Chapter 2

A Wave of Immigrants, 1789–1890s

IN THE 210 years following the end of the American Revolution the greatest migrations of people in the history of the world occurred. Sparked by the Industrial Revolution, which forced peasants off the land and into the cities, the movement also gained momentum from many other factors in European social history, including the doubling of population between 1750 and 1850. At the same time, intensified religious persecutions and relaxation of emigration restrictions in various European nations combined with a transportation revolution to facilitate the movement of those who wanted to travel. Meanwhile, receptive countries in southern Africa, Oceania, and North and South America sought people to exploit resources. Finally, two devastating world wars uprooted millions. More than 60 million people left their native homes from 1820 to 1940. Some went from one European or Asian country to another, but others sought riches in Africa, Asia, and South America. More than 15 million went to Canada, Argentina, and Brazil. About two thirds of the migrants, who were primarily European but included considerable numbers of Asians and Latin Americans, chose the United States as their destination. Their arrival would be one of the most significant factors shaping the destiny of this country.

After a lull in immigration at mid-twentieth century, major patterns of migration appeared again. While western Europeans no longer were on the move, peoples from southern Europe went to labor in northern Europe, and refugees from communism fled to western Europe. From the former colonies of Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands immigrants headed for the mother countries. America's immigrants in the second half of the twentieth century have largely been from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Just as America has become more diverse through immigration, so have Canada and Australia. Other Asians have sought jobs in the Middle East or in Latin America, and refugees have fled countries such as Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos. In Africa too refugees have left, desperately trying to find a haven in another land.

In the years between 1820 and 1930 America received more than 37 million immigrants, mostly from Europe. An analysis of time periods reveals that those coming from northern and western Europe predominated through

the 1880s, whereas southern and eastern Europeans overshadowed the others after 1896. As table 2.1 shows, the great change began after 1880.

Not all of these people can be treated in one chapter, of course. Hence discussion of the different groups has been divided into three roughly chronological periods. The so-called old immigrants, those of northern and western Europe, are considered in this chapter along with some Mexicans, the French Canadians, and the Chinese, most of whom came in the nineteenth century. The next chapter deals with both the "new" immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and the Japanese, whose major emigration occurred roughly between 1880 and 1920. Later chapters deal with the Hispanic migrants from Mexico and the Caribbean, whose presence is, for the most part, a twentieth-century phenomenon; the refugees coming as a result of Hitler's persecutions, World War II, and the Cold War; and Asians and Latin Americans who have become eligible for admission to the United States because of congressional action since 1965.

Although foreigners came to the United States throughout the nineteenth century, statistics reveal that before 1880 the bulk of them arrived in two major periods: from 1845 to 1854, when more than 3 million people landed at American ports; and from 1865 to 1875, when the numbers reached almost 3.5 million. In the first period the Irish and Germans exceeded all others; in the second the English and Scandinavians figured heavily along with the first two; and after 1880 all these groups were joined, and then swamped, by southern and eastern European emigrants who pushed American immigration totals to new heights. Asians and Latin Americans, on the other hand, predominated after 1970.

Most immigrants came essentially because of poor economic conditions in their native lands and prospects for a better life in the United States. Local concerns and variations, the pace of industrialization on the Continent, the disruptions of World War I, and the restrictive immigration quotas of the 1920s had much to do with the timing of the emigrants' departures. In Great Britain the industrial change began in the eighteenth century, and the British clearly dominated American immigration statistics until the 1820s; in the German states the transformation of the social order was most profound in the second third of the nineteenth century; hence the Germans began to move after 1830; and in Scandinavia the decade of the 1880s, with its economic upheavals, proved most significant for migration. Nevertheless, the peaks and troughs in foreign arrivals after 1819 correspond roughly with fluctuations in the business cycles in the United States. Good years such as 1854, 1873, 1892, 1907, and 1921 were high points for immigration, but they were followed by industrial depressions that resulted in correspondingly low totals for new entrants.

Table 2.1 Immigration to America, 1820–1930

Decade	*Germany*	*Ireland*	*England, Scotland, Wales*	*Scandi-navia*	*Italy*	*Austro-Hungary*	*Russia and Baltic States*	*Totals*
1820	968	3,614	2,410	23	30		14	8,385
1821–1830	6,761	50,724	25,079	260	409		75	143,439
1831–1840	152,454	207,654	75,810	2,264	2,253		277	599,125
1841–1850	434,626	780,719	267,044	13,122	1,970		551	1,713,251
1851–1860	951,657	914,119	423,929	24,680	9,231		457	2,598,214
1861–1870	827,468	435,697	607,076	126,392	11,725	7,800	2,515	2,314,824
1871–1880	718,182	436,871	548,043	242,934	55,795	72,969	39,287	2,812,191
1881–1890	1,452,970	655,540	807,357	655,494	307,309	362,719	213,282	5,246,613
1891–1900	505,152	388,416	271,538	371,512	651,783	574,069	505,281	3,687,564
1901–1910	341,498	339,065	525,950	505,324	2,045,877	2,145,266	1,597,308	8,795,386
1911–1920	143,945	146,199	341,408	203,452	1,209,524	901,656	921,957	5,735,811
1921–1930	412,202	220,564	330,168	198,210	455,315	214,806	89,423	4,107,209
Totals	5,947,883	4,579,182	4,225,812	2,343,667	4,751,311	4,279,285	3,370,427	

SOURCE: Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports*.

People do not cross continents and oceans without considerable thought, nor do they uproot themselves from family, friends, and familiar terrain without significant strain. The motivation to emigrate must be overwhelming before the fateful step is taken. In the nineteenth century, as in the seventeenth and eighteenth, poverty was the chief spur to movement. One eminent historian has written, "The most powerful factor impelling emigration was an extraordinary increase in population, preceding the ability of agriculture to feed it or of industry to give it jobs." The industrial and agricultural revolutions wrought such profound changes in Europe that large numbers of people were forced by circumstances beyond their control to relinquish ancestral dwellings and move to where they could find jobs. Yet a variety of other impelling reasons cannot be ignored. Religious intolerance, demeaning social gradations, political upheavals—all these pushed people across the Atlantic, and the ubiquitous "American letters" describing the Garden of Eden in the New World pulled countless thousands to America. Nevertheless, it must still be acknowledged that the economic factor was the most compelling for the majority of emigrants.

From 1790 to 1820 fewer than 500,000 immigrants came to the United States. The new Constitution of 1787 said virtually nothing about immigration, and after passing a few laws in the 1790s, the federal government generally allowed states to regulate immigration until 1875. Germans and Scots-Irish continued to arrive after 1790, including a few German soldiers who had fought in the Revolutionary War. But other groups were more prominent. During the upheavals of the French Revolution and the slave rebellion in Haiti, which began in 1791, thousands of French-speaking refugees arrived from France and Haiti. Most of the French exiles settled in coastal cities such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and Charleston. Occasional groups of political refugees, like the 25,000 or so French-speaking immigrants who fled their Caribbean plantations in the 1790s in the wake of slave uprisings, might be given safe havens. But these newcomers, usually middle or upper class, brought a courtliness or sophistication that allowed them to mingle with the elite in American society. As a result they assimilated rather quickly and suffered much less from minority status than did those of lesser education, wealth, or position. Many, however, returned to France after 1800, and those remaining made only a minor impact upon American society.

English radicals, fleeing political oppression in Great Britain, also entered the United States during the 1790s, as did members of the United Irishmen. The United Irishmen were part of a movement to end English domination of Ireland, and when their movement failed in the late 1790s, some fled to America. Federalists worried about these immigrants with radical ideas, and some Jeffersonian Republicans believed that French refugees did not have a

proper appreciation of American republicanism. As a result, Congress gave President John Adams power to deport persons deemed dangerous, even in time of peace. Adams did not use this authority. However, a sedition act was used against Irish-born Congressman Matthew Lyons for libeling President Adams in the press. The crisis and conflict over immigration resulting from the French Revolution ended in 1800, however. In 1790 Congress passed the first naturalization act; it granted whites the right to become citizens after only two years' residence in the United States. Legislators subsequently altered the period of years required for citizenship, but in 1800, after the election of Thomas Jefferson to the presidency, Congress set the time at five years, where it has remained ever since. The Napoleonic wars after 1800 and the War of 1812 between the United States and England reduced the opportunities for emigration from Europe.

