



# The Immigrant Experience

American Immigration from 1865-1920

## Statue of Liberty

- Gift from France
- Designed by Frédéric Bartholdi and dedicated on 28 October 1886
- Bartholdi completed the head and the torch-bearing arm before the statue was fully designed, and these pieces were exhibited for publicity at international expositions



# Emma Lazarus "The New Colossus"

*Not like the brazen giant of  
Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride  
from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset  
gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch,  
whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and  
her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her  
beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her  
mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that  
twin cities frame.*

*"Keep ancient lands, your  
storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me  
your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses  
yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your  
teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless,  
tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the  
golden door!"*

# Coming to America

In the 5+ decades following the Civil War (1865-1920) a flood of immigrants came to America



- ▶ U.S. population in 1860 was 31.5m people
- ▶ Between 1865 and 1920, close to 30m *additional* people entered the country

# The U.S. experienced four major waves of immigration

## *1<sup>st</sup> Wave*

-Began in 1600s with first colonists  
-Majority of immigrants from England

## *2<sup>nd</sup> Wave*

-1820s-1870s  
- Mostly from Northern and Western Europe  
- 1/3 Irish, 1/3 German

## *3<sup>rd</sup> Wave*

-1881-1920  
- Approx 23.5 million immigrants  
-Mostly from Eastern and Southern Europe

## *4<sup>th</sup> Wave*

-Begins in 1965  
- Built upon new immigration law reform

# Push/Pull Migration Factors

## Push Factors

- Poverty: new agricultural techniques → unemployment
- Religious persecution (e.g. Jews)
- Political tyranny
- War/Compulsory military service
- Lack of social mobility
- Emigration laws allow migration

## Pull Factors

- Economic opportunity: work or land
- Civil liberties
- Democracy
- Social mobility
- Loose immigration laws (think industrialization leading to a demand for labor)
- Better standard of living

# Transportation to America

Passage often cost a life's savings

-Families would save enough money to send one or two family members to America and hoped those family members could earn enough to bring over the rest of the family ("Birds of Passage")



**From**  
**Europe:**  
1 week

**From**  
**Asia:**  
3 weeks

- The steerage deck was usually overcrowded
- Below deck was crowded, dark, and damp
  - Lack of air
  - Low food rations
  - Contagious disease



“During the twelve days in the steerage I lived... in surroundings that offended every sense. Only a fresh breeze from the sea overcame the sickening odors. Everything was dirty, sticky, and disagreeable to the touch”

# Ellis Island

In 1890, Congress designated a three-acre island in NY Bay as an immigration station (open from 1892-1954)



**By 1910, 6  
million  
immigrants  
had come  
through Ellis  
Island**



Many immigrants had their names changed by the inspectors because they didn't have the time or patience to struggle with foreign spellings

## **Immigrants then faced a medical inspection**

-If evidence was found of a communicable disease, they could be immediately deported back to their home country

-Could be placed into quarantine for an indefinite period of time



**The immigration inspection process could be a humiliating and dehumanizing experience**

# Asian Immigrants

During the mid-1800s, Chinese and Japanese immigrants began to arrive on the West Coast



