of President Richard Nixon, and American newspapers printed the "Pentagon papers," classified documents related to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Press reports of official corruption that in some countries would bring arrests and the shutdown of newspapers are made freely in the United States, where the media cannot be shut down, where government itself cannot be libeled, and where public officials must prove that a statement is not only false but was made with actual malice before they can recover damages.

We examine four topics in this chapter: newspapers, magazines, the broadcast media, and current issues related to the media.

NEWSPAPERS: PIONEERING PRESS FREEDOM

In 1990 the press celebrated its 300th anniversary as an American institution. The first newspaper in the colonies, *Publick Occurrences: Both Foreign and Domestick*, lasted only one day in 1690 before British officials suppressed it. But other papers sprang up, and by the 1730s the colonial press was strong enough to criticize British governors. In 1734 the governor of New York charged John Peter Zenger, publisher of the *New York Weekly Journal*, with seditious libel. Zenger's lawyer, Alexander Hamilton, argued that "the truth of the facts" was reason enough to print a story. In a decision bolstering freedom of the press, the jury acquitted Zenger.

By the 1820s about 25 daily newspapers and more than 400 weeklies were being published in the United States. Horace Greeley founded the *New York Tribune* in 1841, and it quickly became the nation's most influential newspaper. Two media giants, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, began building their newspaper empires after the American Civil War (1861-65). Fiercely competitive, they resorted to "yellow journalism" -- sensational and often inaccurate reporting aimed at attracting readers. Early in the 20th century, newspaper editors realized that the best way to attract readers was to give them all sides of a story, without bias. This standard of objective reporting is today one of American journalism's most important traditions. Another dominant feature of early 20th-century journalism was the creation of chains of newspapers operating under the same ownership, led by a group owned by Hearst. This trend accelerated after World War II, and today about 75 percent of all U.S. daily papers are owned by newspaper chains.

With the advent of television in the 1940s and 1950s, the new electronic medium made inroads on newspaper circulation: Readers tended to overlook the afternoon paper because they could watch the day's news on TV. In 1971, 66 cities had two or more dailies, usually one published in the morning and one in the afternoon. In 1995, only 36 cities had two or more dailies.

Overall, the number of dailies dropped only slightly, from 1,763 in 1946 to 1,534 in 1994, and the number of Sunday papers rose from 497 in 1946 to 889 in 1994. The combined figure is the highest number of newspapers with the highest total circulation -- 135 million -- in the world. Nonetheless, the largest U.S. newspapers have been losing circulation in recent years, a trend that can be attributed to the increasing availability of news from television and other sources.

The top five daily newspapers by circulation in 1995 were the *Wall Street Journal* (1,823,207), *USA Today* (1,570,624), the *New York Times* (1,170,869), the *Los Angeles Times* (1,053,498), and the *Washington Post* (840,232). The youngest of the top five, *USA Today*, was launched as a national newspaper in 1982, after exhaustive research by the Gannett chain. It relies on bold graphic design, color photos, and brief articles to capture an audience of urban readers interested in news "bites" rather than traditional, longer stories.

New technology has made *USA Today* possible and is enabling other newspapers to enlarge their national and international audiences. *USA Today* is edited and composed in Arlington, Virginia, then transmitted via satellite to 32 printing plants around the country and two printing plants serving Europe and Asia. The *International Herald Tribune*, owned jointly by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, is a global newspaper, printed via satellite in 11 cities around the world and distributed in 164 countries.

In 1992, the *Chicago Sun-Times* began to offer articles through America Online, one of the first companies that connected personal computers with the Internet. In 1993, the *San Jose Mercury-News* began distributing most of its daily text, minus photos and illustrations, to subscribers to America Online; in 1995, eight media companies announced formation of a company to create a network of on-line newspapers. Now, most American newspapers are available on the Internet, and anyone with a personal computer and a link to the Internet can scan papers from across the country in his or her own home or office.

MAGAZINES' NICHE

The first American magazines appeared a half century after the first newspapers and took longer to attain a wide audience. In 1893, the first mass-circulation magazines were introduced, and in 1923, Henry Luce launched *Time*, the first weekly news magazine. The arrival of television cut into the advertising revenues enjoyed by mass-circulation magazines, and some weekly magazines eventually folded: *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1969, *Look* in 1971, and *Life* in 1972. (*The Saturday Evening Post* and *Life* later reappeared as monthlies.)