The low levels of immigration and the nationalistic spirit engendered by the American Revolution combined to weaken the old ethnic communities. This process of Americanization seemed a prelude to the end of diverse cultures in the United States. The Welsh, Dutch, German, and French languages were already being replaced by English, and the process of acculturation continued. The Dutch Reformed Church, finding the younger generation did not understand Dutch, switched its bibles, hymn books, and prayer books to English. At one time New York and Philadelphia each had several German newspapers; by 1815 they had none.

The Irish were the first group of impoverished Europeans to leave their homeland in the nineteenth century. The Irish Poor Law of 1838, the enclosure movement on the land, and finally the great famine at the end of the 1840s, when blight ravaged the potato crops and brought untold misery and starvation to millions, combined to increase emigration. A French observer who had visited both America and Ireland before the Great Hunger said the condition of the Irish was worse than that of black slaves, and concluded: "There is no doubt that the most miserable of English paupers is better fed and clothed than the most prosperous of Irish laborers." As hundreds of thousands starved to death during the famine, one of the few lucrative trades left in Tipperary was the sale of coffin mountings and hinges. One man lamented, "Every day furnished victims, and the living hear, and endeavor to drive from their minds, as soon as they can, the horrifying particulars that are related. I have this day, returning to my house, witnessed more than one person lying in our district at this moment unburied. I have known of bodies here remaining in the mountainous parts, neglected for more than eight days." Many of the destitute went to England and some to South America, but more than a million came to the United States. The majority of these people remained in the port cities of New York and Boston, where they

landed, because they were too poor to move any farther; but others traveled west. As conditions improved in Ireland in the middle of the 1850s, emigration subsided, but another potato rot in 1863 and still another famine in the 1880s swelled the Irish emigration statistics. Almost 4 million Irish came to the United States in the nineteenth century. Their impact in this country has far exceeded both their numbers and their percentage of the population.

Within nineteenth-century immigrant groups, only among the Irish did women predominate. The famine and the shortage of land left many of them with dim prospects for marriage. Many decided not to marry or to postpone marriage, and to support themselves. They went to the cities, frequently finding jobs as domestic servants. But why stop in Dublin, many asked, when stories of America made emigration sound like such a better choice? So they headed for New York and Boston and other cities, where they readily found jobs in domestic service.

For contemporary Americans such work has a low status, but this was not necessarily the case for Irish women. In contrast with grim prospects at home or jobs in sweat shops, domestic service offered food and a clean place to live. Thus the Irish women became the ubiquitous "Bridget," the domestic worker employed by each middle-class family. Some of these women eventually married and left their jobs, but others remained single. Many opened bank accounts and provided passage money to bring their brothers and sisters to the United States.

Along with the Irish came the Germans. But unlike the Irish, they continued to be the largest ethnic group arriving in all but three of the years between 1854 and 1894. Before the end of the century more than 5 million Germans reached the United States; in the twentieth century another 2 million came. The exodus, at first primarily from the rural and agricultural southern and western regions of Germany, fits the general pattern of immigration. Crop failures, high rents, high prices, and the changeover to an industrial economy stimulated the move. Conditions were not as bad as in impoverished Ireland, but they were bad enough. One observer told of the "poor wretches" on the road to Strasbourg: "There they go slowly along; their miserable tumbrils—drawn by such starved dropping beasts, that your only wonder is, how can they possibly reach Havre alive." Relatives and friends who went first to America wrote glowing letters, for the most part, and this in turn stimulated further waves. Rich farmers who saw a bleak future in Germany, poor ones who had no future, peasants and paupers whom the state paid to leave, a handful of disappointed revolutionaries after 1848, and an assortment of artisans and professionals came in the 1840s and 1850s.

In late 1854 reports circulated in the German states of large numbers of shipwrecks and cholera epidemics at sea that resulted in death rates as high as 50 percent. At about the same time, nativist agitation in the United States

reached a peak and the American economy turned downward. These factors slowed immigration in the late 1850s. Then came the Civil War, which deterred people already beset with their own troubles from emigrating.

Between 1866 and 1873, however, a combination of American prosperity and European depression once again increased German emigration totals. Congressional passage of the 1862 Homestead Act granting free land to settlers, the convulsions in the German states owing to Bismarck's wars in the 1860s, the high conscription rate, and low wages at home also prompted German emigration. When the United States suffered a severe depression between 1873 and 1879, immigration figures were correspondingly depressed. But when the American economy improved, anxious Europeans once again descended on American shores. Germans who believed that prosperity would never be theirs at home left in record numbers; in 1882 more than 250,000 passed through the immigration stations here. The American depressions of the late 1880s and 1893–1894 cut emigration sharply, but by then an improved industrial economy in Germany provided greater opportunities than in the past, and fewer Germans felt compelled to seek their fortunes in the New World.

Scandinavians—the largest northwestern European group, after the British, Germans, and Irish, to populate America in the nineteenth century—increased their numbers in the United States markedly after the Civil War. The first group of nineteenth-century Scandinavians arrived in the autumn of 1825, when about 50 Norwegians settled in Kendall, New York, about 30 miles southwest of Rochester. In 1841 a Swedish colony developed in Pine Lake, Wisconsin. During the next decades, Scandinavians continued to come, but never in the numbers that either the Irish or the Germans did. For example, Scandinavian immigration totaled only 2,830 in 1846 and not much more in 1865. After 1868, however, annual immigration from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland passed the 10,000 mark. Jacob Riis, social reformer and friend of Theodore Roosevelt, for example, left Denmark for America in 1870. Like so many other immigrants, he arrived with little but "a pair of strong hands, and stubbornness enough to do for two; [and] also a strong belief that in a free country, free from the dominion of custom, of caste, as well as of men, things would somehow come right in the end." Other Danes and Scandinavians obviously agreed, for annual immigration from Scandinavia did not fall below 10,000 until the disruptions caused by World War I. In the 1920s, when other Europeans resumed their exodus, the Scandinavians joined them.

As in the case of the Irish and the Germans, Scandinavian immigration can be correlated to a large extent with economic conditions at home and in the United States. Sweden enjoyed a period of good crop production between 1850 and 1864; the years between 1865 and 1868, however, culminated in a

great famine that coincided with particularly bountiful times in the United States. During those years, the numbers of emigrants increased sharply, doubling from 1865 to 1866 and tripling from 9,000 in 1867 to 27,000 in 1868. The exodus from Norway of a large percentage of the nation's entire population at that time can be explained almost wholly by the industrial transformation and the consequent disruptions at home. Norwegian migration can be grouped into three significant periods: from 1866 to 1873, when 111,000 people came; from 1879 to 1893, when the figures went over 250,000; and from 1900 to 1910, when the numbers totaled about 200,000.

Industrialism came earlier in Denmark than in either Norway or Sweden, and the rural upheaval sent people into the cities and towns. But there were simply not enough jobs for those willing to work, and many artisans and skilled laborers sought opportunities in America. Wisconsin was the first state to attract Danes in any substantial number, but subsequently large contingents could be found in Iowa and Illinois as well. Before 1868 families generally emigrated from Denmark as units, but thereafter unmarried, young adult male immigrants exceeded married ones by an almost 3:1 margin. A plurality of these Danes were farmhands, but there was also a sprinkling of small landholders, craftsmen, and unskilled factory laborers. By 1920 United States census figures recorded 190,000 Danish-born.

Although economic factors overshadowed all others for the Scandinavians, it would be misleading to overlook social difficulties as motivating forces, except in the case of the Danes, who had no serious political or religious problems. In Sweden and Norway church and state were aligned, and both dissenters and nonconformists were penalized. There was no universal suffrage, and tightened conscription laws bothered many young men and their families; one scholar noted a particularly high proportion of emigrants among those eligible for military service in Sweden in the 1880s. Swedes in particular also abhorred the hierarchy of titles and the rigidly defined class system. After living in the United States, one Swede wrote home that his "cap [is not] worn out from lifting it in the presence of gentlemen. There is no class distinction between high and low, rich and poor, no make-believe, no 'title-sickness,' or artificial ceremonies. . . . Everybody lives in peace and prosperity."

Another compelling, perhaps decisive, reason was something called "American fever." After Europeans left their homelands, they wrote to their compatriots and described the wonders of America, or the "land of Canaan." Nowhere did these letters have a greater impact than in the Scandinavian countries. They were passed carefully from family to family, published intact in the local newspapers, and discussed avidly from pulpits on Sundays. The influx of favorable mail inspired whole villages with the fervent desire to em-

igrate to America. Not all the letters from the United States glowed with praise, however, and many complained of the adjustment to the New World. But as one emigrant succinctly put it, "Norway cannot be compared to America any more than a desert can be compared to a garden in full bloom."

