Name_____ Date_____Period_____

"Immigrants in the 'Land of Opportunity'"

Directions, use the article to answer the following questions in complete sentences

1. About how many immigrants came to the United States between 1880 and 1914?

2. Give at least three reasons why immigrants came to America during this time

3. Most immigrants came from Europe. What are some other countries they came from?

4. Why did most immigrants settle in big cities?

5. Why did many immigrants tend to live in areas with other people from the same country?

6. What were three jobs that immigrants would take?

6b. Why did the immigrants take these kinds of jobs?

7. What were some jobs that children would take?

8. What were some of the poor conditions that sweatshop workers faced?

9. Describe the different feelings that native-born Americans had towards immigrants.

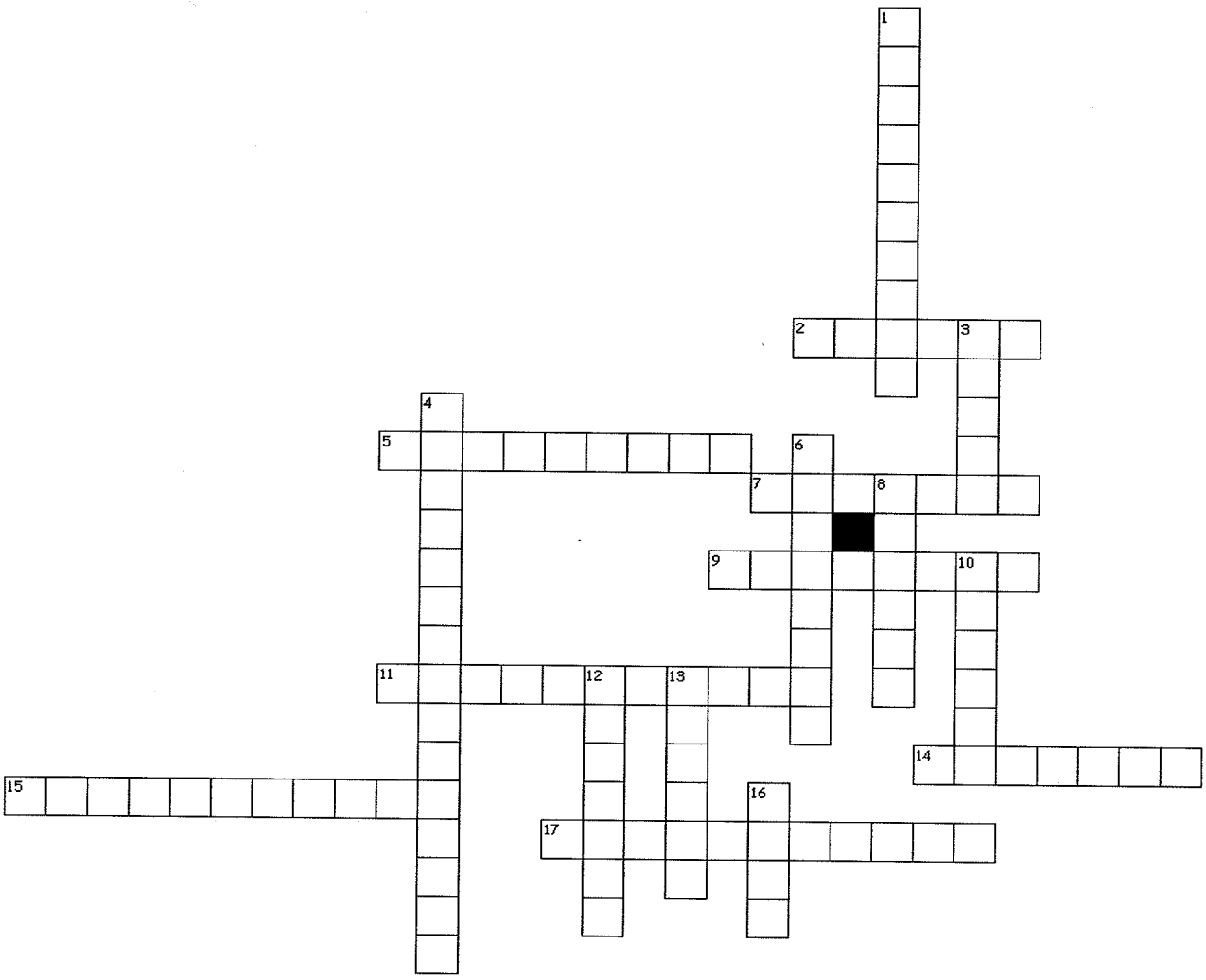
How the Wealthy Lived

Across

2. A hostess presented her dog with a _____ worth $15,000
5. The term Mark Twain used to describe this time period
7. The city where the rich spent the summer
9. nickname for the mansions in Newport, Rhode Island
11. This was left by visitors to announce they had stopped by
14. Oliver H.P. _____ had his horses stay in stalls with linen sheets
15. An afternoon ritual for the wealthy ladies in Newport
17. The number of guests Mrs. Astor invited to her parties