Magazine publishers responded by trying to appeal more to carefully defined audiences than to the public at large. Magazines on virtually any topic imaginable have appeared, including *Tennis*, *Trailer Life*, and *Model Railroading*. Other magazines have targeted segments within their audience for special attention. *TV Guide*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*, for example, publish regional editions. Several magazines are attempting to personalize the contents of each issue according to an individual reader's interests.

This specialization has brought an upswing in the number of magazines published in the United States, from 6,960 in 1970 to 11,000 in 1994. More than 50 magazines had a circulation of over one million in 1994. The top two in circulation were both aimed at retired persons: *NRTS/AARP Bulletin* (21,875,436) and *Modern Maturity* (21,716,727). Rounding out the top five were *Reader's Digest* (15,126,664), *TV Guide* (14,037,062), and *National Geographic* (9,283,079).

In 1993, *Time* became the first magazine to offer an on-line edition that subscribers can call up on their computers before it hits the newsstands. In 1996, software magnate Bill Gates started *Slate*, a magazine covering politics and culture that was intended to be available exclusively on-line (*Slate's* publisher soon decided to add a print version).

Meanwhile, a new hybrid of newspaper and magazine became popular starting in the 1970s: the newsletter. Printed on inexpensive paper and often as short as four to six pages, the typical newsletter appears weekly or biweekly. Newsletters gather and analyze information on specialized topics. *Southern Political Report*, for example, covers election races in the southern U.S. states, and *FTC*

Watch covers the actions of the Federal Trade Commission. Newsletters can be the product of small staffs, sometimes only a single reporter who produces the issue by computer.

The newsletter has been joined by the "zine," highly personalized magazines of relatively small circulation, sometimes with contents that are meant to shock. *Afraid*, for instance, is a monthly zine devoted to horror stories.

THE ROLE OF RADIO

The beginning of commercial radio broadcasts in 1920 brought a new source of information and entertainment directly into American homes. President Franklin Roosevelt understood the usefulness of radio as a medium of communication: His "fireside chats" kept the nation abreast of economic developments during the Depression and of military maneuvers during World War II.

The widespread availability of television after World War II caused radio executives to rethink their programming. Radio could hardly compete with television's visual presentation of drama, comedy, and variety acts; many radio stations switched to a format of recorded music mixed with news and features. Starting in the 1950s, radios became standard accessories in American automobiles. The medium enjoyed a renaissance as American commuters tuned in their car radios on the way to work.

The expansion of FM radio, which has better sound quality but a more limited signal range than AM, led to a split in radio programming in the 1970s and 1980s. FM came to dominate the music side of programming, while AM has shifted mainly to all-news and talk formats.

Barely in existence 25 years ago, talk radio usually features a host, a celebrity or an expert on some subject, and the opportunity for listeners to call in and ask questions or express opinions on the air. The call-in format is now heard on nearly 1,000 of the 10,000 commercial radio stations in the United States.

Despite the importance of TV, the reach of radio is still impressive. In 1994, 99 percent of American households had at least one radio, with an average of five per household. Besides the 10,000 commercial radio stations, the United States has more than 1,400 public radio stations. Most of these are run by universities and other public institutions for educational purposes and are financed by public funds and private donations. In 1991, more than 12 million Americans listened each week to the 430 public radio stations affiliated with National Public Radio, a nationwide, nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C.

TELEVISION: BEYOND THE BIG THREE

Since World War II television has developed into the most popular medium in the United States, with enormous influence on the country's elections and way of life. Virtually every American home -- 97 million of them in 1994 -- has at least one TV set, and 65 percent have two or more.

Three privately owned networks that offered free programming financed by commercials -- NBC, CBS, and ABC -- controlled 90 percent of the TV market from the 1950s to the 1970s. In the 1980s the rapid spread of pay cable TV transmitted by satellite undermined that privileged position. By 1994, almost 60 percent of American households had subscribed to cable TV, and non-network programming was drawing more than 30 percent of viewers. Among the new cable channels were several that show movies 24 hours a day; Cable News Network, the creation of Ted Turner, which broadcasts news around the clock; and MTV, which shows music videos.