The Irish, the Germans, and the Scandinavians constituted the main group of non-English European immigrants before the 1890s, but others also chose to emigrate to the New World. Between 1815 and 1850 the predominantly rural Welsh endured severe agricultural discontent as the nation began industrializing. A depression hit Wales after 1815. The winter of 1814 had been the coldest in memory; and in 1816, "the year without summer," Wales began to feel the effect of a population explosion. By mid-century the region's inhabitants, like those in the rest of Europe, had doubled in number. The high birth rate, the increase in illegitimate births, and the pauperization of the peasants compounded the discontent. By comparison, the United States, to which an individual could sail for £2 or £3 from Liverpool in 1836, seemed to be a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The availability of land, the growth of American industry—especially in iron making and mining, where many Welshmen could use their skills—and the increasing number of "American letters" tempted those most inclined to seek a better life.

Dutch religious dissenters also considered American economic opportunities inviting. Beginning in the 1840s they founded colonies in Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and what would later be South Dakota. Their departures from Europe corresponded with the potato blights and economic depression in Holland. By 1902 more than 135,000 Dutch, most of whom had arrived in the 1880s and 1890s, lived in the United States.

Several other groups, including the French from France, French Canadians, Chinese, and German Russians, also made significant impressions on the United States. Overpopulation at home and the diminishing size of agricultural plots that had been divided and subdivided for generations finally induced French Canadians to start emigrating in the 1830s, although most left Canada between 1860 and 1900. The approximately 300,000 emigrants settled for the most part in the mill villages and factory towns of New England, although scattered communities developed in New York and the upper Midwest.

The discovery of gold in California in 1849 had a great impact on the Chinese. News of the strike reached China by way of American merchant ships, but only the people of Toishan, a depressed agricultural province about 150 miles northwest of Hong Kong, responded. Toishan's agricultural output could feed its population for only about one third of the year, and floods and typhoons frequently devastated the community. As a result, many Toishanese moved into commercial activities and came in contact with West-

erners in Hong Kong and Canton, the two major cities closest to their province. They were therefore receptive to the opportunity for enrichment in the United States, and a number of the more adventurous males made the long journey. Only a few women accompanied them. Perhaps half of these young men left their wives and families behind, and a good number returned home after a period of years in the United States working in the mines or on the railroads. It was not acceptable for single women to emigrate. Some who did were virtually seized from their families or sold to merchants who brought them to America to become prostitutes. In 1870 61 percent of the 3,536 Chinese women in California had their occupation listed as prostitute. Other immigrant women ended up as prostitutes, but these Chinese women prompted some charges that the Chinese were immoral and unworthy of becoming Americans.

After the initial discovery of gold, about half of the Chinese settling in the United States came from Toishan, and a large percentage of the others came from areas surrounding that province. Lack of contact with Americans probably deterred other Chinese from going to the United States, and after 1882, when Chinese laborers were banned, few entered. The ban on Chinese immigrants did not include merchants and they and their wives continued to emigrate, though in small numbers. In 1930, 80 percent of the Chinese in America were men, largely living in bachelor societies, and about half of the women resided in San Francisco. These women were mostly confined to their prescribed roles in families.

The United States added Spanish speakers to its population when it acquired Florida in 1819 and many more following the Mexican-American War. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) permitted the nation to annex most of the Southwest. About 75,000 Mexicans living in this region were granted the right to become American citizens. Many did so, but a switch in loyalty did not prevent them from being overwhelmed by European Americans following the discovery of gold in California. Mexicans endured the loss of their lands, sometimes fraudulently; the loss of power; and an end to the pastoral life of Mexican California. The shabby treatment did not deter others from Mexico from emigrating to the United States. Like Europeans and Chinese, they came to work in the gold fields, along with other immigrants from Peru and Chile. Still other Mexicans, mostly men, came to work as cowboys or in agriculture. They were the forerunners of a greater migration from Mexico that occurred after 1910.

German Russians, Germans who had settled in western Russia several generations earlier and who had been allowed not only to maintain their cultural heritage but also to be free from military service, began arriving in the United States in the 1870s after the Russian government abrogated earlier

agreements and tried to incorporate these people into the nation's broader society. Most of these Germans traveled to what later became North and South Dakota, but others could be found in Montana, Kansas, and Nebraska. Almost all were Lutherans, Mennonites, and Hutterites, and some of their colonies today are more in tune with the values of yesteryear than they are with those of contemporary American society.

The physical and economic growth of the United States in the nineteenth century made it mandatory for Americans to turn to the new settlers for cheap labor to plow fields, build canals and railroads, dig mines, and run machinery in fledgling factories. Without the newcomers the vast riches of the nation could not have been exploited quickly. Major efforts and inducements were made to lure Europeans, French Canadians, Chinese, and, later, Latin Americans to the United States. Their strong backs and steadfast enterprise were necessary to turn American dreams into American accomplishments. At the forefront of these efforts were the state and territorial governments, the railroads, and the various emigrant-aid societies, which were buttressed by federal legislation.

Just as the Atlantic seaboard states had made efforts in the colonial period to attract settlers, so in the nineteenth century practically every state and territory of the American West, plus several others, sought to entice select groups of Europeans to their area. More people meant more schools and post offices, larger federal appropriations for internal improvements, larger markets for goods, faster economic development, "and the speedy arrival of the eagerly desired railroad."

In 1845 Michigan became the first state to provide for the appointment of an immigration agent to recruit settlers at the New York docks, and Wisconsin followed suit seven years later. After the Civil War, though, the competition among states for Europeans intensified, and efforts to attract them expanded on a vast scale. At least 33 states and territorial governments eventually set up immigration bureaus, advertised in European and American foreign-language newspapers, sent agents to northern and western Europe, and published their brochures, guidebooks, and maps in English, Welsh, German, Dutch, French, Norwegian, and Swedish. Each state elaborated upon its virtues, "the likes of which," one historian has written, "had never been known—except to other states seeking immigration." Minnesota, proud of its "beautiful lakes, forests, prairies and salubrious climate"—and quiet about its subzero winters—offered two prizes for the best essays on the state as a place for European immigrants and then published them in seven languages. Kansas specifically exempted the Mennonites from militia service, and thousands of them moved there from central and eastern Europe in the 1870s.

In 1870 the recruitment movement came to a head when several midwestern governors organized a national immigration convention at Indianapolis. Delegates from 22 states and the District of Columbia discussed how the federal government could be more helpful in encouraging foreigners to settle in the United States, and they petitioned Congress to establish a national immigration bureau. The heyday for the state bureaus ended with the depression of 1873, but several continued into the 1880s and 1890s. On the eve of World War I, Louisiana officials still distributed enticing brochures in several foreign languages to those disembarking at New Orleans, and the legislatures of Michigan, Wisconsin, and South Dakota continued to make appropriations to induce foreigners to settle in their states.

The railroads worked as hard as the states to attract immigrants and, in fact, in the words of historian Carl Wittke, were "probably the most important promotional agencies at work for some years around the turn of the century." After 1854, but especially in the 1870s and 1880s, most of the transcontinental railroads actively promoted immigration to the areas where they owned lands. The more people who settled in any given location, the more business and profits for the trains. Crops and merchandise would have to be moved. With additional markets and sources of labor, industrialists and governmental aid would surely follow. Like the states, the railroads subsidized agents in Europe, advertised and printed brochures in many languages, and played up the virtues of their respective territories. In addition, some gave free or reduced passage to prospective settlers, established immigrant receiving houses near their terminals, and built churches and schools for fledgling communities.

The first railroad to seek foreigners aggressively, the Illinois Central, inaugurated its program in 1854. The line sent special agents to the German states and the Scandinavian countries, and these men attended fairs and church services, arranged meetings, advertised in the local press, and promised fabulous inducements to prospective settlers. Not only did they help secure ocean passage, but they also provided free railroad transportation to Illinois for prospective land purchasers and their families. If the immigrants then bought land from the company, the Illinois Central allowed for long-term payments at 6 percent interest, gave discounts to the farmers for shipping their future crops on the line, and agreed to pay all land taxes until land-buying payments were completed. Immigrants preferred buying railroad lands to homesteading free governmental acreage because of these inducements, and because the railroads often offered choicer properties.