## **Processed at “Angel Island”**

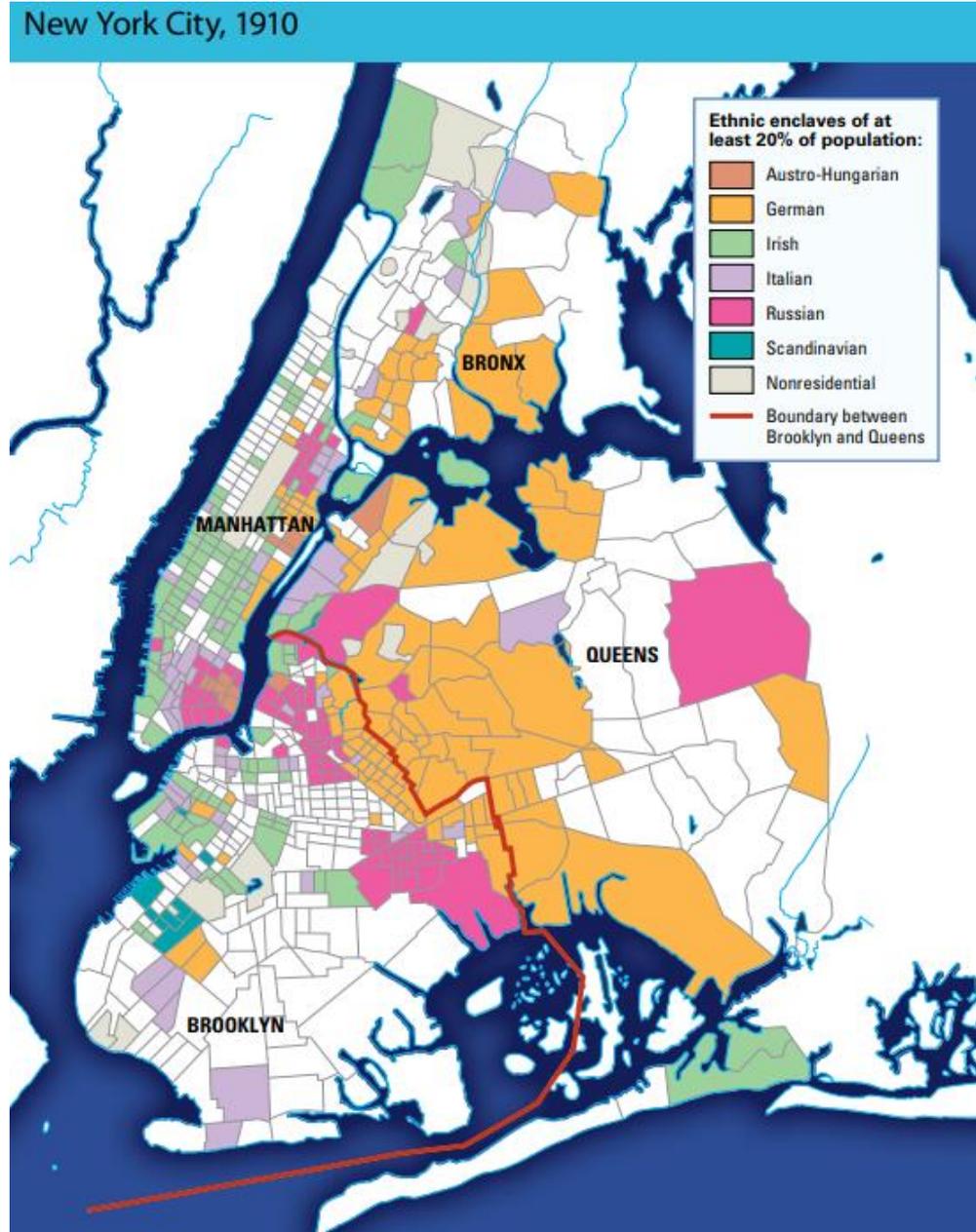
- Located in CA
- Very slow process, sometimes taking months to clear immigration hearings

# Ethnic Cities

The majority of immigrants settled in big cities where factory jobs were available

-Many immigrants lived in areas with people of similar ethnic backgrounds

-Neighborhoods provided a sense of community and support but slowed assimilation into American culture



# Nativism

Increased waves of immigration led to increased feelings of nativism:

- An extreme dislike for immigrants by \*native-born people and a desire to limit immigration
- WASPS (White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants)
  - Disliked unfamiliar customs and languages
  - Viewed immigrants as a threat to American way of life

## Anti-immigration Societies Grow

**American Protective Association:** anti-Catholic and foreigners

**Workingman's Party of California:** goal aimed at limiting/ending Chinese immigration

## **“Old Immigrants”**

- Northern or Western Europe
- Protestant
- Literate and “skilled”
- Quick to assimilate
- Came from more democratic countries
- Came with an amount of wealth

## **“New Immigrants”**

- Southern or Eastern Europe
- Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish
- Illiterate and “unskilled”
- Settled into ethnic neighborhoods
- Less democratic countries
- Arrived poorer

# THE “NEW IMMIGRANTS”

- Unlimited immigration kept wages low:
  - Worked in factories, coal mines, or became farmers because of the Homestead Act
  - Most immigrants avoided the South



CLOSE THE GATE.

