

## The Roaring Twenties

### Return to Normalcy

President Wilson had expected to return home from the Paris Peace Conference a hero, but several factors put Democrats out of power: Mishandling of the Treaty of Versailles, an economic recession, labor disputes that led to violence, and fear that communists would overthrow the government.

### Warren G Harding

- Harding promised a return to Normalcy
- He appointed businessmen, including Andrew Mellon as secretary of treasury. He balanced the budget and lowered taxes.
- Herbert Hoover was appointed secretary of Commerce. He helped American businesses expand overseas.

Scandals marred Harding's presidency, including the Teapot Dome scandal.

- Secretary of Interior Albert Fall had secretly leased government land in California and at Teapot Dome, Wyoming, to oil companies. In exchange, Fall accepted large bribes.
- He was tried and found guilty, he became the first Cabinet official ever sent to Prison
- In August 1923, Harding had a heart attack and died. Vice President Calvin Coolidge became President.

### President Calvin Coolidge

- Known as "Silent Cal"
- He forced officials involved in scandals to resign
- Elected in 1924 with the slogan "Keep Cool with Coolidge."
- He believed that prosperity for all Americans depended on business prosperity. He cut government regulations and named business leaders to government agencies.
- The economy revived and the 1920s began to roar.

### Foreign Policy

- Most Americans favored isolationism after World War I. The U.S. however continued to participate in world affairs.
- It encouraged disarmament, or limiting armed forces and weapons of war

- The U.S. sponsored the Kellogg Briand Pact which outlawed war.
- Coolidge sent the marines to Nicaragua to protect American business interests.

### The Red Scare

Alarm about Communism (an anti-democratic political system in which the single party government controls all means of production) affected American foreign policy and events at home

- Postwar strikes led Americans to believe that a revolution was beginning.
- A series of bombings by anarchists led to many Communists being hunted down, arrested, and deported.
- Two Italian immigrants, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were arrested for murder. There was little evidence of their guilt, but they were convicted and executed on the fact that they were Foreigners and anarchists.
- Immigration was limited because of fears about radical immigrants and American workers feared for their Jobs.
- An immigration law limited people from eastern and southern Europe and prohibited immigration from Asia.

### Prohibition

- In 1919, the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment was ratified which prohibited the making, selling, and transporting of alcohol.
- Saloons closed, but illegal ones called speakeasies took their place.
- A smuggling industry known as bootlegging arose. Bootleggers transported alcohol from Canada.
- Organized crime made huge amounts of money. Gang warfare and general lawlessness increased.

It became clear that Prohibition could not be enforced. In February 1933, the 21<sup>st</sup> amendment repealed Prohibition.

### Changing Lives of Women

- The 19<sup>th</sup> amendment gave women the right to vote in the 1920 election.

- In 1924 Nellie Ross of Wyoming and Miriam Ferguson of Texas became the first 2 female governors.
- Younger women known as Flappers became the symbol of women in the 1920s. They had bobbed hair, wore short dresses, wore bright red lipstick, smoked cigarettes, and drank alcohol.

### A New Mass Culture

- Since the cost of a Model T dropped to \$ 290, ordinary people could now afford them. The automobile became the symbol of Freedom and independence.
- Other industries grew because of the automobile. It included steel mills, tire plants, paint and glass manufactures. Oil drilling and oil refineries were needed. More roads and highways were built. Gas stations, tourist cabins, and restaurants also were needed.

### Radio/Movies

- The 1<sup>st</sup> commercial radio station began broadcasting in Pittsburgh in 1920.
- Families gathered around the radio and listened to comedies, westerns, mysteries, classical music and Jazz.
- Motion Pictures became a popular entertainment. They had no sound, but followed the plot by reading "title cards" that appeared on the screen.
- In 1927 The Jazz Singer was made. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> "talkie"

### Scopes Trial

- John Scopes was a 24 year old biology teacher in Tennessee. He taught his students Darwin's theory of Evolution, even though it violated state law.
- Two of the nation's best lawyers were hired. William Jennings Bryan, who had run for president 3 times argued for the state. Clarence Darrow, a Chicago lawyer who defended unions and radicals, defended Scopes.
- Darrow argued that religious doctrine was being imposed on public schools.
- Bryan accused Darrow of wanting to slur the bible.
- Scopes was convicted and fined. The law against teaching evolution stayed.

