



IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

Time Line

Immigration, Indiana, and the Early Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century urbanization and an increasingly industrial economy encouraged new immigration to Indiana, especially from eastern Europe and from the southern United States. This was a time of technological wonder as the automobile replaced the horse and buggy. Roads throughout the state had to be rebuilt to accommodate this new way of travel. Interurban railways (electrically operated railway cars traveling from city to city) flourished early in the century and cities grew at a rapid rate. Railroads were also transforming the state, hauling raw materials as well as people to the new foundries and factories.

In northern Indiana there was an urgent need for skilled laborers to work in the growing steel industry. In 1906, the town of Gary was laid out at the southern end of Lake Michigan along with U.S. Steel Corporation's huge new manufacturing complex. The site was chosen because it lay on navigable water midway between the iron-ore mines to the northwest and the coal mines to the south. It was also near the limestone quarries of Michigan. Many of the workers were originally recruited from outside the state. Gary and neighboring East Chicago attracted immigrants from Serbia, Poland, Greece, and Yugoslavia, among other countries. Employers such as Inland Steel also recruited large numbers of Mexican settlers

into the region. Work was plentiful at the mills, but it was hazardous. As with many jobs assigned to recent immigrants, wages were low and workers were paid irregularly. Unskilled laborers could expect to earn little more than a dollar a day, while the most skilled earned up to \$4.50 a day. Steelworkers in Gary, even as late as 1910, were earning little more than seventeen cents per hour. Some employers required twelve-hour shifts (sometimes even longer) seven days a week when the workload was heavy. Many were then laid off when the work slowed.

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