

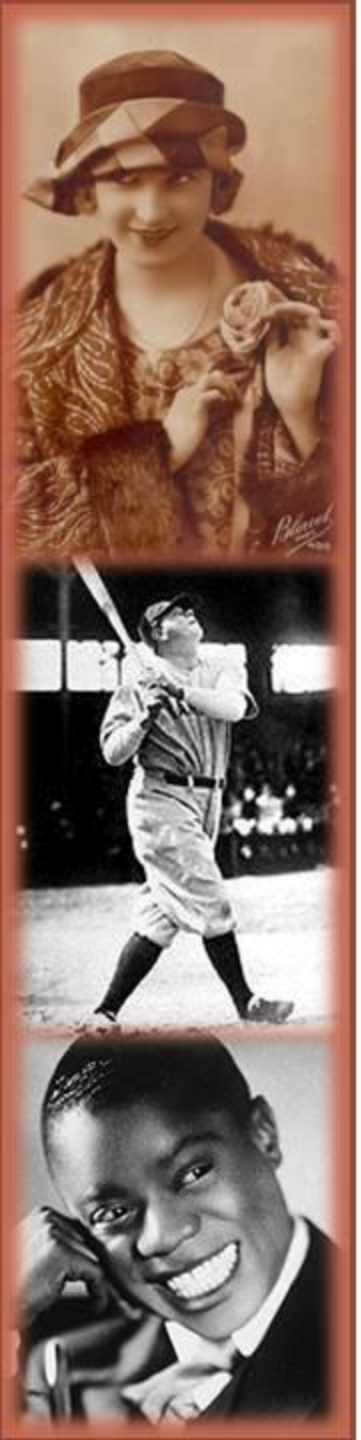


American Society in the 1920s



1920s Theme

A disillusioned America turned away from idealism after World War I and toward social conservatism, a new mass-consumption economy, and exciting new forms of popular culture that undermined many traditional values.



Intro: Political philosophies

- A. radical
- B. conservative
- C. reactionary
- D. liberal/progressive



I. “Americanism” in the 1920s

A. “Red Scare” (1919-1920)

1. October 1917, Bolshevik Revolution in Russia resulted in fears that communism would spread to the U.S.

2. Strikes after WWI were seen as “radical”

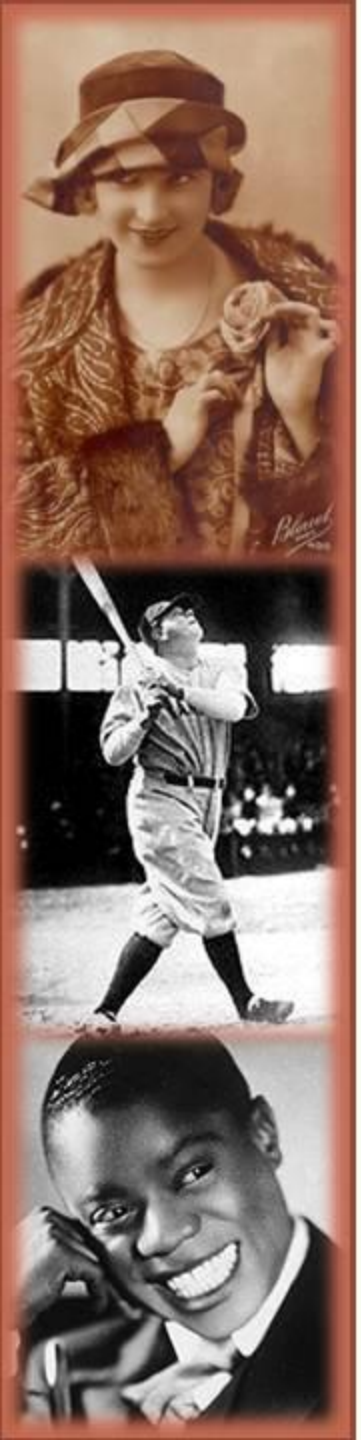
a. Result of inflation during WWI

b. Many Americans thought large-scale labor strikes were the result of the spread of Bolshevism



c. **Seattle General Strike** (January 1919): most famous general strike in U.S. history

- All Seattle unions went on strike
- Despite being peaceful, conservatives feared a European-style take over by labor
- The Seattle mayor called for federal troops claiming the strike was a Bolshevik-type uprising



d. Labor unions sought industrial democracy

e. **Boston Police Strike**

➤ Over 70% of Boston's 1,500 policemen went on strike seeking wage increases and the right to unionize

➤ Governor Calvin Coolidge broke the strike

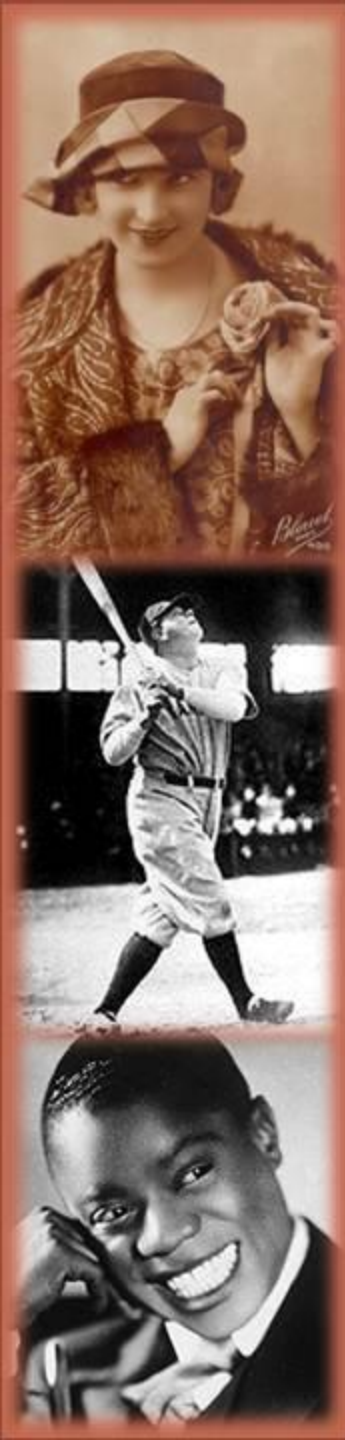
➤ Police strikers were fired and replaced



Copyrighted by the Press Publishing Company, New York.

STRIKING BACK!

—Cassel in the New York Evening World.



f. **Steel Strike, 1919**

- The AFL attempted to organize the steel industry
- US Steel refused to negotiate and characterized the strike as a communist threat
- After much violence and the use of federal and state troops, the strike was broken in early 1920



g. **United Mine Workers Strike,** November, 1919

- Led by **John L. Lewis**
- Workers demanded shorter hours and higher wages
- Attorney General Palmer got injunctions and the union called off the strike



3. **Palmer Raids, 1919-1920**

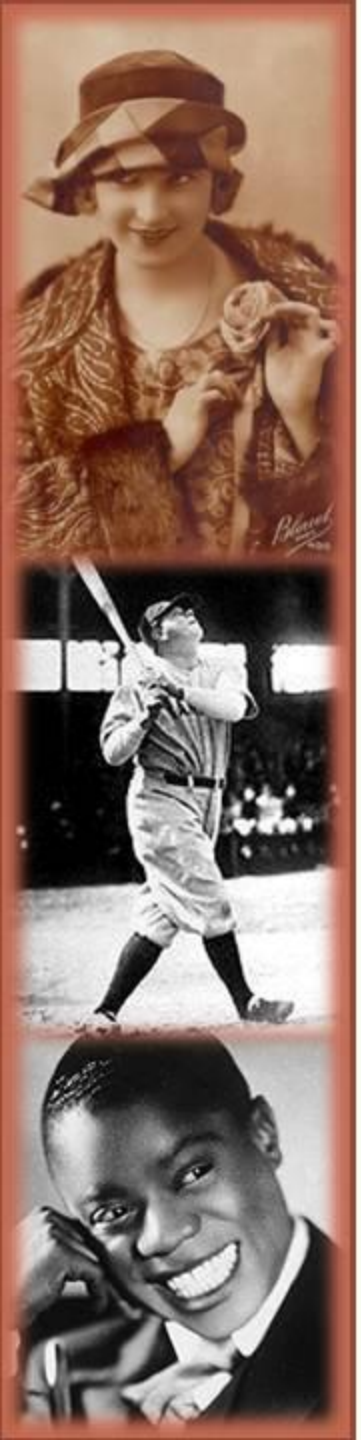
a. Anarchist bombings

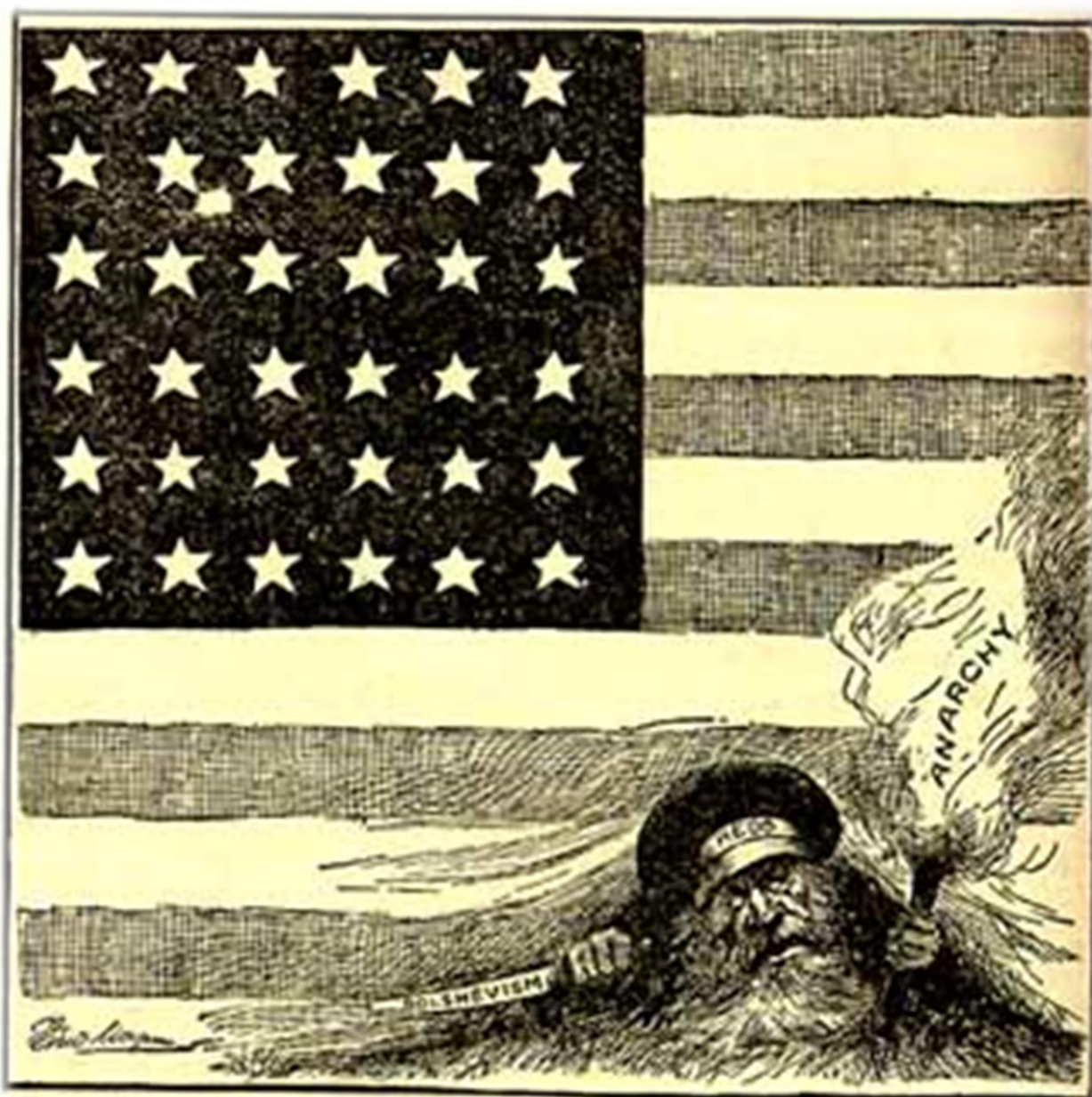
b. **Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer** received \$500,000 from Congress to crack down on “radicals”

-- Several cities required teachers sign loyalty oaths

c. 249 “radicals” were deported to Russia in November, 1919

-- **The American Legion** took the lead in going after “dangerous” foreigners





Copyrighted 1919 by The Philadelphia Inquirer Company
PUT THEM OUT AND KEEP THEM OUT