Down

1. Mrs. William K._____ spent a quarter million dollars on a ball
3. Caroline _____ had an elaborate ball every year in January
4. nickname for Fifth Avenue in New York City
6. _____ Vanderbilt attended more than ninety dinners during one fall season
8. Black _____ were hidden inside diner's oysters at one dinner
10. Wealthy families traveled here in the spring
12. This is the city where the rich spent the fall social season
13. One wealthy man wrapped these in hundred-dollar bills
16. Month when parties were held at country homes and on yachts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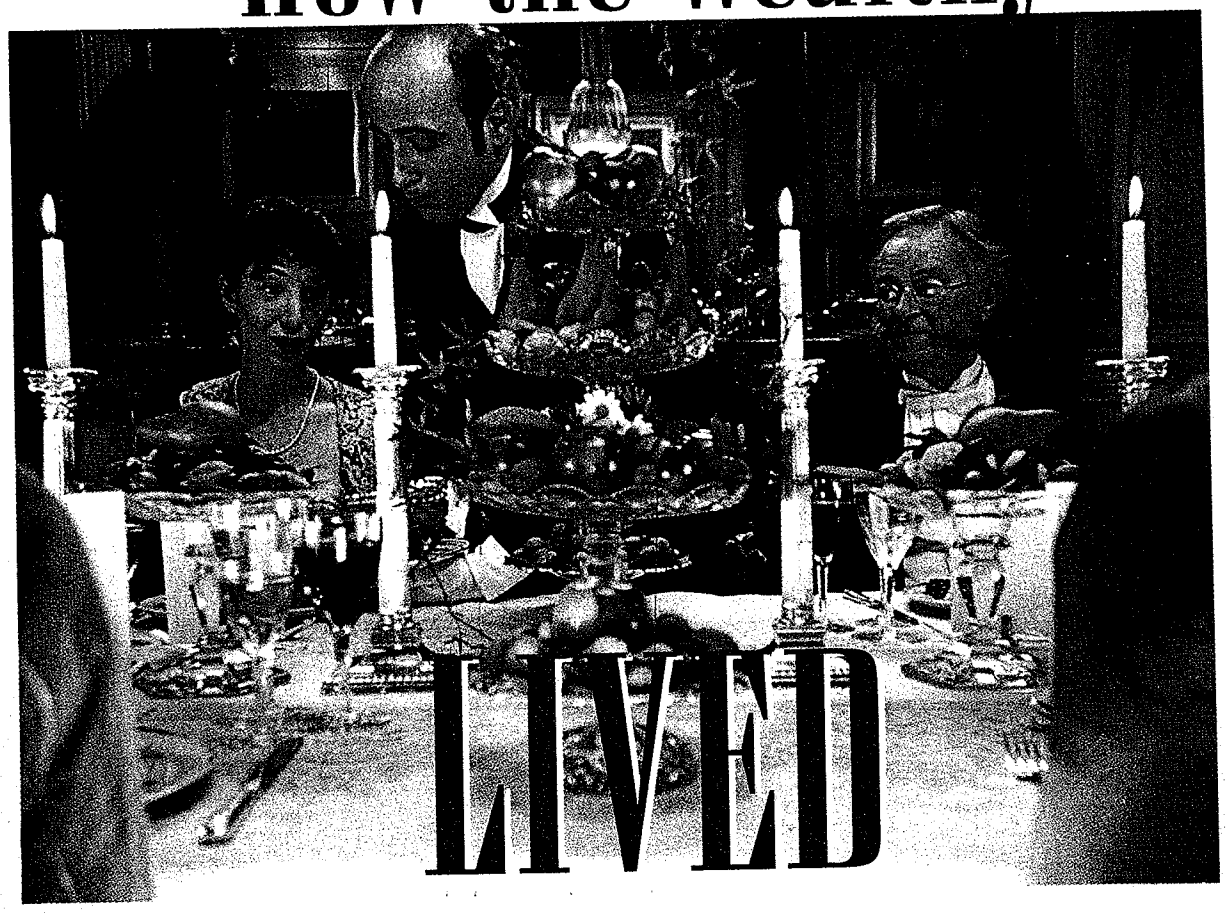
How the Wealthy LIVED



