Exploring the Progressive Movement through the Presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson

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Exploring the Progressive Movement through the Presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson

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ABSTRACT

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Progressivism was a broad based social and political reform movement during the years from around 1890-1920. The depression of 1893 helped unify the “good government” movement of the 1870s and the “social welfare” movement that began before the American Civil War into the Progressive Movement. This movement sought to remedy many social ills in a variety of ways. Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson were presidents during this time of reform and this thesis explores the era and the relative progressivism of these influential men, especially in regard to trust-busting and issues of race.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the two greatest kids on the planet:

Paul Ward Howard Mullan

and

Michaelyn Rose Howard Mullan
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without Michael John Mullan. Thank you for loving me, thank you for working on the house, thank you for doing the next “thing” that needs to be done (there is always one more) and thank you for being a great dad. A special thank you goes to Nancy French for her tremendous grammatical knowledge and helpful hints about word choice. Huge thanks also to Suzanne Smith who provided outstanding grammatical advice, and encouragement, both with my thesis and in my classroom. Thanks to Rod Sievers whose historical expertise, and book loaning, kept me on the right track. Thanks to Dee McBroome for involving me in learning more about history and participating in History Day. Thank you to Gayle Olson Raymer for lesson plan suggestions and a great trip to Washington D.C.

And thanks as always to my mom, Julia Eunice Park Howard Strydom, who encourages me in every undertaking.
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Graphic Organizer for Coal Mining Songs Suggested Answers

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INTRODUCTION

In the sixth Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, the Prime Minister of England suggests that Cornelius Fudge, the former Minister of Magic, should undo all evil with a sweep of his wand. Perhaps that was the same sentiment underlying the American Progressive Movement, attempting to eradicate evil in America by using government regulation as a wand. In the period between the Spanish American War and the First World War, progressive ideas influenced domestic and foreign policies. Progressives sought to “control evil” by dealing with economic, political and social issues including: mistreatment of labor, unsanitary and unsafe working and living conditions, inadequate fire escapes, overcrowding in cities, city planning, educational reforms, campaigns to regulate railroads, conservation of natural resources, pure food laws and a drive to curb the power of money through the battle over trusts.\(^1\)

Yet progressivism was not created in a vacuum. Progressive ideas, referred to as the social welfare movement, were around even before the Civil War. William Cullen Bryant who became associate editor of the highly literate *New York Evening Post* in 1826 was a defender of human rights. Bryant was part owner and editor-in-chief of the *New York Evening Post* from 1829 until his death in 1878. He advocated free trade, abolition of slavery and other reforms. In 1879, Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty* was published. *Progress and Poverty* was widely read and influential. In it, George expanded the definition of what constituted public interest. He called for an end of individual self-

interest and suggested that men in a community should think of themselves in a lifeboat and row together towards shore. He asserted that laws, customs and politics need to grow and change as cultures mature; much like a child is unable to wear the same clothes throughout childhood.  

Populism was a political movement that represented the interest of farmers in the 1890s. Populism was an attempt by farmers to fight against post Civil War economic challenges. Populists hoped to improve farmers’ economic condition by gaining control of the federal government and bending it to the farmer’s advantage. Walter Laferber in his book, *The American Century* asserts that Populism failed because the radical whites attempting to create a class movement of both blacks and whites were unable to quell racism, which broke up the movement and ignited greater anti-black sentiment.

During the depression of 1893, monopolies raised prices even though there was less demand for their goods. At the same time, monopolies cut workers’ wages despite the fact that the owners were making more money. It appeared that monopolies, like those controlled by J.P. Morgan, were putting their own profits and greed above the public good. “The panic of 1893 and the subsequent five-year depression showed how urgently new policies and new ways of managing affairs were needed. Americans started organizing themselves as never before.”

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3 Walter LaFeber, Richard Polenberg and Nancy Woloch, *The American Century: A History of the United States since the 1890s* (Boston: McGray-Hill, 1988), 8-17. LaFeber goes on to say that the anti-black sentiment caused by Populism manifested itself in an average of 188 lynchings per year from 1890 to 1900.
become interested in reform movements. The progressive ideology broke away from the earlier value of the individual and turned toward a group consciousness, spurred on by books like Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty*.

Andrew S. Berky in his *Historian’s History of the United States* asserts: “The men and women who made Progressivism were taught to accept the proposition that the function of government was not to make men happy, but rather it was the duty of every man to achieve happiness in his own way. The state served to provide security of rights and a neutral politics in which each person would begin with an equal chance.” With this belief, it is not surprising that Americans in 1890 were dismayed to learn that 88% of American families controlled barely 12% of the national income. The average annual income was less than $500.00 and it was common knowledge that Andrew Carnegie had an annual tax-free income of $24,000,000; this led many Americans to have concerns about the system.

Progressivism was a broad based social and political reform movement that took place from about 1890-1920. The depression of 1893 helped unify the “good government” movement of the 1870s and the “social welfare” movement that began before the American Civil War into the Progressive Movement. This movement sought to cure a myriad of social ills on a much broader platform than Populism or Grangerism (which focused on the farmer). This new movement sought basic social, economic and governmental reforms. Some reformers were spurred to action by local tragedies to

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5 Ibid., 11.
enforce or pass specific laws such as those dealing with fire codes. Progressives generally favored regulation of big business, a woman’s right to vote, and the establishment of child labor laws.\(^7\) However, not all progressives were cut from the same cloth and many supported certain reforms and not others. The bulk of progressives were well-educated middle class Americans who felt that the government must be involved in solving the nation’s serious social problems. Some also believed that educational reforms and better city services could help “Americanize” immigrants.\(^8\) Progressives wanted to improve the American system without overthrowing it. Progressives wanted to preserve democracy and promote opportunity. They were searching for order and efficiency in a “world complicated by rapid industrialization, immigration and spectacular urban growth.”\(^9\) Middle Class pities, compassion, and a thirst for justice—all were heightened by industrialization and the depression at the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century. Progressives operated to the benefit of many kinds of disadvantaged people.\(^10\) Many progressives felt that it was their Christian duty to right the wrongs caused by industrialism. The Progressives reached a climax in the years from 1900 to 1914.\(^11\)

In 1877, Republicans were mostly northern white Protestants. Democrats were mostly southerners, Catholics and immigrants. Many members of both the Democratic and Republican parties supported some type of reform during the Progressive Movement. The revisionist historians would say none of the presidents between 1901 and 1921 were

\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^10\) O’Neill, 14.
\(^11\) Nash, 614.
"progressive" in the contemporary sense of the term, but rather, just shook things up a bit, while Thomas Kessner would argue that Theodore Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson were “a line of three Progressive presidents.”

Progressives, especially those from the Midwest, were uninterested in foreign affairs. Progressives believed the United States was safe from foreign invasion due to its relative geographic isolation. Senator Beveridge, Roosevelt’s chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, reflected an isolationist attitude that focused on domestic concerns. Beveridge, like other progressives of his time, believed that their purpose was to make democracy work. This preoccupation with domestic affairs drew the criticism that Beveridge was neglecting his responsibilities.

Some historians, including Samuel Eliot Morrison, see Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson as liberal conservatives who accepted the new industrial order but wished to bring it under governmental control. Morrison states that the Progressive Movement was nothing more than the adaptation of federal, state and municipal governments to the changes already occurring in American society. Louis Corey feels that reform is to America what revolution is to the rest of the world; change in America serves to preserve the already revealed truths (that the government’s role is to provide equal footing for man’s happiness) and that the purpose of change is always to restore. Therefore,

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12 Thomas Kessner, Lecture at Gilder Lehrman Institute, New York, New York, 27 June 2005. The focus of this lecture was on the history of the city of New York but auxiliary topics were covered especially in the question and answer portion.
15 Berky,
Progressive reformers are at root conservatives. William L O’Neill sees the progressive era more as an age of modernization than of reform; concluding that the progressive era is the story of how “after many battles and much confusion, the basis was laid for the bureaucratized, business-dominated, limited welfare state we live in now.”

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16 O’Neill, 4.
THEODORE ROOSEVELT AS A PROGRESSIVE ON DOMESTIC ISSUES

Although the nation had not voted for a progressive president, they suddenly had one. Kessner believes that Theodore Roosevelt’s brand of progressivism was earnest, although vague and very mild, representing no attack on corporate capitalism.\(^{17}\) In this respect, Kessner and Morrison are in complete agreement. Others believe Roosevelt was an ally of the progressives, opposing corruption in politics and business and supporting social change with his “Square Deal.”\(^{18}\) Although Theodore Roosevelt supported some progressive ideas, he criticized the “muckrakers;” they were writers, such as Upton Sinclair, who exposed the abuses of power in American business and politics. Roosevelt thought muckrakers were necessary as watchdogs for society, but he felt they went too far in their criticism and dwelt only on the negative.\(^{19}\) Nevertheless, the assumption that the American people once aware of injustices correct them and make society clean again is the cornerstone of progressivism.\(^{20}\) Even as Theodore Roosevelt rode the funeral train, after President McKinley’s death, a daily chronicle welcomed Roosevelt as an expansionist and imperialist. Much of the Capitol city viewed him as rash, impulsive, self-advertising and fiscally irresponsible, a “mad messiah.” While the nation at large saw his inconsistencies as a vestige of his aristocratic will and loved him for his democratic desire to please.\(^{21}\)

\(^{17}\) Thomas Kessner, Lecture at Gilder Lehrman Institute, New York, New York, 27 June 2005.
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
\(^{20}\) Berky, .
Theodore Roosevelt came from a comfortable background rooted in New York’s brownstones. His family had made their money as merchants. After his father’s death, he continued his father’s public works such as Sunday night Newsboys’ dinner; he joined the Free Trade Club, assumed the role of a trustee of the Orthopedic Asylum and the New York Infant Asylum. He eventually dropped his father’s commitments as he pursued new interests. Although Roosevelt graduated from Harvard, his real political education was in the legislature in Albany. He rapidly became a powerful force. One of the defining characteristics of Theodore Roosevelt was his willingness to reexamine the rights and privileges of citizens. Roosevelt’s loss in the 1886 run for mayor of New York led him to think in new ways about the need to curb business’ excessive power and molded his progressive consciousness. He learned to interact with “citizens of all types, not just those of his class, but also bricklayers and day laborers, immigrants and African Americans.” This led Roosevelt to think in new ways about the power of capitalism and monopolies. Roosevelt acknowledged that some things had changed over the last 120 years, and government needed to grow and change to keep in step. According to Edmund Morris in *Theodore Rex*, Roosevelt believed that pruning and moderately changing government slowly over time was good conservatism. In this view, Morris and Corey agree.

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26 Ibid.
It was these Albany roots, perhaps, that led to Roosevelt’s historic support for striking mineworkers in 1902. The miners struck for shorter hours and higher wages at a time when most homes were heated with coal. The owners of the mine were willing to sit the strike out until miners were unable financially to continue. After a five-month stand off between John Mitchell, president of the United Mine Workers, and George Baer, leader of the coalmine owners, Roosevelt called for a conference at the temporary White House on Jackson Place. At the brink of winter, Roosevelt did not want coal prices to be driven up for the American people. By gathering four labor representatives and six mine owners under one roof, Roosevelt succeeded in reaping a rush of popular approval from Democrats, Republicans and Progressives. He managed an agreement for a review of grievances by an “impartial” commission with the help of J. P. Morgan and Elihu Root. When the mine owners indicated that they intended to walk out of the negotiations, Roosevelt threatened to have the army take over the mines. That threat ended the stalemate and the strike was over. It was the first time in United States history that a president intervened in a strike on the side of labor.

In an eighty-page dissertation referred to by Theodore Roosevelt as “a message from the President of the United States,” his first presidential instruction to Congress was read to both the House and the Senate on Thursday, December 3, 1901. The conservative Republicans had tempered Roosevelt’s early drafts with ideas of their own. When Theodore ascended to the presidency, he promised conservatives he would carry on

McKinley’s policies. However, that did not preclude his message to Congress containing a much-edited sub-section on trusts. That was the progressive portion of his message that none of Roosevelt’s advisors were able to suppress.

It is no limitation upon property rights or freedom of contract to require that when men receive from government the privilege of doing business under corporation form...they shall do so upon absolutely truthful representations....Great corporations exist only because they are created and safeguarded by our institutions; and it is therefore our right and duty to see that they work in harmony with these institutions......In the interest of the public, the government should have the right to inspect and examine the workings of the great corporations.

In this first message, he also defended the Monroe Doctrine, called for a canal across Central America, and demanded reform of immigration laws, including a ban against admitting into the United States persons of low intellect, low morals or the ability to earn only a low wage. He touched upon tariffs and trade reciprocity. He was the first president to refer to the Smithsonian Institution and the Library of Congress as National Treasures. There was no mention of race; Roosevelt had already had Booker T. Washington to the White House for dinner on October 16, 1901. 29 In New Orleans, whites rioted to protest the black leader's visit to the White House, leaving thirty-four dead. 30 By 1903, many White Southerners rejected Roosevelt as a “Nigger Lover.”