---Morgan in the Philadelphia Inquirer



*“The Gauntlet
Flung Down”
Outlook,
5/21/19.
Originally from
the Brooklyn
Eagle
(Harding).*





- d. January 2, 1919, 5,000 suspected communists were arrested in 33 cities
 - 550 Russians were deported; many were U.S. citizens
- e. Most Americans condoned Palmer's actions
- f. "Red Scare" ended in summer of 1920
- g. Conservatives used the scare to break fledgling unions
 - AFL lost 25% of its members

B. Sacco and Vanzetti case

1. Two Italian-atheist-anarchist-draft dodgers were convicted of murder in 1921

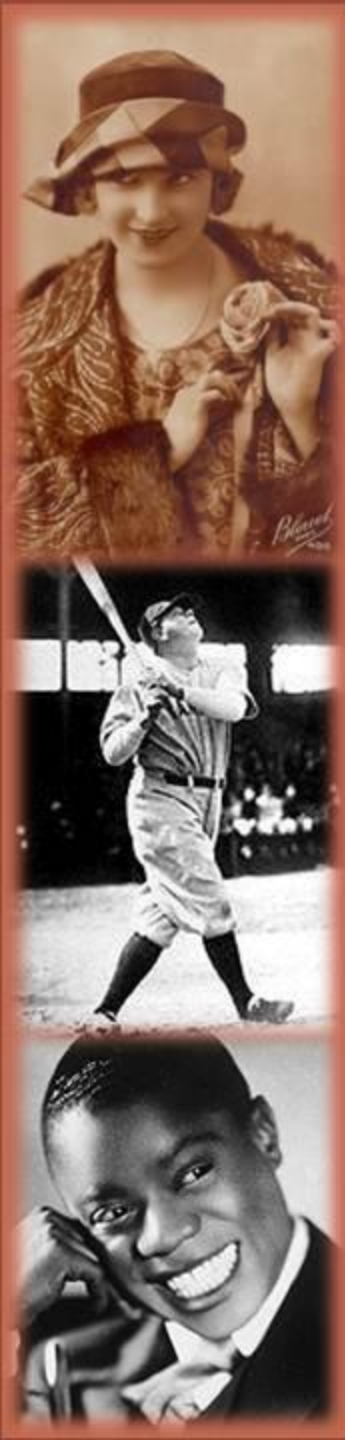


Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Niccolo Sacco





2. The jury and judge appeared to have nativist prejudices against the two men although the evidence was not conclusive
3. Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in 1927
 - The case attracted world attention



WITCHES
SALEM
1692

LABOR
BOSTON
1927



HAVE A CHAIR!

July 22, 1927

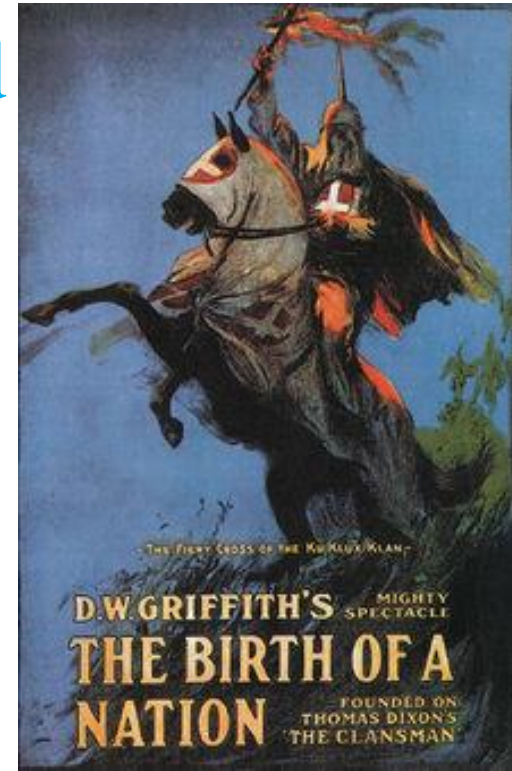


Is this the Emblem?

August 11, 1927

C. **Ku Klux Klan**

1. Resurgence began in the South but spread into the Southwest and Midwest (Illinois, Ohio, Indiana)
 - a. Total membership eventually reached 5 million
 - b. Resurgence inspired by D.W. Griffith's movie, *Birth of a Nation* (1915)





2. The KKK was strongly nativist (like the “Know-Nothings” of the 1850s”

a. Opposed immigration, Catholics, Jews, communists, and blacks, as well as bootleggers, gamblers, adulterers, and birth control advocates

b. Extreme pro-WASP values

3. Demise of the KKK

a. KKK leader in Indiana was arrested for murder in 1925 of a woman he kidnapped and sexually abused

b. Federal gov’t investigated Klan embezzlement activities

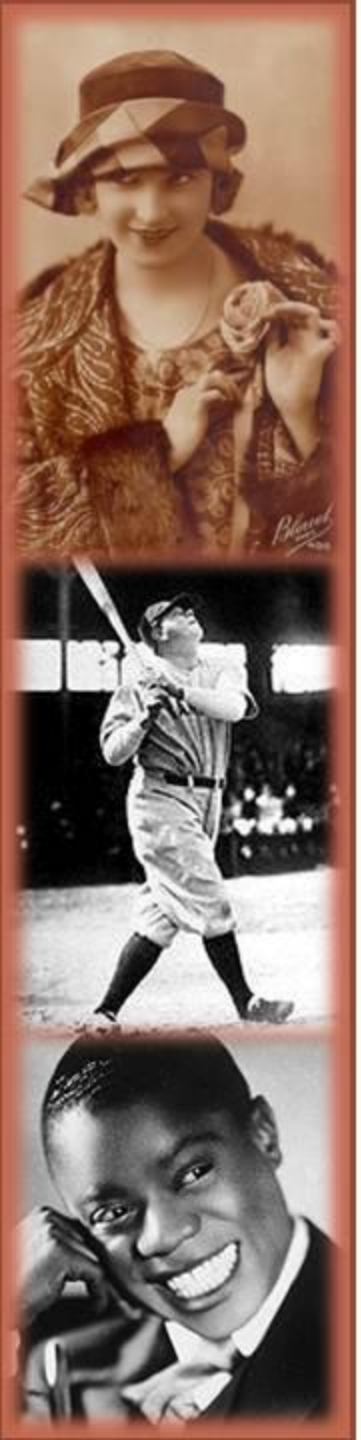


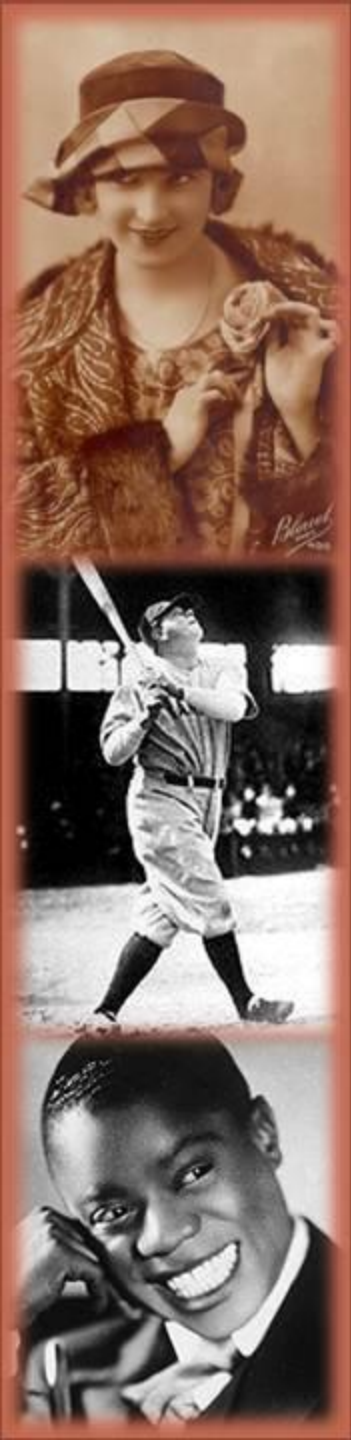
The Ku Klux Klan marches down Pennsylvania Avenue in 1925

D. Nativism in the 1920s

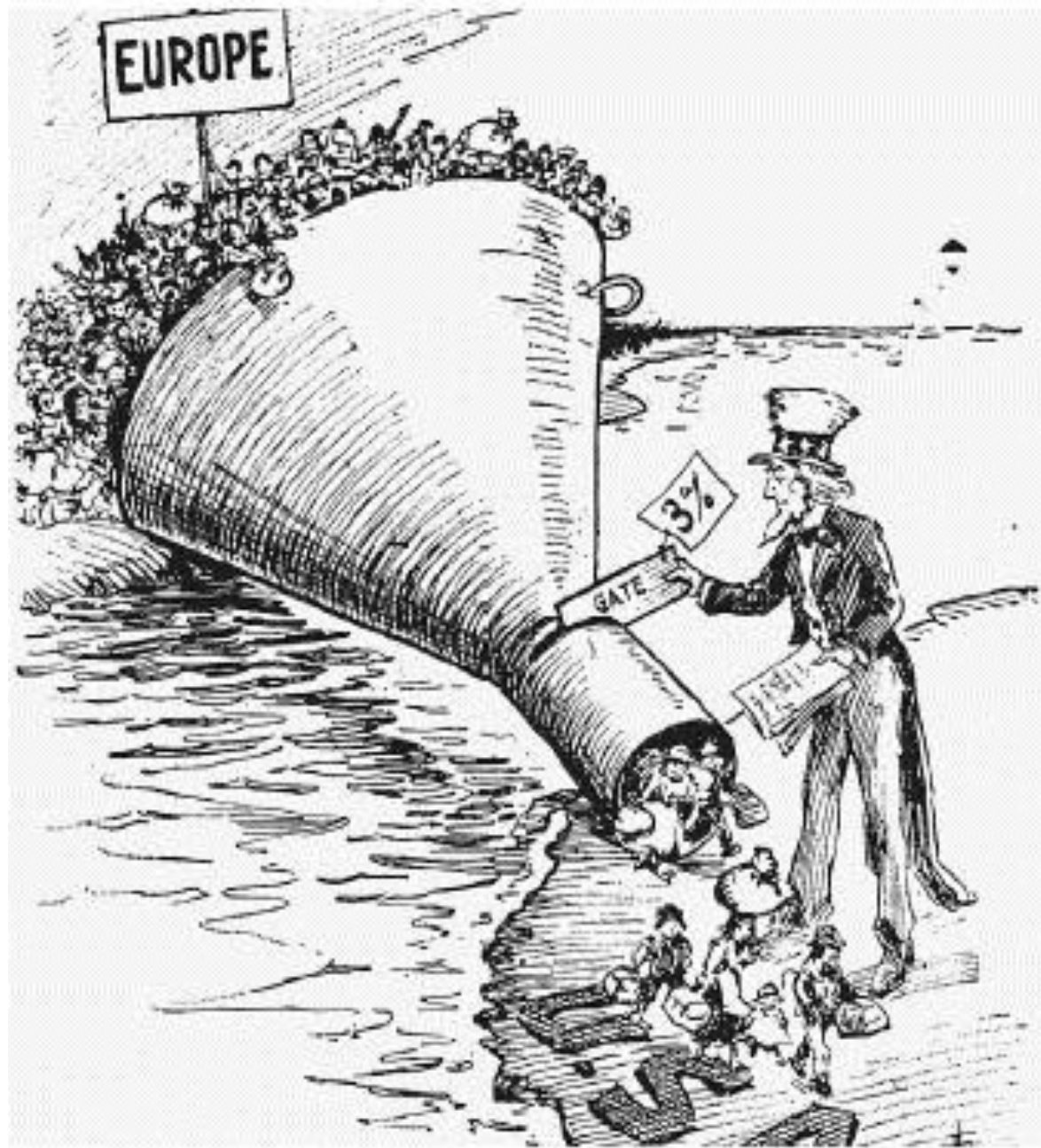
➤ Historical Review

- a. “Know-Nothings” in 1850s
- b. Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882
- c. “Gentleman’s Agreement”, 1908
- d. World War I
- e. KKK in the 1910s and 1920s