by Helen Wieman Bledsoe

Mrs. William K. (Alva) Vanderbilt spent a quarter of a million dollars (more than four and a quarter million dollars today) on one of her balls. The flowers alone cost eleven thousand dollars (just less than two hundred thousand dollars today). Mrs. Odgen Mills claimed she could entertain one hundred dinner guests without hiring extra household help. Oliver H.P. Belmont bedded his horses on Irish linen sheets decorated with embroidery and placed gold nameplates on their stalls. These families were some of the Gilded Age's very rich. They spent their huge incomes on elaborate mansions, lavish parties, and extensive traveling.

America's rich of the late 1800s followed a fairly rigid social calendar. They spent the fall season in New York, centered on Fifth Avenue, which was nicknamed "Millionaires' Row." The ladies spent a great amount of time paying social calls on friends. The exchange of visits at times became quite burdensome. In such cases, the visitor simply left an engraved

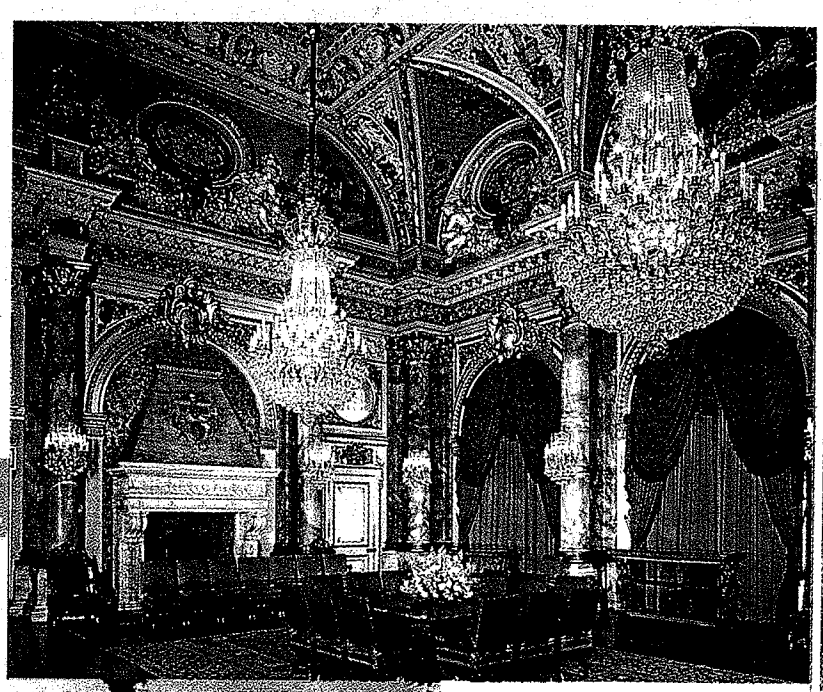
calling card that announced that she had made the obligatory stop.