In the meantime, a fourth major commercial network, Fox, has come into being and challenged the big three networks; several local TV stations have switched their affiliation from one of the big three to the newcomer. Two more national networks -- WB and UPN -- have also come along, and the number of cable television channels continues to expand.

There are 335 public television stations across the United States, each of which is independent and serves its community's interests. But the stations are united by such national entities as the Public Broadcasting Service, which supplies programming. American taxpayers provide partial funding for public television, which is watched by an estimated 87 million viewers per week. Among the most popular programs is "Sesame Street," a children's show that teaches beginning reading and math through the use of puppets, cartoons, songs, and comedy skits.

Beginning in the late 1970s, U.S. cable companies have offered services to selected segments of the population. Programs broadcast by the Silent Network come with sign language and captions for the network's audience of people with hearing problems. In 1988, Christopher Whittle founded Channel One cable network, which provides educational programming -- along with commercials -- to about 40 percent of American high school students. In addition, the convergence of the computer, TV, and fiber optics has raised the possibility of interactive TV, which would allow viewers to select specific programs they wish to see at times of their choosing.

CURRENT ISSUES

Many Americans are disturbed by the amount of violence their children see on television. In response to citizens' complaints and pressure from the Congress, the four major TV networks -- ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox -- agreed in 1993 to inform parents of violent content at the beginning of a program, and cable networks have agreed to give similar warnings. In 1996, the commercial and cable networks went a step further and established a rating system, based on the amount of violence, sexual content, and/or profane language that a program contains. A symbol indicating the show's rating appears on the television screen at the beginning of, and intermittently during, the broadcast.

Such voluntary measures seem preferable to government regulation of programming content, which would probably violate the First Amendment. Another possible solution to the problem is technological. Beginning in 1998 new television sets sold in the United States will be equipped with a "V-chip," a device that will enable parents to block out programs they would rather their children not see.

Similar complaints have been voiced about the words and images accessible on computers. Congress recently passed a law attempting to keep indecent language or pictures from being transmitted through cyberspace, but a federal court struck it down as unconstitutional. If this problem has a solution, it probably lies either in close parental supervision of children's time on the computer or the development of a technological barrier to use of certain computer functions.

One of the most debated media-related issues facing Americans today has little to do with technology and much more to do with the age-old concept of personal privacy: whether any area of a person's life should remain off-limits once he or she becomes a public figure. In 1988, a leading presidential candidate, Senator Gary Hart, withdrew from the race after the press revealed his affair with a young woman. Politicians from both parties complain that the press is "out to get" them, and some conservative members of Congress assert that the media are biased in favor of liberals. Many critics believe that increased prying by the media will deter capable people, regardless of their beliefs, from going into politics.

On the other hand, in the old days reporters virtually conspired with politicians to keep the public from knowing about personal weaknesses. President Franklin Roosevelt's crippled body was not talked about or photographed, and his poor physical health was kept from the electorate when he ran for a fourth term in 1944. A majority of voters might have chosen Roosevelt anyway, but shielding them from the facts seems dishonest to most Americans today, who believe that in a democracy it is better to share information than to suppress it.

NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS

Holidays in the United States

Americans share three national holidays with many countries: Easter Sunday, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

Easter, which falls on a spring Sunday that varies from year to year, celebrates the Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Christians, Easter is a day of religious services and the gathering of family. Many Americans follow old traditions of coloring hard-boiled eggs and giving children baskets of candy. On the next day, Easter Monday, the president of the United States holds an annual Easter egg hunt on the White House lawn for young children.

Christmas Day, December 25, is another Christian holiday; it marks the birth of the Christ Child. Decorating houses and yards with lights, putting up Christmas trees, giving gifts, and sending greeting cards have become traditions even for many non-Christian Americans.

New Year's Day, of course, is January 1. The celebration of this holiday begins the night before, when Americans gather to wish each other a happy and prosperous coming year.

UNIQUELY AMERICAN HOLIDAYS

Eight other holidays are uniquely American (although some of them have counterparts in other nations). For most Americans, two of these stand out above the others as occasions to cherish national origins: Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July.