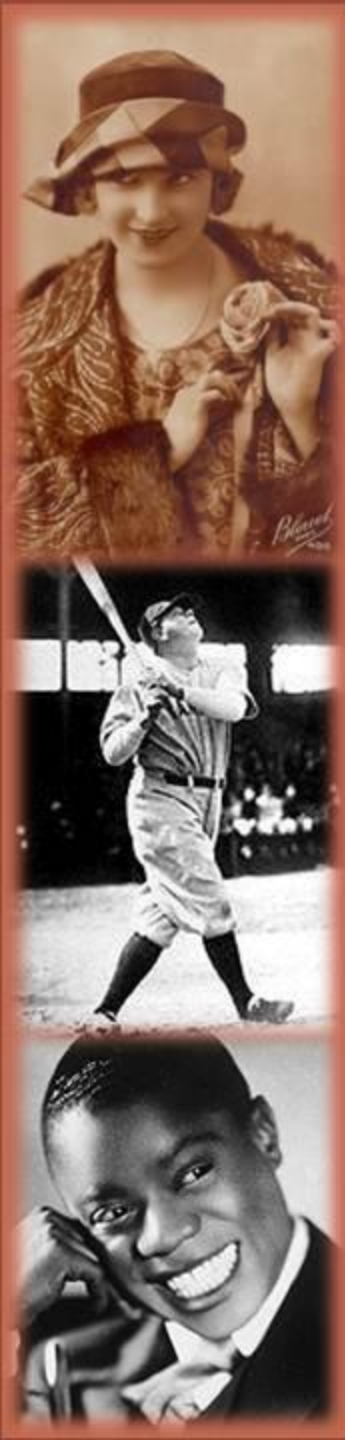




1. Many in America, especially rural areas, believed immigration was eroding traditional American values
2. **1921 Immigration Act**
 - a. 350,000 per year; no more than 3% of a specific ethnic group already in the U.S.
 - b. Based on 1910 census: aimed at eastern and southern Europeans



“The Only Way to Handle It”



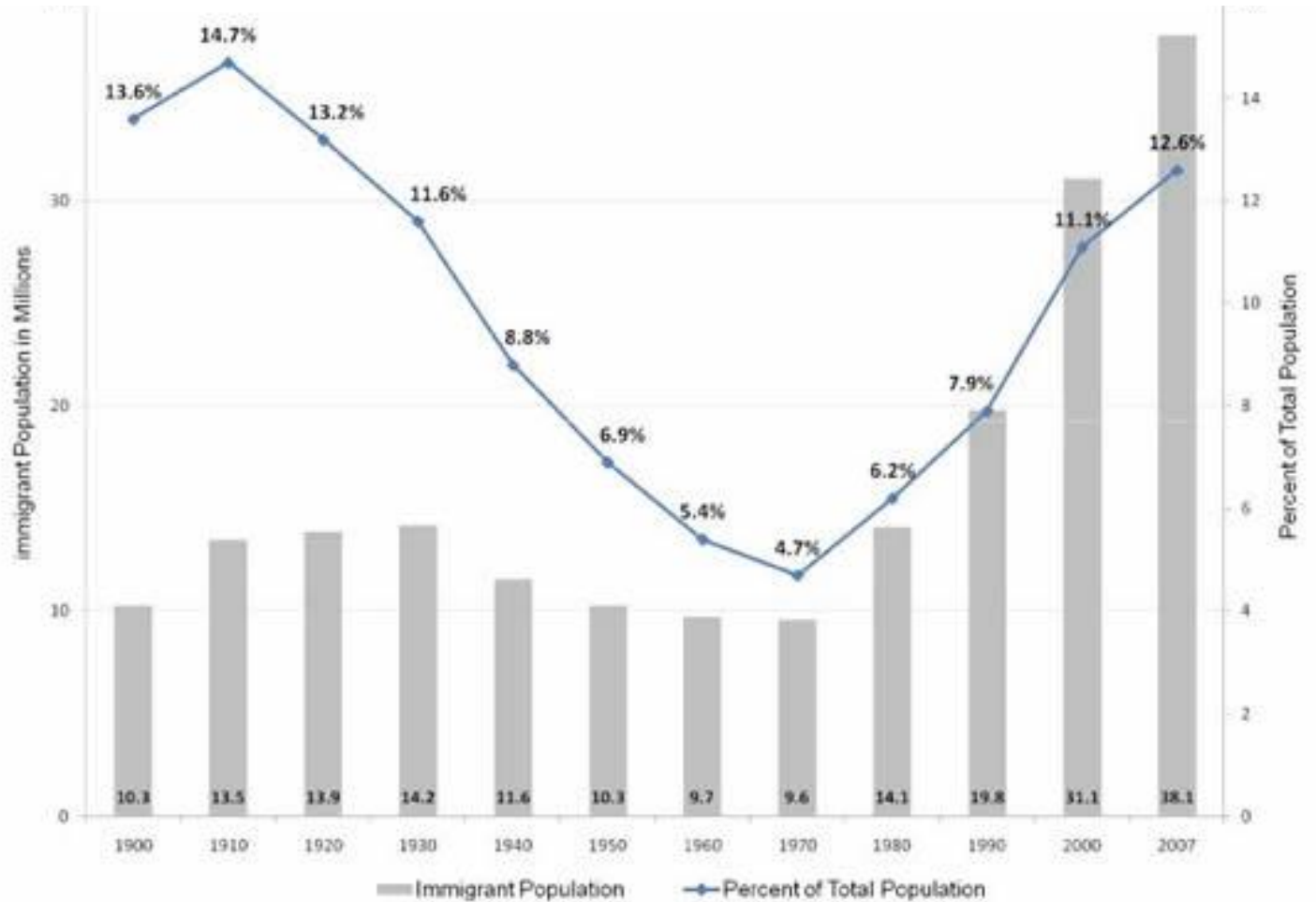
3. **1924 National Origins Act**

- a. 152,000 per year; no more than 2% of an ethnic group already in U.S.
- b. Based on 1890 census: eastern and southern European immigration was reduced dramatically
- c. Asians were banned completely
- d. Canadians and Hispanics exempted

4. 1929 immigration act cut immigration in half

- a. By 1931, more foreigners left than arrived
- b. Congress ended the quota system in 1965

Foreign Born Immigrant Population in the U.S., 1900-2007

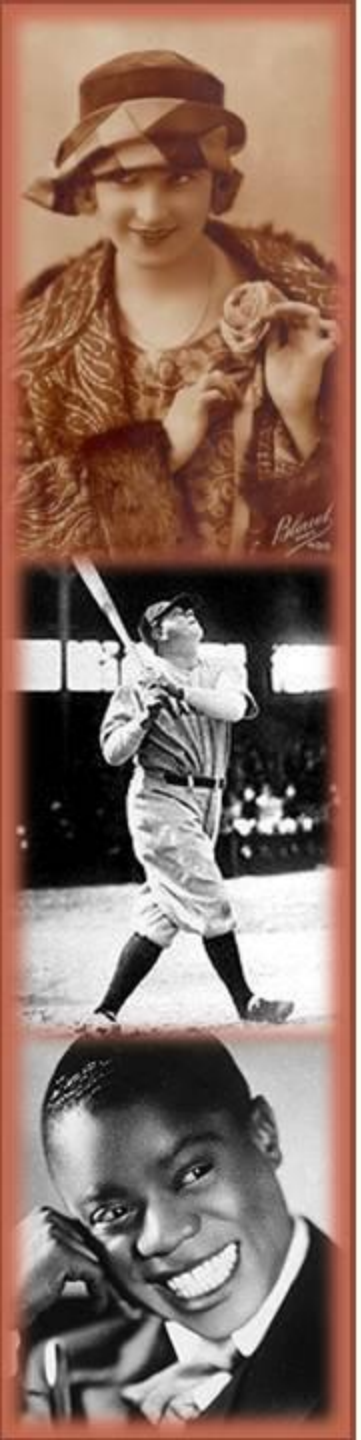


Source: U.S. Census Bureau



E. **Scopes Trial** (“Monkey Trial”): 1925, Tennessee

1. **Fundamentalists** challenged Darwinism
2. **John Scopes** was indicted for teaching evolution
 - a. A Tennessee law barred the teaching of evolution
 - b. The **American Civil Liberties Union** challenged the law
 - c. The case attracted national attention

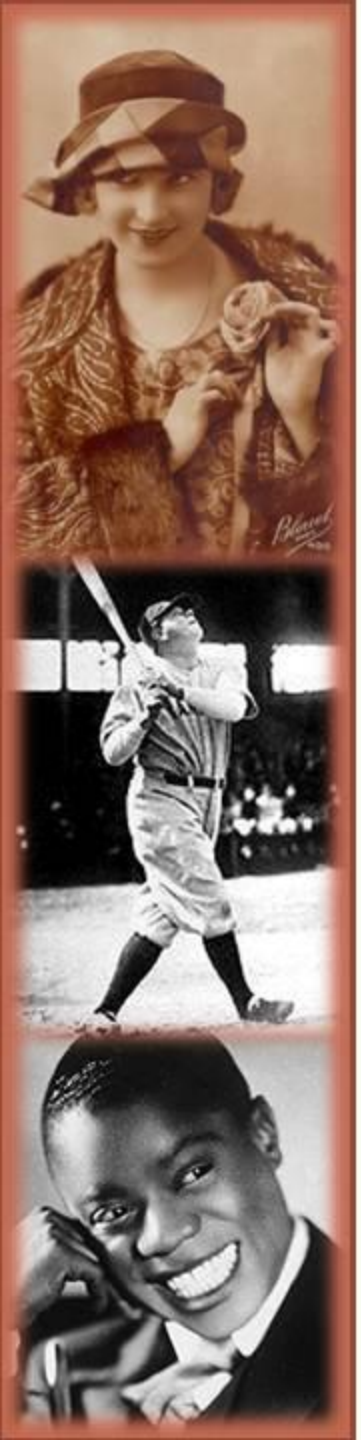




3. **Clarence Darrow** defended Scopes
4. **William Jennings Bryan** led the prosecution



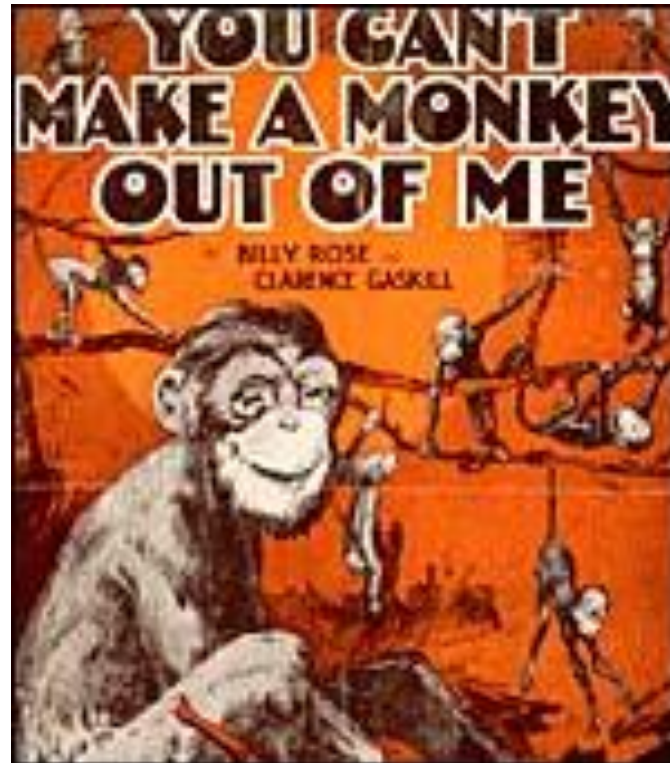
Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan



5. Fundamentalism itself seemed to be on trial

a. Darrow put Bryan put on the witness stand

b. Bryan contradicted his fundamentalist beliefs





*Not the Bible, but
the test-tube.*

"Away with God"



*There is no god but
the proletariat*

*There is no god but
protoplasm*

THE DEICIDES



F. Prohibition

1. One of last Progressive reforms (18th Amendment)
 - a. Supported heavily by churches and women, the South and Midwest
 - b. **The Volstead Act of 1920** enforced the 18th Amendment
 - c. Prohibition was opposed in the larger eastern cities with “wet” immigrants