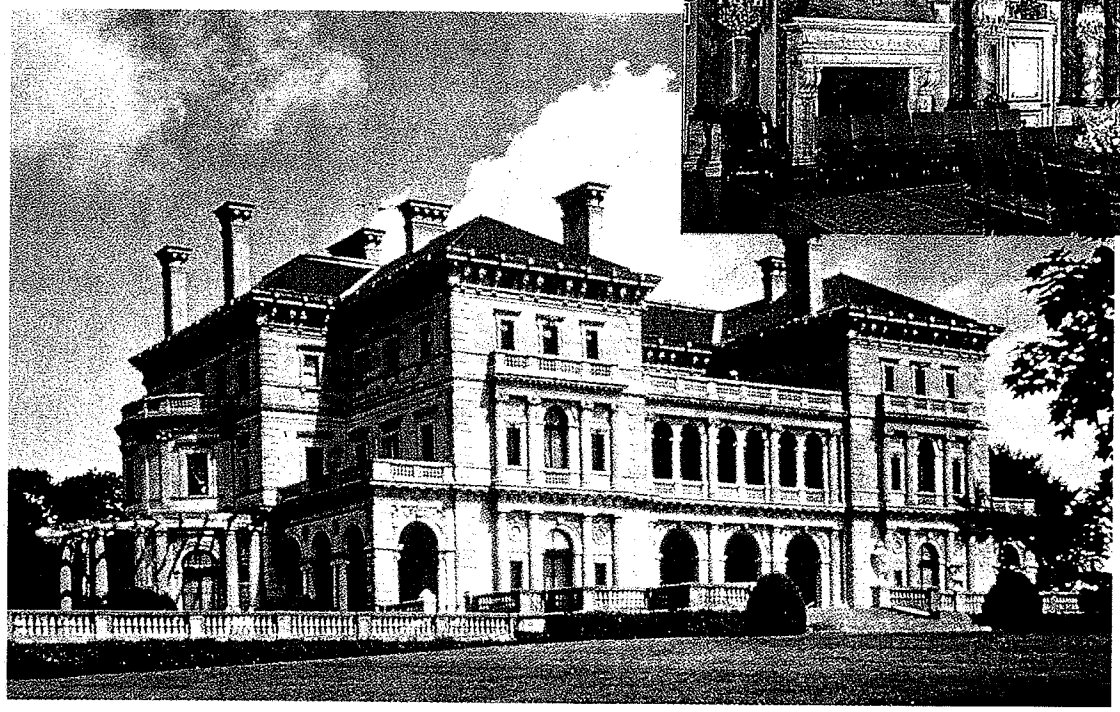
Invitations for parties arrived daily throughout the fall. Gertrude Vanderbilt's diary recorded that she attended more than ninety dinners in one fall season in the 1890s. One party host offered cigars wrapped in hundred-dollar bills to his guests. At another event, black pearls lay hidden inside diners' oysters. The hostess of yet another party named her dog the guest of honor and presented the pet with a collar worth fifteen thousand dollars.

The party season reached its climax at Mrs. William Backhouse (Caroline) Astor's elaborate annual ball in January (see the sidebar on page 28). Then, early in the spring, these wealthy families journeyed to Europe, accompanied by servants and trunkloads of clothes. They lived in lavish hotel suites. They shopped for the latest fashions and purchased antique furniture and art.

In June, it was back to the United States for parties held at country homes and on yachts. July brought the rich to their Newport, Rhode Island, summer "cottages" —

OPPOSITE: Author Edith Wharton's novel,* The Age of Innocence, *which delved into the morals and customs of New York's high society, was made into a 1993 movie. This movie still shows a formal dinner scene. BELOW: Cornelius Vanderbilt (grandson of the Commodore) built The Breakers around 1895, as a summer "cottage" for his family. Formal meals in this dining room (RIGHT) must have been quite an event!





a playful name for what were actually huge estates.

At Newport house parties, men generally wore tennis or yachting clothes. The ladies mostly wore white summer dresses. They all had lunch together, often outdoors or under a tent.

The afternoon "Coach Parade" on Newport's Bellevue Avenue was a daily ritual. Ladies dressed in finery and rode up and down the street in their horse-drawn vehicles. They would wave to one another while comparing clothes, carriages, and horses.

Afternoon tea was followed by music and card playing. The women changed to elaborate tea gowns. For dinner, it was yet another dress for each female guest. A woman had to bring sixteen different outfits for a four-day weekend — so as to avoid wearing the same dress twice!

Many Newport houses had large ballrooms with gilded furniture, and enormous chandeliers. Balls began about 10 P.M., usually following a dinner party. Sometimes they were fancy, dress-up affairs, where the women came in costume. In the fall, the social whirl began all over again back in New York.

Due to their social obligations and the enormous size of their

Mrs. Astor (born Caroline Schermerhorn) reigned as the undisputed "queen" of New York's high society during the Gilded Age.