The Illinois Central had almost completed its efforts in 1870 when most other railroads were inaugurating their land and development bureaus. Some functioned as agents for states: the Burlington line, for example, represented

Iowa; and the Northern Pacific line acted as Oregon's East Coast representative. Railroad companies also published monthly newsletters in various northern and western European languages, and the Northern Pacific even set up its own newspapers in Germany, Switzerland, and England. From 1882 to 1883 alone, the company printed 635,590 copies of its publications in English, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, and German and also distributed a monthly newsletter for immigrants, *Northwest*. The Burlington's efforts resulted in the sale of nearly 3 million acres in Iowa and Nebraska, and the Northern Pacific is credited with having more than doubled the population of Minnesota, the Dakotas, Montana, and the Pacific Northwest between 1880 and 1900.

Working together with the railroads and state agencies to encourage immigration were the various emigrant-aid societies. But unlike the state agencies and railroads, these semiphilanthropic organizations were more interested in assisting departing Europeans and easing their travails in a foreign land by providing interpreters, clean boardinghouses, and employment bureaus in the United States than in encouraging them to come to America in the first place. This aid was clearly necessary, for as one Swedish emigration agent explained, "most of the emigrants are entirely ignorant about how to come to America."

Numerous steamship lines also promoted vigorously their own interests by seeking out immigrants. By 1882, 48 steamship companies traversed the Atlantic, each competing furiously with the others for the immigrant traffic. Fares were relatively cheap. One could go from England to the United States, for instance, for about $12 to $15, from Copenhagen to New York for about $30, and from Odessa to Dakota Territory for $75. In many cases minor children accompanied their parents at no extra cost. Publicity and services attracted customers. The Red Star, Anchor, and Hamburg-American lines, among others, established more than 6,500 agencies in the United States to sell prepaid tickets. As early as the 1850s the Irish were sending more than a million dollars a year—about half in prepaid tickets—to their relatives and friends at home, and other immigrant groups were no less diligent. Estimates are that in the 1880s most of the Scandinavians emigrating to the United States came on prepaid tickets or purchased them with money specifically sent for that purpose. Although there are no exact statistics available, historians assume that 25 to 70 percent of all immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries received either prepaid tickets from the United States or money designated to facilitate the journey.

Although the companies vied for the immigrant traffic, few felt compelled to make the voyage comfortable for steerage passengers. Before the 1850s immigrants came in sailing vessels similar to those the colonists had arrived

in a century or two earlier. The average journey across the Atlantic took about 44 days; voyages of four to six months were not uncommon. Like their forebears, many of those arriving in the nineteenth century, especially on English packets, which had been built for carrying cargo and not people, suffered inhumane treatment. Overcrowding, filth, stench, and poor ventilation were standard on almost all vessels, and tales of starvation and brutal assaults stand out in the accounts of the crossings. In 1846 a Dane who sailed to New York on a German ship wrote home, "Steerage became a regular brothel. We had four prostitutes and five thieves." Dysentery, cholera, typhoid fever, lice, and a disease known as "the itch" also presented problems. Those housed in the ship's bowels slept and ate on wooden bunks, which looked like dog kennels. One mid-century ship from Ireland possessed only 36 berths for 260 people; another had only 32 for 276. After one Irish ship had docked in New Orleans, customs officials found passengers and pigs lying together in "filth and feculent matter." One observer wrote that "it was a daily occurrence to see starving women and children fight for the food which was brought to the dogs and the pigs that were kept on the deck of the ship." An emigrants' guide in 1851 likened the fate of steerage travelers to that of prisoners on the African slavers; and as a surgeon who had served on six emigrant ships wrote, "The torments of hell might in some degree resemble the suffering of emigrants, but crime was punished in hell, whereas in an emigrant ship it flourished without check or retribution."

With the advent of steamships, however, conditions and amenities improved. The average crossing lasted fourteen days in 1867 and only five days in 1897. On the steamers all passengers had their own berths, women slept separately from men, and the galley provided three meals a day. Overcrowding and foul odors still existed, and the turbulence of the North Atlantic still forced many passengers to their knees to pray for divine assistance; but temporary inconveniences for two weeks or less could be endured. Moreover, between 1855 and 1875 both European and American governments established stringent rules to improve conditions for emigrants and restrict abuses by shipmasters.

Immigrant traffic followed commercial routes. Because of the Canadian timber trade and because British officials concluded that the fastest way to send mail to Canada was via Boston, a number of vessels, mostly British ships carrying the Irish, went to Massachusetts. Trade along the Mississippi River made New Orleans the major southern port; consequently it received the bulk of immigrants landing in the South. Since the journey to Louisiana took an extra two or three weeks and the climate in the lower South was muggy, most Europeans shunned that route. New York, the nation's major commercial center, also served as its chief immigration depot. After 1816 it

accommodated more than 70 percent of the newcomers, and its reception centers at Castle Garden (on the southern tip of Manhattan) and later at Ellis Island became world famous.

Regulation of foreigners entering British America had been a function of the individual colonies and later, by tradition, of the states. Beginning in 1819 the federal government required the collection of vital statistics but otherwise allowed immigrants to enter unfettered until 1875, when it imposed additional regulations.

New York State, where most of the newcomers landed, passed a series of laws, beginning in 1824, requiring ship captains to post bonds indemnifying the state for any expenses incurred in connection with paupers disembarking there. Later the state required a $1 head tax on every steerage passenger to finance an immigrant hospital. In 1847 New York established the State Board of Commissioners of Immigration. The commissioners were granted the power to collect vital statistics, board and inspect incoming ships, establish and manage an immigrant hospital, and quarantine those who had communicable diseases. The commissioners, who served without pay, made every effort to assist the newly arrived foreigners. In 1855 they set up Castle Garden, a model reception center, through which everyone disembarking in New York had to pass. In this way the foreigners were counted, and their ages, occupations, religions, and the value of property they brought with them were recorded. Immigrants arriving at the center had to bathe with soap and water. Afterward they could purchase items like bread, milk, and coffee and use the extensive kitchen facilities to prepare their own food. Although officials encouraged everyone to leave the depot within hours of arrival, those who wished to remain could sleep overnight in the galleries. Beds were not provided, but a few thousand could be lodged. Immigration officials had already inspected and licensed numerous New York City boardinghouses and posted lists of suitable accommodations. Before this time many "greenhorns," as the immigrants were called, had been fleeced by boardinghouse agents and cheated by phony ticket sellers and other swindlers. To counteract this, Castle Garden also provided money exchanges and railroad and canal ticket booths for those going inland and disseminated information about the United States and employment opportunities throughout the country.

Castle Garden remained the nation's chief immigrant depot for more than 35 years. In 1876 the United States Supreme Court forbade New York State to collect bonds from ship captains on the ground that they were equivalent to head taxes, and for the next six years the state financed the reception center out of its general funds. In 1882 Congress levied a 50-cent head tax on newcomers and defrayed New York's expenses out of the monies collected.

The federal government finally took charge of immigration in 1890. Ellis Island then replaced the abandoned Castle Garden as the gateway to America for millions of Europeans. On the West Coast, Angel Island in San Francisco Bay received newcomers from China and other nations that bordered the Pacific Ocean.

Once through Castle Garden or Ellis Island, foreigners dispersed quickly (see table 2.2). Those too poor to go anywhere else remained in New York. Others, determined to reach the wooded regions and fertile prairies of the Midwest, obtained the necessary railroad or canal tickets and proceeded on their journeys. A favorite route began with a boat ride up the Hudson River to Albany and across the Erie Canal to Buffalo, then continued by water, rail, or wagon to the ultimate destination. Most of the nineteenth-century newcomers from Germany and Scandinavia wanted their own farms; the Homestead Act, invitations from the states and the railroads, and letters from relatives drew them to the north central plains, where land was either free or cheap. (As late as 1879 some Wisconsin land sold for 50 cents an acre.)

Those too poor to finance any trip—like many of the Irish—accepted offers from canal and railroad builders to be taken to various construction projects throughout the nation. As a result, pockets of Irish could be found in every region of the country. Most, however, remained in port cities or their environs, although by the end of the nineteenth century Irish colonies existed in San Francisco and New Orleans. The majority of Irish immigrants were in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois.