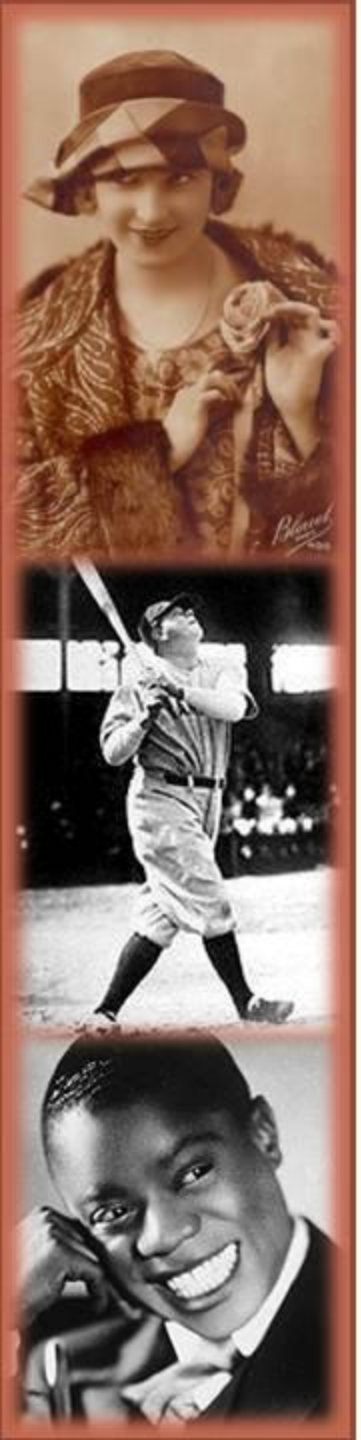


2. Problems with enforcement
 - a. Approximately half of Americans were opposed to prohibition
 - b. Lack of enforcement officials
 - c. Alcohol could be sold by doctors' prescription
 - d. Alcohol was necessary for industrial uses
 - e. Home-made alcohol was rampant

3. Results

a. Rise of organized crime:

- Huge profits from bootlegging
- **Al Capone** was the most powerful gangster of the 1920s
- Increased gang violence
- Bribery at all gov't levels was rampant
- Organized crime spread to prostitution, gambling, and narcotics





b. Rise of speakeasies

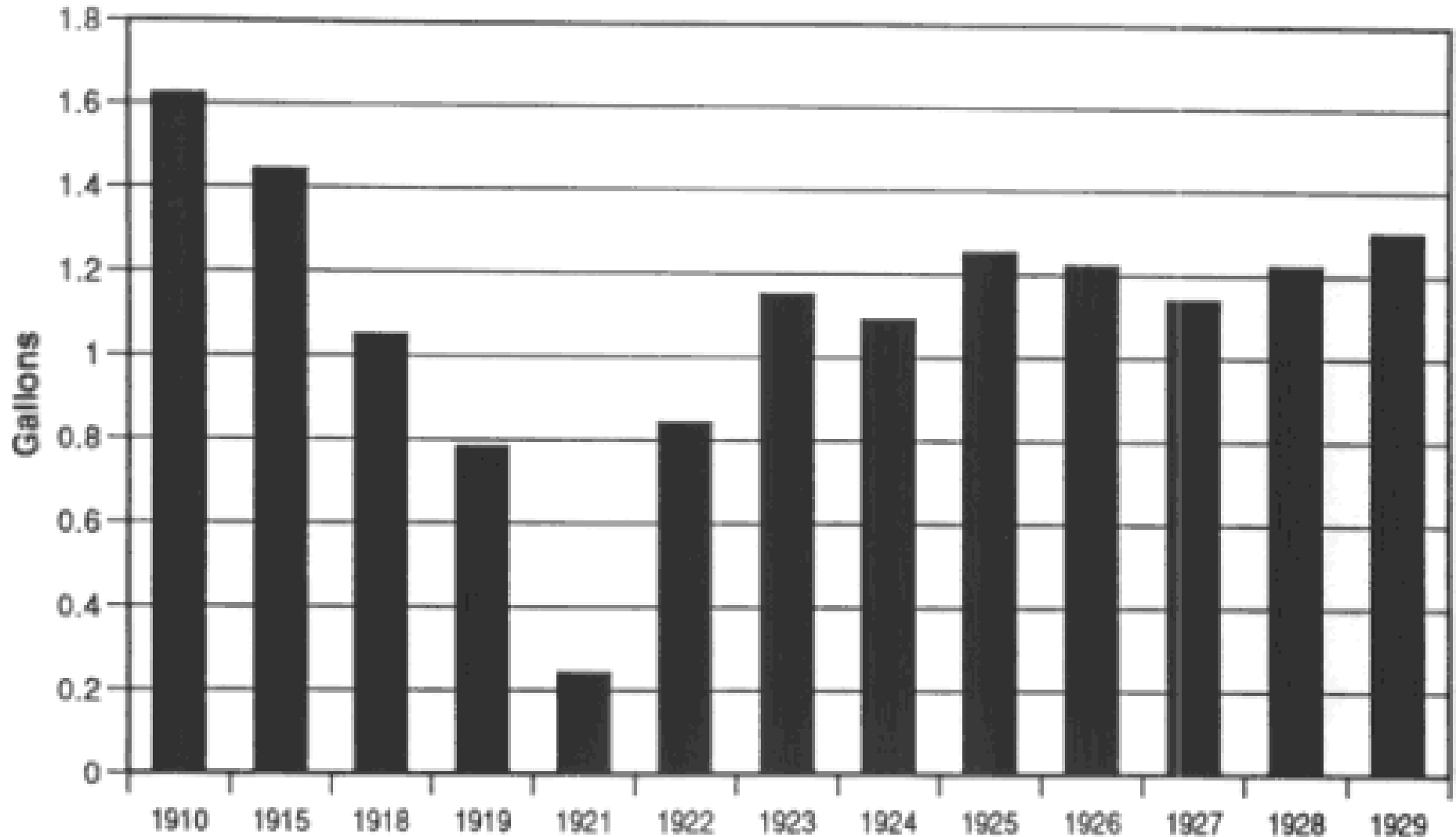
- Middle-class havens for drinking
- Women were welcome (compared to saloons)

c. Saloons disappeared, cutting off immigrant access to alcohol

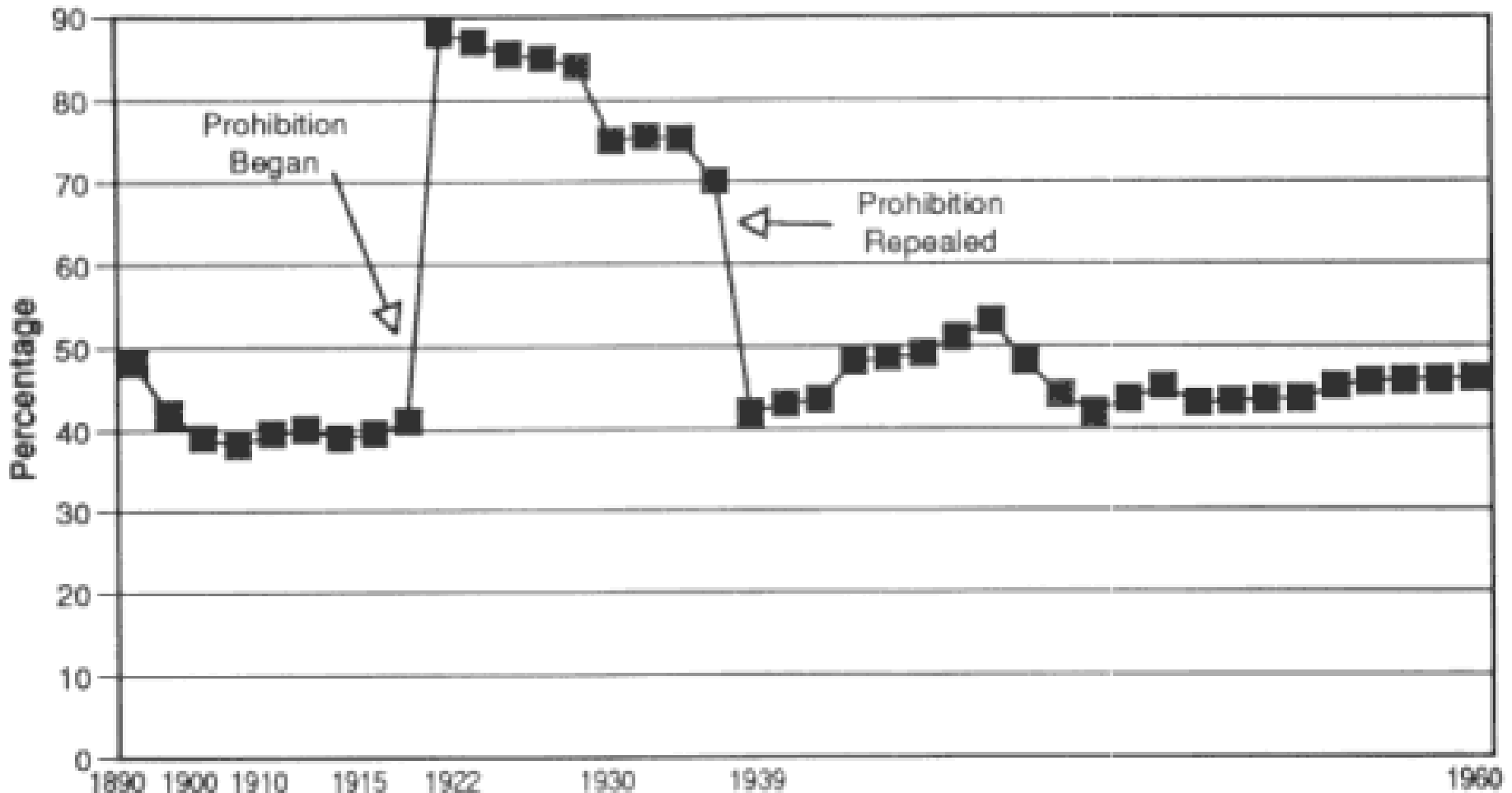
d. Americans became used to casually breaking law

4. Prohibition was repealed in 1933 with the **21st Amendment**

Per Capita Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages (Gallons of Pure Alcohol) 1910-1929



Total Expenditure on Distilled Spirits as a Percentage of Total Alcohol Sales (1890-1960)



III. America's mass-consumption economy

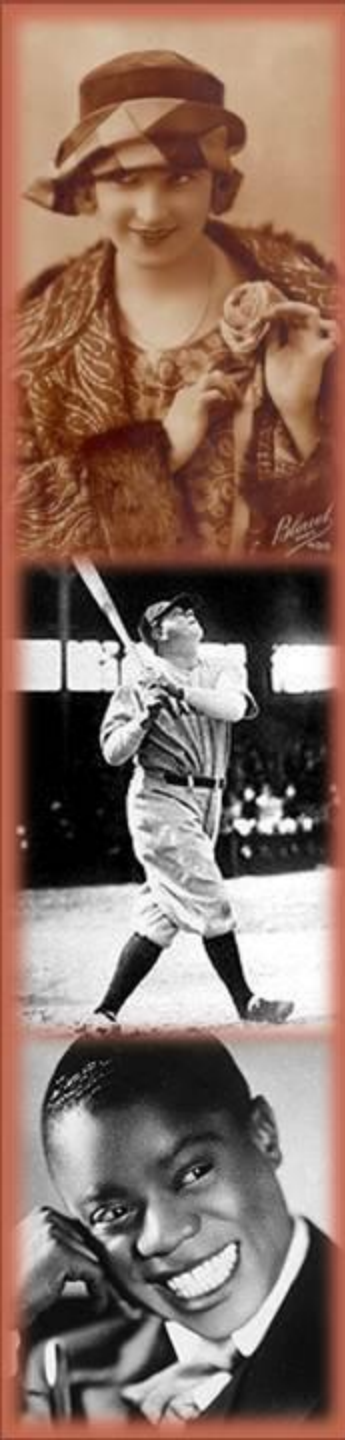
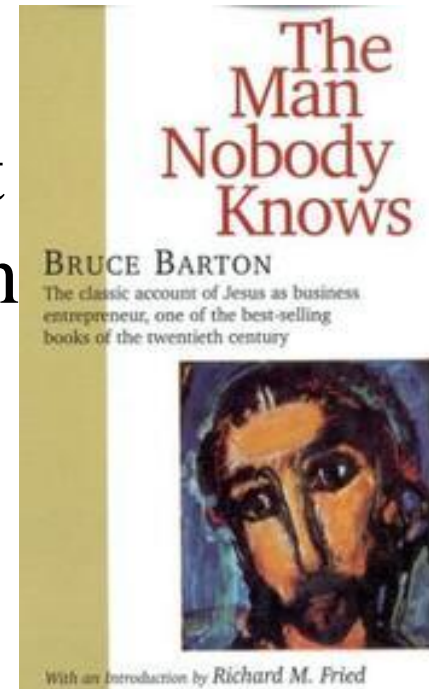
A. Glorification of business in the '20s

1. **Bruce Barton: *The Man Nobody Knows* (1926)**

a. Called Jesus the first modern businessman

2. **Calvin Coolidge:**

“The man who builds a factory builds a temple; The man who works there worships there.”