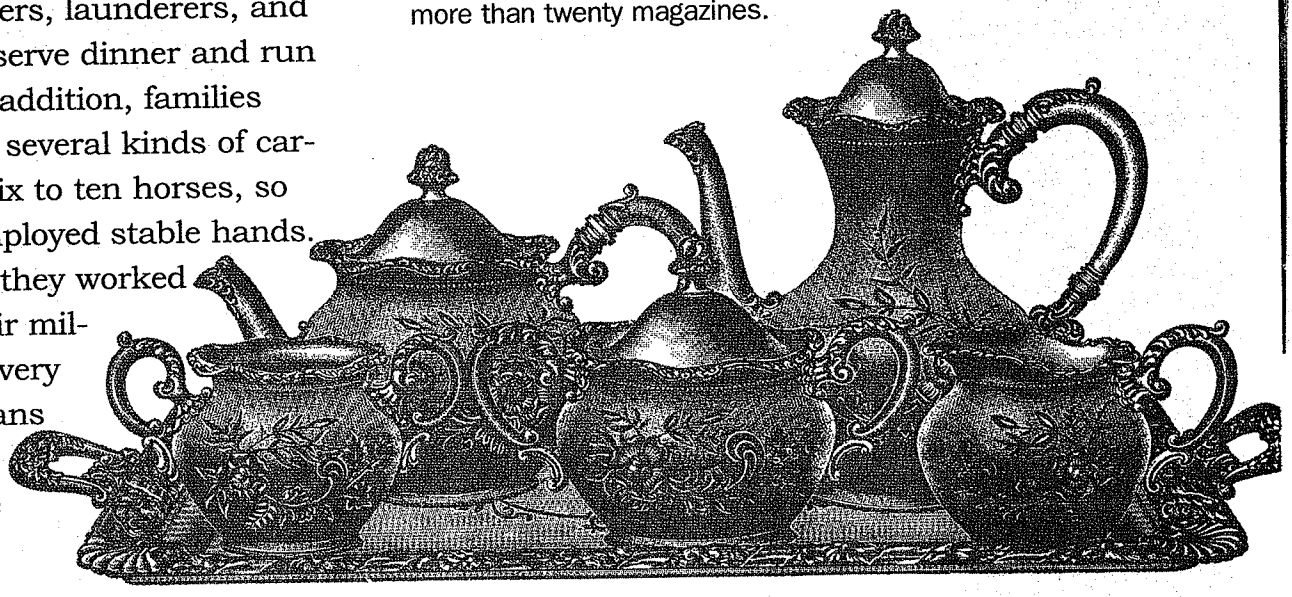
Mrs. Astor

During the Gilded Age, Caroline Astor ruled New York's social elite. Her balls and parties were the events of the year for the wealthy crowd. She served expensive food on golden dishes and greeted visitors from a throne-like couch. Rich New Yorkers clamored for invitations, but many were turned away. Her guest lists were limited to four hundred, and Mrs. Astor made it clear that only "worthwhile" people were invited.

households, America's wealthiest required large staffs of a dozen or more servants. These included a personal maid for the wife, a valet (male servant) for the husband, a butler, a chef, and several other kitchen helpers, launderers, and footmen (to serve dinner and run errands). In addition, families often owned several kinds of carriages and six to ten horses, so they also employed stable hands.

Although they worked hard for their millions, these very rich Americans spent much of their time showing off their great wealth. Perhaps Mark Twain had them in mind when he first coined the phrase "the Gilded Age."

Helen Wieman Bledsoe lives in Oregon and has written two books and many articles for more than twenty magazines.



and the 'Four Hundred'

The Astor parties were dreadfully dull, but no one cared. The socialites of the Gilded Age were desperate to be among the chosen "Four Hundred." Those who made the cut were thrilled; those who missed out were terribly ashamed.

Being on or off the list, however, was usually temporary, depending on Mrs. Astor's whims. She dropped and added names constantly. Friends fell in rank when they annoyed her. She replaced them with others who were more in her favor. As a result, many New Yorkers became clones of Mrs. Astor and her dictates. They agreed with her at every turn and tried not to outshine her. Being in the Four Hundred group was too important for them to risk thinking for themselves. — **Stephen Currie**

