

Second Edition

AMERICA'S SECOND CENTURY

TOPICAL READINGS
1865

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PRESENT

Kenneth G. Alfers
Cecil Larry Pool
William F. Mugleston

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America's Second Century Topical Readings 1865–Present

Second Edition

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Preface to the Second Edition

We have been gratified by the kind remarks of many users of the first edition of *America's Second Century*. They report that many of the essays are provocative reading and, more important, that they arouse student interest in history.

In the second edition we have shortened the number of selections, rearranged them a bit, and added two new articles: Number 11 on the Carter administration and number 21 on the 1889 Sullivan-Kilrain heavyweight championship bout, the last bare-knuckles contest in American history. We have also retained the chronological guide, which many readers have found helpful.

Kenneth G. Alfers

Larry Pool

William F. Mugleston

Preface

We Americans living in the 1980s have had special reasons to reflect upon our nation's past. Nearly a decade ago we began celebrating the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence. In the next few years greater attention will be focused on the 200th anniversary of our Constitution.

It is well that those special occasions serve to remind us that we do indeed have a rich and vibrant history. The technological changes occurring in the 1980s sometimes appear to be moving forward so rapidly that we do not have or take the time to gain an historical perspective on events.

A prime purpose of this reader is to help students develop that needed historical perspective. Furthermore, we acknowledge the fact that the U.S. history survey course is perhaps our only chance to reach most students in American colleges and universities. This reader, therefore, is intended to serve as an integral part of a survey of U.S. history since 1865. It can be used to supplement texts, monographs, historical novels, and/or lectures. Although organized topically, the articles can be used selectively along traditional chronological lines (see the accompanying guide).

In choosing articles, we were primarily concerned with readability and sound scholarship. Too often we have heard from our entering students that history has been boring and uninteresting. We want students to enjoy reading history while they are gaining that understanding and developing that habit of critical thinking which we think so important.

One unique feature of this reader is its topical organization. The articles are grouped into four core themes which cut through any study of our past—economic, political, diplomatic, and social. Although many students may be unfamiliar with a topical approach to U.S. history, that is not an impediment to learning. In fact, our experience has shown that a new approach can provide fresh insights to the study of history, especially as it relates to our understanding of present conditions. When that happens, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we have helped students achieve a worthwhile objective.

We wish to thank Raymond W. Smock of the Instructional Resources Corporation for his efficient help in securing photographs.

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Mountain View College
Dallas, Texas

Chronological Guide

<i>1865–1898:</i>	Economic —“Andrew Carnegie: Captain of Industry”	Political —“Was Bryan a Reformer?”
<i>1898–1920:</i>	—“Hell on Saturday Afternoon”	—“Consumer Protection: The Pure Food and Drugs Act”
<i>1920–1945:</i>	—“The Causes of the Great Crash” —“The Poor in the Great Depression” —“Shut the Goddam Plant!”	—“FDR: A Practical Magician”
<i>1945–Present:</i>		—“How the Media Seduced and Captured American Politics: —“I Am Not a Crook! Corruption in Presidential Politics” “Whatever Became of Jimmy Carter?”

Epilogue: “What is Past is Prologue: An Interview with Professor Henry Steele Commager”

<i>1865–1898:</i>	Diplomatic —“The Needless War With Spain”	Social —“Reluctant Conquerors: American Army Officers and the Plains Indians” —“Ride-in: A Century of Protest Begins”
<i>1898–1920:</i>	—“Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations”	“‘The Great Fight: Mr. Jake vs. John L. Sullivan’” —“Jane Addams: Urban Crusader”
<i>1920–1945:</i>	—“Pearl Harbor: Who Blundered?”	
<i>1945–Present:</i>	—“The Cold War” —“The U.S. and Castro, 1959–1962” —“Machismo in the White House: LBJ and Vietnam”	—“The Week the World Watched Selma” —“Full Speed Ahead and Damn the Tomorrows: Our Frontier Heritage of Waste”

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Part I

Economic Developments during America's Second Century

During its second century, the United States underwent an economic transformation which changed the nation from a primarily agricultural nation to a highly industrialized one. As a consequence, the economic system of the United States has become much more complicated than it was one hundred years ago. As the noted economist Dr. Robert Heilbroner has remarked, "Everything is bigger, more massive, more technological. . . . That's the great thrust of American history."

The theme of "bigness" is a recurring one in any discussion of U.S. economic developments. Big Business, Big Labor, and Big Government all came into being during the past century. Even farmers, who lost priority in terms of numbers, status, and influence, engaged in big operations by means of their increased acreage and production.