B. Booming U.S. Economy

1. U.S. became world's largest creditor nation after WWI

a. A brief post-war recession (1920-1921) preceded a massive economic expansion

b. Andrew Mellon's "trickle down" tax policies favored the rapid expansion of capital investment

c. **Buying on credit: "buy now, pay later"**





2. 70% rise in industrial productivity
3. Wages at an all-time high
4. Electric power increased 19-fold between 1912 & 1929
5. **New technology: electric motor, assembly line**
6. New industries: light metals, synthetics, movies, radio, automobile
7. Construction industry (e.g. skyscrapers)
8. Medical breakthroughs resulted in increased life expectancies

C. Continued consolidation of trusts

1. By 1929, the top 200 corporations held $\frac{1}{2}$ of the country's wealth

2. Chain stores became common (e.g. Woolworth, Sears & Roebuck)



A cover of a pamphlet commemorating Woolworth's 50-year anniversary





D. New White Collar workers

1. By 1930, comprised 44% of workers
 - a. 18% were white collar in 1900
 - b. Manual labor jobs rose only 7.9%
2. Increase in consumer goods created need for advertising and sales people
3. Women increasingly entered the workforce
 - a. Middle class: typists, teachers
 - b. Shop clerks, cashiers, switchboard operators
 - c. 57% of work force were black or immigrants (mostly domestic servants)

E. Advertising emerged as a new industry

1. Manufacturers tapped mass markets for their goods

- Advertisers were largely white college-educated men

2. Magazines, newspapers, radio

3. Sports became big business

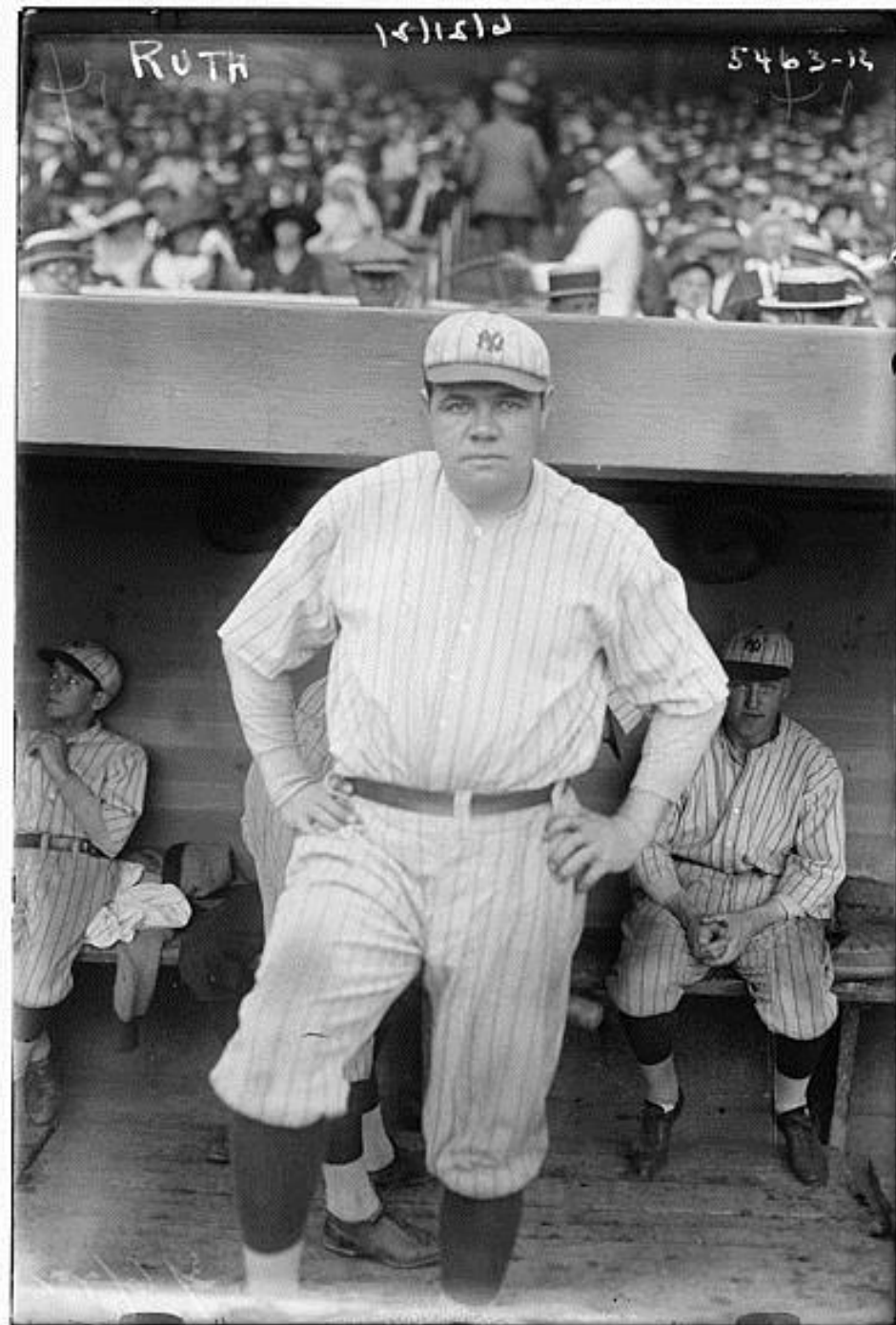
- a. **Babe Ruth** and **Jack**

Dempsey became famous through the “image making” of advertising





Yankee slugger, Babe Ruth





World
Heavyweight
Champion,
Jack Dempsey
(1921-26)



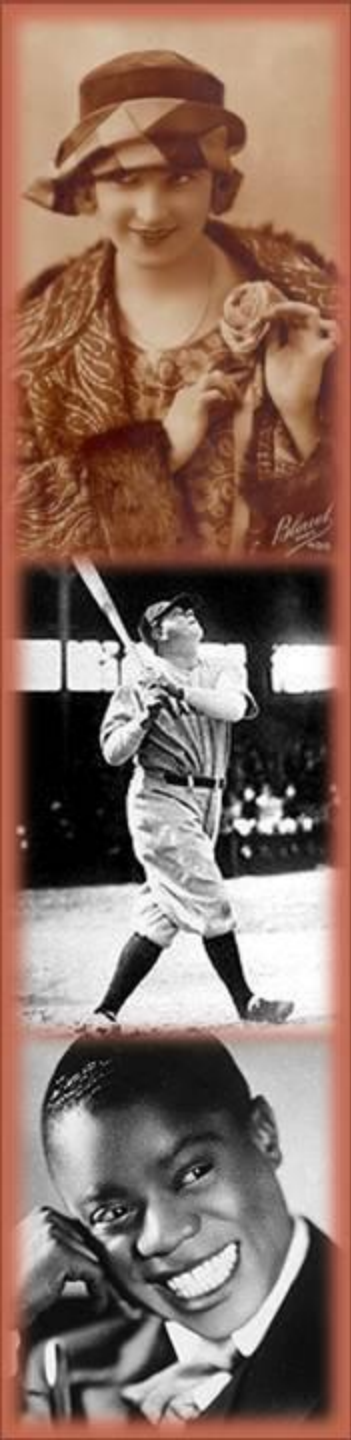
F. **Scientific Management: Frederick W. Taylor**

1. Developed the **assembly line** to increase productivity and profits
2. *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) was influential in the mass production movement
 - a. Henry Ford and other auto makers were the first to adopt Taylor's practices
 - b. **Workers hated Taylorism**



G. **Henry Ford**

1. Detroit emerged as the automobile capital of the world
2. Ford realized workers were also consumers
 - a. In 1914, he raised wages from \$2 to \$5 if workers adopted “thrifty habits”
 - b. Ford paid good benefits, hired handicapped workers, convicts and immigrants





c. Ford was called a “traitor to his class” by some wealthy Americans due to his generosity toward the working class

3. **Ford’s assembly** line produced a car in 1.5 hours compared to 14 hours for his pre-assembly line methods

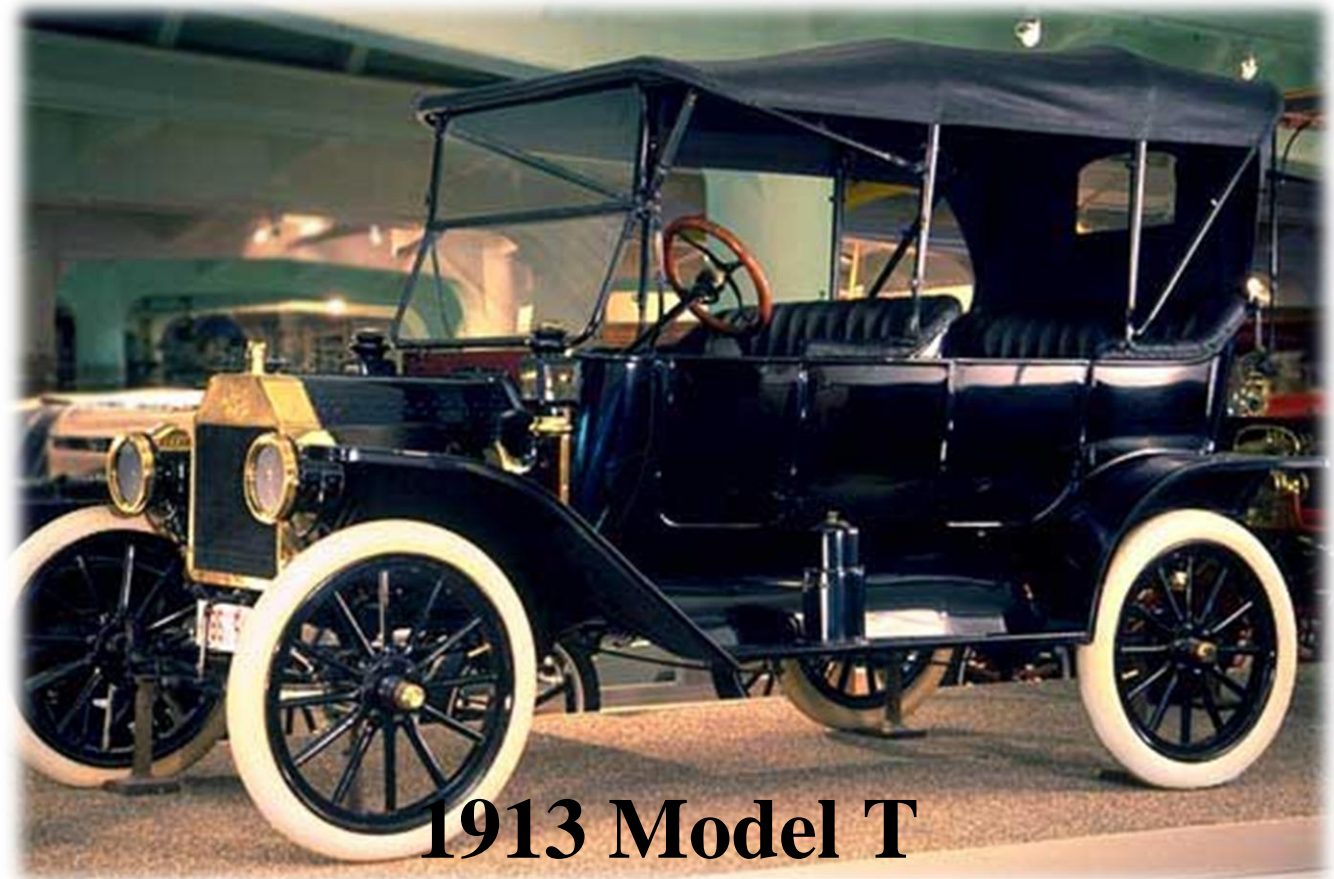
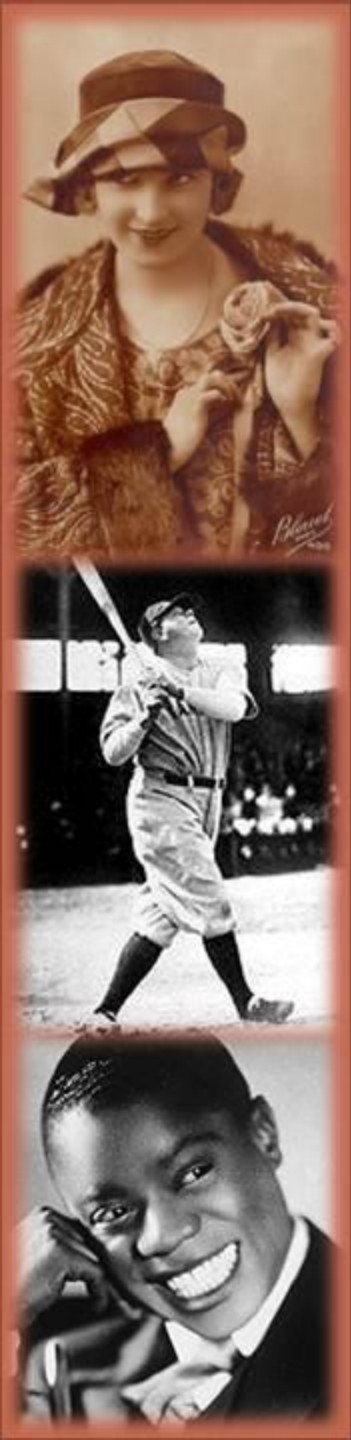
a. One car every 10 seconds!