In this first message to Congress, “Roosevelt issued notice that he was prepared to address the new economic realities: The free economy had given rise to colossal

29 Morris,
combinations whose size and power were disturbing to many progressives. These giant corporations had brought much prosperity, but some of these companies were responsible for ‘real and grave evils.’ The corporations were a ‘natural’ part of modern America, and they could not be eliminated, but the old laws and customs were no longer sufficient to contain them. Government had a duty to learn as much as it could about these new monopolies and to regulate them.”

This idea contrasted sharply with the laissez faire policy that advocated no government interference in business that characterized America before 1893. “For some time after the Civil War most Americans seemed not to know, or care, about the control that business leaders exercised over local communities, state houses, political parties, and national legislation… Americans assumed that business interests and national interests were identical. Social control appeared secondary to the ethic of free enterprise.”

Historians disagree as to what specific years of explosive economic growth finally triggered a progressive response. Progressives were not united by their solution to the problems of big business; rather they were united in their belief that economic forces needed some kind of restraint. Progressives feared that mammoth corporations could hurt consumers, farmers, businessmen, workers and entire towns. Consumers would suffer by monopolies raising the price of goods. Corporations could hurt farmers and small businessmen by raising railroad rates and hiking the cost of raw materials, while hurting competitors by slashing the price of finished products and raising the price of raw materials. In addition, big business threatened towns, cities, whole regions of the country

31 Ibid.
32 Resek, xxv.
by manipulating freight charges and putting railroads and factories in one locale or another. Even workers could be hurt by company towns cutting wages and demanding more productivity as they did in Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*. 

Agreeing there was a potential problem was easier than agreeing on a solution. Some progressives wished to restore competition by dismantling mammoth trusts, limiting monopolies and encouraging enterprise. Others believed big business was highly efficient. They saw nothing wrong with trusts as long as government ensured the public received the benefits of that efficiency in the form of low prices.

Kessner does not believe Roosevelt was a radical; rather he was a man of power who had a metropolitan background and had given serious thought to some of the issues raised by corporate America. He was not out to dismantle corporate America. Kessner asserts that Roosevelt believed the federal government in Washington had a role in regulation, not so much to address the inequalities of wealth as to police corporate America’s potentially distorting influence. Page Smith suggests that Roosevelt only desired to be a referee between capital and labor. Smith believes that when Roosevelt took office he did not have any general or comprehensive view for modest social change, let alone radical social change. Smith agrees with Roosevelt’s contemporary Lincoln Steffen whose opinion of Theodore was that he was an opportunistic politician with no deep insights into issues. Robert A. Divine believes Roosevelt saw the central problem of

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33 McGerr, 152.
the American nation as economic growth and its effect on individuals and society. He believes Roosevelt welcomed federal power, national planning and business growth.34

Theodore Roosevelt’s war on the trusts was an effort to reinforce the system, not weaken or attack it. In 1902, President Roosevelt helped bring a suit against the Northern Securities Company for violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act despite the protests of J.P. Morgan.35 The intent of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 was to preserve fair competition by preventing monopolies. By the time Roosevelt was president, some historians assert that several Supreme Court rulings made Swiss cheese of the Sherman Act.36 Only companies that engaged in interstate commerce came under the control of the federal government and that is why Roosevelt challenged the Northern Securities Company (NHS). The NHS was a huge holding company controlling the Great Northern, the Northern Pacific and the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroads, with some of the biggest names in business behind them.37 Edmund Morris believes that Roosevelt chose to challenge the Northern Securities Company in the Supreme Court because that is the only trust that Knox, his legal advisor, felt he could argue against and win.38 In 1904, the Supreme Court upheld the suit and ordered the company dissolved. Roosevelt was delighted and followed up with several other antitrust suits.39 In total, he brought forty-four suits against large corporations and although he was not always victorious, he did

34 Devine page 728.
36 The Emergence of Modern America: videocassette.
37 (us history.com)
38 Morris,
succeed in breaking up the Swifton beef, oil and tobacco trusts. Page Smith points out that while Roosevelt’s "boldest and greatest stroke of statesmanship" was shown in supporting labor during the Pennsylvania anthracite coal strike in 1902 there were many other skirmishes between capitol and labor in which Roosevelt chose not to involve himself, such as the eight hour workday question in for miners in Colorado.

“A tree should be allowed to grow as high as it can…even if the tree overshadows and sucks the life out of all the bushes and plants in its radius.” That is how Morrison uses metaphor to summarize a laissez-faire government with the tree representing big business. Capitalists in the 1900s, according to Brooks Adams, put money making above all else and did not feel any responsibility to the public. In Roosevelt’s time, conservative Republicans like Elihu Root, John Spooner, Nelson W. Aldrich, John Hay and Mark Hanna believed in the sanctity of property - that which is yours is yours alone and not to be trifled with by others - and the patrician responsibilities of wealth and power. These Republicans were the people to whom Theodore Roosevelt owed his political career. The opponents of the progressive party, such as William Graham Sumner, supported a laissez-faire style of government. Sumner harkened back to former interventions of government in business that he felt had been disastrous such as in Colonial Canada. Theodore Roosevelt himself disliked many reformers put off by their

42 Morrison, 811-856.
43 Ibid.
self-righteousness and it galled him that they did not understand that their middle class status was afforded to them by the system (and its corruption) that they condemned.

Other opponents of the progressive ideology were the “Morgans, Rockefellers and Carnegies who might object to details but not the system. They did not intend to halt the progress of corporate growth or even to uproot monopoly.” These men and their contemporaries saw that corporate capitalism had proven effective in promoting growth, encouraging technology and mobilizing America’s resources. “From Morgan’s point of view, the government was not a superior authority …in fact its budget was much smaller than the ones he worked with and it should mind its own business and not his.”

While Theodore might criticize muckrakers for their negativity, after reading Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle he could no longer enjoy his morning sausages. Roosevelt ordered a study of the meatpacking industry. The report from this study helped force Congress and the meatpackers to accept the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, which provided for the federal inspection of all companies selling meat in interstate commerce. Nevertheless, the bill was a compromise, granting the concession of not dating meat, it demonstrated Roosevelt using “the Public mood and manipulating the political process to get a bill through Congress.” It is Nash’s contention that Roosevelt was always willing to settle for half a loaf of bread, rather than none at all.

Carl Resek concludes that Theodore Roosevelt’s trust busting was greatly over publicized and “involved more indictments, often halfhearted, than it did convictions.

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45 Kessner, ibid.
46 Nash, 634.
Roosevelt held firmly that little could be gained from punishing corporations merely for their size.” Resek contends that “more effective and lasting than their trust busting was the progressives’ creation or strengthening of regulatory agencies and the passage of pioneering laws safeguarding consumers and labor from the excesses of the profit motive.”

As alluded to earlier, progressives were not all of one mind on domestic issues. For example, John Marshall Harlan “the last of the tobacco-spitting judges” was a progressive on race but he was not a progressive when it came to the labor unions; he supported the owners of the railroads. In the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case of 1896, John Harlen was the one dissenting vote. He asserted that justice should be colorblind and that the enforcement of “separate but equal” interferes with the personal freedoms of individuals by legally forcing separation. As he stated, “Sixty million whites are in no danger from the presence of eight millions of Blacks. . .The destinies of the two races in this country are indissolubly linked together, and the interest of both require that the common government of all shall not permit the seeds of race hate to be planted under the sanction of law.” He foresaw that the decision would lead to a pattern of behavior that would be very dangerous and undermine a basic sense of justice. Most progressive reformers were dedicated to making life better for Caucasian Americans and unconcerned with the plight of those of different nationalities. In North Carolina, Josephus Daniels

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47 Resek, xxvi-xxvii.
48 Morris, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. called John Marshall Harlan the last of the tobacco-spitting judges.
49 [www.yale.edu/vnhti/curriculum](http://www.yale.edu/vnhti/curriculum)
was a progressive who defended white rule while simultaneously supporting temperance and trust-busting.\textsuperscript{50}

After his adventures in the Dakota Badlands, Theodore Roosevelt admired and respected the strength, courage, self-reliance and patriotism of the American Cowboy. As Michael L. Collins points out, Roosevelt’s position on the American Indian was not progressive since he adopted the prevailing cowboy mentality of the time presuming Indians were bloodthirsty savages.

His contact with the Dakota frontier had confirmed and reinforced his faith in Anglo racial superiority. His personal experiences and exposure to the frontier ethic had further strengthened his strident belief that the white man must carry forth the ‘blessings of civilization’ to the dark-skinned peoples of the earth, even if it meant that these ‘savages’ had to be subdued and pacified by armed conquest……natives were just heathens, the natural enemies of all white men.

Roosevelt seemed to hold little but contempt for humanitarians like Helen Hunt Jackson, author of \textit{A Century of Dishonor}, whose stinging indictment of United States Indian policies he had dismissed as ‘worse than valueless’ and ‘beneath criticism.’ He often referred to such writings of Christian reformers as ‘maudlin nonsense’ which refused to recognize the historical reality of ‘racial warfare’ in the West.\textsuperscript{51}

Although Roosevelt was not a progressive on race by today’s standards, as he aged and associated with Herbert Welsh his racial views became slightly more progressive. For instance, Roosevelt confessed, “a gross wrong had …been done the

\textsuperscript{50}Resek, 241. Josephus Daniels was born in 1862 in Washington, North Carolina. He studied law and in 1894 became the editor and publisher of the \textit{Raleigh News and Observer} and remained the driving force of that paper for 53 years. He was a good friend of William Jennings Bryan and supported Bryan for president three times until he supported Wilson in 1912.

Indians” by the broken Black Hills Treaty of 1868. In 1886 Roosevelt said, “I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are.” In 1891 as a member of the Civil Service Commission Roosevelt “joined with the Indian Rights Association in condemning the senseless shooting of a Sioux named Few Tails by two white ranch hands……The brutal murder of Few Tails offended Roosevelt’s respect for law and justice.” He fought against random violence towards Indians and the pervasive graft that plagued the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Matthew Quay was part Indian and a political pal of Roosevelt’s. On Quay’s deathbed, Quay asked Roosevelt to replace him as the chief and protector of the Five Nations, which Roosevelt agreed to do.

As to Roosevelt’s views on Mexican vaqueros Michael Collins reports that Roosevelt was very impressed with their riding and roping and thought it was superior to that which he had seen in the Dakota Badlands. But Page Smith reports that Roosevelt commonly referred to Mexicans as greasers.

While stances on race were missing from Theodore Roosevelt’s annual messages to Congress, his progressive actions caused controversy throughout his presidency. As previously mentioned, he invited and dined at the White House with Booker T.

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52 Ibid, 60-63 & 127-131. Herbert Welsh was the founder and guiding force of the Indian Rights Association headquartered in Philadelphia.
53 Ibid., 61.
54 Ibid., 131-131.
55 Ibid.
56 Smith. Some Indians formed confederacies such as the League of the Five Nations, which was made up of certain New York-Pennsylvania groups of Iroquoian speech. Sen. Matthew Quay of Pennsylvania, another former Republican National Committee chair, was his state's favorite son candidate for president in 1896.
57 Collins, 132.
Washington, a leading Black intellectual. It had not occurred to Roosevelt that dining with a black man would become a national crisis.\textsuperscript{58} It also surprised him that having his eldest daughter, Alice, in attendance at the dinner seemed to be an added insult to raciest southerners. His gesture toward Booker T. Washington looked, in retrospect, more courageous than politically wise. He never invited him to dinner again and received him at the White House with appointments at 10:30 in the morning, ensuring that meals were never an issue again. Morris believes that Roosevelt was not ready for total equality but that he believed particular black men who advanced faster than others should be rewarded with every privilege that democracy could give them. In general, Morris continues, Roosevelt thought the 15\textsuperscript{th} Amendment was a mistake and that in “nine cases out of ten, disfranchisement was justified.” However, unlike other contemporaries, Roosevelt believed the “inferiority” of the black masses was temporary and equality in America would come.\textsuperscript{59}

The Vernon Johns Society feels that progressivism was very compatible with American racism. Theodore Roosevelt himself had to accept and work within a racist context.\textsuperscript{60} Carl Resek points out that most white progressive remained unaffected by the plight of the Negro. A few progressives eventually joined in founding the National Associate for the Advancement of Colored People. But most reformers shielded