Thanksgiving Day is the fourth Thursday in November, but many Americans take a day of vacation on the following Friday to make a four-day weekend, during which they may travel long distances to visit family and friends. The holiday dates back to 1621, the year after the Puritans arrived in Massachusetts, determined to practice their dissenting religion without interference.

After a rough winter, in which about half of them died, they turned for help to neighboring Indians, who taught them how to plant corn and other crops. The next fall's bountiful harvest inspired the Pilgrims to give thanks by holding a feast. The Thanksgiving feast became a national tradition -- not only because so many other Americans have found prosperity but also because the Pilgrims' sacrifices for their freedom still captivate the imagination. To this day, Thanksgiving dinner almost always includes some of the foods served at the first feast: roast turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes, pumpkin pie. Before the meal begins, families or friends usually pause to give thanks for their blessings, including the joy of being united for the occasion.

The Fourth of July, or Independence Day, honors the nation's birthday -- the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. It is a day of picnics and patriotic parades, a night of concerts and fireworks. The flying of the American flag (which also occurs on Memorial Day and other holidays) is widespread. On July 4, 1976, the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence was marked by grand festivals across the nation.

Besides Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July, there are six other uniquely American holidays.

Martin Luther King Day: The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., an African-American clergyman, is considered a great American because of his tireless efforts to win civil rights for all people through nonviolent means. Since his assassination in 1968, memorial services have marked his birthday on January 15. In 1986, that day was replaced by the third Monday of January, which was declared a national holiday.

Presidents' Day: Until the mid-1970s, the February 22 birthday of George Washington, hero of the Revolutionary War and first president of the United States, was a national holiday. In addition, the February 12 birthday of Abraham Lincoln, the president during the Civil War, was a holiday in most states. The two days have been joined, and the holiday has been expanded to embrace all past presidents. It is celebrated on the third Monday in February.

Memorial Day: Celebrated on the fourth Monday of May, this holiday honors the dead. Although it originated in the aftermath of the Civil War, it has become a day on which the dead of all wars, and the dead generally, are remembered in special programs held in cemeteries, churches, and other public meeting places.

Labor Day: The first Monday of September, this holiday honors the nation's working people, typically with parades. For most Americans it marks the end of the summer vacation season, and for many students the opening of the school year.

Columbus Day: On October 12, 1492, Italian navigator Christopher Columbus landed in the New World. Although most other nations of the Americas observe this holiday on October 12, in the United States it takes place on the second Monday in October.

Veterans Day: Originally called Armistice Day, this holiday was established to honor Americans who had served in World War I. It falls on November 11, the day when that war ended in 1918, but it now honors veterans of all wars in which the United States has fought. Veterans' organizations hold parades, and the president customarily places a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.

OTHER CELEBRATIONS

While not holidays, two other days of the year inspire colorful celebrations in the United States. On February 14, **Valentine's Day**, (named after an early Christian martyr), Americans give presents, usually candy or flowers, to the ones they love. On October 31, **Halloween** (the evening before All Saints or All Hallows Day), American children dress up in funny or scary costumes and go "trick or treating": knocking on doors in their neighborhood. The neighbors are expected to respond by giving them small gifts of candy or money. Adults may also dress in costume for Halloween parties.

Various ethnic groups in America celebrate days with special meaning to them even though these are not national holidays. Jews, for example, observe their high holy days in September, and most employers show consideration by allowing them to take these days off. Irish Americans celebrate the old country's patron saint, St. Patrick, on March 17; this is a high-spirited day on which many Americans wear green clothing in honor of the "Emerald Isle." The celebration of Mardi Gras -- the day before the Christian season of Lent begins in late winter -- is a big occasion in New Orleans, Louisiana, where huge parades and wild revels take place. As its French name implies (Mardi Gras means "Fat Tuesday," the last day of hearty eating before the penitential season of Lent), the tradition goes back to the city's settlement by French immigrants. There are many other such ethnic celebrations, and New York City is particularly rich in them.

It should be noted that, with the many levels of American government, confusion can arise as to what public and private facilities are open on a given holiday. The daily newspaper is a good source of general information, but visitors who are in doubt should call for information ahead of time.