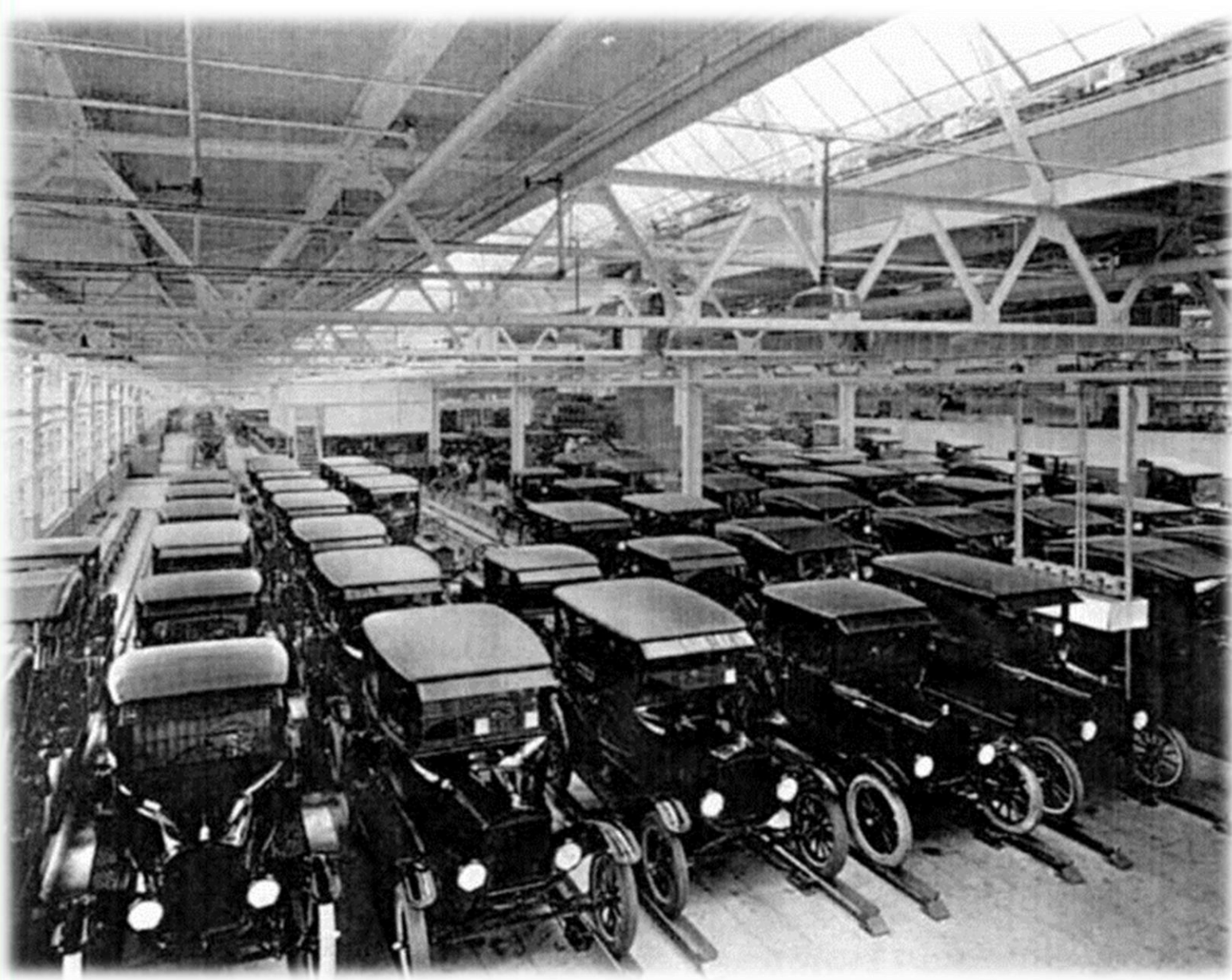
A 1913 assembly line in Ford’s Detroit factory

b. The **Model T** became the staple car in America for many years

-- By 1930 Americans owned 30 million cars, 2/3 of which were Model Ts

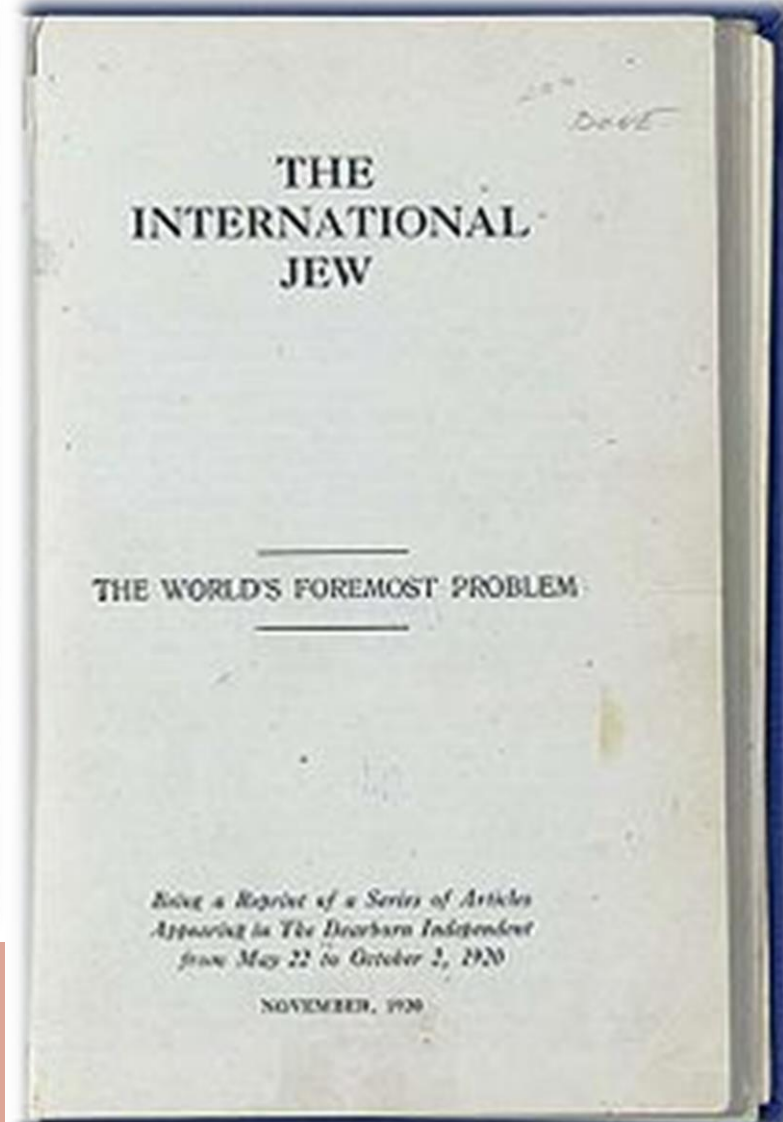


1913 Model T



Final Assembly of Model Ts

4. Ford's anti-Semitism became controversial in the 1920s and 1930s



This book contained a series of anti-Semitic articles from Ford's company newspaper

5. Impact of automobile

- a. Replaced the steel industry as king of American industry
- b. Supporting industries: rubber, glass, fabrics, gas stations, garages, highway construction
- c. U.S. standard of living improved
 - Increased leisure time of Americans spent on the road
 - Suburbs emerged increasing home ownership
- d. Railroad industry decimated by cars, buses and trucks





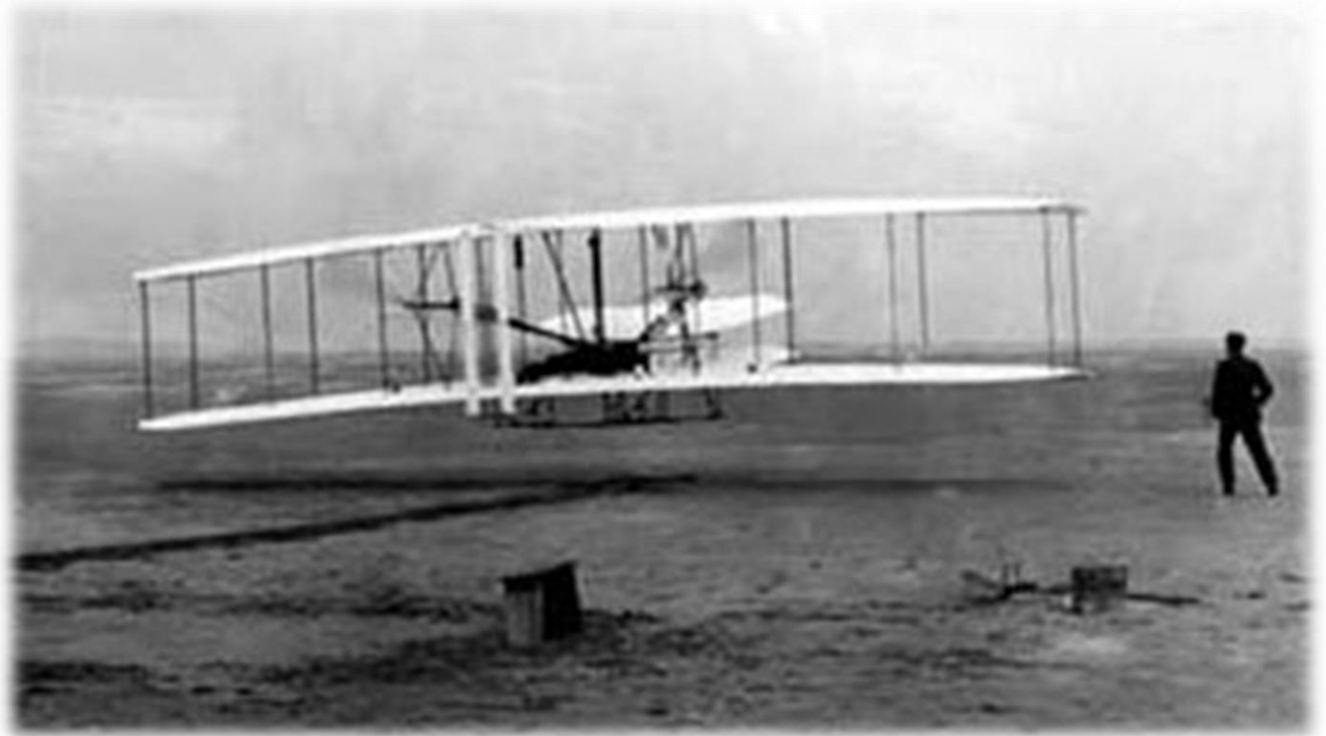
e. **Social changes**

- Women became less dependent on men
- Home life affected as youths became more independent
- Isolation of certain regions decreased (e.g. southwest)
- Buses made possible consolidation of schools and in some cases, churches

f. Fatalities from accidents by 1951 totaled more than all the war dead in all of American history

H. The Airplane

1. 1903, **Wright Brothers** flew the first flight (12 seconds) at Kitty Hawk, NC



2. Airplanes were later used in WWI
3. In the 1920s passenger lines emerged



4. **Charles Lindbergh** flew the first solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927

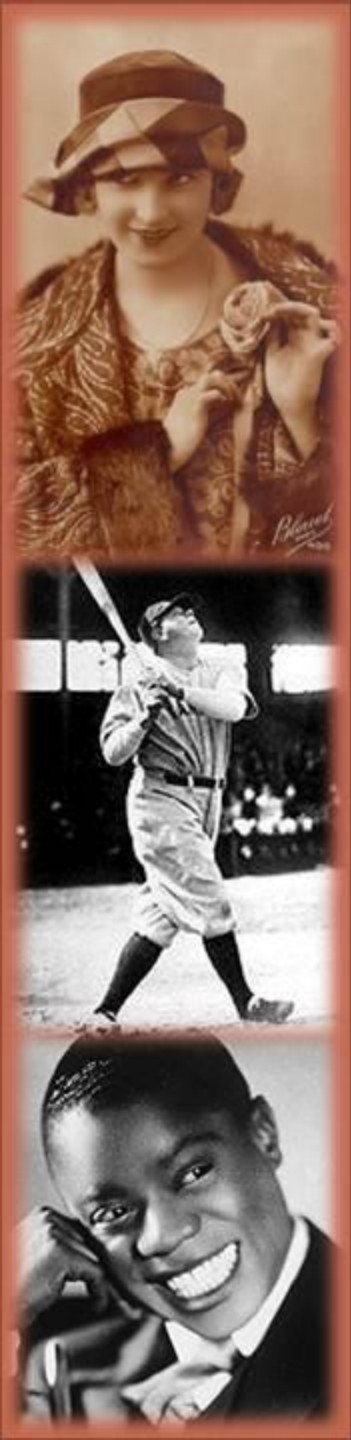


-- **Amelia Earhart** furthered the cause of women's liberation by repeating Lindbergh's feat in 1932.