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item 58 Kathleen Dalton, Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 215. Booker T. Washinton was the most famous black leader of his day. Roosevelt wanted to talk politics with him and work together to thwart Mark Hanna’s party leadership. Washington had gained fame for his 1895 “Atlantic Compromise” speech, which encouraged accommodation.
\item 59 Morris, 52-53.
\item 60 http://www.vernonjohns.org/vernjohns/sthprgrs.html The Vernon Johns Society Website. The Only Non-racist History of the United States of America: The United States as the South. Chapter 20. Vernon Johns was an important figure in the civil rights movement; the sociology of race relations; and predecessor of Martin Luther King Jr.
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\end{footnotesize}
themselves from this area of controversy by adopting prevalent racist ideas. O’Neill states unequivocally that Theodore Roosevelt believed in the inferiority of colored people and to a lesser extent the inferiority of non-Anglo Saxons.61

In this historical context, Roosevelt was a liberal progressive when dealing with blacks. Some historians believe that Roosevelt periodically tried to help blacks, but no American president can do very much when his hands are tied by racism. At the 1904 Republican Party convention, Roosevelt had a black man second his nomination. In April 1908, he publicly announced an injunction requiring equal railway accommodations for blacks in the South.62 At the turn of the century, even whites that supported the advancement of ‘colored people’ such as Oswald Garrison Villard did not socialize with blacks. Villard never had his “friend” W.E.B. Du Bois to his home.63 Yet Theodore had demonstrated a history of socializing with blacks. His opinion was to treat each man on his own merits. The “Roosevelts had entertained blacks in Albany and had William H. Lewis, the Massachusetts lawyer and ally of Washington, stay overnight at Sagamore Hill.”64

William Jennings Bryan is a controversial historical figure. Dulles brands him as a Midwestern Progressive who opposed aggressive foreign policy and held a deep

61 O’Neill, 23. He also goes on to say that, Roosevelt was afraid of Anglo Saxons being out bred by fecund immigrants and to avert “race suicide” he encouraged Anglo Saxon families to have lots of children. O’Neill calls Roosevelt Priggish, racist, imperialistic and someone with a thirst for martial glory and although those views have few admirers today-they were not barriers to popularity in Roosevelt’s day.
62 The Vernon Johns Society Website.
63 Dalton, 216. Oswald Garrison Villard was the editor of the Evening Post and later on one of the founders of the NAACP.
64 Ibid. Sagamore Hill was the Roosevelt home in Oyster Bay.
devotion to peace. Whereas, Kessner asserts that Bryan was a Populist who supported a retreat from the ‘new economy.’ The Populists called for nationalizing the telegraph and railroads and blamed Wall Street for the troubles of upright plain folk of the farm.

In terms of the Booker T. Washington dinner, “even William Jennings Bryan denounced Roosevelt for promoting dangerous social equality.”

Roosevelt’s view of blacks contrasts drastically with his view of Indians. The President disliked seeing that “blacks paid taxes but could not walk into public libraries funded by their tax dollars.” He was angered that poll taxes and literacy tests prevented some blacks from voting. In the same way that he was angered by random violence against Indians such as Few Tails he disliked what he saw in the South where blacks could not be sure their families would be safe from white mob violence.

Yet another racial scandal erupted in Dixie during January 1903, when four or five “Negroes” shook Roosevelt’s hand at a Washington reception. They were federal office holders that he had appointed, so their attendance at an official, stand-up event was not unusual. What was “uppity” was that they brought their wives. It was the first time that Black women had attended a private function at the White House and Southern Congressmen raced for the exits. This coincided with his appointment of a black Assistant District Attorney in Boston. A black appointment in the north was shocking. Roosevelt had already appointed thirteen blacks to federal positions before appointing Dr. William D. Crum. However, Crum was the first black Roosevelt appointed to replace a

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65 Dulles, 83-107.
66 Kessner, 264-265.
67 Dalton, 217.
68 Dalton, 215.
white incumbent. Due to his support of blacks, his popularity in the south continued to plummet (as if it could descend any further) but now complaints were also being heard closer to home. Nonetheless, in 1903 Roosevelt also came to the aid of a Postmaster who had been appointed by President Harrison and reappointed by McKinley. Mrs. Minnie Cox, a black postal worker was “asked” to resign her position after years of exemplary service because she had made some wise investments and had a substantial “nest egg.” Roosevelt requested that she still receive her full federal salary; closing the Indianola, Mississippi post office from which she had been chased (causing Indianola residents to travel 30 miles to get their mail). Debating his request in the Senate, Senator McLaurin argued that Mrs. Cox must submit to the will of her neighbors and then started rambling about how white women must be safe in their homes. John Spooner affected polite puzzlement by asking if Mrs. Cox had made some improper advancement toward Southern women.  

The humor of this situation carried the day: Mrs. Cox received her salary and Indianola residents traveled a windy country road to get their mail.

Historian Kathleen Dalton asserts that Roosevelt’s handling of the Mimi Cox situation gave strength and power to race baiter James K. Vardaman who used an anti Roosevelt campaign in Mississippi to successfully run for governor in 1903. Dalton feels that Roosevelt had not really helped Mrs. Cox or the cause of racial justice.

His support of the Negro leads Theodore Roosevelt to compare himself to Abraham Lincoln. Secretary of State, John Hay at the age of sixty-four in 1903, who had

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69 Morris, 204.
70 Dalton, 236. James K. Vardaman’s home town was very close to Indianola. Vardaman accused Roosevelt of trying to bring back Reconstruction and force black Republicanism on the state.
worked in Lincoln’s administration, seemed to connect the two presidencies. Although corporations were attacking Roosevelt with specific stories of injury, he was undaunted. Booker T. Washington was a symbol that the Republicans were still the party of Lincoln thirty five years after the Civil War.\(^71\) In the 1890’s there were nearly 200 lynchings per year and almost all people of color.\(^72\) Some historians report that lynching declined during Roosevelt’s presidency. Page Smith reports lynchings were mounting during this same time with scarcely a month passing without its “dreadful harvest of broken and mutilated black bodies” during the Roosevelt years. Nevertheless, Roosevelt, wary of inciting more violence was slow to respond to the Delaware lynching of a black man in which a crowd of 4000 burned him alive because he had murdered a white girl.\(^73\) When he did make a public statement, over a month later, it was an impassioned condemnation of the sadistic quality of mob violence.

There are certain hideous sight which when once seen can never be wholly erased from the mental retina. The mere fact of having seen them implies degradation…Whoever in any part of our country has ever taken part in lawlessly putting to death a criminal by the dreadful torture of fire must forever after have the awful spectacle of his own handiwork seared into his brain and soul. He can never again be the same man.\(^74\)

Gregory Nash asserts, “Roosevelt believed that blacks, Indians and Asians were inferior and he feared that massive migrations from southern and eastern Europe threatened Anglo-Saxon dominance.” Nash believes that having Booker T. Washington

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\(^{71}\) Michael Serber, Lecture at Gilder Lehrman Institute, New York, New York, 27 June 2005.

\(^{72}\) Resek, viii.

\(^{73}\) Morris, 251.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 262.
the white house was merely a political gesture. Nash uses Roosevelt’s mishandling of the Brownsville, Texas riot as an example of Roosevelt’s insensitivity towards Blacks. In Texas, 167 members of a Black army unit were dishonorably discharged after one white man was killed and several were injured. Historical records are unclear as to what happened. Supposedly, the black army members angered by constant discrimination rioted and “shot up the town,” killing one white man. The crime was never properly investigated. Since the regiment remained silent and united; Taft, as Secretary of War, dishonorably discharged all 167 men on Roosevelt’s order. As Smith points out, the 25th regiment discharge was a turning point that destroyed the President’s standing with black Americans; turning him from Moses into Judas. Some historians believe that this decision unified black Americans as nothing had since the Emancipation Proclamation. Sixty-six years later the dishonorable discharges were revoked.

In discrediting Roosevelt’s support of blacks, Nash also points out that Roosevelt refused to carry a plank in his 1912 Progressive Party supporting equality for blacks and refused to seat black delegates. Although this was politically motivated with Roosevelt hoping to carry some southern states, Nash feels his making no mention of black equality illustrates his lack of progressive support for blacks. Perhaps this is another example of Roosevelt trying to get half a loaf and bake the rest later.

When Theodore Roosevelt established the Progressive party in 1912 one of his most ardent supporters was Frances Kellor a college educated social reformist. Keller

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75 Nash, 635-636.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid., 638
sought state and federal laws to protect the nearly eight million immigrants to the United States, mainly from southern and eastern Europe. Kellor campaigned for Roosevelt and many other social workers and social researches joined his campaign.

A by-product of the Progressive Movement or Theodore Roosevelt was an increase in power of the executive branch of government. Theodore Roosevelt carefully monitored corporations and this monitoring led to proposed restrictions. He took the view that the President, as a "steward of the people" should take whatever action necessary for the public good unless expressly forbidden by law or the Constitution. “I did not usurp power," Roosevelt wrote later, "but I did greatly broaden the use of executive power.”79 Veto power was not really used until Roosevelt’s presidency except for technical purposes. Roosevelt reawakened the use of presidential legislation that had slumbered since Jefferson’s day.

Theodore Roosevelt was a strong advocate for the Progressive Movement. Dalton agrees that although Roosevelt was more talk than action, “in tariff disputes, antitrust prosecutions, and many other questions he made more noise than progress, but his rhetoric changed minds and renamed the common ground on which American politics stood.80 Both Arthur S. Link81 and Mowry agree with Dalton. His continual preaching of progressive ideology awakened the country to what “ought to be done” and stirred millions of citizens into a high state of righteous indignation. Although he never

78 Kessner, Lecture.
80 Dalton, 214.
personally achieved half of the many things he told the public “ought to be done,” he created an acute desire for progressive action. Roosevelt’s advocacy of progressivism was in sharp contrast, when he left office, to a Congress dominated by conservatives who “stoutly set their faces in the opposite direction.” And therein lay the grief for his successor.\footnote{George E. Mowry, \textit{Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement} (New York: Hill and Yang, 1946, 1960), 34-35.}
HISTORIAN GARY NASH STATES THAT IN SOME WAYS, WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT WAS MORE PROGRESSIVE THAN ROOSEVELT WAS.\textsuperscript{83} DURING ROOSEVELT’S ADMINISTRATION, TAFT HAD CONSCIENTIOUSLY CARRIED OUT EVERY PROGRESSIVE ASSIGNMENT GIVEN TO HIM BY PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT. NASH PROPOSES THAT THE GENERAL PUBLIC FELT THAT ROOSEVELT’S ADMINISTRATION HAD CUT THE HAY FROM THE FIELD AND NOW TAFT WAS GOING TO PUT THE HAY IN THE BARN. TAFT’S ADMINISTRATION INSTITUTED MORE SUITS AGAINST MONOPOLIES IN ONE TERM THAN ROOSEVELT HAD IN TWO. WILLIAM HOWARD SUPPORTED THE EIGHT-HOUR WORKDAY AND LEGISLATION TO MAKE MINING SAFER. HE SUPPORTED THE MANN-ELKINS ACT IN 1910, WHICH STRENGTHENED THE ICC. TAFT AND CONGRESS ALSO AUTHORIZED THE FIRST TAX ON CORPORATE PROFITS, AND HE ENCOURAGED THE PROCESS THAT EVENTUALLY LED TO THE PASSAGE OF THE FEDERAL INCOME TAX, WHICH WAS AUTHORIZED UNDER THE SIXTEENTH AMENDMENT AND WAS RATIFIED IN 1913.\textsuperscript{84}

ALTHOUGH TAFT DID NOT CAMPAIGN SOLELY ON THE PROGRESSIVE PLATFORM, PROGRESSIVES WERE PLEASED WITH TAFT'S ELECTION. HARRIS NEWMARK ALLUDES TO A THREE-DAY VISIT BY TAFT TO LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA INCLUDING A BANQUET ON OCTOBER 11, 1909. ACCORDING TO NEWMARK, TAFT’S TIME WAS SPENT SIGHT SEEING AND SMOOZING WITH POLITICIANS, INCLUDING GEORGE Alexander. Alexander won the bid for mayor of Los Angeles less than a month after the banquet.

\textsuperscript{83} Nash, 637.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
later. Newmark considered Alexander an extreme progressive bordering on socialistic.\textsuperscript{85} 

William Jennings Bryan, running on the Democratic ticket for a third time in 1908,

\textsuperscript{85} Harris Newmark, 60 Years in Southern California 1853-1913: Containing the Reminiscences of Harris Newmark. Edited by Maurice H. and Marco R. Newmark. (Los Angeles, Zeitin and Ver Brugge, 1970), 629.
complained that he was having to oppose two candidates, a western-progressive Taft and an eastern-conservative Taft. Taft recognized that his techniques differed from those of his predecessor.