# Impact of Anti-Immigrant

# Movement

Prejudice  
against  
immigrants  
stimulated  
new federal  
laws

1882: Chinese  
Exclusion Act-  
barred Chinese  
immigrants for 10  
years  
-Chinese already in  
country were  
denied citizenship

1882  
Immigration  
Act: banned  
convicts,  
paupers, and  
the mentally  
disabled from  
immigrating  
with a 50-  
cent tax on  
every person  
coming into  
the country



# The Rise of Large Cities

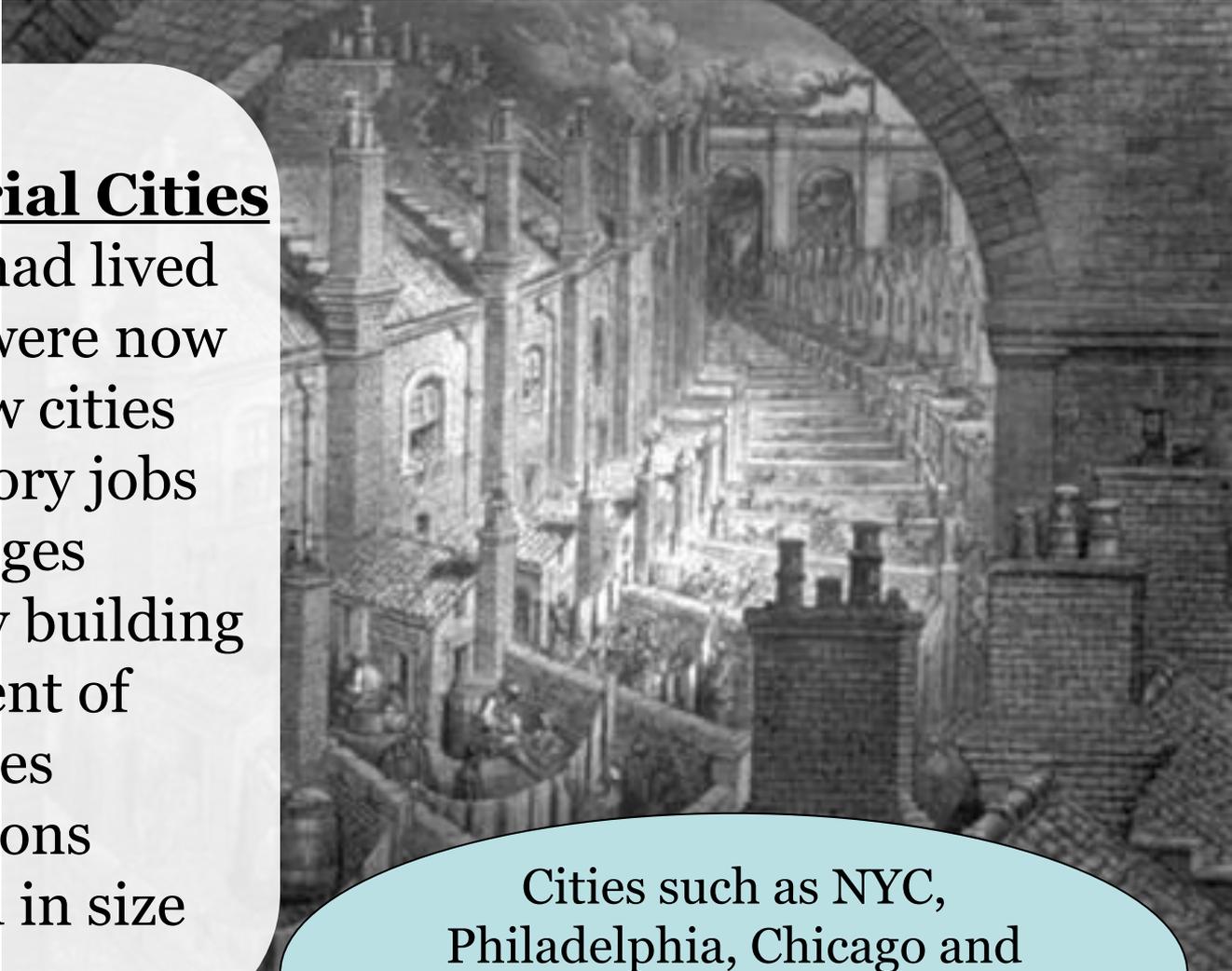
## Growth of Industrial Cities

- Most Americans had lived in rural areas, but were now moving to the new cities
- Searching for factory jobs and higher wages