5. Impact of the airplane

- a. Civilization became more closely linked
- b. Railroads received another setback
- c. Airplanes used in WWI on cities

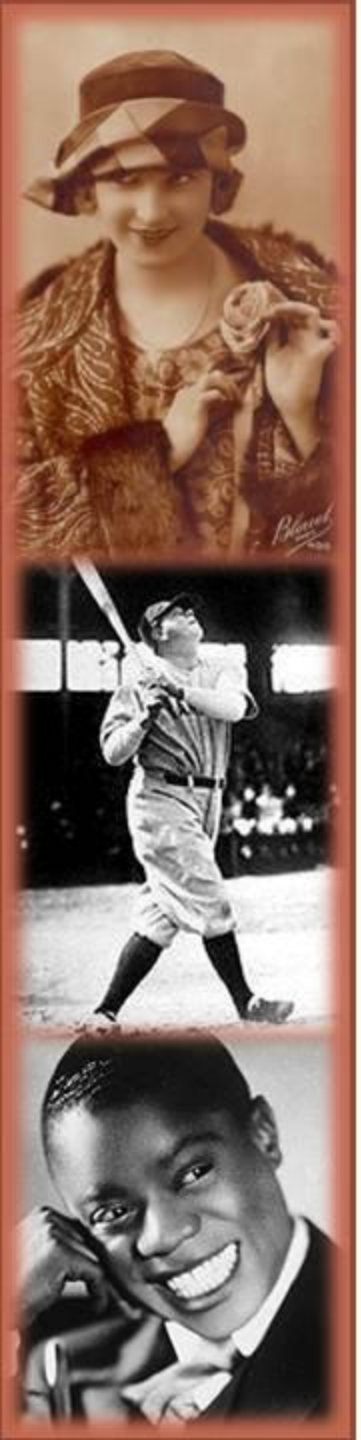


I. Radio

1. Radio had been invented in the 1890s and used during WWI
2. 1920, **KDKA** in Pittsburg carried the first public broadcast
3. Broadcasts grew exponentially
4. National radio networks emerged:
NBC & CBS



A 1920s Crosley
Harko radio



5. Impact of radio on American culture

- a. Employed thousands
- b. Entertained millions during their leisure time
- c. Created nationally a more closely-knit culture
- d. Advertisers used radio extensively
- e. Sports events were more profitable
- f. Politicians campaigned on the radio
- g. Newscasts brought news to millions
- h. Classical music on the radio enhanced American culture

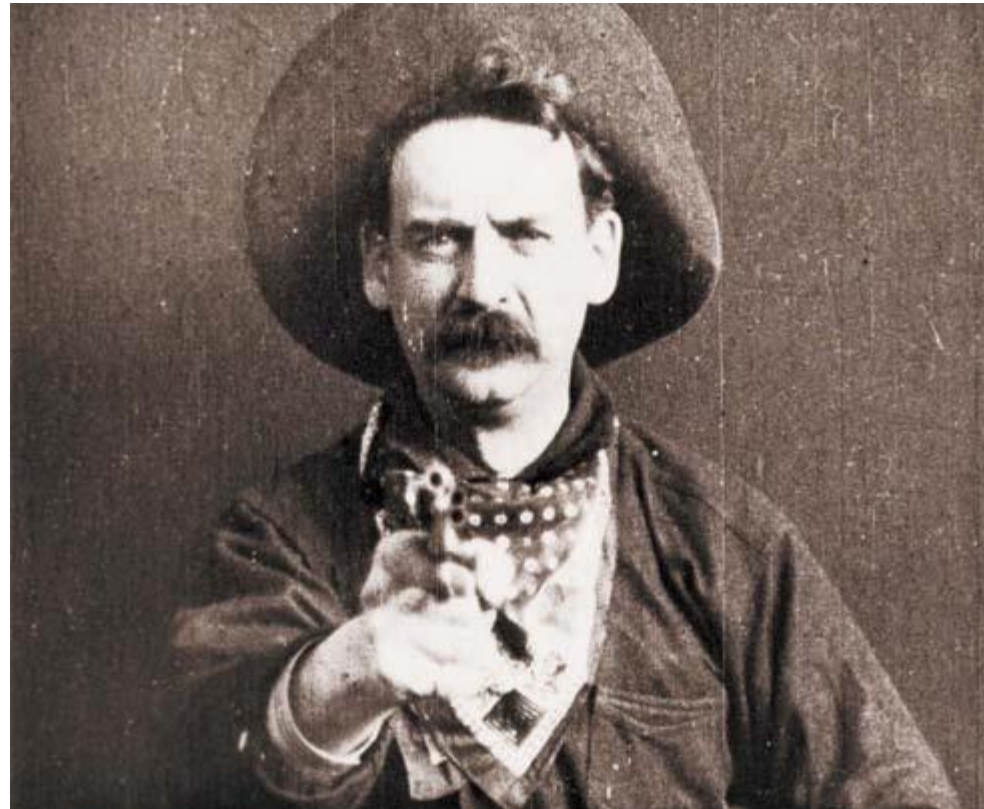


J. Movies

1. Emergence of the movie industry
 - a. 1890s, peep-show penny arcades
 - b. 1903, *Great Train Robbery* was the 1st real moving picture



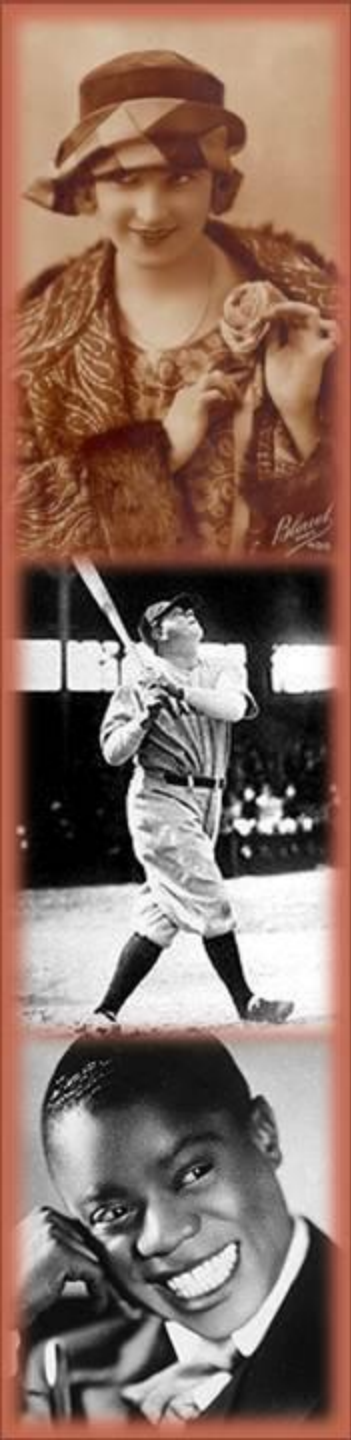
Justus D. Barnes
fires point blank
at the audience



c. First full-length feature was D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) that glorified the Ku Klux Klan

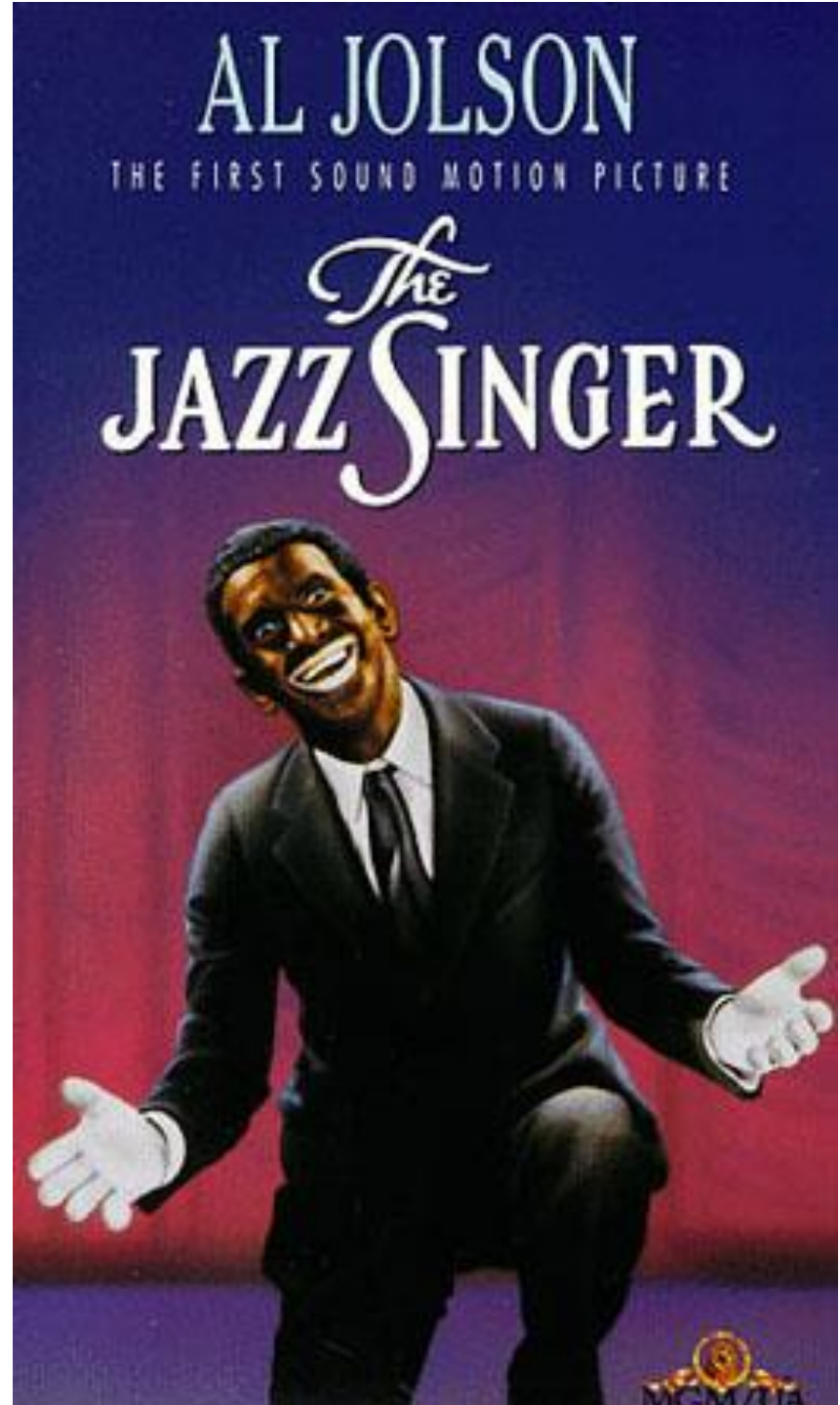


- d. Movies got a boost from anti-German propaganda during WWI
- e. **Hollywood** became the movie capital of the world
- Silent movies until 1927
- f. *The Jazz Singer* became the first “talkie” in 1927





Al Jolson, a Jewish entertainer, donned blackface while doing a minstrel show



2. Impact of Movies in America

- a. Eclipsed all other new forms of amusement (radio, music, theater)
- b. Employed 325,000 people in 1930
- c. Some actors and actresses became more popular than America's political leaders
- d. Standardized American culture
- e. Provided education through newsreels and travelogues
- f. Tabloids and cheap movie magazines emerged



K. Changes in working conditions

1. Reduction of work hours

2. **Welfare capitalism**

a. Some owners believed that if workers are taken care of, labor unions or strikes would no longer be needed

-- Union membership declined

b. Unions could not compete with industrial prosperity and wages did not increase significantly