Continuing in the progressive vein, Taft made some strong reforms. He became an even more active trustbuster than Roosevelt with his administration initiating 80 antitrust suits. Congress submitted amendments to the states for a Federal income tax and the direct election of Senators. He established a postal savings system and directed the Interstate Commerce Commission to set railroad rates.⁸⁶

In 1912, he established the Children’s Bureau. President William Taft created the Children's Bureau to "investigate and report upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people." Taft appointed Julia Lathrop, a member of the Hull House settlement, as the chief of the bureau.⁸⁷ The Children’s Bureau is the oldest federal agency for children and is currently located within the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The Bureau is responsible for assisting states in the delivery of child welfare services, which are designed to protect children and strengthen families.⁸⁸

During a December trip to buy a wedding dress for her friend, Helen Cooper, Bertha Estelle Harris, age 18, went to a matinee at the Iroquois Theater in Chicago. The year was 1903. It was part of their big city adventure from the small town of Lena, Illinois. Midway through the second act a blaze broke out and within fifteen minutes 602 people, mostly women and children, were dead, including Helen Cooper. Chicago city inspectors had received free tickets to ignore fire code violations and the crush of people against inward opening doors prevented escape. Blocked and inadequate fire escapes caused more than 100 deaths. It was one of the most deadly blazes in our nation’s history. Seven years later inadequate safety precautions killed ¼ as many women and children generating compassion from the middle class causing new recruits to the progressive reform movement.

In 1911, five years after Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle* depicting the poor conditions of laborers, 146 girls, mostly between the ages of 13 and 23, were killed in New York because of locked exits. The exits were locked during regular working hours to prevent workers from stealing goods or taking breaks. The cause of these deaths, the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, helped to solidify support for worker’s unions like the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and helped to change American Labor Unions and laws. New York legislation created the Factory Commission in 1911 with Samuel Gompers as one of the members. The Factory Commission emphasized fire prevention and clear escape routes. That was only in New York and a few people, such

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80 Personal correspondence with Judy Olson 2005.
81 Nash, 626-627. The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire was March 25, 1911.
as Stephen S. Wise believed that there needed to be federal legislation to protect workers against such catastrophes.

It is not a question of enforcement of law nor of inadequacy of law. We have the wrong kind of laws and the wrong kind of enforcement. Before insisting upon inspection and enforcement, let us lift up the industrial standards so as to make conditions worth inspecting.

The Triangular Shirtwaist Fire demonstrated the need for radical improvement in factory conditions and it became increasingly obvious that only nationwide legislation could mandate the sweeping reforms which were essential. Wise, Jane Addams and others pushed President Taft for federal legislation or at least a Commission on Industrial Relations. Taft came out in support of the commission before the Senate, “The time is ripe for searching inquiry into the subject of industrial relations, which shall be official, authoritative, balanced and well-rounded.” Wise felt that Taft’s appointments to the Commission made it worse than having no commission at all. However, Wise and other progressives for labor rights were heartened when Wilson took over and named Frank Walsh as head of the commission. It then made a “constructive and significant report to the President.” Wise sees this as the first formal attempt of the federal government to concern itself with facts and threats in the field of industrial relations.92

November 23, 1909 25,000 garment workers in New York went on strike. The strikers, mostly women, had public support in their fight against sweatshop working conditions, due partially to the history of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire. Employers officially refused to recognize the strikers, but most owners instituted a fifty-two hour

92 Resek, 100-117.
week. The ILGWU grew from a few hundred before the strike to 100,000 afterwards. By 1920, it represented 65,000 workers (Chafe, page 67).

Beverly J. Armento reports that Taft became more conservative as his presidency wore on, eventually deferring to the more conservative minded in the Republican Party and losing his Progressive supporters.93 Whereas, David Burner contends that Taft went down in history as a conservative because of his “political ineptitude” even though his reform accomplishments exceeded Roosevelt’s. Arthur Link agrees with Burner that Taft’s “bungling leadership” brought about his political demise. However, Link does not believe Taft was a progressive thinker. While Burner proposes that it was Taft’s inability to sell himself, and his policies, to the public that colored him forever as a conservative.94

Assistant attorney General of the United States, W. H. Lewis, in his 1911 speech, unwittingly supports Burner’s point of view when he urged blacks to oppose the Progressive Party and support Taft. “The administration of President Taft has been one of the most progressive in the history of the country. All that it needs is a good advertising agent.”95

Other historians, such as George E. Mowry believe that once Taft was out from under Roosevelt’s shadow he sloughed off progressivism as a snake sheds skin. “Once that influence was removed he returned to his basic conservative self. For Taft, slow to

93 Armento, 499. Also found in http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/wt27.html .
action, tolerant and suspicious of all excesses, was of the same pattern as John Morley’s classic conservative.”

When Taft took office, he already had a personal dislike for Speaker of the House “Uncle Joe” Cannon. When Cannon made a high tariff speech to protect producers instead of consumers, Taft felt that “Uncle Joe” and the Republican insurgents were on the same side. But later Senator Nelson Aldrich and Representative Sereno Payne (Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee) convinced Taft that if he did not back Cannon there would be no tariff reforms. Taft alienated progressive Washington politicians by supporting Uncle Joe, who was a staunch conservative Republican from Illinois and who did not share Roosevelt's ideas. Cannon was so powerful that he almost controlled the House, appointing all its committee members. Link asserts Taft’s support of Cannon in 1909 against progressives trying to oust Cannon begins the fissure between Taft and Washington progressives. Cannon's reign did not end until 1910 when a coalition of Democrats and Progressive Republicans upset his rule.

Taft further alienated many liberal Republicans who later formed the Progressive Party by defending the Payne-Aldrich Act, which continued high tariff rates. A trade agreement with Canada that Taft pushed through Congress would have pleased eastern advocates of a low tariff, but the Canadians rejected it. Many progressives thought the

96 George E. Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement* (New York: Hill and Yang, 1946, 1960), 38-39. John Morley was a radical in England who defined a conservative as one “with his inexhaustible patience with abuses that only torment others, his apologetic words for beliefs that may not be so precisely true, and institutions that are not altogether so useful as some might think possible; his cordiality toward progress and improvement in a general way and his coldness or antipathy to each progressive proposal in particular.”


Payne-Aldrich Tariff favored the eastern industrial interests and left the rates too high. Taft had promised in his campaign speeches to address the tariff issue, but he had not been specific about whether tariffs needed raising or lowering. The general populous assumed he meant to lower tariffs, which would be consistent with progressive ideology. When the Payne bill, which was a real attempt at a downward revision, did well in the house, progressives were happy. Nearly 200 revisions were made in the bill, most of them lowering tariffs even further. When Nelson Aldrich proposed the “new and improved” bill in the Senate, it unexpectedly increased tariff custom rates for sugar, iron & steel goods, cottons, hosiery, lumber and a host of fabricated items. Since Taft, unlike Roosevelt, did not believe in stretching Presidential powers, he did not lend support to either side of the tariff debates when the controversy began. Soon Taft was caught in the middle of an intense battle between progressives and conservatives. As the tariff debates grew bitter in the Senate; the progressive attack on Aldrich grew violent. “Taft’s own conservatism and his increasing fondness for Aldrich personally led him to associate the criticism [of Aldrich and the Payne bill] with himself.” Taft failed to support progressive senators that criticized the overall higher tariffs resulting from many of the 847 amendments tacked on the bill. Taft’s salt-in-the-wound to progressives was his statement that the bill was “on the whole…the best bill that the Republican Party ever passed.”

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99 Nash, 637
100 Mowry, 49-52
101 Ibid, 56-57.
After hearing of the tariff debacle, Mr. Theodore Roosevelt said he thought the administration had “come out as well as we could hope on the tariff question.”

Therefore, at the end of 1909 Theodore Roosevelt was still satisfied with Taft’s administration, although later he recanted and used the tariff issue in criticism against Taft. Taft appointed or retained 31 Negroes in Federal positions which disappointed much of the black community including Francis J. Grimke’ who supported Wilson in 1912.

Conventional historic reasoning for the rift between Theodore Roosevelt and Taft is that Roosevelt was displeased with Taft choosing his own cabinet, turning his back on conservation of natural resources and refusing to continue Henry White as ambassador to France. However, George E. Mowry suggests that the disintegration of Roosevelt and Taft’s relationship was not caused by Taft’s failure to support conservation or appointing his own cabinet. Mowry directs us to look at Taft’s ambitious wife, Helen “Nellie” Herron Taft, who was anxious to distance her husband from Theodore Roosevelt. Mowry asserts that Nellie continually snubbed Edith (Theodore’s wife), Ethel (Theodore’s daughter from his second marriage) and Alice Roosevelt (Theodore’s daughter from his first marriage) once Nellie became first lady. Fiery Alice returned hostilities towards “Nellie” thereby feeding the growing animosity. Meanwhile William Taft’s brother, Charles, sent unfriendly newspaper clippings and antagonistic letters to

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103 Mowry, 124.
104 Ibid.
Theodore in Africa. 106 Mowry’s contention is that a private “falling out” between the Taft and Roosevelt families preceded and possibly led to a public political falling out. This perspective is in contrast or ignored by the official White House Website that refers to Nellie’s “brilliance” in the social arena of Washington. 107 Coinciding with these interpersonal difficulties with the Roosevelt women was Nellie’s stroke. 108

The first national forests were set aside to protect watersheds, not timber. Gifford Pinchot became head of the Forest Service in 1900 and believed forests should be scientifically managed so that time production was balanced against other uses. 109 Taft further antagonized Progressives by dismissing Gifford Pinchot and upholding his Secretary of the Interior, who was accused of failing to carry out Roosevelt’s conservation policies.

In 1912, when the Republicans re-nominated Taft, Roosevelt bolted from the party to lead the Progressive Party, thus guaranteeing the election of Woodrow Wilson. Roosevelt’s decision to exclude southern Negroes from the Progressive Bull Moose Party convention in 1912 turned W. H. Lewis and other Northern Negroes against Teddy Roosevelt and the new Progressive party. 110

106 Ibid. 120-123. James R. Garfield and Luke Wright were the displaced cabinet members in addition to Henry White.
107 The White House Website.
108 Women in History. Helen Herron Taft biography. August 11 2005. Lakewood Public Library. 22 October 2005. <http://www.lkwdpl.org/wihohio/taft-hel.htm>. Helen’s stroke was in mid-May 1909, she suffered a major stroke while on the presidential yacht, paralyzing her left side and leaving her unable to speak. This site mentions nothing about the Roosevelt women, but some stroke victims grow more narrow-minded or stubborn after a stroke. Perhaps this was a contributing factor in any misunderstanding.
110 Leslie H. Fishel, Jr. and Benjamin Quarles, The Negro American: A Documentary History (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co, 1967) page W. H. Lewis was a graduate of Amherst College and held a law degree from Harvard. Roosevelt had consulted him in 1900 after winning his Republican vice
president nomination. Lewis was the only colored Federal office holder to defend Roosevelt when Theodore discharged the Brownsville soldiers.
WOODROW WILSON AS A PROGRESSIVE ON DOMESTIC ISSUES

Woodrow Wilson was a strong Democratic governor in New Jersey, promoting successful reform movements, such as putting through a direct primary. As governor, he moved his desk from the traditional area to be “more accessible to every citizen who walked in.” Wilson did a great deal to improve laws protecting women and childcare in New Jersey, and rallied many women behind him in the presidential election. (338) “Progressivism in the states, like progressivism everywhere had mixed results. But the spirit of reform that swept the country was real, progressive movements on the local level did eventually have an impact on Washington.” One advantage that Wilson had that was not available to Roosevelt was that Wilson's party had a majority of seventy-three in the House during the critical first two years of his administration. Although Beal insinuates that it took all of Wilson’s oratory powers and charm as an orator to pull the Democrats together to pass his legislation.

Wilson’s entire inaugural address contained only 1500 words, one of the shortest ever given. The address was truly inspiring and of a progressive nature. In speaking of prosperity, he continued:

But evil has come with good. With riches has come inexcusable waste. The great government we loved had too often been made use of for private and selfish purposes, and those who used it have forgotten the people. There has been something crude and heartless and unfeeling in our haste to succeed and be great.