## Urbanization: city building

and the movement of people to cities

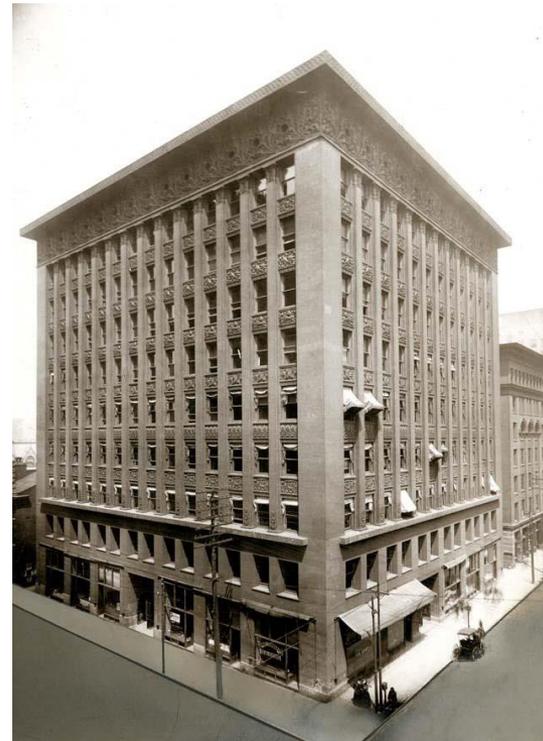
- City populations doubled or tripled in size



Cities such as NYC, Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston grew into industrial hubs

# Construction

- Brooklyn Bridge (1883)— 14 years to build
- Skyscrapers—invention of elevators and development of internal steel skeleton them to be built
  - Louis Sullivan designed the 10-story Wainwright Building in St. Louis
  - Daniel Burnham designed the Flatiron building in 1902
  - Frederick Law Olmsted started planned urban parks—Central Park in New York