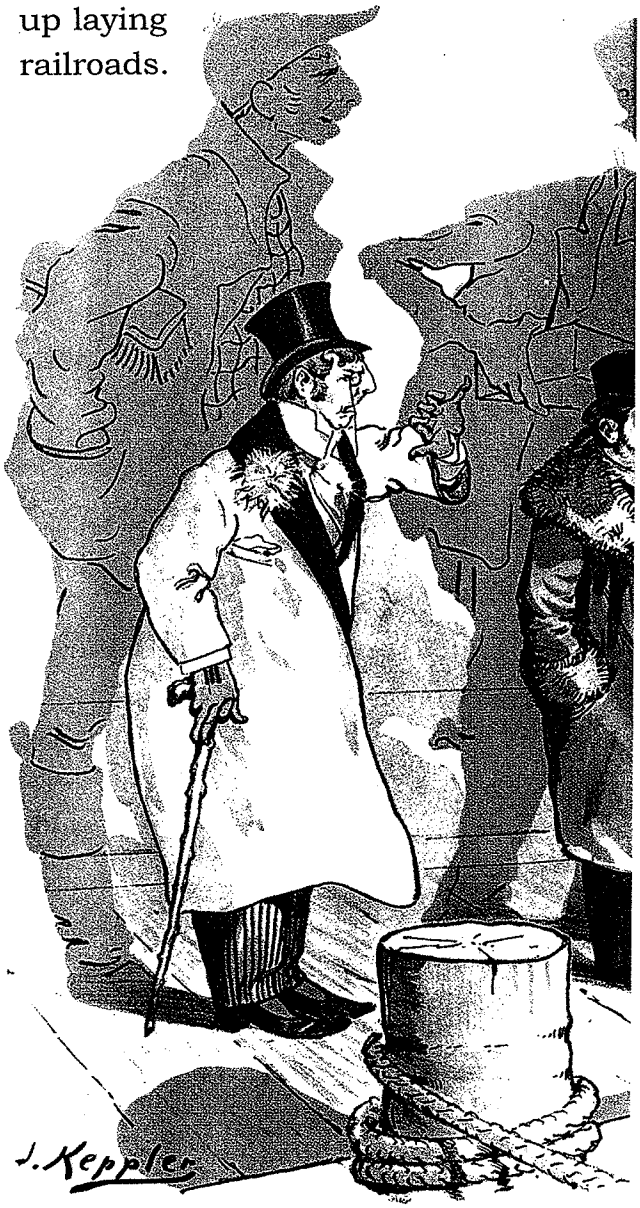
IMMIGRANTS IN THE 'Land of Opportunity'

by Sylvia Whitman

The lure of prosperity brought record numbers of immigrants to the United States — roughly twenty-five million between 1880 and 1914. Some young men intended to make their fortunes and then return home. Many, however, stayed. Other workers brought or sent for their families. While most newcomers found the United States a land of opportunity, nothing came easy. Immigrants from Italy told this joke: "I came to America because I heard the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, I found out three things: First, the streets weren't paved with gold; second, they weren't paved at all; and third, I was expected to pave them."

Immigrants arrived from all over the world. Most were fleeing ***famine,*** economic hardship, political unrest, or religious persecution. From the north, French Canadians migrated to the textile mill towns of New England. Hoping to strike it rich in western mines, the Chinese crossed the Pacific Ocean to California, which they dubbed "Gold Mountain." Many ended up laying railroads.

Famine means a drastic shortage of food.



Later, Japanese immigrants worked mostly on West Coast farms. In the South and Southwest, farmers and ranchers depended on laborers from Mexico and the Caribbean islands. The majority of immigrants to the United States came from Europe, however.

Some immigrants settled in familiar climates and occupations. Scandinavians and Czechs, for instance, pioneered farms in frigid Wisconsin and Minnesota. Yet most immigrants — even Italians and Russian Jews from small villages — settled in big cities because that was where the majority of jobs could be found. By 1910, immigrants and their children made up about fifty percent of the populations of New York, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland.