111 Smith, 316.
112 Nash 631 & 638.
Reformers took heart from Wilson’s address that went further than any other in acknowledging the deplorable social conditions under which so many Americans, especially immigrants lived.\textsuperscript{113} The successful showing of the Democratic Party over the Progressive Party in the election of 1912 did not dampen the nation’s zest for progressivism. At least six prominent former Bull Moose Party members were elected to the senate and six more won gubernatorial races.\textsuperscript{114} Yet Roosevelt could not support Wilson. Some said it was his pride and the pettiness of his personality that kept him from supporting Wilson after his own defeat. Page Smith explains that Roosevelt could not back Wilson because TR truly believed that the Democrats were the embodiment of evil.\textsuperscript{115}

Kessner believes Wilson considered himself a progressive in every sense of the word and a sharp contrast to Taft.\textsuperscript{116} He sees him as the third in line of the progressive presidents. Gayle Olson Raymer does not see Woodrow Wilson as the third progressive President, but as the second after Theodore Roosevelt. Olson Raymer does agree with Kessner that Woodrow Wilson was quite conservative in many areas. She goes on to say that, “The revisionist historians would say neither [Roosevelt nor Wilson] were ‘progressive’ in the contemporary sense of the term, but rather, just shook things up a bit.”\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{113} Smith, 405.  
\textsuperscript{114} Smith, 338.  
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 331  
\textsuperscript{116} Kessner, Lecture.  
\textsuperscript{117} Gayle Olson Raymer, personal email 9 July 2005.
Wilson became president in 1913 with an emphasis on domestic reform, not foreign policy. After war broke out in Europe in 1914, American domestic prosperity was tied to extending vital economic aide to the Allies through munitions, wheat, cotton and beef.\textsuperscript{118} As Arthur S. Link points out, Woodrow Wilson campaigned with promises to destroy monopolies and restore free competition with the “New Freedom Plan.” Yet Link is critical that there was no real “trust busting” during the early Wilson administration. Steinberg argues that Wilson was just tackling each of his three points of the New Freedom one at a time.

First, Wilson undid the damage of Taft’s Payne-Aldrich Act with his Underwood Tariff Bill. The Underwood Tariff Act passed in 1913. It was the first tariff cut in nineteen years; it lowered rates about fifteen percent and removed duties from sugar, wool, and several other consumer goods. Link and Devine agree that most progressives thought the Underwood Tariff was a step in the right direction.\textsuperscript{119}

Steinberg believes that Wilson’s next step in fulfilling the second plank of his “New Freedom” was establishing the Federal Reserve Banks in twelve zones to reduce corruption in private banks. The regional banks answered to a Federal Reserve Board, appointed by the President, which governed the nationwide system. Page Smith observes that “Wilson’s administration was able to do what the Populists had called for twenty years earlier: an elastic currency that could respond to need for credit and that could not be manipulated by private banks.”\textsuperscript{120} The progressives viewed the Federal Reserve

\textsuperscript{118} Dulles, 83-107.
\textsuperscript{119} Divine, 730.
\textsuperscript{120} Smith, 410.
Board with mixed reactions. Robert M. La Follette, the ardent progressive Republican leader, and others liked him denounced the Federal Reserve Board because it still allowed a tremendous amount of private control. Middle of the road progressives approved of the Federal Reserve Banks and Board seeing them as the beginning of regulation. Link feels that Wilson’s concessions to the progressive concept were made under duress, and that the middle of the road progressives of the time realized that Wilson’s actions in this instance were not the result of any genuine progressive convictions on his part. McGerr’s assessment is that Wilson’s establishing of the Federal Reserve Banks was politically motivated and successfully played on Americans’ fears of “Money Trusts” and big banks controlling the Nation’s economy. Conservatives were outraged by the creation of the Federal Reserve Banks. Elihu Root, a conservative Republican, said it was this type of idea that brought the downfall of nations.121

Steinberg’s argument is that since Wilson had completed the first two planks of his New Freedom, it was now time to respond to the public clamor against trusts, and tackle them as his third plank. It is this issue of trusts, monopoly and money that has received much attention from historians and begs comparison to Roosevelt. Kessner asserts that Wilson “studied at regulation” and control of big business instead of doing anything about it. Some historians believe that, whereas Roosevelt wanted to use federal power to regulate trusts and monopolies, Wilson wanted to break them up into smaller units, thereby restoring more competition in the marketplace. Many historians believe that difference of opinion in the role competition should play in the marketplace was the

121 McGerr, 163-164.
difference between Theodore Roosevelt’s “New Nationalism” and Woodrow Wilson’s “New Freedom.” As Wilson himself said, “I am for big business, and I am against the trusts.” Historians differ in where Wilson’s emphasis lies. Resek points out that “to many progressives the hope of going back to an economy of small producers - Woodrow Wilson’s ‘New Freedom’- appeared a false, impractical ideal.” Resek continues that by the onset of World War I, Wilson also had given up on breaking up the corporations he depended upon to continue the war effort.

In November of 1913, Wilson was ready to start on his anti-trust legislation and consulted with Democratic leaders in Congress. Most Democrats supported dusting off the Sherman Act and amending it. At this point, Roosevelt viewed anti-trust actions as throwbacks to the past. LaFeber contents that Wilson disapproved of the inefficiency of trusts and blamed them for inflation; but was not going to go on any rampage to control them. LaFeber states that Wilson sought to undermine trusts by stripping them of “special privileges” believing trusts would fall under their own weight. A few Democrats and most progressives, including Theodore Roosevelt, wanted an independent trade commission with greater authority and the ability of suppressing unfair competition. While touting his “New Freedom Plan,” Wilson stated that government should intervene in the economy only to the point of restoring competition (in contrast to Roosevelt’s “New Nationalism”). Link believes Wilson disappointed progressives by pressing ahead with his “New Freedom Plan” embodied in the form of the Clayton bill. The Clayton Act

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122 O’Neill, 130.
123 Resek, xxvi.
forbade price-fixing agreements and in some instances made it illegal for corporations to control the stock of another corporation. The act also gave rights to labor by stating that, “labor organizations shall not be held to be illegal combinations or conspiracies in restricting trade.”

But “big business” was against rights for labor and did not want a bill outlawing practices without a regulatory commission. Beal and O’Neil believe Wilson wanted to pacify big business with regulated competition. During the following year, progressives of his day saw Wilson’s letting go of the Clayton bill and allowing it to languish in congress as merely supporting big business. Once Wilson decided on benevolent regulation, he backed the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Wilson originally intended for the Federal Trade Commission to be a companion to the Clayton Act and to prevent “unfair competition” in interstate commerce. The Federal Trade Commission was to enforce fair trade practices, and conservatives called the FTC “socialistic,” and radicals called it a “tool of big business.” Backing the Federal Trade Commission was a move that temporarily pleased progressives, until Wilson and the Senate appointed incompetent and/or thoroughly business-minded commissioners who spurned the role of watchdog. In his selection of commissioners, Wilson came out as a champion and defender of big business. All too soon the FTC was a tool of big business and, like other regulatory agencies, was in cahoots with the very interests it was supposed to restrain. The Clayton act also made a gesture toward exempting labor unions

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125 Steinberg, 126.
126 Ibid.
127 O’Neill, 130.
128 Link
from persecution when demanding their rights, but later the Supreme Court found the wording ambiguous enough to rule certain kinds of strikes and boycotts illegal.

In personal letters, Wilson lashed out at progressives; Link agrees with the chief editor of the *New Republic*, Herbert Croly, who stated that Woodrow Wilson’s progressivism was superficial. They agree that Wilson was intelligent and sincere, but hardly a progressive. Link states that Wilson was not a blatant progressive in the years between 1913-1915. With the upcoming election in 1916, Wilson believed that the best leadership for the country would come from his Democratic Party and that the Democrats needed to stay in power at all costs. Link and Blum agree that Wilson believed the only way the Democrats could ensure their continued leadership was to win progressives who had fallen away, after the Bull Moose Party lost to the Democratic Party in 1912. Suddenly Wilson was a progressive: lowering tariffs, reorganizing the currency and banking system, and strengthening the antitrust laws. Link believes that Wilson did what he had promised albeit minimally, to ensure an additional term in office. Blum believes instead that Wilson’s actions demonstrated his understanding that he must consider both the progressive and conservative ideologies.

Link does not believe Wilson was a progressive and certainly not an “advanced progressive.” Dulles points out that the “advanced progressives” believed in the malleability of human nature. They were utopians who believed that as educated people “they” could pursue honest selfless leadership. These white middle and upper class reformers suffered from elitism by the very fact that they believed that they knew what was best for everyone. Perhaps in Wilson’s uncompromising promotion of the League of
Nations, by Dulles’ definition, Wilson was an advanced progressive. However, Walter LaFeber might contend that Wilson’s Calvinist training shaped his political outlook. LaFeber suggests that once Wilson cast an idea in terms of moral terms or defined something as good or evil he would not compromise.\textsuperscript{129} Sievers agrees citing Wilson’s 1919 fight over the League of Nations as another example.

Both Wilson’s wives were helpful to his political career. Blum contends that Wilson’s first wife, Ellen, had a thoughtfulness that made Wilson considerate beyond his inclinations and helped bridge Wilson’s atrophied ability for social intimacy. Page Smith offers an example of Ellen’s charm in a description of a scene at a dinner party with William Jennings Bryan. Wilson viewed Bryan as a Populist whose political power days in the Democratic Party were long past. Despite her husband’s opinion, first Mrs. Wilson uses this social setting to win Bryan’s support for her husband.\textsuperscript{130} This support secured Wilson the presidential candidacy of the Democratic Party at the convention in Baltimore over James Beauchamp Clark for the 1912 election.\textsuperscript{131} Blum contends Ellen’s death in 1914-left Wilson emotionally crippled.\textsuperscript{132}

Blum suggests that in sharp contrast to Ellen, Wilson’s second wife, Edith, resented those who shared Wilson’s confidences. There is always the question of how much Edith Wilson steered policy and the country after her husband’s series of strokes. Smith states that for a whole year after his stroke he was unable to write with his right

\textsuperscript{129} LaFeber, 59.
\textsuperscript{130} Smith, 319.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 325-326.
\textsuperscript{132} Blum, 118.
hand.\textsuperscript{133} At one point, he needed assistance to sign his name.\textsuperscript{134} In Edith’s memoirs she contends that she was merely a vehicle to convey Wilson’s decisions. Her memoirs deny that the funneling of only issues she deemed important enough to bring before the President steered policy. Edith was never a Suffragist and disliked their noisy ways. She was especially upset when Suffragists marched around the White House, demanding that the President support their cause.\textsuperscript{135} Blum asserts that Wilson disguised his dislike for suffragettes by suggesting that women’s voting rights was a state issue.\textsuperscript{136} Minnie Bronson thought it was below the office of the Presidency “that the President of the United States would under cover assist a proposition which he had publicly and unqualifiedly repudiated.”\textsuperscript{137} However, Steinberg contends that Wilson approved of suffragists and appeared before the Senate to urge approval of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Theodore Roosevelt consistently supported child welfare legislation and a minimum wage for women. Roosevelt did not believe that being poor reflected some kind of moral failure on the part of the poor. This is in sharp contrast to Wilson who equated being poor with being morally bankrupt. Wilson did not support paternalistic measure to ease the “evils” of the industrial age, which puts him in opposition with most

\textsuperscript{133} Smith, 318.
\textsuperscript{134} Steinberg, 127.
\textsuperscript{135} James Cross Giblin, \textit{Edith Wilson: The Woman Who Ran the United States} (New York: Viking, 1992), 17-37. Wilson’s first stroke was in Pueblo, Colorado in 1919 during the \textit{Presidential Special} tour by rail. By October 1, 1919, Woodrow felt better; then another stroke hit and he lost the feeling in his left hand. On October 2, Woodrow suffered a stroke that paralyzed the left side of his body. There were still approximately 18 months left of his second term as president.
\textsuperscript{136} Blum, 116-117.
\textsuperscript{137} Schneider, 167-168. Bronson was the general secretary of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage.
But as part of his quest for progressive votes in 1916 he supported low-interest loans to farmers and asked the Senate to approve a child-labor bill that had already cleared the House. After making these overtures to agrarians and reformers he then wooed labor by urging Congress to pass the Adamson act, which gave an eight-hour workday to railroad workers. In the 1916 election, 3 million more people voted for Wilson than had in 1912 including the New Nationalist Progressives who “approved of the direction his administration had taken in 1916.”

Wilson was less progressive than Roosevelt in the matter of race. Although Steinberg relates a story of Wilson complementing Booker T. Washington on making a better speech than Wilson had when he was inaugurated as President of Princeton, it was not a secret that Wilson was not supportive of racial integration. Surprisingly, Wilson’s father was a champion of African American rights and invited blacks to join his church. Perhaps Wilson’s racism was the result of his boyhood roots in the South, or perhaps it was because Wilson felt he needed to occasionally submit to the wishes of Southern congressional representatives. Blum explains that Wilson’s racism applied not only to African Americans but also the “yellow man or brown man” or anyone whose accent was strange. In California, Wilson suggested phrasing the Japanese-American bill as inoffensively as possible, but he was not opposed to it. Like most white Americans of

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138 LaFeber, 60.
139 LaFeber, 62.
140 Blum, ibid.
the time, Wilson saw no contradiction between his religious convictions and his racial practices.\footnote{LaFeber, 59.}

In terms of racial integration, Wilson undid the limited progress made by his predecessor Theodore Roosevelt. Most Progressives were indifferent to racism and segregationists, mirroring the attitude of the majority of whites during this era. Serber points out that in the fiftieth celebration of the end of the Civil War in 1915 hosted by Wilson, he invited no blacks: not even from the highly honored Massachusetts 54th all black regiment. Serber points out that snubbing 10\% of the fighting force from the Civil War illustrates that Wilson was definitely not a social progressive. Link stresses that in Wilson’s era there was a dearth of passion for social justice. During the campaign of 1912, Wilson appealed for African American support to the extent that Oswald Garrison Villard (white), William E. B. Du Bois and W. M. Trotter (both black) worked toward his election. Du Bois was a member of the Socialist party in 1911 but supported Wilson in 1912 because Du Bois was convinced that the Socialists were almost as indifferent to the plight of black Americans as the capitalists were.\footnote{Smith, 177.} More African Americans supported Woodrow Wilson in 1912 than had ever voted for a Democratic presidential candidate. The majority of African Americans’ attitude changed from eager anticipation to dismay and bitterness as Wilson’s attitudes on race unfolded.

