



IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

Time Line

Indiana Industry and Immigration: Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Indiana was swept by a strong wave of industrial growth that transformed it into an urban, industrial state by 1920. Growth during this period of expansion focused primarily on heavy industry, especially in the Calumet Region of northwestern Indiana. As part of this expansion, a new surge of immigration began in 1880s, peaking only as war broke out in Europe in 1914.

By the early twentieth century, up to a million people were arriving in the United States each year. Census figures indicate that about 6 million Germans; 4.5 million Irish; 4.75 million Italians; 4.2 million people from England, Scotland, and Wales; approximately the same number from the Austro-Hungarian Empire; 2.3 million Scandinavians; and 3.3 million people from Russia and the Baltic states entered the United States. Their reasons for coming to the United States are much the same as in every other era of our history: to find work; to escape disease, famine, and natural disasters; or to leave behind religious and political persecution or government-sanctioned oppression. For example, Italian immigration increased following decadelong epidemics of cholera and malaria and a massive earthquake that destroyed much of the Sicilian provinces of Messina and Calabria in 1908. Millions of Jewish immigrants arrived from the Ukraine, Poland, Galicia, Rumania, Hungary, Lithuania, and Russia between

1881 and 1914 in order to escape severe economic discrimination and pogroms, which were violent attacks on their neighborhoods. Similarly, hundreds of thousands of Armenians left their homeland during that era to avoid armed conflict with Turkey. Irish immigration was also heavy beginning in the 1880s, a decade marked by severe famine in western Ireland and increasing political and religious strife throughout the country.

Travel to the United States from Europe improved dramatically after 1880. Steam-powered transportation, especially trains, now reached all parts of Europe. Steam-powered ships crossed the Atlantic Ocean in only a matter of days rather than weeks, and conditions aboard ships were much improved, especially for passages from northern Europe. Rail travel throughout the United States was rapidly expanding as well.

New factories and mills across the United States created a big demand for cheap labor. Again, immigrants became the primary workforce to support America's industrial revolution. While businesses required a growing supply of skilled and unskilled workers, Americans had at best uncertain attitudes toward new immigrant laborers. Fear was expressed about the potential loss of jobs to newcomers, and many politicians were wary about the influence of foreign attitudes toward religion and politics.

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