# Living Conditions

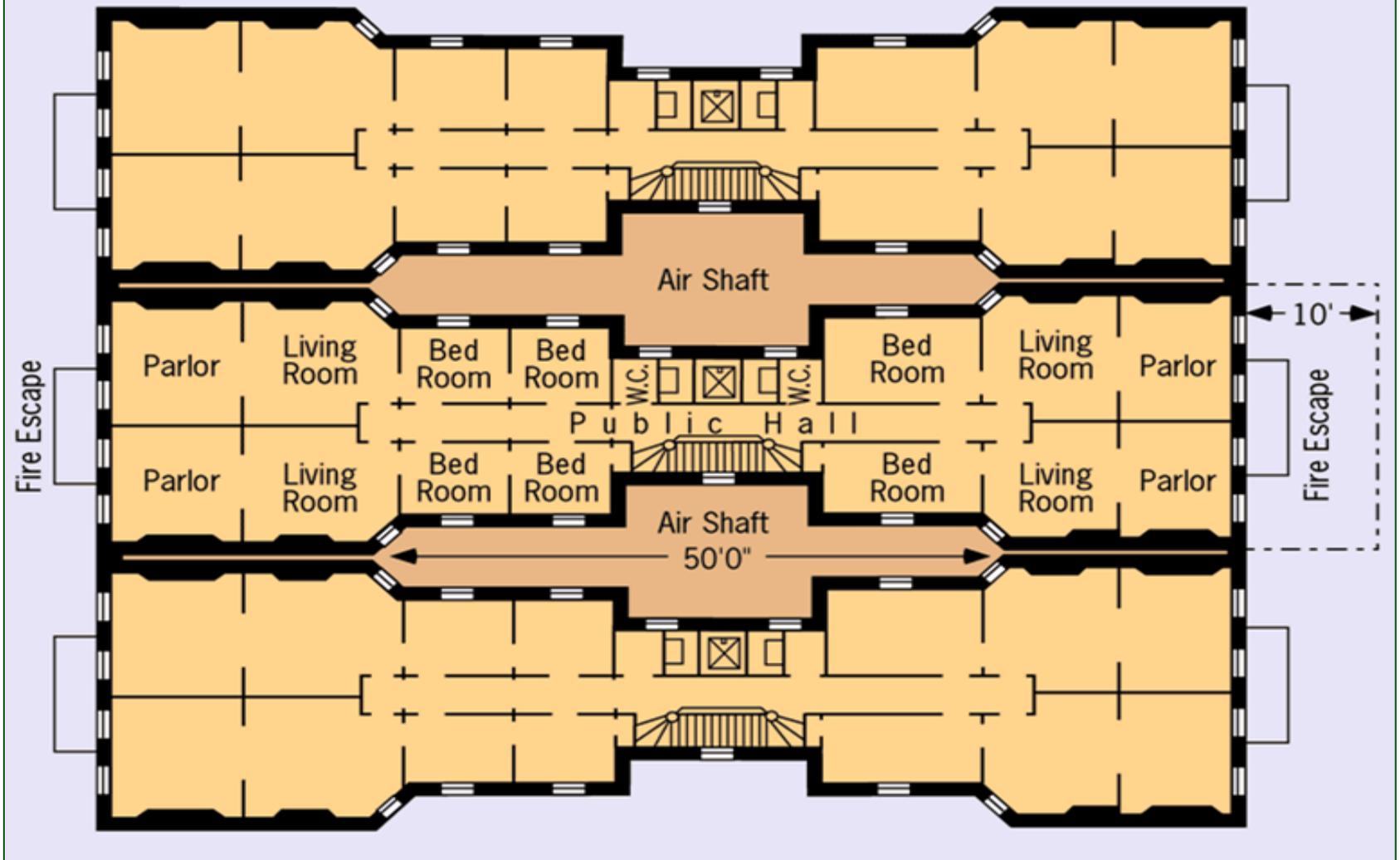


No building codes  
No sanitation codes





- Lacked adequate amount of housing
- Little opportunity for education
- Very little police protection
- Most of the unpaved streets had no drains, and collected heaps of garbage
- Human waste disposal went unchecked
- Crime rate skyrocketed
- Workers in the city had average life span of 17 yrs.  
in rural areas: 38 yrs.



- In 1878, a publication offered \$500 to the architect who could provide the best design for mass housing
- Most cost-efficient: “**Dumbbell Tenements**”, which were unsafe and crowded
- Poorly ventilated
- Massively overcrowded
- Disease was widespread

“New Immigrants” settled into what would become known as **ghettos**

- Cholera (1832 worldwide) and Yellow-fever epidemics swept through the slums on a regular basis
- Tuberculosis was most prevalent and fatal; infants suffered most (25% of infants would die before the age of 1)