As already noted, Germans constituted the most numerous of the nineteenth-century immigrants. Originally they hoped to plant a new Germany in America. Missouri in the 1830s, Texas in the 1840s, and Wisconsin in the 1850s were the states that they had hoped to make their own, but American expansion and ideology quickly frustrated such visions. Americans were unwilling to allow any group to carve out its own exclusive territory in the United States, and subsequent waves of immigrants showed no respect or tolerance for the wishes of those Germans who wanted to insulate their settlements. Germans toiled as farmers in rural areas and as both skilled and unskilled laborers in urban communities. Nearly half of them settled in Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin, but Texas published its laws in the German language in 1843, and Germans constituted one fifth of the white population there four years later. Many of the counties of west Texas owe their beginnings to German immigrants, and by 1900 about one third of the state's white population had German parents or grandparents. Germans also dominated the foreign-born statistics and lent a particular flavor to cities like St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee. In New York City they outnumbered all other foreigners except the Irish in 1870. One observer described New

Table 2.2 The Urban Immigrant, 1870

Irish, German, and English Populations in American Cities

Name of City	Total Population	Irish	Germans	English
1. New York, N.Y.	942,292	202,000	151,203	24,408
2. Philadelphia, Pa.	674,022	96,698	50,746	22,034
3. Brooklyn, N.Y.	376,099	73,985	36,769	18,832
4. St. Louis, Mo.	310,864	32,239	59,040	5,366
5. Chicago, Ill.	298,977	40,000	52,316	10,026
6. Baltimore, Md.	267,354	15,223	35,276	2,138
7. Boston, Mass.	250,526	56,900	5,606	6,000
8. Cincinnati, Ohio	216,239	18,624	49,446	3,524
9. New Orleans, La.	191,418	14,693	15,224	2,005
10. San Francisco, Calif.	149,473	25,864	13,602	5,166
11. Buffalo, N.Y.	117,714	11,264	22,249	3,558
12. Washington, D.C.	109,200	6,948	4,131	1,231
13. Newark, N.J.	105,059	12,481	15,873	4,040
14. Louisville, Ky.	100,753	7,626	14,380	930
15. Cleveland, Ohio	92,829	9,964	15,855	4,530
16. Pittsburgh, Pa.	86,076	13,119	8,703	2,838
17. Jersey City, N.J.	82,546	17,665	7,151	4,005
18. Detroit, Mich.	79,577	6,970	12,647	3,282
19. Milwaukee, Wis.	71,440	3,784	22,600	1,395
20. Albany, N.Y.	69,422	13,276	5,168	1,572
21. Providence, R.I.	68,904	12,085	596	2,426
22. Rochester, N.Y.	62,386	6,078	7,730	2,530
23. Allegheny, Pa.	53,180	4,034	7,665	1,112
24. Richmond, Va.	51,038	1,239	1,621	289
25. New Haven, Conn.	50,840	9,601	2,423	1,087
26. Charleston, S.C.	48,956	2,180	1,826	234
27. Indianapolis, Ind.	48,244	3,321	5,286	697
28. Troy, N.Y.	46,465	10,877	1,174	1,575
29. Syracuse, N.Y.	43,051	172	5,062	1,345
30. Worcester, Mass.	41,105	389	325	893
31. Lowell, Mass.	40,928	103	34	1,697
32. Memphis, Tenn.	40,226	2,987	1,768	589
33. Cambridge, Mass.	39,634	7,180	482	1,043
34. Hartford, Conn.	37,180	7,438	1,458	787

(*continued*)

Table 2.2 (*continued*)
Irish, German, and English Populations in American Cities

Name of City	Total Population	Irish	Germans	English
35. Scranton, Pa.	35,092	6,491	3,056	1,444
36. Reading, Pa.	33,930	547	2,648	305
37. Paterson, N.J.	33,600	5,124	1,429	3,347
38. Kansas City, Mo.	32,260	2,869	1,884	709
39. Mobile, Ala.	32,034	2,000	843	386
40. Toledo, Ohio	31,584	3,032	5,341	694
41. Portland, Me.	31,413	3,900	82	557
42. Columbus, Ohio	31,274	1,845	3,982	504
43. Wilmington, Del.	30,841	3,503	684	613
44. Dayton, Ohio	30,473	1,326	4,962	394
45. Lawrence, Mass.	28,921	7,457	467	2,456
46. Utica, N.Y.	28,804	3,496	2,822	1,352
47. Charlestown, Mass.	28,323	4,803	216	488
48. Savannah, Ga.	28,235	2,197	787	251
49. Lynn, Mass.	28,233	3,232	17	330
50. Fall River, Mass.	26,766	5,572	37	4,042

SOURCE: U.S. Census, 1870.

York's German section in the 1850s: "Life in *Kleindeutschland* is almost the same as in the Old Country. . . . There is not a single business which is not run by Germans. Not only the shoemakers, tailors, barbers, physicians, grocers, and innkeepers are German, but the pastors and priests as well. . . . The resident of *Kleindeutschland* need not even know English in order to make a living." One chronicler made the same observation about people in and around Fort Wayne, Indiana. Until World War I it was possible for German immigrants, and for their children, to live a German-American life—attending German-language parochial or public schools, dozing through long German sermons from the pulpit, reading Fort Wayne German newspapers, purchasing grocery, hardware, and agricultural supplies from German stores that prudently employed German-speaking clerks, attending German band and choral performances, sharing a "grawler" of locally brewed German beer and locally packed German sausages with fellow workers at one of the 170 friendly ethnic saloons, and ultimately to take final rest in an exclusive German Lutheran, Catholic, or Jewish cemetery.

Scandinavians, a third group whose presence in nineteenth-century America is frequently noted, went mostly to the wheat-growing regions of Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Kansas, and Nebraska. The rich and fertile soil, the open spaces, and the harsh winter climate reminded them of their European homes, and with each successive wave of settlement there was the added attraction of living near friends and relatives from the old country. The solicitations from the actively recruiting states and railroads steered them into the Midwest, and the boom times of the early 1880s kept them there. Minnesota's population, buttressed by heavy migration from Germany and Scandinavia, soared from 8,425 in 1860 to 101,109 in 1870 and to 1,301,826 in 1890. Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and the Dakotas showed similar rises. But the bitter winter of 1886–1887 and the successive years of failing wheat crops slowed the pace. Beginning in the early 1890s Scandinavians responded to the industrial opportunities in the Northeast and the Middle Atlantic states as well as in the lumber camps and sawmills of the Pacific Northwest. The influx of Scandinavians and others into the state of Washington, for example, reached such proportions that the state population jumped from 75,000 in 1880 to over 1 million in 1910. Every census after 1910 shows more than 60 percent of the Swedish-born and their children living in urban areas. In 1917 Chicago had the largest number of Swedes and Norwegians in the world next to Stockholm and Oslo, respectively, and 13 years later the federal census found a sizable Norwegian population comfortably established in a middle-class neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York.

Other nineteenth-century newcomers went to both urban and rural areas. The French Canadians had established small communities in Winooski, Vermont and Woonsocket, Rhode Island, as early as 1814 and 1815, respectively, and before 1850 in Madawaska and Burlington, Vermont. By the end of the nineteenth century they constituted a major minority in New England and much smaller ones in the cities of northern New York, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Welsh people who came to America headed for the mining camps in Pennsylvania and Ohio. The Dutch, who went to the wooded and lake regions of southwestern Michigan, northern Illinois, and southern Wisconsin, also had settlements in Iowa, New York, Wyoming, and Arizona. Czechs, on the other hand, went mostly to the prairie lands in Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Texas. Some of the mountain states in the West attracted English, Scottish, and Welsh settlers, and the Mormons in Utah were particularly successful in converting some Dutch and Scandinavian peoples who then went on to places like Ogden and Salt Lake City. Immigrants from the British Isles, Germany, and the Russian Empire found the coal mines of the foothills of the Kiamichi Mountains in southeastern Oklahoma compelling because of the relatively high wages they could earn there.

Even the South—where officials and some businessmen desired northern and western Europeans to fill the labor ranks (white Southerners commonly considered blacks unsuitable for any work other than farm and domestic service) but the population in general did not want intruders—received contingents of foreigners. Swedes went to Thornsby, Arkansas; Danes farmed in Mississippi. Italians worked in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee; the Irish bolstered the populations of several southern cities; a Slavic community developed near Petersburg, Virginia; and some Chinese planted themselves in Mississippi. In the 1900 census of Alabama, Italians were the most numerous foreigners in Mobile County, the Irish stood out from all the rest in Bibb County, and Germans ranked at the top of Europeans living in Colbert, Montgomery, and Culliman counties.