Soon after Wilson’s election Villard visited him at the White House and presented Wilson with the concept of a National Race Commission to study the problems of race relations in the United States. Villard left the White House under the impression that the
commission would be created. When nothing had happened by July, Villard repeatedly attempted to see Wilson, to no avail. When Villard appealed to the President in personal terms, he was told that Wilson was not supporting the commission for fear of losing Southern votes in Congress for his legislation. Likewise, William Monroe Trotter received promises from Wilson in 1912 that Wilson would support African Americans. Wilson treated Trotter shabbily in 1914 when the latter attempted to talk to Wilson about the intrinsic problems of segregation in Washington.¹⁴³

Link further establishes Wilson’s desertion of blacks by describing his avid support of white Southerners’ demands for segregation in governmental departments and public services, and the “dismissal or down-grading of Negro civil servants.”¹⁴⁴ The U.S. Post Office in Atlanta discharged thirty-five African Americans. When “‘there are no Government positions for Negroes in the South,’ the Collector of Internal Revenue in Georgia announced, ‘A Negro’s place is in the cornfield.’” The South was riding high again in Washington for the first time since the Civil War.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Fishel, This was in the report of an interview between Woodrow Wilson and a committee of the National Independence Equal Rights League, headed by William Monroe Trotter, November 12, 1914. Trotter was an advocate of equal rights and the editor of the Boston Guardian. He was a black born and bred in Massachusetts and a Phi Beta Kappa from Harvard. He was an ardent supporter in Wilson’s 1912 campaign.
¹⁴⁴ Link, 64.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 65.
PROGRESSIVISM DRAWS TO A CLOSE

The power of the Progressives ended after Wilson’s administration. The Nation, tired of idealism, was thankful for President Warren G. Harding. Wilson asked for a constant idealism from the populace, especially in regards to the establishment of the League of Nations. This idealism made Wilson appear to be more of a progressive than he actually was.

Progressivism was faltering even before 1920. The First World War was death to the progressive movement. There was new emphasis on efficiency in government, and on government working with business by privatizing public corporations. As Wilson and the Nation were drawn into the European conflict, the American spirit of social reform lost momentum. It is hard for any country to concentrate on both war and reform simultaneously. By 1936, there was still a strong progressive bloc within the Republican Party that supported isolationism, backed the “New Deal,” and helped to make up the New Deal majority. But even enthusiasm for the New Deal diminished after 1940 with growing tensions in Europe. By 1941, some Midwest progressives were represented in the America First Committee which promoted isolationism. But, like the early progressives with their divergent and sometimes opposing views, America First had an extremely diverse and political extremist membership consisting of progressives, noninterventionists, anti-Semites, Roosevelt-haters, Coughlinites and fascists.  

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146 Rod Sievers, Lecture to Teachers of American History, Arcata High School, Arcata, California, 9 September 2005.
147 Dulles, 83-107.
Albert Beveridge from Indiana summarized the progressive ideals in his opening address at the 1912 Progressive Party Convention. “We stand for a nobler America. We stand for an undivided nation. We stand for a broader liberty, a fuller justice. We stand for social brotherhood as against savage industrialism. We stand for intelligent co-operation instead of a reckless competition… We stand for equal rights as a fact of life instead of a catchword of politics. We stand for the rule of the people as a practical truth instead of a meaningless pretence. We stand for a representative government that represents the people. We battle for the actual rights of man.”

What unified progressives was not their solutions to social or economic problems, but their agreement that they existed. Beveridge’s summary of the ideals behind progressivism is a good one. Leon Fink believes that progressivism was the first and only reform movement that drew widespread interest from the American public. He contends this interest was due mostly to widely distributed magazines that brought (to the morning breakfast table) knowledge of young girls trying to escape the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, ten-year-old boys working in dangerous factory conditions and the almost unfathomable wealth of J.P. Morgan.

Historians do not agree how to label Roosevelt: as a progressive, a conservative or a radical. Perhaps the reason for the controversy over the true nature of Roosevelt’s politics is due to his tendency to neutralize his positions by making contradictory comments in his speeches connected with phrases such as “on the other hand.” As Smith puts it, “He sounded progressive one minute and reactionary the next as he alternately scowled and

148 Smith, 334.
149 Fink, 315-330.
smiled at muckraking and money making, allowing that there were good and bad varieties of each.”

Smith contends that Theodore Roosevelt’s role in this ongoing American dichotomy was a dramatic focal point that allowed for a perceived national coherence.

Progressivism helped to bring about a change in how Americans participated in government. Before the efforts of the many reform movements and special interest groups voting and running for office were the only ways to be involved in government. Voting was difficult for blacks and immigrants. Interest groups provided them with a means to participate in the government. These reform groups spread propaganda, hired lobbyists, and put pressure on public officials. These groups also allowed women to participate in American politics as never before. After 1906, the growing number of direct primaries reduced the power, and therefore the abuses, of party bosses. Regulatory boards and commissions provided new ways for interest groups to interact with government. Ressek promotes the idea that the two most effective and long lasting contributions of the Progressive Era were the creation and/or strengthening of regulatory agencies, and the pioneering of the passage of laws to protect consumers and labor from the excesses of those motivated purely by profit.

The term “progressive” evokes the idea of enlightened, farsighted and positive change. Progressivism was a combination of grass roots desire for change and the desire of middle class liberals to preserve their economic stature while alleviating their guilt about less fortunate citizens. Dozens of causes were part of the Progressive Era. Perhaps, as McGerr states, the crusading progressivism of the middleclass was aimed at utopianism and

150 Morris, 444
151 Resek, xxvii.
that aim led to an inevitable letdown from unrealistic expectations. These middle class reformers did not just want to redesign government; they wanted to transform all Americans into middle class citizens with the same ideology.

Page Smith thinks it is obvious that progressivism was rooted deeply in the Protestant American psyche. He argues that it was the “Protestant Passion” that brought about the Revolutionary War and the anti-slavery movement. Protestants who came to America were infused with the passion for making a better life for themselves and others, and they had children. Through the years, their ideals and passion passed to subsequent generations, influencing the progressives. Leon Fink believes that much of the zeal for progressive reforms came from the evangelical mindset that needed to purge the world of sin: not just intemperance, but also the evils brought about by the industrialization of the cities. Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider agree that Roosevelt’s optimism was echoed in the major Protestant denominations. The early 1900s were a time of emotion charged revivals of both religious content and social reform.152 Religious zealots were not alone in attempting to alleviate suffering and to bring about social justice.

Many leading reformers considered themselves social scientists and thought they could remedy social evils by rational measures. Progressives tried new ideas to contain the negative side of industrialism. While accepting industry as an unavoidable evil, they tried to mitigate the human suffering associated with it. They adhered to the general assumption that government could be trusted to carry out social reforms. In reality, government bureaucracy did not contain enough magical power to right all the wrongs advanced by progressives.

152 Schneider, 13.
Progressivism in general fell short of its targets because it sought to do too much for too many special interest groups. It was also easier to point out what was wrong with industrialization than to solve the problems surrounding it. Progressives also failed because the politicians implementing reforms never intended to go as far as the grassroots organizers had hoped. Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson were all politicians and as such, whatever agendas they had always required an adjustment to the political realities of both party survival and public pressure. Congress and its many varied constituents, many of whom were not interested in the progressive legislation that was put forth by the presidents, was also a mitigating factor when examining how “progressive” each president truly was. Presidents, even strong presidents like Roosevelt and Wilson, could not ignore those political realities. Progressive reformers were bound to be disappointed by what the presidents accomplished, but it is remarkable that they passed as much progressive legislation as they did, even in its diluted form.\(^\text{153}\)

The diverse group of people referred to as progressives of the early 1900s did not find the right wand or magical concoction of government intervention, science and administration to solve all the political scandals and tragic social calamities present in America. Social challenges faced during the Progressive Era seem eerily echoed in twenty first century America. Social injustices and political scandals persist. It takes more than progressive sentiment and a trip to Ollivander’s (Maker of Fine Wands since 382 B.C.) with seven Galleons\(^\text{154}\) to find the right wand to correct the injustices that plaque our nation.

\(^\text{153}\) Sievers, personal correspondence 1/5/2006.
\(^\text{154}\) J.K. Rowling. Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone.(Mexico, Scholastic Press, 1997) this is a reference from the Harry Potter series harkening back to the introduction which asserted that the progressives needed a magic wand to solve all the ills of society.
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LESSON PLAN

California State Social Studies Standards

8.12  Students analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in the United States in response to the Industrial Revolution.

8.12.3  • Explain how states and the federal government encouraged business expansion through tariffs, banking, land grants, and subsidies.

8.12.4  • Discuss entrepreneurs, industrialists, and bankers in politics, commerce, and industry (e.g., Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Leland Stanford).

8.12.5  • Examine the location and effects of urbanization, renewed immigration, and industrialization (e.g., the effects on social fabric of cities, wealth and economic opportunity, the conservation movement).

8.12.6  • Discuss child labor, working conditions, and laissez-faire policies toward big business, and examine the labor movement, including its leaders (e.g., Samuel Gompers), its demand for collective bargaining, and its strikes and protests over labor conditions.

8.12.7  • Identify the new sources of large-scale immigration and the contributions of immigrants to the building of cities and the economy; explain the ways in which new social and economic patterns encouraged assimilation of newcomers into the mainstream amidst growing cultural diversity; and discuss the new wave of nativism.

8.12.8  • Identify the characteristics and impact of Grangerism and Populism.
Prior Content Knowledge and Skills:

1. It is helpful if students know about the Gilded Age (1868-1898) but it is not required.
2. Students should have a good grasp of the order of the presidents: McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson

Teacher Prep Work:

1. Announce and encourage students to bring in pictures or posters of people they admire for the designated day. **We will be discussing people we admire. Please bring in ideas or pictures of people you admire to share.**
2. The seasoned teacher will also have some pictures or posters that students who could not think of anyone or did not quite “get it” can choose so they can still take part. Spread out pictures and posters on the front table. A rich collection of both contemporary and historic people from politics, sports, music and other entertainment industries will hook the kids.
3. Write the passage by Page Smith on the whiteboard, chalkboard, or overhead, print it in a handout or read it aloud. “As Roosevelt approached the end of his second term of office [in 1907], he was not only far and away the most dominant figure in the United States, but the best known and, by all odds, the most admired individual in the world. Not since Abraham Lincoln had there been a public figure so universally acclaimed. Kings and emperors could not hold a candle to the cowboy President…” (Page Smith: 184.) Appendix C contains a large print version. The British politician and biographer John Morley said of Roosevelt, “He is not an American you know, he is America.” (Page Smith: 213.) Roosevelt went on an African safari after his 2nd term of office, and then followed that with a tour of Europe. He was surprised that everywhere he went he drove through “dense throngs of people cheering and calling…there is great enthusiasm for me.” At first Roosevelt was puzzled by this admiration but later concluded that he “must appeal to people’s imagination…as a leader whom they suppose to represent democracy, liberty, honesty and justice.”
4. Procure the song lyrics and recordings of *Big Bad John* by Jimmy Dean, *Sixteen Tons* by Tennessee Ernie Ford, and *Coal Miner’s Daughter* by Loretta Lynn. The easiest way to get lyrics is to type the name of the song into an Internet search engine, such as Google, followed by a comma and the word “lyrics.” Many of these sites have both lyrics and audio recordings.
5. Make copies of the song lyrics and graphic organizer for the coal songs, Appendix D. Alternatively, if you prefer, write the material on the board or overhead and have students copy it down. Make copies of the Temperance Rallying Song, Appendix A.
6. For day three: If students do not have access to the following websites, then the teacher will need to prepare the material ahead of time as handouts.
7. For day four: Procure the song lyrics and recordings of George Jones’ *White Lightning*.
8. For day five: procure a Monopoly board game.
9. For week two: procure visuals of child labor for option two of evaluation.