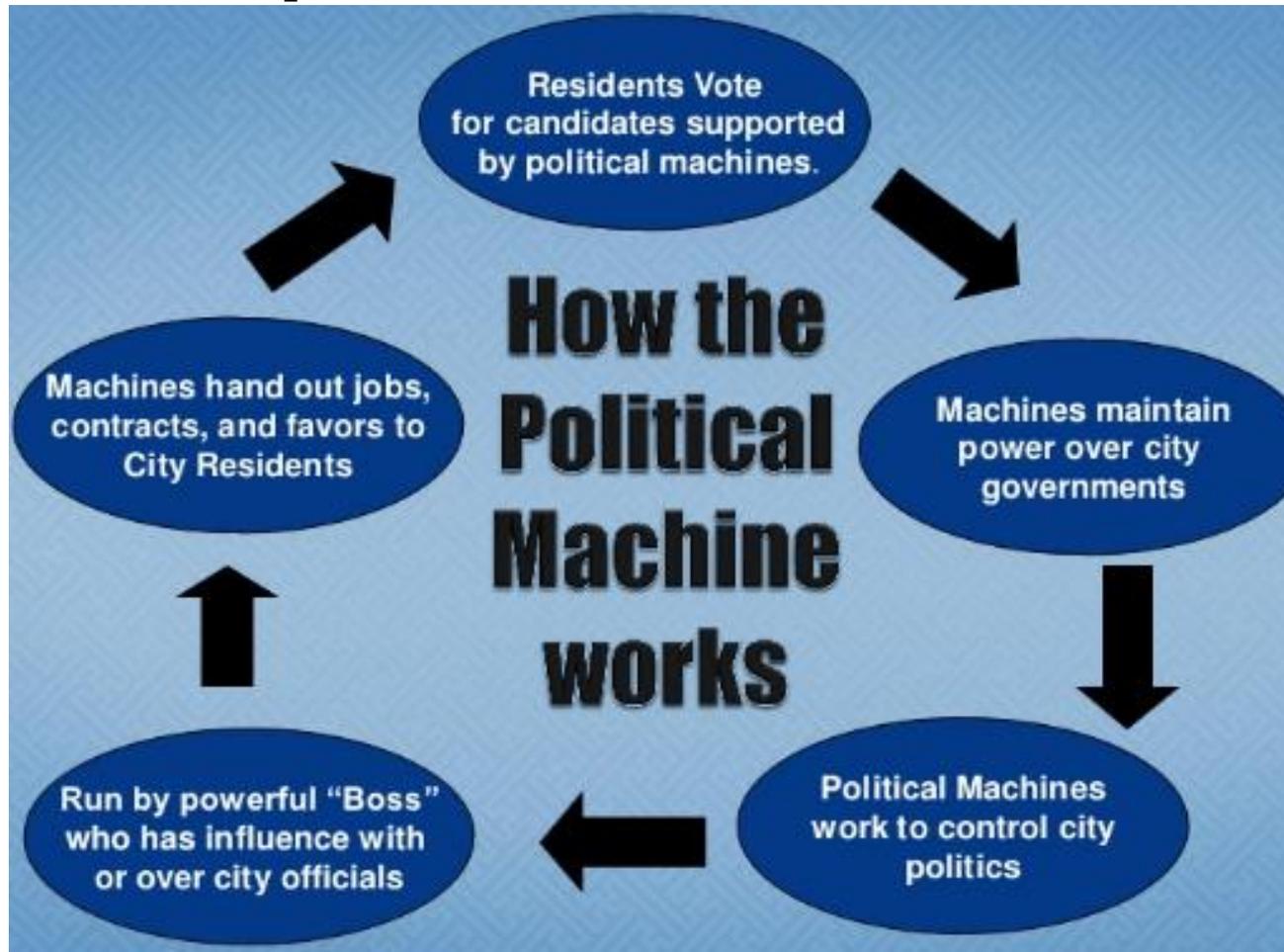
Other common diseases: smallpox, typhoid, malaria