The Great Depression of the 1930s did much to alter the make-up of business, labor, agriculture, and the federal government and their relationships with each other. It also brought home the issue of poverty to all segments of society. In fact, the effects of the Depression years are so great that the words of historian David Shannon are still applicable: ". . . if one would understand the United States today he must know the Great Depression."

The essays in Part I enhance our understanding of U.S. economic history by providing perspective on industrial leadership, labor-management relations, the Depression and poverty.

Andrew Carnegie: Captain of Industry

by Robert L. Heilbroner

One of the major reasons for the rapid industrialization of the United States during the late nineteenth century was the emergence of the entrepreneurs. Ingenuity, managerial expertise, willingness to take risks, and hard work were some of the qualities displayed in large measure by these men. None of them are more appealing than Andrew Carnegie. In him we see the personification of the American Dream. We also see what we hope the real-life Horatio Alger figures did with their money before they died.

Professor Robert Heilbroner, an economist at the New School for Social Research, is noted for his writings on economic history and thought. Among his well-known works are *The Worldly Philosophers*, *The Future as History*, *The Limits of American Capitalism*, and *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect*. In this essay he once again demonstrates his ability to enliven the study of our past.

Toward the end of his long life, at the close of World War I, Andrew Carnegie was already something of a national legend. His meteoric rise, the scandals and successes of his industrial generalship—all this was blurred into nostalgic memory. What was left was a small, rather feeble man with a white beard and pale, penetrating eyes, who could occasionally be seen puttering around his mansion on upper Fifth Avenue, a benevolent old gentleman who still rated an annual birthday interview but was even then a venerable relic of a fast-disappearing era. Carnegie himself looked back on his career with a certain savored incredulity. “How much did you say I had given away, Poynton?” he would inquire of his private secretary; “\$324,657,399” was the answer. “Good Heaven!” Carnegie would exclaim. “Where did I ever get all that money?”

Where he *had* got all that money was indeed a legendary story, for even in an age known for its acquisitive triumphs, Carnegie’s touch had been an extraordinary one. He had begun, in true Horatio Alger fashion, at the bottom; he had ended, in a manner that put the wildest of Alger’s novels to shame, at the very pinnacle of success. At the close of his great deal with J. P. Morgan in 1901, when the Carnegie steel empire was sold to form the core of the new United States Steel Company, the banker had extended his hand and delivered the ultimate encomium of the times: “Mr. Carnegie,” he said, “I want to congratulate you on being the richest man in the world.”

It was certainly as “the richest man in the world” that Carnegie attracted the attention of his contemporaries. Yet this is hardly why we look back on him with interest today. As an enormous moneymaker Carnegie was a flashy,

but hardly a profound, hero of the times; and the attitudes of Earnestness and Self-Assurance, so engaging in the young immigrant, become irritating when they are congealed in the millionaire. But what lifts Carnegie's life above the rut of a one-dimensional success story is an aspect of which his contemporaries were relatively unaware.

Going through his papers after his death, Carnegie's executors came across a memorandum that he had written to himself fifty years before, carefully preserved in a little yellow box of keepsakes and mementos. It brings us back to December, 1868, when Carnegie, a young man flushed with the first taste of great success, retired to his suite in the opulent Hotel St. Nicholas in New York, to tot up his profits for the year. It had been a tremendous year and the calculation must have been extremely pleasurable. Yet this is what he wrote as he reflected on the figures:

Thirty-three and an income of \$50,000 per annum! By this time two years I can so arrange all my business as to secure at least \$50,000 per annum. Beyond this never earn—make no effort to increase fortune, but spend the surplus each year for benevolent purposes. Cast aside business forever, except for others.

Settle in Oxford and get a thorough education, making the acquaintance of literary men—this will take three years of active work—pay especial attention to speaking in public. Settle then in London and purchase a controlling interest in some newspaper or live review and give the general management of it attention, taking part in public matters, especially those connected with education and improvement of the poorer classes.

Man must have an idol—the amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry—no idol more debasing than the worship of money. Whatever I engage in I must push inordinately; therefore should I be careful to choose that life which will be the most elevating in its character. To continue much longer overwhelmed by business cares and with most of my thoughts wholly upon the way to make more money in the shortest time, must degrade me beyond hope of permanent recovery. I will resign business at thirty-five, but during the ensuing two years I wish to spend the afternoons in receiving instruction and in reading systematically.