**Lesson Content**

*Day 1 Objective: acquaint students with struggles coal miners faced as an introduction to labor issues faced at the turn of the century.*

1. As students enter the room, encourage them to get out their picture/poster or choose one from the front table. There will be a rise in noise level as students discuss their choices with their friends on the way to their seats. This is good noise. Break the class into groups to share the pictures they brought in or chose from the front table. After students share briefly about people they admire, have students record on butcher paper or construction paper. **What they value about their people? What qualities does that person have that makes you look up to them?**
2. Students share the commonalities they have recorded with the rest of the class.
3. The teachers should share the passage from Page Smith about the world admiring Theodore Roosevelt in whatever manner they feel comfortable. After students have all had a chance to read or hear this quote ask them to respond to the following prompt and/or the ideas presented by Smith individually in their journal or on a sheet of paper. **People admired Roosevelt for his honesty, hard work and gusto for life. Everyone admires different qualities in people. What do you admire in your friends and other people?** This should take 5-15 minutes depending upon the sophistication of your particular group.
4. Afterwards have students brainstorm what they admire in people on the board or overhead. **Now we are going to brainstorm some of the qualities you admire in people and record your ideas on the board.**
5. Choose two to three students to record ideas on the board (it works best if you choose fluent writers with good spelling so that others do not ridicule or belittle their notes). Save some space on the board or large poster paper for additional brainstorming in #3. Again, this can take 5 to 15 minutes depending on how often your class does this kind of activity.
6. Hand out the song lyrics prior to playing Big Bad John by Jimmy Dean, Sixteen Tons by Tennessee Ernie Ford, and Coal Miner’s Daughter by Loretta Lynn for the students. (It is surprising how many students have trouble understanding lyrics the first time around to songs with which they are unfamiliar.)
7. Distribute copies of the graphic organizer from Appendix D for coal mining songs. **As you listen to the song, Sixteen Tons, fill in the rectangle next to each of the questions in the graphic organizer.**

8. Afterward Sixteen Tons is played have students write notes on the lyrics you have provided them. **Please look at your lyric sheet for Sixteen Tons. Underline the lyrics that gave you clues to what the singer admired which was the second rectangle on your graphic organizer. If you didn’t have time to jot down what visual images you heard in the song, take time now to read through the lyrics and circle the visual images on your lyric sheet and then write in any additions you’d like to make to the third rectangle of your chart. Star lyrics that gave clues as to what the singer expected from daily life.**

9. While allowing time for students to respond to Sixteen Tons and review lyric sheets, play the song a second time. Depending on your classroom management style, either collect the papers for use tomorrow or ask students to bring the papers with them to the next class period.

**Day 2 Objective:** continue to investigate struggles coal miners faced and connect this to 1902 coal strike.

1. Hand out graphic organizer and lyric sheets the students completed yesterday for Sixteen Tons so they can complete the section for Big John and Coal Miner’s Daughter. **Please look at your lyric sheet for Big John and Coal Miner’s Daughter. As I play the song, please underline the lyrics that give you clues to what the singer admired. I will play the song twice to give time to jot down what visual images you hear in the song. Circle the visual images on your lyric sheet. Remember to fill in the graphic organizer for each song. Star lyrics that gave clues as to what the singer expected from daily life.**

2. Play the songs while students fill out the sheets.

3. Lead a discussion to help students process what it might be like to work in a coal mine at the turn of the century. Have students popcorn the answers to some of the following questions. Try to help students listen to the message of the lyrics and not just the beat of the music. Many middle school students are misled that Coal Miner’s Daughter is a happy song about mining because it is sung in a more jaunty way. **As I ask you the following questions, remember to support your opinion with actual lyrics from the songs. What do these mining people admire? What are the singer’s expectations of daily life? Why do you think the songs have religious references?**

4. If you use Armento, Beverly J. et al., eds., *A More Perfect Union* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), in your classroom have students turn to page 499. There is a painting there by George Bellows. George Bellows
belonged to a 20\textsuperscript{th} century group of painters known as the Ash Can School. These artists portrayed slum living conditions, back alleys, garbage cans and other realistic aspects of poverty. Have students compare the images from the mining songs to Bellow’s images. \textbf{Do the mining songs we’ve been listening to have any similarities with George Bellows painting? What expectations of daily life do you think the people in the picture have?}

5. Remind students that President Theodore Roosevelt was the first progressive president. Read the passage about coal mining from Exploring the Progressive Movement through the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson aloud to the students.

Roosevelt’s historic support for striking mineworkers occurred in 1902. The miners struck for shorter hours and higher wages at a time when most homes were heated with coal. The owners of the mine were willing to sit the strike out until miners were unable financially to continue. After a five-month stand off between John Mitchell, president of the United Mine Workers, and George Baer, leader of the coalmine owners, Roosevelt called for a conference at the temporary White House on Jackson Place. At the brink of winter, Roosevelt did not want coal prices to be driven up for the American people. By gathering four labor representatives and six mine owners under one roof, Roosevelt succeeded in reaping a rush of popular approval from Democrats, Republicans and Progressives. He managed an agreement for a review of grievances by an “impartial” commission with the help of J. P. Morgan and Elihu Root. When the mine owners indicated that they intended to walk out of the negotiations, Roosevelt threatened to have the army take over the mines. That threat ended the stalemate and the strike was over. It was the first time in United States history that a president intervened in a strike on the side of labor.

6. Ask clarifying questions of the students after reading to check for understanding. \textbf{What was the main reason Roosevelt wanted the miners to go back to work? Why was Roosevelt meeting with the miners and mine owners memorable?}

7. Please write a sentence about Roosevelt and the 1902 coal strike on the back of your graphic organizer. Please write a sentence about George Bellow’s painting on the back of your graphic organizer. Depending on your classroom management style, either collect the papers for use tomorrow or ask students to bring the papers with them to the next class period.
Day 3 Objective: explore the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire tragedy and working conditions of sweatshops in New York.

1. Have students use computers to access the following websites to read materials or prepare them ahead of time as handouts. George Grantham Bain Collection (Library of Congress) Photos available in Appendix E and there is no known restriction on copying them.

http://www.csun.edu/~ghy7463/mw2.html (summary with pictures)

http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/texts/stein_ootss/ootss_cl.html (from a working girl’s perspective)

http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/texts/stein_ootss/ootss_sg.html (introduces Gompers and the Cooper Union Meeting)

2. Students may also enjoy reading a hard copy of Minute by Minute: The World’s Account of the Triangle Fire by Reporter William Gunn Shepherd who raced to a nearby telephone at the start of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire on March 26, 1911 to give his editor at the New York World the story as it unfolded.

3. To help students relate to the era and tragedy of the Triangle Fire break the students into groups of four and ask them the following focus questions about the photos from Appendix F.
   a. Examine the clothing of the people in the crowd. How is the dress of 1911 similar or different from that of today?
   b. What would cause so many people to gather in the street?

4. After students report back to the class about the similarities and differences of dress and guesses as to why people were gathered in the street. Share the following information. The Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory was in the middle of a very densely populated area of New York and the fire attracted thousands of people to the site. The day after the fire, many people came to the factory and also to the temporary morgue on 26th Street. Some came out of curiosity. Some were relatives or friends of victims of the fire trying to identify bodies. In the first 24 hours over 100,000 people walked through the rows of coffins on the piers.

5. Have students respond in writing to the material. Two possible writing prompts are:
   a. 1. Free response to written material read about the Triangle Fire.
   b. 2. Did the Triangle Fire serve a purpose? What happened because of it?
Day 4 Objective: acquaint students with the idea that progressives included a wide range of people wanting different reforms. This day has an emphasis on the Temperance Movement.

1. Hand out copies of Appendix H which is an excerpt from Exploring the Progressive Movement through the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson aloud to the students.

2. Break the students into six groups and have students jigsaw the material by having each group read and digest one paragraph and prepare a 30 second presentation summarizing the information for the rest of the class. Each paragraph will have two presentations.

3. Have students share their presentations.

4. Introduce the temperance movement with the song in Appendix A. Sing with students a song from the Women’s Christian Temperance Union set to the tune of “Yankee Doodle.” Go over unfamiliar words after the first time through such as: Waterloo, dry, and any words students ask about. Then sing a second time with students.

5. Check for understanding with the following questions.
   c. According to the Rallying Song, what are the attributes of those who drink? (Bumming leeches-they suck the good people dry)
   d. According to the Rallying Song, what good will happen to the community when it is “dry?” (Some poor folks will have more money and the local economy will improve because people will spend their money “right” and “business go a humming.”)

6. Explain to Students that: Progressives were activists, who believed that the actions of government could make a difference in people's everyday lives. The net result was that they expanded the government and created many permanent bureaucratic structures. In the early 1900s regulatory Commissions were a new way to deal with problems. The number of those regulatory commissions has not diminished; rather their numbers have increased dramatically, many of them devoted in one way or another to the progressive goal of corporate regulation. With the passage and ratification of the 18th Amendment in 1919, law enforcement officials all over the nation were suddenly charged with stopping "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States ... for beverage purposes."

7. Have students read a copy of the 18th Amendment from their textbook or from Appendix B.

8. Focus student’s learning with the following questions:
   a. What evidence is there from Amendment XVIII that anti alcohol feelings were widespread? (An amendment may be proposed by 2/3
of both houses of Congress or the legislatures or 2/3 of the states can propose a constitutional convention. If ¾ of the states ratify a proposed amendment, it then becomes part of the Constitution.)

b. **Is the timeline of this amendment appropriate?** (This helps students see the implementation phase is a year long)

9. Have students work in groups to create an additional verse for the Woman’s Temperance Song based on the 18th Amendment. Groups may wish to share the verses they created spontaneously with the rest of the class. More reserve classes respond to having verses typed up and singing everyone’s verses on a subsequent day.

10. Continue to explain to students: **Some progressive policy goals such as temperance ended in disaster.**
   a. Prohibition of alcohol only temporarily banished the saloon. Although liquor stores and saloons were shut down, it was not long before illegal stills were set up. "Speakeasies" became very popular. Speakeasies were hidden saloons where a whispered password allowed the speaker to get into a bar.
   b. Prohibition promoted the violent excesses of bootlegging. The rise of organized crime is often associated with the lucrative illegal trade in alcohol during prohibition. Law enforcement agencies across the country raided stills and warehouses, often at gunpoint.
   c. Prohibition did nothing to halt alcohol consumption. In the early 1900s some folks back up in the hills built stills that made “squeeze” or “White Lightening.” (This idea can be extended or reinforced by George Jones’s song.) The 14-year experiment of prohibition ended in 1933, with California voters overwhelmingly approving the 21st amendment to end prohibition.

11. The controversy about whether or not individuals have the right to make poor health or recreation decisions still exists today, for example in the controversies surrounding tobacco, marijuana, helmets and handguns. Many progressive attempts to reform individual recreation choices and vice laws were also overturned at the end of the progressive era, such as the prohibition on trackside gambling. However, the ban on other types of gambling has been maintained in most states besides Nevada and Georgia. The controversy over gambling has been reawakened in recent years because of Indian’s rights to build casinos on reservations. After the approval of the 21st Amendment, Congress and the states were left with the task of figuring out how to balance prohibiting alcohol from the general public, half of whom wanted to consume alcohol and half who thought no one should.

12. Hand out lyrics and play George Jones’ *White Lightning* for the students.

13. Have students respond in writing to material presented either in their journals or on a separate sheet of paper.
a. **In which ways did progressives try to change American society?**
(Answers should address that progressives planned and worked for reforms in business, social behavior, government, education or cities)

b. **The Progressive movement was lead mainly by well educated middle class Americans who sought to change society to fit their values.** Should American society be changed to fit the values of one group? How might it be possible for such a change to happen? (Answers should address that the group would need to have political power as did the middle class that fought against alcohol.)

c. **If someone chooses homelessness as a lifestyle does the government (local, state or federal) have the right to declare that lifestyle “bad” or “illegal?”**
Day 5 Objective: introduce students to trusts and convey that trust busting was a reaction to big business.

1. Display a Monopoly game board in the front of the room. (It would be fun to have multiple board games and have an after school Monopoly game so everyone could experience the game) Ask one of the students (or a series of them) to explain the concept behind the game. **What does the name mean? How does owning a monopoly give an advantage to a player over those that do not own a monopoly? Are the trains important? Do the utilities make much money? How is it different for rich and poor people that land on the tax space? (Is it different?)** (After the initial distribution of wealth due to the luck of rolling dice, the game Monopoly demonstrates the principal that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Many people play with a modification of placing money on “free parking” which was not a part of the original playing rules.)

2. Hand out copies of Appendix H from *Exploring the Progressive Movement through the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson*.