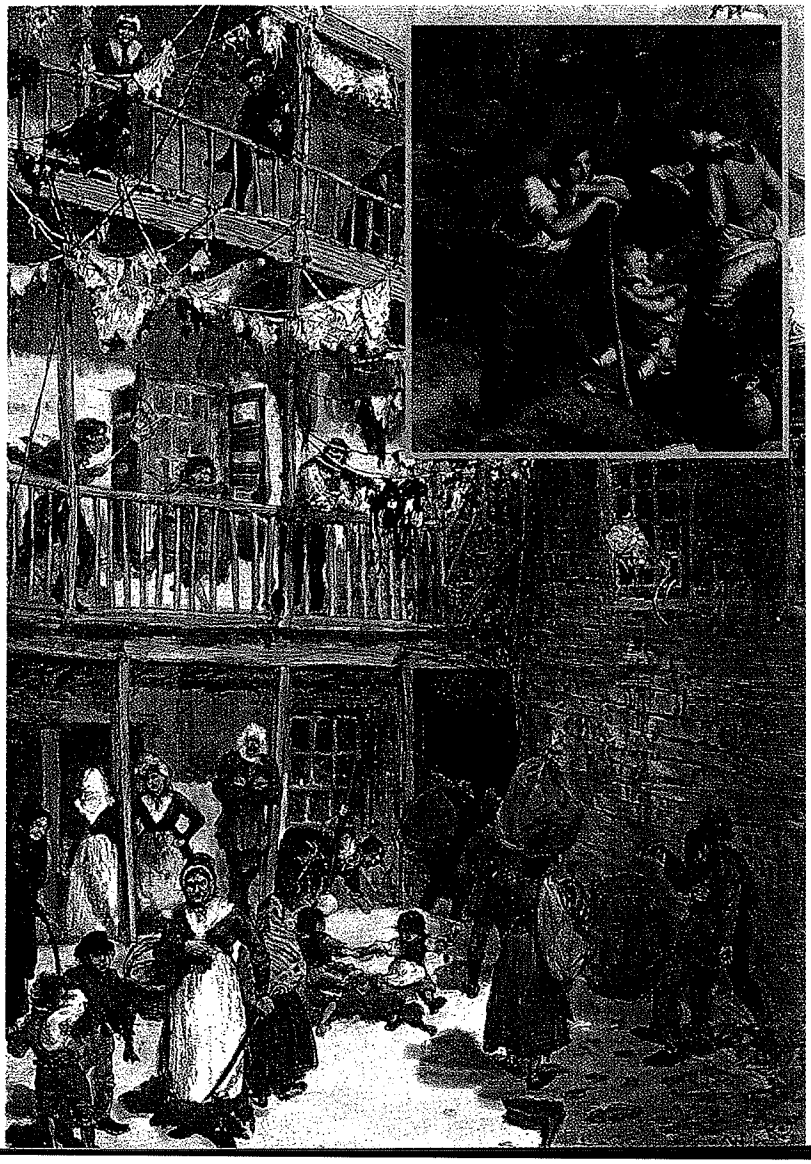
People from the same country usually clustered together, so many cities had a Jewish district, a "Little Italy," or a "Chinatown." Ethnic neighborhoods kept cultural traditions alive and helped newcomers adjust to American life. New arrivals

This editorial cartoon illustrates the irony of how successful Americans quickly forgot their less refined beginnings (shown as their shadows) when faced with new immigrants.

Many immigrants wrote letters describing their wonderful new lives in America to family and friends in the Old World. Compare this pastoral Old World painting (INSET) with this view (BELOW) of how many immigrants ended up living — in crowded tenement houses.

crowded into tenements. On streets already busy with shoppers, pushcart peddlers, parading politicians, and organ grinders with monkeys competed for attention. Immigrants opened small shops and founded schools, newspapers, theaters, churches, sports clubs, and mutual aid societies.

Arriving with little more than a suitcase, immigrants took low-paying jobs others considered dirty or dangerous. They collected rags, slaughtered cattle, canned pickles, and poured steel and concrete.