It is a document which in more ways than one is Carnegie to the very life: brash, incredibly self-confident, chockablock with self-conscious virtue—and more than a little hypocritical. For the program so nobly outlined went largely unrealized. Instead of retiring in two years, Carnegie went on for thirty-three more; even then it was with considerable difficulty that he was persuaded to quit. Far from shunning further money-making, he proceeded to roll up his fortune with an uninhibited drive that led one unfriendly biographer to characterize him as “the greediest little gentleman ever created.” Certainly he was one of the most aggressive profit seekers of his time. Typically, when an associate jubilantly cabled: “No. 8 furnace broke all records today,” Carnegie coldly replied, “What were the other furnaces doing?”

It is this contrast between his hopes and his performance that makes Carnegie interesting. For when we review his life, what we see is more than the career of another nineteenth-century acquisitor. We see the unequal struggle



Andrew Carnegie four years after selling his steel interests to U.S. Steel. (Library of Congress)

between a man who loved money—loved making it, having it, spending it—and a man who, at bottom, was ashamed of himself for his acquisitive desires. All during his lifetime, the money-maker seemed to win. But what lifts Carnegie's story out of the ordinary is that the other Carnegie ultimately triumphed. At his death public speculation placed the size of his estate at about five hundred million dollars. In fact it came to \$22,881,575. Carnegie *had* become the richest man in the world—but something had also driven him to give away ninety per cent of his wealth.

Actually, his contemporaries knew of Carnegie's inquietude about money. In 1889, before he was world-famous, he had written an article for the *North American Review* entitled "The Gospel of Wealth"—an article that contained the startling phrase: "The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced." It was hardly surprising, however, if the world took these sentiments at a liberal discount: homiletic millionaires who preached the virtues of austerity were no novelty;

Carnegie himself, returning in 1879 from a trip to the miseries of India, had been able to write with perfect sincerity, "How very little the millionaire has beyond the peasant, and how very often his additions tend not to happiness but to misery."

What the world may well have underestimated, however, was a concern more deeply rooted than these pieties revealed. For, unlike so many of his self-made peers, who also rose from poverty, Carnegie was the product of a *radical* environment. The village of Dunfermline, Scotland, when he was born there in 1835, was renowned as a center of revolutionary ferment, and Carnegie's family was itself caught up in the radical movement of the times. His father was a regular speaker at the Chartist rallies, which were an almost daily occurrence in Dunfermline in the 1840's, and his uncle was an impassioned orator for the rights of the working class to vote and strike. All this made an indelible impression on Carnegie's childhood.

"I remember as if it were yesterday," he wrote seventy years later, "being awakened during the night by a tap at the back window by men who had come to inform my parents that my uncle, Bailie Morrison, had been thrown in jail because he dared to hold a meeting which had been forbidden. . . . It is not to be wondered at that, nursed amid such surroundings, I developed into a violent young Republican whose motto was 'death to privilege.' "

From another uncle, George Lauder, Carnegie absorbed a second passion that was also to reveal itself in his later career. This was his love of poetry, first that of the poet Burns; with its overtones of romantic egalitarianism, and then later, of Shakespeare. Immense quantities of both were not only committed to memory, but made into an integral—indeed, sometimes an embarrassingly evident—part of his life: on first visiting the Doge's palace in Venice he thrust a companion in the ducal throne and held him pinioned there while he orated the appropriate speeches from *Othello*. Once, seeing Vanderbilt walking on Fifth Avenue, Carnegie smugly remarked, "I would not exchange his millions for my knowledge of Shakespeare."

But it was more than just a love of poetry that remained with Carnegie. Virtually alone among his fellow acquirers, he was driven by a genuine respect for the power of thought to seek answers for questions that never even occurred to them. Later, when he "discovered" Herbert Spencer, the English sociologist, Carnegie wrote to him, addressing him as "Master," and it was as "Master" that Spencer remained, even after Carnegie's lavishness had left Spencer very much in his debt.

But Carnegie's early life was shaped by currents more material than intellectual. The grinding process of industrial change had begun slowly but ineluctably to undermine the cottage weaving that was the traditional means of employment in Dunfermline. The Industrial Revolution, in the shape of new steam mills, was forcing out the hand weavers, and one by one the looms which constituted the entire capital of the Carnegie family had to be sold. Carnegie never forgot the shock of his father returning home to tell him, in despair, "Andra, I can get nae mair work."

A family council of war was held, and it was decided that there was only one possible course—they must try their luck in America, to which two sisters of Carnegie's mother, Margaret, had already emigrated. With the aid of a few friends the money for the crossing was scraped together, and at thirteen Andrew found himself transported to the only country in which his career would have been possible.

It hardly got off to an auspicious start, however. The family made their way to Allegheny, Pennsylvania, a raw and bustling town where Carnegie's father again sought work as an independent weaver. But it was hopeless to compete against the great mills in America as in Scotland, and soon father and son were forced to seek work in the local cotton mills. There Andrew worked from six in the morning until six at night, making \$1.20 as a bobbin boy.