3. Break the students into four groups and have students jigsaw the material by having each group read and digest one paragraph and prepare a 30 second presentation summarizing the information for the rest of the class.

4. Have students draw a political cartoon depicting some of the information presented.
Week Two Objective: project oriented synthesis and evaluation of the Progressive Era.

1. The evaluation option a teacher selects depends on how much time is available for a project. Options 1 and 2 can be completed in one or two class periods. Options 3 or 4 can take an entire week (or longer) and students will need access to the library and the Internet.
   a. Option 1: Students pretend to be muckraking journalists, they choose one of the songs from the hook (Big Bad John, Sixteen Tons, or Coal Miner’s Daughter), and create an article for a newspaper (real or imagined). Students use their social studies text, the Internet or library to obtain additional facts about mining to be included in their article.
   b. Option 2: students respond to pictures of child labor from mining camps and imagine themselves in the picture. (It is often helpful to have pictures displayed to facilitate this) Ask students to write about what a day is like for them from that perspective. Child labor pictures can be obtained through a search engine on the Internet.
   c. Option 3: Students do in depth research on personalities from the progressive era. Students can present their research in a variety of ways as they do for History Day: poster, exhibit, documentary, webpage(s) performance or written paper.
   d. Option 4: Students do in depth research on personalities from the progressive era. On the last day of the unit, each student takes on the persona of the person he or she researched and has a discussion, with other members of the class in their respective characters, responding as he or she believes that historical figure would respond. Fodder for discussion could be any of the progressive era issues that still are controversial today. Some possible personalities to research are listed below.

Susan B. Anthony
Elizabeth Cady Stanton
Oliver Wendell Holmes
Theodore Roosevelt
Samuel Gompers
Jane Adams
Booker T. Washington
W. E. B. DuBois
Carry Nation
William Jennings Bryan
Upton Sinclair
John D. Rockefeller
Leland Standford
APPENDIX A
WOMEN’S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION RALLYING SONG

Set to the Tune of “Yankee Doodle.”

Saloons have been
by Lincoln tried…
And drinking has been easy.
And many of our men and boys
occasionally are boozy.

Chorus:
Lincoln now is going dry,
Yankee doodle dandy,
Saloons have met their “Waterloo,”
Strong drink no more is handy.

We will no longer give consent,
Our sons are far too precious,
We now unite saloons to rout,
And ask the Lord to help us.

Chorus.

Let all now join the Civic League,
And help to clean up Lincoln
And if we turn these leeches out,
Some poor folks will have plenty.

Chorus.
Our buildings would soon fill again,
And business go a humming.
When people spend their money right,
And quit their foolish bumbling

Section 1.
After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

Section 2.
The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Section 3.
This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by Congress.
As President Theodore Roosevelt approached the end of his second term of office [in 1907], he was not only far and away the most dominant figure in the United States, but the best known and, by all odds, the most admired individual in the world.

He [President Theodore Roosevelt] is not an American you know, he is America.

John Morley
APPENDIX D
GRAPHIC ORGANIZER FOR COAL MINING SONGS

As you listen to the following songs, write the answer to each of the questions in the chart below. Afterward the song is over, underline the lyrics that gave you clues to what the singer admired (#2), circle the visual images in song (#3), and star lyrics that gave clues to what the singer expects from daily life (#6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sixteen Tons</th>
<th>Big John</th>
<th>Coal Miner’s Daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>5.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Graphic Organizer for Coal Mining Songs Suggested Answers**

As you listen to the following songs, write the answer to each of the questions in the chart below. Afterward the song is over, underline the lyrics that gave you clues to what the singer admired (#2), circle the visual images in song (#3), and star lyrics that gave clues to what the singer expects from daily life (#6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Possible Answers</strong> (accept other reasonable ideas)</th>
<th>Sixteen Tons</th>
<th>Big John</th>
<th>Coal Miner’s Daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the tone of the song?</td>
<td>despair</td>
<td>matter-of-fact</td>
<td>nostalgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resignation to system independence from peers</td>
<td></td>
<td>thankfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>stoicism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What attributes are admired by the person singing?</td>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>strength</td>
<td>Love, strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strength of family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>proud of parents and meeting challenges (no Welfare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What images are in the song?</td>
<td>weak mind</td>
<td>collapsing mine</td>
<td>loving family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strong back</td>
<td>fist fight</td>
<td>bleeding fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What tools does the singer or the singer’s family use in his or her work?</td>
<td>pick shovel</td>
<td>timbers</td>
<td>washboard shovel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>jacks</td>
<td>shovel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hoeing corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What occupations are in the song?</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>daughter of a miner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What are the singer’s expectations of daily life?</td>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>danger</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unending work wake up and die</td>
<td>death (daily)</td>
<td>clean clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hard work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sleeping good at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>same thing each day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What religious references are in the song?</td>
<td>Saint Peter soul</td>
<td>Promised Land Hell miners praying</td>
<td>read the Bible each night</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX E
PICTURES FROM TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST FIRE

Triangle Shirtwaist Fire: Outside Pier Morgue #1. March 26, 1911.

Digital ID: cph 3b37414  Source: b&w film copy neg.
Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-91066 (b&w film copy neg.)
Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA
George Grantham Bain Collection: No known restrictions on publication.
Triangle Shirtwaist Fire: Crowds on Washington Street. March 26, 1911.

Digital ID: cph 3b37416  Source: b&w film copy neg.
Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-91068 (b&w film copy neg.)
Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA  George Grantham Bain Collection: No known restrictions on publication.
Triangle Shirtwaist Fire: Outside Pier Morgue #2. March 26, 1911.

Digital ID: cph 3b37415  Source: b&w film copy neg.
Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-91067 (b&w film copy neg.)
Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA  George Grantham Bain Collection: No known restrictions on publication.
Triangle Shirtwaist Fire: Horse-drawn Fire Engines in Street. March 25, 1911.

TITLE: Firemen searching for bodies.
CALL NUMBER: LOT 10869 [item] [P&P].
REPRODUCTION NUMBER: LC-USZ62-83864 (b&w film copy neg.)
SUMMARY: Firemen looking down hole in sidewalk, searching for victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire, New York City. George Grantham Bain Collection: No known restrictions on publication.
“You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand,"

Woodrow Wilson.
Progressivism was a broad based social and political reform movement that took place from about 1890 to 1920. The depression of 1893 helped unify the “good government” movement of the 1870s and the “social welfare” movement that began before the American Civil War into the Progressive Movement. This movement sought to cure a myriad of social ills on a much broader platform than Populism or Grangerism (which focused on the farmer). This new movement sought basic social, economic and governmental reforms. Some reformers were spurred to action by local tragedies to enforce or pass specific laws such as those dealing with fire codes. Progressives generally favored regulation of big business, a woman’s right to vote, and the establishment of child labor laws. However, not all progressives were cut from the same cloth and many supported certain reforms and not others.

The bulk of progressives were well-educated middle class Americans who felt that the government must be involved in solving the nation’s serious social problems. Some also believed that educational reforms and better city services could help “Americanize” immigrants. Progressives wanted to improve the American system without overthrowing it. Progressives wanted to preserve democracy and promote opportunity. They were searching for order and efficiency in a “world complicated by rapid industrialization, immigration and spectacular urban growth.” Middle Class pities, compassion, and a thirst for justice-all were heightened by industrialization and the depression at the end of the 19th century. Progressives operated to the benefit of many kinds of disadvantaged people. Many progressives felt that it was their Christian duty to right the wrongs caused by industrialism. The Progressives reached a climax in the years from 1900 to 1914.

Progressives were not all of one mind on domestic issues. For example, John Marshall Harlan “the last of the tobacco-spitting judges” was a progressive on race but he was not a progressive when it came to the labor unions; he supported the owners of the railroads. In the Plessy vs. Ferguson case of 1896, John Harlen was the one dissenting vote. He asserted that justice should be colorblind and that the enforcement of “separate but equal” interferes with the personal freedoms of individuals by legally forcing separation. As he stated, “Sixty million whites are in no danger from the presence of eight millions of Blacks. . . The destinies of the two races in this country are indissolubly linked together, and the interest of both require that the common government of all shall not permit the seeds of race hate to be planted under the sanction of law.” He foresaw that the decision would lead to a pattern of behavior that would be very dangerous and undermine a basic sense of justice. Most progressive reformers were dedicated to making life better for Caucasian Americans and unconcerned with the plight of those of different nationalities. In North Carolina, Josephus Daniels was a progressive who defended white rule while simultaneously supporting temperance and trust-busting.
Historians disagree as to what specific years of explosive economic growth finally triggered a progressive response. Progressives were not united by their solution to the problems of big business; rather they were united in their belief that economic forces needed some kind of restraint. Progressives feared that mammoth corporations could hurt consumers, farmers, businessmen, workers and entire towns. Consumers would suffer by monopolies raising the price of goods. Corporations could hurt farmers and small businessmen by raising railroad rates and hiking the cost of raw materials, while hurting competitors by slashing the price of finished products and raising the price of raw materials. In addition, big business threatened towns, cities, whole regions of the country by manipulating freight charges and putting railroads and factories in one locale or another. Agreeing there was a potential problem was easier than agreeing on a solution. Some progressives wished to restore competition by dismantling mammoth trusts, limiting monopolies and encouraging enterprise. Others believed big business was highly efficient. They saw nothing wrong with trusts as long as government ensured the public received the benefits of that efficiency in the form of low prices.

Theodore Roosevelt’s war on the trusts was an effort to reinforce the system, not weaken or attack it. In 1902, President Roosevelt helped bring a suit against the Northern Securities Company for violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act despite the protests of J.P. Morgan. The intent of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 was to preserve fair competition by preventing monopolies. By the time Roosevelt was president, some historians assert that several Supreme Court rulings made Swiss cheese of the Sherman Act. Only companies that engaged in interstate commerce came under the control of the federal government and that is why Roosevelt challenged the Northern Securities Company (NHS). The NHS was a huge holding company controlling the Great Northern, the Northern Pacific and the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroads, with some of the biggest names in business behind them.

In 1904, the Supreme Court upheld Roosevelt’s suit and ordered the company dissolved. Roosevelt was delighted and followed up with several other antitrust suits. In total, he brought forty-four suits against large corporations and although he was not always victorious, he did succeed in breaking up the Swifton beef, oil and tobacco trusts.

Although one of Roosevelt’s boldest and greatest strokes of statesmanship was shown in supporting labor during the Pennsylvania anthracite coal strike in 1902 there were many other skirmishes between capitol and labor in which Roosevelt chose not to involve himself, such as the eight hour workday question in for miners in Colorado.
anarchist - a person who opposes all organized forms of government
conservation - the act or process of protecting and preserving natural resources and wilderness areas
franchise - the right to vote
graft - money gained by elected or appointed officials through dishonest or illegal means
Grangerism - the earliest effort to organize white farmers in 1867. (It was originally a social and cultural organization but the depression of the 1870s caused economic unity against high rail prices and by 1875 there were an estimated 800,000 members known as the National Grange.)
initiative - a procedure that allows citizens to propose a bill by collecting a specific number of signature from registered voters on a petition
laissez faire - a policy that opposes government regulation of industry and/or of the economy
monopoly - the control of the market for a particular commodity or service by one company.
muckraker - a journalist who exposes political corruption and social problems
philanthropy - the idea that a person of wealth should promote human welfare by funding beneficial public institutions.
populism - a political movement representing the interest of farmers in the 1890s. Populism was an attempt by farmers to fight against post Civil War economic challenges.
political machine - a powerful tightly run political organization. Many American cities in the late 1800s and early 1900s were run by political machines.
progressivism - a broad social and political reform movement during the years around 1890-1920
prohibition - the forbidding by law of the manufacture, transportation, sale and possession of alcoholic beverages
recall - a special election that allows voters to remove an elected official from office before his or her term has expired
referendum - the process by which people can vote directly for or against the passage of a bill
regulate - to control or manage based on established rules
socialist - a person who supports an economic system in which the workers possess both political power and the means of producing and distributing goods
temperance: a progressive era movement to outlaw alcohol which led to the 18th Amendment.
tenement - an apartment building whose facilities fail to meet minimum standards of sanitation, safety and comfort
trust—a combination of business firms formed by legal agreement especially to reduce competition

Waterloo—used in reference as a complete disaster. Historically Waterloo was one of the most decisive battles of the Napoleonic Wars. Waterloo was fought in a small area (10 km by 4 km) on the main road leading south from Brussels. June 18, 1815. It was a win all/lose all scenario between Napoleon Bonaparte and the Duke of Wellington. Waterloo ended Bonaparte's hold on power. Wellington lost 17,000 men, and Bonaparte lost 32,000, with at least another 7000 captured.

zoning law—a law restricting areas of a city to a certain use, such as residential, commercial, or industrial