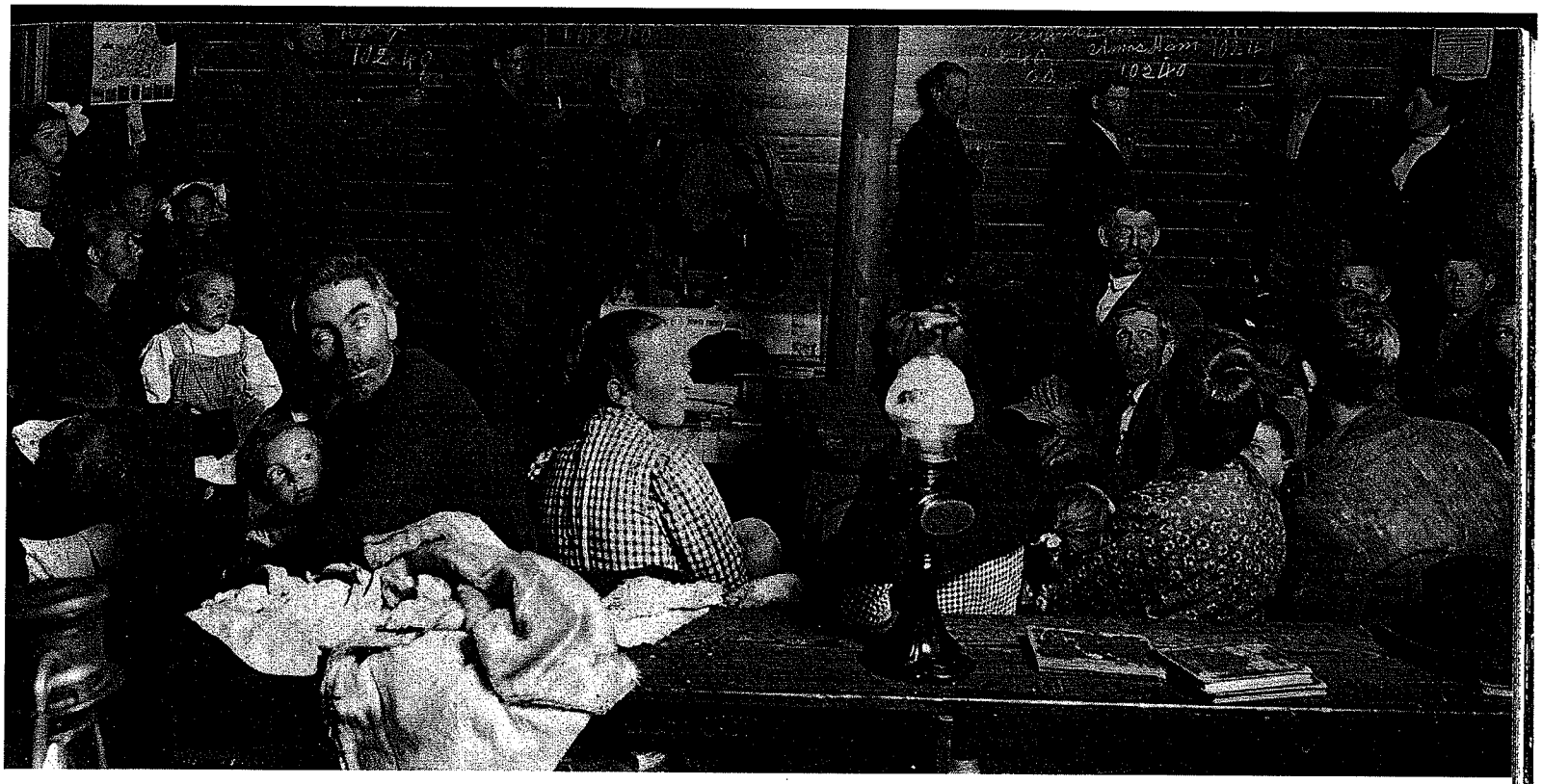


To survive, immigrant families usually depended on wages from every member. Sometimes families took in piecework. They got paid not by the hour but by the piece — for example, for every wooden button they covered with silk or every fake flower they glued together. Men, women, and children as young as six also worked in sweatshops.

Despite laws requiring that children attend school, they often were included in the work force, doing what they could. Boys sold newspapers, shined shoes, and ran errands. Girls hired out as household servants or cared for younger siblings while parents worked.

Poor working conditions caused illness and injury. Packed into unventilated rooms, sweatshop workers breathed in dust and fumes. Their eyes suffered in dim light. Machines sometimes burned skin or tore off fingers. Employers demanded long hours and six- or seven-day weeks. "If you don't come in on Sunday, don't come in on Monday," they threatened.

Fed up, immigrants began to band together into unions. Even more than strikes, a tragedy awoke the nation to the mistreatment of workers. On March 25, 1911, a fire started at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company in New York. Within minutes, the



Immigrant families attend a night school (most likely after working all day) in the hope of attaining greater success in America.

fire consumed the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors. Since bosses had locked the doors to prevent workers from stealing, employees leaped out the windows. The deaths of 146 Jewish and Italian American women shocked the public and pressured officials to pass fire safety codes. Other ***exposés*** about dangerous working and living conditions led to housing reform and stricter child labor laws (see the article and sidebar on pages 14–18).

Many native-born Americans had mixed feelings about the influx of newcomers. On one hand, hungry workers fueled the economy. On the other hand, strangers brought strange customs. Through public schools and private charities, citizens tried to Americanize new arrivals. As prejudice against foreigners grew, however, the United States passed laws making it more difficult for immigrants to come to America.

Some immigrants actually lived their dreams. But many newcomers had to postpone their hopes for education or financial success for a generation or two. Instead, their children and grandchildren embraced and enriched their new country. They grew up to be athletes and architects, doctors and diplomats, poets and politicians. Americans have learned from hard-working newcomers that it takes determination to follow a dream.

Exposés are disclosures of disgraceful or damaging things.

Sylvia Whitman is a writer who lives in Orlando, Florida. Her latest book is *Immigrant Children.*