Wherever they went and whoever they were, the immigrants lived and worked under conditions that were far from idyllic. Male workers were always needed in the dangerous construction of the canals and railroads, and strapping Irishmen won a reputation for talent and skill in these construction industries. Irish laborers built the Illinois Central Railroad before the company employed German hands. The Union Pacific used Mexicans, Germans, Chinese, and Irish to get its lines going. In rural areas, prairie fires, blizzards, the pestilence of grasshoppers, and the ravages of storms or long spells of dry weather were not unknown. Food was often scarce. Many Danes in Nebraska wore wooden shoes rather than leather ones; among many of the pioneers, who depended upon the homespun garments that their women made for them, underwear was also considered a luxury that hardier settlers did without. A German in Indiana wrote home in 1842, "We have reduced our requirements for luxuries very sharply: We drink coffee on Sundays only, go barefoot all summer and make our own clothes because we keep sheep and can also make flax."

Life in rural America was exceedingly difficult for women. Farm lands had to be cleared and crops planted and harvested. Women were expected to help with these tasks in addition to rearing children and running the household. Unmarried women carried a major farming burden. Because doctors were rare, women also helped one another in sickness and childbirth. Although immigrants set up ethnic organizations, the church being the most important, to aid in settlement and survival, primitive transportation made communication with friends and family difficult during the harsh winter months. Because of their isolation, rural families were apt to cling to traditional practices and values, in which the women played such a vital role. They spoke in their native language to the children, prepared ethnic foods, and in general conveyed a sense of the Old World culture. It is no doubt true that women in immigrant families were the main keepers of ethnic cultures

because of their central role in family life, and in rural America it was possible to resist the process of Americanization more easily than in the cities.

Mass immigration also resulted in new social problems for urban dwellers, especially in congested cities like New York City and Chicago. Many immigrants were either unemployed or underemployed, and disease and poverty were common. Inexperienced immigrants found coping difficult.

Immigrants generally found work easily in the United States, but often in unskilled jobs. In cities like New York, Boston, and Chicago immigrants composed the bulk of the unskilled laborers, porters, street cleaners, bartenders, waiters, draymen, cabmen, carmen, livery workers, and domestics. The Irish could be found as stevedores on docks at every major port in the country. In New England they replaced young American women in the mills and later stepped aside for the French Canadians. Germans in New York held menial positions but also qualified as tailors and skilled craftsmen in furniture, cabinet making, and bookbinding firms; in Cincinnati they were dominant in the stove and musical instrument industries. Those Norwegians who did not farm worked in the iron mines and lumber camps in Michigan, in the sawmills and fisheries in the Pacific Northwest, and at other industrial tasks in places as diverse as Tacoma, Cleveland, and Brooklyn.

Irish women constituted two thirds of the domestics in Boston as early as 1860. Many Scandinavian women also migrated alone and became domestic servants. Swedish women, no less than Swedish men, found limited economic opportunities at home, and it became common for young daughters to seek outside employment. But as with Irish women, employment in their home country offered them little chance for advancement. From the 1870s to World War I, single women constituted nearly 30 percent of Swedish immigrants. They quickly found that domestic service was a better job in America than in Sweden. One historian examining the letters of these young women wrote that in America, unlike Sweden, a domestic was "treated like a human being." Newcomers tended to find jobs near other Swedes with whom they could associate during their leisure hours. Many woman looked upon domestic service not as a loss in status but as an improvement over conditions they had left at home.

Most immigrant men expected their wives to stay home, raise the children, and care for the household, for immigrant families often included five or more children. Women also served as midwives to bring their neighbors', friends', and relatives' children into the world. Unmarried women were usually sent to work to contribute to the family income. They found jobs in the nation's growing number of garment shops, in the printing business, as domestics, and as dressmakers. After women married they usually remained at home, but on occasion some still sought outside employment. Others added

to their domestic responsibilities, and contributed to the family coffers, by taking in lodgers. One historian described the situation among Irish anthracite miners in Pennsylvania: "in addition to a married couple and their children, households often included other relatives, or a number of boarders, or in some cases a second family. These households were almost ethnically exclusive."

Widows and those whose husbands had deserted them needed to support their children. Socially acceptable work for which they had the necessary skill, such as sewing at home, was not lucrative. Not even the labor of their children, who went to work at an early age, could provide enough income. Thus in much of the United States a strikingly large number of households headed by women lived in a precarious state. Scandinavian, Irish, and German women had no qualms about serving as domestics, but French Canadians shunned personal service for factory work. The mainstay of the late nineteenth-century New England textile mills, French-Canadian families, insisted that all their members be employed at the same establishment. They put little premium on education and thought that children as well as adults should contribute to the family coffers. One overseer in a textile mill recalled telling a French-Canadian family that the law prohibited the hiring of children under the age of ten, "and the next day they were all ten." In the West the Chinese were forced to accept the menial jobs that whites shunned in mines, in domestic service, and on farms. Chinese also opened restaurants and laundries, and they made up half of California's agricultural workers by 1884.

Some immigrants were excluded from unions; others, unfamiliar with American labor practices and the advantages of unions, worked as scabs and strikebreakers. Chinese laborers showed little regard for the white man's union; when white miners struck in 1875, the Union Pacific brought 125 Chinese to mine in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Ten years later a similar problem resulted in the further importation of Chinese workers, who refused to join the Knights of Labor. This no doubt precipitated the September 1885 massacre in Rock Springs, where whites killed 28 Chinese laborers, wounded 15 others, and chased several hundred out of town.

The conditions under which Americans and immigrants labored were often appalling. Since American wages were much higher than those in Europe and Asia, emigrants did not realize that there could be economic hardships in the United States, due to a correspondingly high cost of living. In Sweden farmhands earned $33.50 a year, plus room and board. It is no wonder, therefore, that a salary of $40 a month in the Pennsylvania coal mines, $1.25 to $2.00 a day on a railroad construction gang, or $200 a year as an American farmhand would be appealing. Not until they reached the United

States and had to cope with the realities of urban squalor or rural depression did the emigrants realize that the American laborer did not lead a princely existence.

During the boom times in the Midwest after the Civil War, farm income was relatively high. Wheat sold for $1.50 a bushel, and hard work seemed to ensure prosperity. But in the 1890s wheat prices fell on the world market to 50 cents a bushel. Countless farmers were ruined. There is no doubt that the failure of wheat crops in places like Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and the Dakotas contributed to the decline in migration to those areas in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

Employees in industrial enterprises fared just as badly as those on the farm. In the nineteenth century there was a chronic labor shortage even though at times cities like Boston had more people than jobs. But the pay in most occupations failed to sustain even a modest standard of living. In 1851 *The New York Times* and the New York *Tribune* published estimated budgets for a family of five. The first came to about $600 a year, the second to $539. Yet the wage scales reveal that most employees' yearly incomes fell far short of these figures. A skilled tailor might earn $6 to $9 a week but did not work a 52-week year. Cabinetmakers earned $5 a week, and common laborers took home $20 to $30 a month. A journeyman dressmaker earned $1.25 to $1.50 for a 14- to 16- hour day. In Boston, in 1830, when the annual cost of living was $440, the average working person earned $230; in 1864, when the cost of living rose to $810, the average unskilled laborer made only $465. Real wages increased in the decades after the Civil War, but many immigrant families received only a few hundred dollars a year and had to struggle to maintain a modest standard of living.

Such low wages and yearly incomes make clear why so many immigrants, as well as many native-born Americans, lived in humble and often squalid dwellings. The typical Norwegian in the upper Midwest built a log cabin 12 feet by 12 or 14 feet, with a height of 7 to 14 feet, for himself and his family. The early Dutch pioneers of Michigan lived under bedsheets framed on hemlock branches, with cooking pots outside. When they earned enough to build a more commodious abode, several families shared a one-room log cabin. The German Russians in North Dakota put together homes representative of many others on the Great Plains. Inexpensively built, they had interior walls plastered with a straw- or prairie-grass clay mud and limewashed. Few of the homes had wooden floors since lumber was too expensive and the original occupants did not expect to remain long.

Urban enclaves also left much to be desired. In small cities like Fall River and Holyoke, Massachusetts, French Canadians crowded into dark, dank, rat-infested tenements that one chronicler pronounced "worse than the old

slave quarters." Housing in most of the major urban centers was also appalling. In Boston the Irish resided in "crammed hovels . . . without furniture and with patches of dirty straw," in damp cellars that flowed with raw sewage after heavy rains, or in reconverted factory lofts with leaking roofs, broken windows, and no running water. Historian Oscar Handlin, who vividly chronicled their experiences, tells us that in winter the Boston Irish often remained in bed all day to protect themselves from the cold or "huddled together like brutes, without regard to sex, or age, or sense of decency." Similar hovels existed in New York as well. In the middle of the century 18,000 people lived in cellars without light, air, or drainage, and even those residing above them had to use outdoor, and often malfunctioning, privies—winter and summer. Overcrowding was proverbial; half a million people lived in 16,000 dilapidated tenements. The Irish often grouped five or six families in a single flat. Three quarters of the city had no sewers; garbage and horse droppings littered ghetto streets.