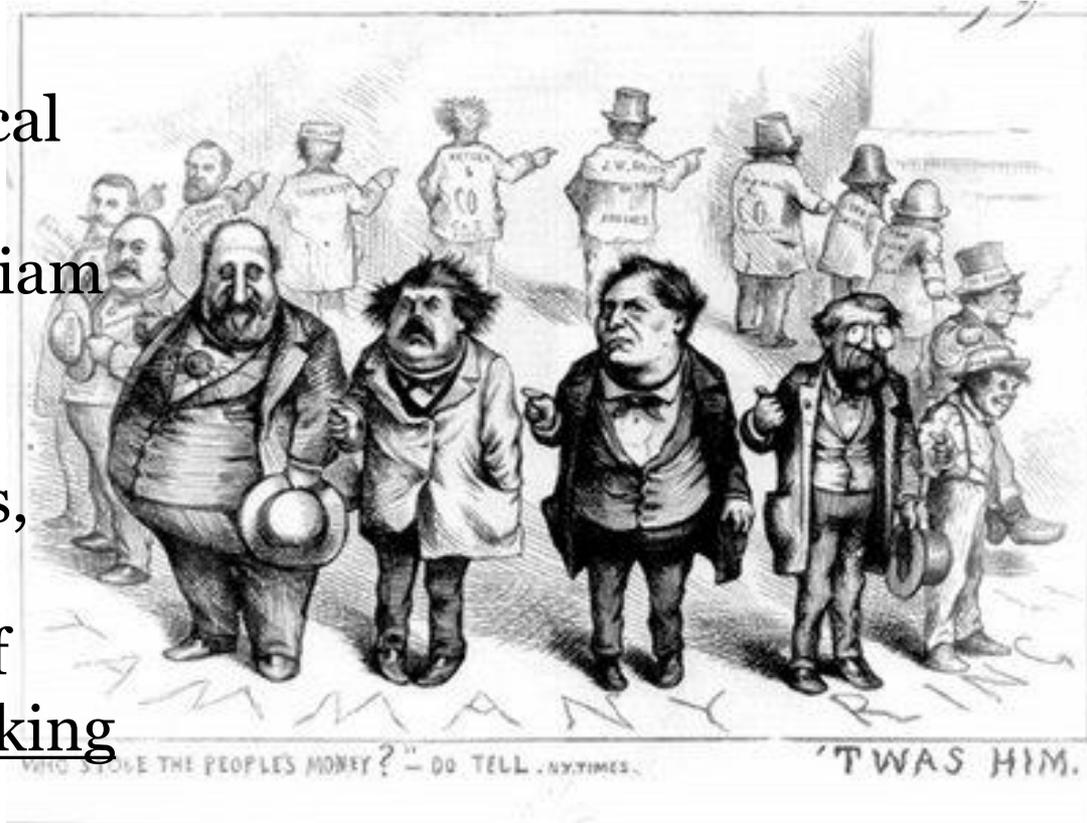
## POLITICAL MACHINES

- Corrupt local and state politics
- Organized by a “boss” who:
  - Picks who will run for office
  - Uses fraud and intimidation to get people elected
  - Siphons off tax money for profit
  - Stays in the “good graces” of the local immigrant/poor communities through small favors and public works