## Fads

- Dance fads illustrated the enthusiasm of the decade. These included the Charleston, the Lindy Hop, the Black Bottom and the Breakaway
- Fads such as Flag Pole Sitting and dance marathons, in which couples danced for hours, swept the country.
- The Chinese game of mah-jongg was a popular past time.

## Heroes

During this time the majority of the heroes were athletes.

- Baseball: Babe Ruth
- Swimmers: Johnny Weissmuller and Gertrude Ederle (1<sup>st</sup> women to swim the English Channel)
- Golfer: Bobby Jones
- Tennis: Bill Tilden and Helen Wills

## Hero of the Decade

The hero of the decade was Charles Lindbergh. He flew his plane "The Spirit of St. Louis, non-stop from New York to Paris in 33 1/2 hours.

## Jazz

- Jazz was born in the nightclubs and dance halls of New Orleans. It was a mix of rhythms from West Africa and the Caribbean, work chants and spirituals from the South, and harmonies from Europe. African American musicians spread jazz across the U.S. Famous jazz stars included Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, and Duke Ellington.
- So popular did jazz become that the 1920s are known as the Jazz Age.

## Literature

- American literature reflected both the decade's energy and its excesses. The novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Sinclair Lewis were as much social criticisms as they were fictional stories.
- In a New York City neighborhood, a vibrant African American culture known as the Harlem Renaissance emerged. Their work was a reaction to racial prejudice as well as an expression of hope.
- Langston Hughes expressed black pride in poetry that he hoped would capture the beat of Jazz.

- James Weldon Johnson combined poetry and politics. He wrote editorials for a black owned newspaper.
- Novelist and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston recorded and analyzed many African American folk songs and folk tales.

### Industrial Growth

- From 1922 to 1928, industrial production climbed 70 percent
- As more goods came to market, prices dropped
- Rising incomes gave consumers more money to spend on labor-saving devices for the home.
- To encourage spending, businesses offered installment buying, (or buying on credit)
- Chain stores and mail order catalogs made it easier for people to buy goods.
- A new consumer culture arose.
- High tariffs on imports stopped competition with domestic products.
- Taxes on the wealthy were cut to encourage spending.
- Americans developed a recklessness about spending.

### A Booming Stock Market

- Many people could now afford to purchase stocks, or shares of companies
- A Bull market occurred, meaning that stock values rose.
- Investors began buying on margin, which meant they paid a percentage of the stock's cost when they bought it, and paid the rest when they sold it. (If the market fell, investors could be left owing money for devalued stocks.)
- Some economists began to worry, and a few experts warned that the stock market was overvalued.
- Most investors ignored the warnings.
- Most people at the time worked hard yet barely survived.
- The wealthiest Americans made up only 5 percent of the population

### Signs of Trouble

Many farmers lived in poverty. Reasons for an agricultural depression:

- Farmers grew more than the American public could consume.
- After WWI, other nations were too poor to buy farmers' surplus crops.
- Many farmers were unable to pay off their debts.

## Workers

- Workers' wages were rising.
- Some companies offered benefits, such as pensions and paid vacations.
- Unemployment was high.
- unskilled workers who worked on an assembly line were taking the jobs of skilled workers for less pay.

## The Election of 1928

- The Republican Party held the presidency throughout the 1920s.
- The Republican candidate was Herbert Hoover.
- The Democratic candidate was Alfred E. Smith, the 1<sup>st</sup> Catholic to run for president.
- Religion and the economy became the major issues in the election.
- Hoover won the election.