The appalling overcrowding of immigrants and lack of proper sanitation led to continual bouts with disease. Slum dwellers suffered from consumption, cancer, pneumonia, diarrhea, and bronchitis. They were also victims of periodic epidemics of typhoid, typhus, and cholera, which spread through the neighborhoods like fires in a parched forest. Cities having the largest immigrant populations—New York, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and New Orleans—suffered the most from such outbreaks. In 1851 a cholera epidemic hit Chicago, and in one three-block section where 332 Scandinavians (mostly Norwegians) lived, *everyone* died from the disease. Hospitals and lunatic asylums housed disproportionately high numbers of newcomers. In 1850s New York City, 85 percent of the foreign-born admitted to Bellevue Hospital were Irish; so were most of those admitted to Blackwell's Island, the city's asylum.

In rural areas too settlers, poorly versed in the need for proper sanitation, preventative measures, and the benefits of quarantines during bouts with contagious diseases, often fell prey to the ravages of epidemics. In 1898 a wave of diphtheria spread through McIntosh County, North Dakota, yet the German Russians insisted that every member of the family attend all of the funerals of neighbors who perished. As a result all the adults and children in the community either had the disease or had been exposed to it. One cabinetmaker there, who worked day and night building coffins, had to construct three for his own children, ages 12, 10, and 3, who died within a week of one another.

Poverty was another common affliction for the immigrants. Rural folk would sometimes benefit from the generosity of their neighbors, but in the larger cities many of the poor turned to almshouses. Those forced to accept

charity also had to tolerate the sanctimonious declaration that they were merely "the indolent, the aged, and infirm who can earn their subsistence nowhere, [but must] become a burden, and often because of their vices, a nuisance to the community." The foreign-born outnumbered the native-born in the poorhouses of the nation in 1850; in some states, like New York, the ratio was greater than 2:1. The problem worsened with the arrival of new immigrants.

Among the most serious difficulties newcomers encountered was American intolerance for ethnic differences. Each immigrant group experienced hostility in countless ways. The best jobs were closed to them, and employers posted signs saying NO IRISH NEED APPLY or some variation on that theme. Institutions dealing with the foreign-born—almshouses, hospital dispensaries, employment bureaus—treated their clients with "a ridiculous, often brutal disdain." Hardly any minority escaped the barbs of the prejudiced. The Germans received abuse from several sides. Temperance advocates did not like their making merry, drinking beer, and ignoring the Puritan Sabbath. Conservatives distrusted radical and reform-minded German exiles from the abortive revolutions of 1848 who supported the abolition of slavery, women's rights, and other liberal causes in America.

Economics in part explains ethnic intolerance. The increase in immigration, especially of many poverty-stricken refugees from Ireland, aroused American fears of having too many poor people. And large numbers of unskilled laborers, it was argued, would depress wages and the American standard of living. Americans also deplored what they considered the immigrants' striking personal deficiencies. A Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics report in the 1880s censured the French Canadians for their lack of "moral character, their lack of respect for American institutions, their failure to become naturalized, and their opposition to education."

Before the Civil War the most important source of conflict between native-born and immigrant was religion. More precisely, the key battles were fought over American objections to Irish Catholics. The underlying issue revolved around the American belief that Roman Catholicism and American institutions, which were based on Protestant concepts, were incompatible. In this view, if Catholics "took over" America, the pope in Rome would rule and religious and political liberty would be destroyed. Samuel F.B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph, believed that there was a Catholic plot to destroy the United States. He held that the Church was sending Jesuit-controlled immigrants to America. Writing in 1835, he asked his countrymen not to be any longer "deceived by the pensioned Jesuits, who have surrounded your press, are now using it all over the country to stifle the cries of danger, and lull your fears by attributing your alarm to a false cause. . . . To your posts! . . . Fly to

protect the vulnerable places of your Constitution and Laws. Place your guards; you will need them, and quickly too.—And first, shut your gates."

Morse was not the only impassioned enemy of Catholicism. Militant Protestants wrote sensational exposés of the Church. The most famous of the anti-Catholic diatribes was Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*, published in 1836. This gothic horror tale was frequently reprinted and sold several hundred thousand copies. According to her inflammatory story, the author was compelled to live in sin with priests in the nunnery and witnessed the execution of nuns for refusing to submit to the men's carnal lusts. She even insisted that babies were strangled and buried in the basement of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery. Such yarns created inevitable controversy. On the one hand, Monk's work was cited by anti-Catholics as proof of their worst fears, and on the other hand, indignant Catholics and skeptical Protestants denounced the book as a fraud. Investigations turned up no evidence to support her charges, and Maria Monk was personally discredited as a prostitute. Nevertheless, many believed her story, and the book continued to inflame the passions of the anti-Catholic crusade. Her success encouraged others to publish similar hair-raising studies, and she herself added to the literature by writing *Further Disclosures*, also about the Hotel Dieu.

These accounts fanned the passions of the day and contributed to violence. In August of 1834 an angry mob burned the Ursuline Convent outside of Boston. Nativist violence occurred in other places in antebellum America, including a riot in Philadelphia in the summer of 1844. Most conflicts did not lead to violence but involved controversies over control of church property, religious teaching in the schools, and the general issues of separation of church and state.

Not satisfied with exposés and agitation, the nativists turned to state and national politics for weapons against the detested Catholics. A few nativist political organizations and parties existed prior to 1850, but the major nativist party flourished during the 1850s. Called the Know-Nothings, this large secret organization suffered from a number of sectional disagreements and eventually fell apart as a national movement. At its peak it was held together by a suspicion of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1854 the party scored victories at the polls, won control of several state governments, and sent dozens of congressmen to Washington. The Know-Nothings were strongest in the Northeast and the border states. Once in office the nativists proposed a number of bills to restrict the franchise and to make naturalization a longer process. They also established legislative committees to investigate alleged misconduct in Catholic institutions. Many Know-Nothings who took Maria Monk seriously were convinced that nuns were virtual

prisoners in convents, and they petitioned state governments to free these women.

The proposals and investigations produced few results, and did not lead to immigration restriction. The movement failed in part because the party was fragmented, in part because discussions concerning the morality and extension of slavery consumed American political attention in the late 1850s. But most important, despite fears about Catholics and their imagined habits and other alleged evils of immigration, was the fact that Americans welcomed immigrants because they were needed to help the nation expand and develop economically.

Yet even without native hostility, foreigners and their children preferred living in ethnic enclaves and often resisted moving into the mainstream. In some Norwegian communities a "yankee was almost an alien" and a visitor to Scandinavia, Wisconsin in 1879–1880 noted: "On the streets, in stores, one heard only Norwegian. The church was a replica of those at home; the minister wore the vestments of the State Church; the hymnbooks were the same as those used in Norway." A more recent commentator wrote that although his grandparents lived in the United States for more than sixty years, "There's no evidence that they had more than glancing contact with anyone who was not Norwegian."

Several groups, including Irish Catholics, Germans, and Scandinavians, established parochial schools to preserve traditions and thwart assimilation. The French Canadians feared that losing their language would mean losing their faith, which to them meant absolute loss of identity. For the Irish, language presented hardly any problem, but their church claimed their staunchest allegiance. To them nothing seemed as important as keeping the faith. Many sermons and religious tracts of the Irish Catholics, historian Hasia Diner tells us, "linked common schooling with Protestantism, atheism, sexual depravity, and social unrest." In the upper Midwest, among other places, Germans and Scandinavians maintained Lutheran parochial institutions of learning. In 1917 Minnesota alone had over 350 elementary and secondary schools; 270 different German-language texts were in use. Fewer than one third of all the parochial schools in Minnesota on the eve of World War I taught their children in the English language. Most of the rest utilized German, but there were also public schools conducted in Polish, French, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, and Czech.