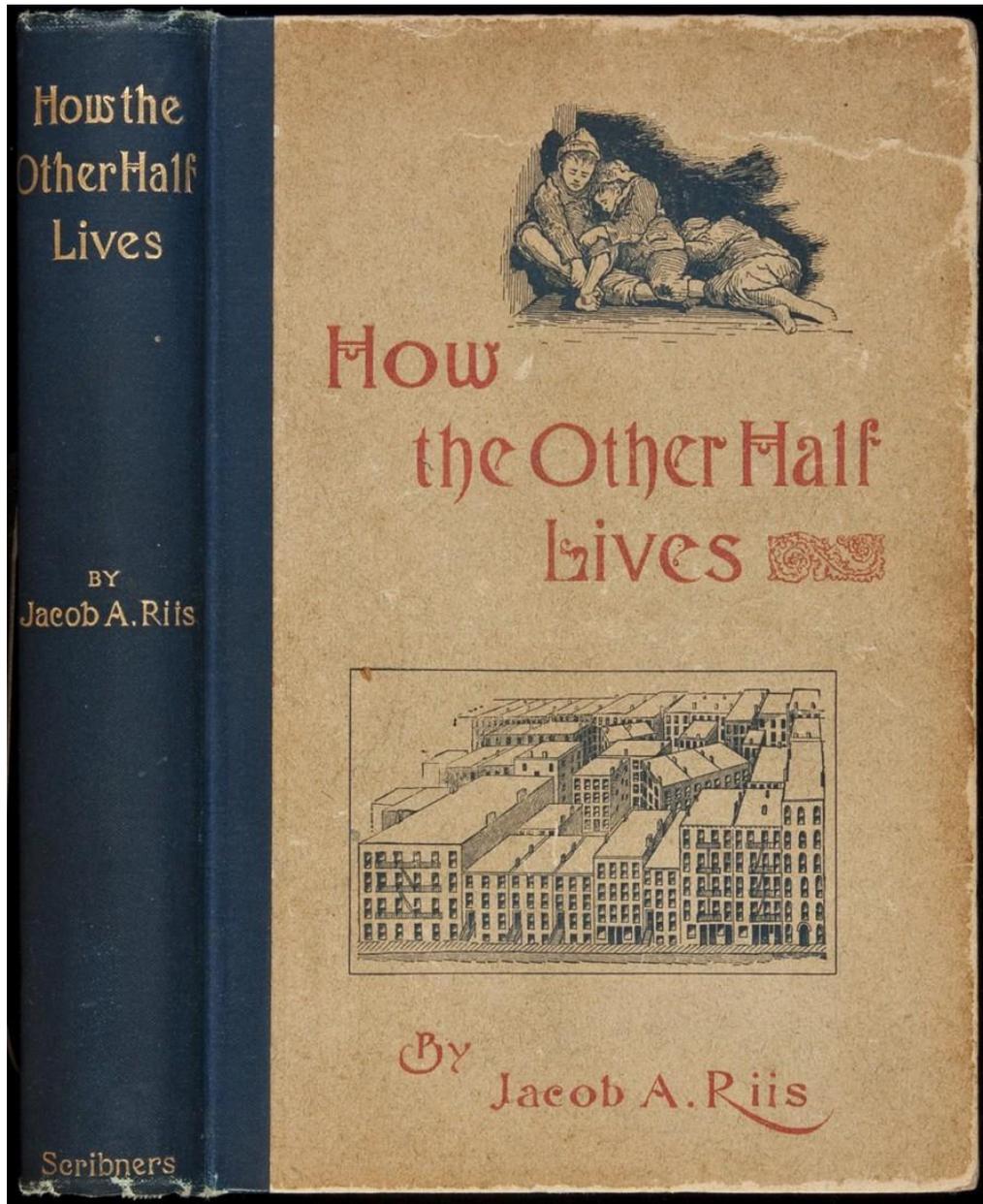
# Tammany Hall

- Most infamous NYC political machine
- Led by **Boss Tweed** (William Macy Tweed)
- Stole millions through patronage, bribes, kickbacks, and fraudulent contracts
- Exposed by the cartoons of **Thomas Nast** and muckraking newspapers
- Investigated, brought to trial, and found guilty by Governor Samuel Tilden (who would win the 1876 election and lose out in the Compromise of 1877)
- Tammany Hall was then taken over by the Irish



**Graft**—illegal use of political influence for private gain. (e.g., helping someone find a job on construction project for the city)

# Muckraker Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives*



-Exposed the parts of the city that the rich never see through photographs and interviews with those living around the Five Points and in the tenements

# Reform

- “Social Gospel Movement”—preached salvation through service of the poor
- “Settlement Houses”—community centers in poor neighborhoods that provided assistance; especially immigrants
- Hull House – one of the most famous settlement houses founded by Jane Addams and located in Chicago



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[1892]

# Triangle Shirtwaist Factory (25 March 1911)



- Both owners were acquitted of negligence or manslaughter charges
- Sullivan-Hoey Fire Prevention Law passed that October
- NY Democratic party took up the cause of the worker and became known as a reform party



“Operators Wanted. Inquire Ninth Floor.”