IV. Social life and culture

A. 1920, a majority of Americans now lived in urban areas

B. Sexual revolution

1. **Freudian** psychology seemed to promote sexual activity

2. Sexual promiscuity, drinking, and erotic dancing were popular among many in the younger generation

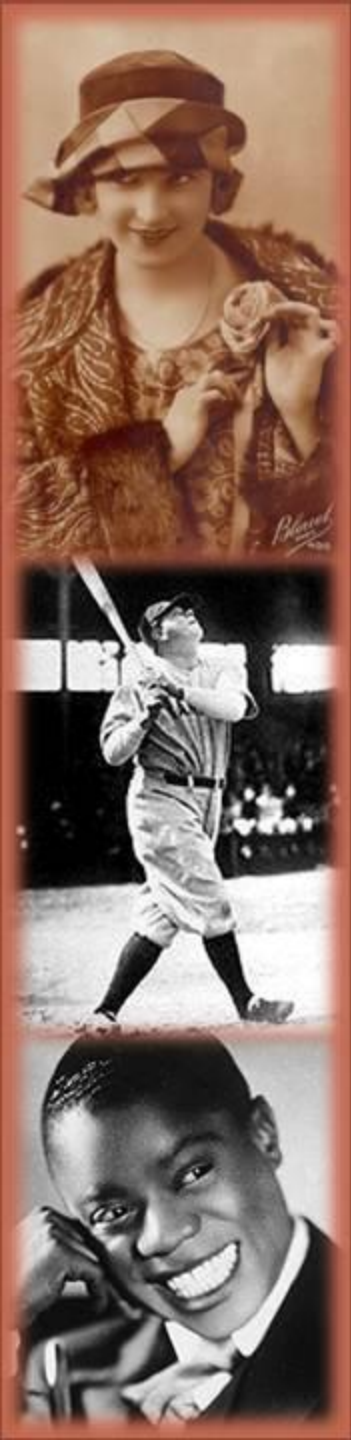
-- **The flapper expressed the new freedom of women**





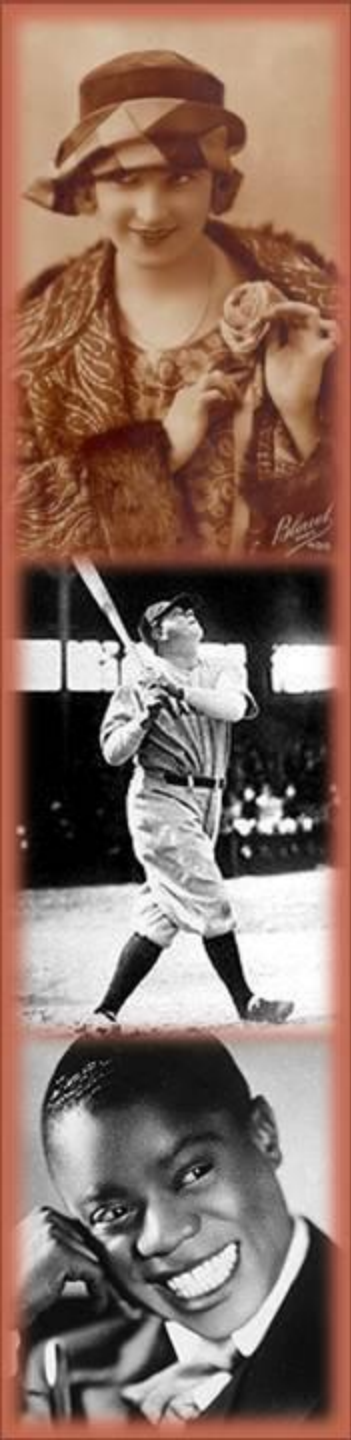
The Flapper

4. **Margaret Sanger:** birth control
- a. Her pamphlets violated the Comstock Laws of the 1870s
 - b. 1916, she established the nation's first family planning clinic
 - c. Founded the American Birth Control League in 1921





5. Women continued to organize
 - a. Alice Paul's National Women's Party began to demand an **Equal Rights Amendment**
 - It finally passed in 1972 but failed to get $\frac{3}{4}$ ratification by the states in the early 1980s



Equal Rights Amendment

“Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex”

Alice Paul’s amendment was first introduced in 1923



- b. League of Women Voters, 1920
- c. Divorce laws were liberalized in many states
- d. Many women stayed in the work force after WWI

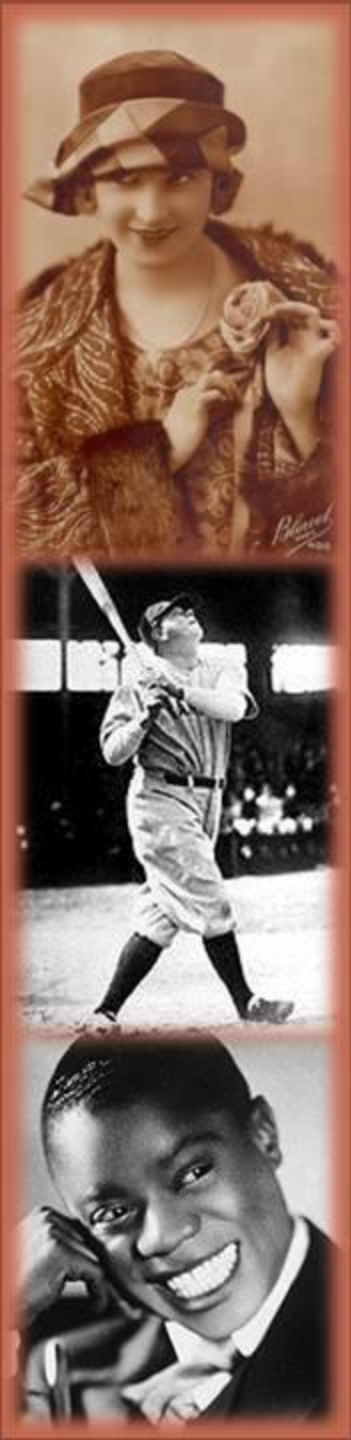


C. Jazz

1. The term “jazz” became popular after WWI
2. Pre-WWI development of jazz
 - a. African-influenced slave spirituals grew into jubilees and the blues in the rural South
 - b. Black folk music contained a common body of sound
 - c. Ragtime works of the 1890s are considered by some as the first “jazz” (e.g. Scott Joplin)
 - d. Blues developed simultaneously with ragtime

3. **New Orleans Dixieland Jazz** eventually spread to the North
 - a. Included group improvisation, syncopation, instrumental solos, and moderate to fast tempos
 - b. **Louis Armstrong** was perhaps the first master improviser
 - c. Great Migration northward during WWI meant jazz moved north as well.





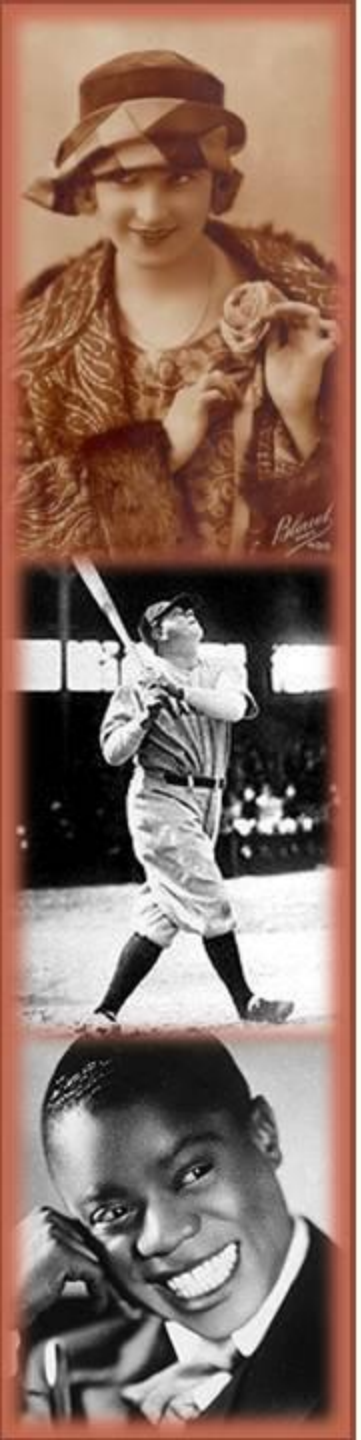
Louis Armstrong's Hot Five was the first group to make recordings that featured Armstrong's name. This version of Armstrong's band recorded from 1925 to 1927.

D. Harlem Renaissance

1. Development

a. Harlem, a black enclave in Manhattan, grew rapidly due to WWI

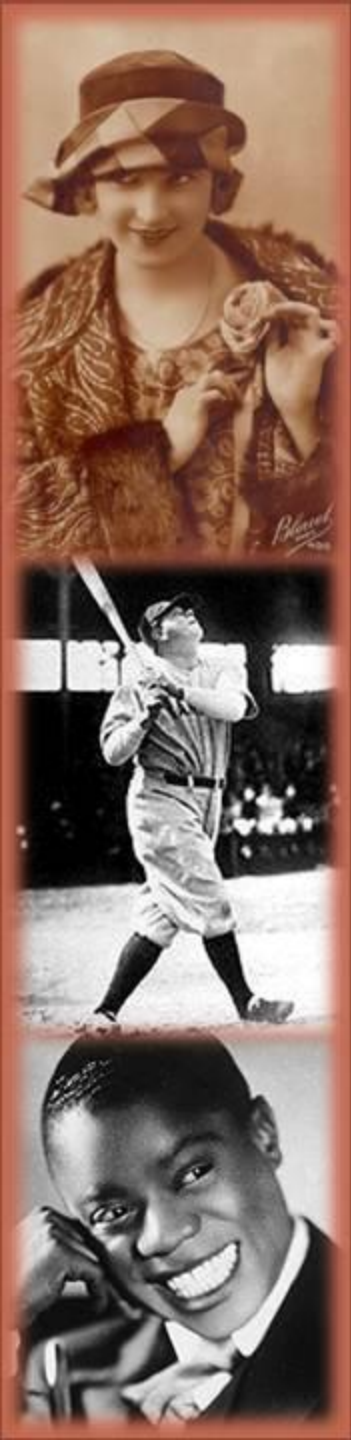
b. Significance: Harlem produced a wealth of African American poetry, literature, art, and music expressing the pain, sorrow, and discrimination blacks felt at this time



2. Poets and writers: **Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Zora Neal Hurston.**

3. **Duke Ellington** and the **Cotton Club**

-- Pianist, band leader, composer/arranger who formed one of the most famous bands in jazz history



4. Marcus Garvey

a. Leader of the **United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)**

- “Back to Africa Movement”: promoted the resettlement of U.S. blacks to Africa
- Advocated black racial pride and separatism from whites rather than integration

b. His views later became the basis for the Nation of Islam in the 1960s

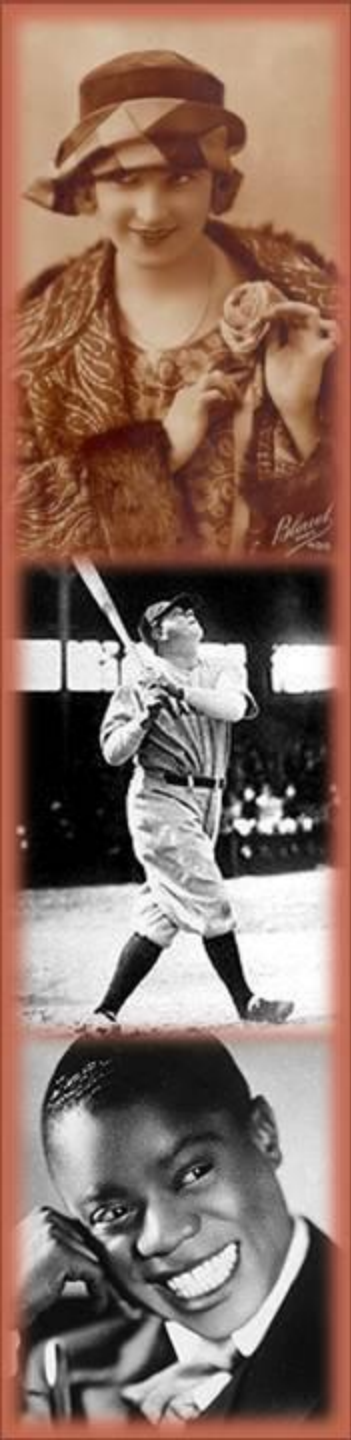


E. The “Lost Generation”

1. After WWI, a new generation of writers emerged
 - Their works conveyed resentment of ideals betrayed by society; criticized the materialism of the 1920s

2. **H. L. Mencken: *American Mercury* magazine**

- Attacked traditional conservative values





3. **F. Scott Fitzgerald**

a. *This Side of Paradise* (1920)

b. *Great Gatsby* (1925)

4. **Theodore Dreiser: *An American Tragedy* (1925)**

5. **Ernest Hemingway: *Farewell to Arms* (1929)**

6. **Sinclair Lewis**

a. Criticized midwestern life

b. *Mainstreet* (1920)

c. *Babbitt* (1922)