Schooling and language were closely tied to religion, and many religious groups split over the appropriate course of behavior and action. Most curricula opted for the maintenance of established values. Among Catholics, liberal cardinals like James Gibbons of Baltimore and John Ireland of St. Paul argued for a gospel of success and accommodation with the members of the

dominant society. They favored assimilation, opposed parochial schools, and frowned on Catholic insularity. But the more conservative theologians of the Northeast, like Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York City, and William Cardinal O'Connor of Boston, did not agree with their more liberal counterparts. "Clinging to medieval visions of church and society," prize-winning historian Kerby Miller tells us, "the conservatives revered tradition, order, and authority both religious and secular." They feared socialism and progressive change and aligned themselves "with the most reactionary elements of native society. Likewise their refusal to attribute social and spiritual ills to any source other than 'Anglo-Saxonism' (their synonym for Protestantism and materialism) impelled conservatives to segregate their flocks behind rigid ideological and institutional barriers."

Protestants suffered from similar woes. One chronicler of newcomers to South Dakota noted, "The central role of the church as a conservative force that defended cultural continuity with the past cannot be overstated. It was the key to cultural maintenance and local identity in all immigrant communities." Constant admonitions from Scandinavian clergymen that "language saves faith" and knowledge of English promoted loss of heritage permeated the region.

Germans especially clung to their religious traditions and fought bitterly any attempt to interfere with their cultural heritage. In 1889, when Wisconsin and Illinois passed laws requiring some of the education of school-age children to be conducted in English, both Lutheran and Catholic Germans denounced the new measures. Their united opposition led to Republican electoral defeats in both states and the subsequent repeal of the offensive acts. The strong stand Germans took against compulsory education in English reinforced prevailing views about their clannishness. What is more, they did little to alter this impression, making great efforts to maintain the Old World culture. In Nashville, Tennessee, observers noted that the newcomers "used the German language as a weapon to ward off Americanization and assimilation and used every social milieu—the home, the press, and the church—in the fight to preserve the German language and German customs among their children and grandchildren." Historian Andrew Yox, who wrote about newcomers in the North, reiterated almost the same point.

> The German immigrants who came to America in the mid-nineteenth century established a counterculture they called *Deutschtum*. In medium-sized cities like Buffalo, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee, the German quarter consisted of Gothic steeples, rows of small frame cottages, open-air markets, and the ubiquitous saloon. Unlike the sedate neighborhoods of the Anglo-Americans, the German district rustled with

> sounds. Beer gardens, brass bands, shops, dance halls, and "slumber-breaking" bells, installed in the steeples to rouse the artisans for work, teamed up to deprive the Yankees of their once-quiet weekends. The German community was younger, more tolerant with regard to beer and dancing, and more populated than the native American sectors. With respect to other immigrant enclaves, the German colony was larger and more developed. In major cities, *Deutschtum* consisted not only of stores and saloons, but banks, hospitals, orchestra halls, and elite social clubs.

Efforts were made to keep everything German; women in particular were admonished "that they must seek to preserve the German spirit in their children." A Texas grandmother, who had come to this country as a 10-year-old girl in 1846, published her memoirs, *Was Grossmutter Erzählt* (1915), in her native tongue and reminded readers that "German family life stands for the preservation of an ideal culture, which can only continue to exert its influence if respected from generation to generation." Most German Americans obviously felt the same way, for at the beginning of the twentieth century it was rare for midwestern Germans to choose mates from other ethnic groups, and on the eve of World War I, 70 percent of the Lutheran churches in St. Louis conducted their services in German. In some German-Russian areas of North Dakota, moreover, church services and Sunday schools in the German language continued into the early 1950s.

The intense concern for preserving the culture of the *Vaterland* also led to vigorous organizational activities. German Americans maintained newspapers, fraternal organizations, gymnastic and cultural societies, choral and athletic groups, and benevolent organizations. Newspapers not only preserved cultural identity but also explained the American scene, helped promote settlement, urged readers to become citizens, and related quantities of information about the homeland to homesick emigrants. By 1900, over 750 German-language newspapers existed in the United States, 64 of them in North and South Dakota alone. In fact, in 1905 the *Dakota Freie Press* had more subscribers than any English-language newspaper in South Dakota. German daily and weekly papers also dotted the landscape in all of the major American cities.

Germans also enjoyed their ethnic theater, their beer, their convivial picnics, their pleasure-filled Sundays, and their melodious music. While parks all over America had bandstands filled by German oompah bands, their *Liederkranz* (singing societies) and *Sangerbunde* (regional and national associations of song groups) made an even more significant national impact. The *Liederkranz* groups were among the most popular cultural societies in the nation between the end of the Civil War and the advent of World War I.

Composed of all-male choruses (some cities had female auxiliaries), they promoted not only choral songs but also classical music, opera, and philharmonic concepts. These singing societies were a major force on the cultural scene in cities like Chicago, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and many other cities. In Louisville, Kentucky, "the Liederkranz was the most prestigious of all the musical organizations," while in Wheeling, West Virginia, there were eleven different German singing societies from 1855 until their demise in 1961 and, we are told, "for many of Wheeling's German citizens the singing societies were a way of life."

The coming of World War I marked the decline of the German American culture. Other Americans demanded 100 percent loyalty and renounced everything and everyone that smacked of "the Hun." Though many resented these pressures, German Americans made a strong effort to conform to the dominant customs and thereby weakened their own heritage.

Scandinavians, who were mostly Lutheran, were more devout and straitlaced than the Germans. No one caricatured them as jolly or frolicsome. Their faith, a stern one that frowned on drinking, dancing, and levity, also provided a complete philosophy of life stressing piety along with the work ethic. This influence was so pervasive and persistent that in 1934 fully two thirds of all the Protestant church members in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Dakotas still belonged to the Lutheran church.

The security derived from family, ethnic neighborhood, school, church, society, and newspapers hastened the day when immigrant children or grandchildren could stand securely on their own and move into the mainstream of American life. Having been nurtured in relative security, they had the strength to meet new challenges of becoming Americanized head-on. They knew, however, that the customs that provided a secure ground for their parents or grandparents would not suffice for them in the United States. Girls and women, more sheltered from the outside world than boys and men, took their cues from fathers and husbands, changing their ways to the extent that the head of the household dictated. Yet disclaimers must be made. To be sure, in the German and Scandinavian households traditional values and lifestyles prevailed. In most of these homes women were respected and appreciated for what they were—"good, laborious, submissive, and silent housewives." But among some of the German Russians in the Dakotas, women were somehow thought to be of considerably less value to a family unit; one popular saying among them went

> When women die, it is not a tragedy
> But when horses die, it is a disaster.

Among the Irish, however, women dominated family life. Perhaps because "the tone of male-female relations within Irish families was indeed charac-

terized by intense animosity," as historian Hasia Diner tells us, as well as "a high rate of domestic violence and discord, [and] the frequent desertion of the male breadwinner," wives and mothers emerged as the strong and stable forces in the family. And because so much violence and disorder occurred in Irish families, a larger percentage of Irish females than those of any other immigrant group sought work outside of the home and delayed or refrained from marriage. Political activist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn recalled: "A domestic life and possibly a large family had no attraction for me. My mother's aversion to both had undoubtedly affected me profoundly. She was strong for her girls 'being somebody' and 'having a life of their own.' "

And of those who did marry, Irish women more than any other ethnic females except blacks appeared in census rolls as heads of family. For example, in 1870 in Philadelphia 16.9 percent of Irish women headed families, compared to only 5.9 percent headed by German females. (Only black families had a higher percentage of female heads in Philadelphia that year.) The tradition of strong, assertive Irish women provided excellent role models for their daughters, many of whom later became successful as nurses and teachers. Jobs existed for Irish women who wanted to teach, for they spoke English. The public schools did not wish to spend much money educating the growing number of immigrant children pouring into their schools, and Irish women provided them with a supply of low-wage teachers. They soon made up about one fourth of the teachers in many cities.

Irish women and their daughters also found career opportunities in education, especially in the expanding parochial school systems. Although the Catholic Church called for a school in every parish, it was unable to fulfill its goal. Still, the parochial school system expanded at the end of the nineteenth century, and women constituted the bulk of instructional staff; they even ran some of the schools. Irish women also became nurses and worked in a variety of religious charities. In some of these institutions they held supervisory positions.

Thus, as we summarize the lives, experiences, and adventures of these immigrants, we reiterate that the complexities, the inequities, and the incongruities of so many immigrants' lives combined with the dynamics of American society to foster a new type of individual in the United States. Almost always rooted in and committed to their ethnic heritage, and often desperate to preserve their native cultures intact, these newcomers frequently discovered that the realities of life in both urban and rural America eventually intruded on the values they wished to continue. To a certain extent, of course, modicums of the culture were preserved. But each successive generation viewed itself as more American and less ethnic. And the advent of World War I in 1917 proved a mighty blow to ethnic life in the United States.