After a while his father quit—factory work was impossible for the traditional small enterpriser—and Andrew got a “better” job with a new firm, tending an engine deep in a dungeon cellar and dipping newly made cotton spools in a vat of oil. Even the raise of \$3 a week—and desperately conjured visions of Wallace and the Bruce—could not overcome the horrors of that lonely and foul-smelling basement. It was perhaps the only time in Carnegie's life when his self-assurance deserted him: to the end of his days the merest whiff of oil could make him deathly sick.

Yet he was certain, as he wrote home at sixteen, that “anyone could get along in this Country,” and the rags-to-riches saga shortly began. The telegraph had just come to Pittsburgh, and one evening over a game of checkers, the manager of the local office informed Andrew's uncle that he was looking for a messenger. Andy got the job and, in true Alger fashion, set out to excel in it. Within a few weeks he had carefully memorized the names and the locations, not only of the main streets in Pittsburgh, but of the main firms, so that he was the quickest of all the messenger boys.

He came early and stayed late, watched the telegraphers at work, and at home at night learned the Morse code. As a result he was soon the head of the growing messenger service, and a skilled telegrapher himself. One day he dazzled the office by taking a message “by ear” instead of by the commonly used tape printer, and since he was then only the third operator in the country able to turn the trick, citizens used to drop into the office to watch Andy take down the words “hot from the wire.”

One such citizen who was especially impressed with young Carnegie's determination was Thomas A. Scott, in time to become one of the colorful railway magnates of the West, but then the local superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Soon thereafter Carnegie became “Scott's Andy”—telegrapher, secretary, and general factotum—at thirty-five dollars a month. In his *Autobiography* Carnegie recalls an instance which enabled him to begin the next stage of his career.

One morning I reached the office and found that a serious accident on the Eastern Division had delayed the express passenger train westward, and that

the passenger train eastward was proceeding with a flagman in advance at every curve. The freight trains in both directions were standing on the sidings. Mr. Scott was not to be found. Finally I could not resist the temptation to plunge in, take the responsibility, give "train orders" and set matters going. "Death or Westminster Abbey" flashed across my mind. I knew it was dismissal, disgrace, perhaps criminal punishment for me if I erred. On the other hand, I could bring in the wearied freight train men who had lain out all night. I knew I could. I knew just what to do, and so I began.

Signing Scott's name to the orders, Carnegie flashed out the necessary instructions to bring order out of the tangle. The trains moved; there were no mishaps. When Scott reached the office Carnegie told him what he had done. Scott said not a word but looked carefully over all that had taken place. After a little he moved away from Carnegie's desk to his own, and that was the end of it. "But I noticed," Carnegie concluded good-humoredly, "that he came in very regularly and in good time for some mornings after that."

It is hardly to be wondered at that Carnegie became Scott's favorite, his "white-haired Scotch devil." Impetuous but not rash, full of enthusiasm and good-natured charm, the small lad with his blunt, open features and his slight Scottish burr was every executive's dream of an assistant. Soon Scott repaid Andy for his services by introducing him to a new and very different kind of opportunity. He gave Carnegie the chance to subscribe to five hundred dollars' worth of Adams Express stock, a company which Scott assured Andy would prosper mightily.

Carnegie had not fifty dollars saved, much less five hundred, but it was a chance he could ill afford to miss. He reported the offer to his mother, and that pillar of the family unhesitatingly mortgaged their home to raise the necessary money. When the first dividend check came in, with its ornate Spenserian flourishes, Carnegie had something like a revelation. "I shall remember that check as long as I live," he subsequently wrote. "It gave me the first penny of revenue from capital—something that I had not worked for with the sweat of my brow. 'Eureka!' I cried, 'Here's the goose that lays the golden eggs.' " He was right; within a few years his investment in the Adams Express Company was paying annual dividends of \$1,400.

It was not long thereafter that an even more propitious chance presented itself. Carnegie was riding on the Pennsylvania line one day when he was approached by a "farmer-looking" man carrying a small green bag in his hand. The other introduced himself as T. T. Woodruff and quite frankly said that he wanted a chance to talk with someone connected with the railroad. Whereupon he opened his bag and took out a small model of the first sleeping car.

Carnegie was immediately impressed with its possibilities, and he quickly arranged for Woodruff to meet Scott. When the latter agreed to give the cars a trial, Woodruff in appreciation offered Carnegie a chance to subscribe to a one-eighth interest in the new company. A local banker agreed to lend Andy the few hundred dollars needed for the initial payment—the rest being fi-