

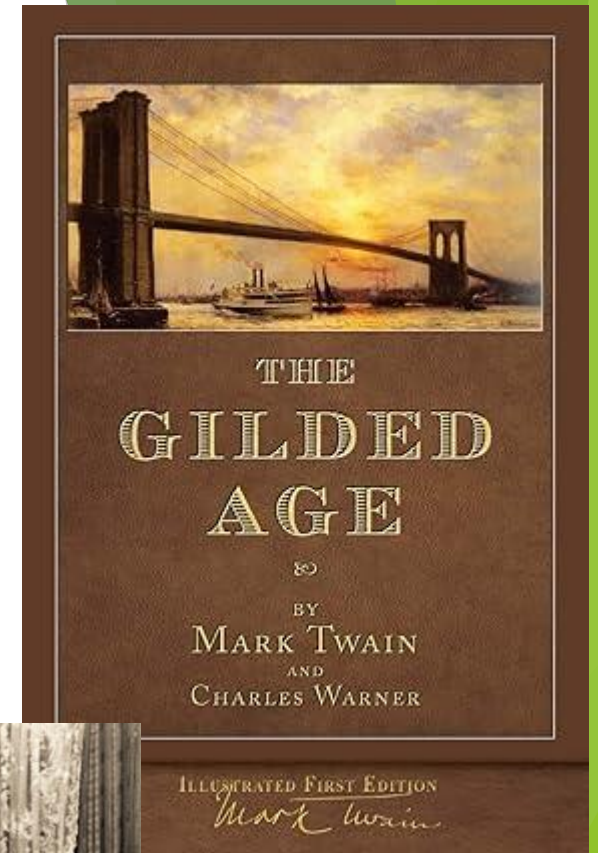
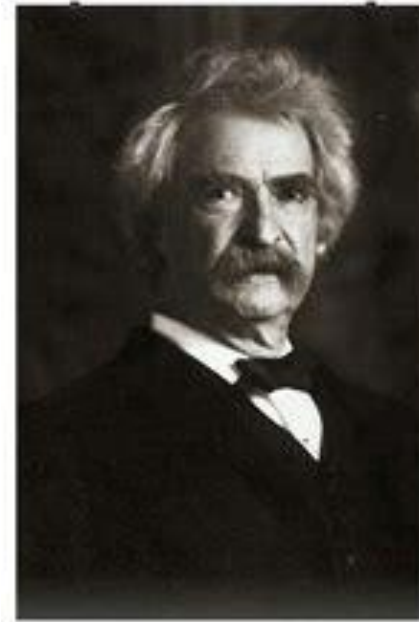
# The Great American Transformation: The Gilded Age

Session 6: Gilded Age New York



# Our Session Subjects

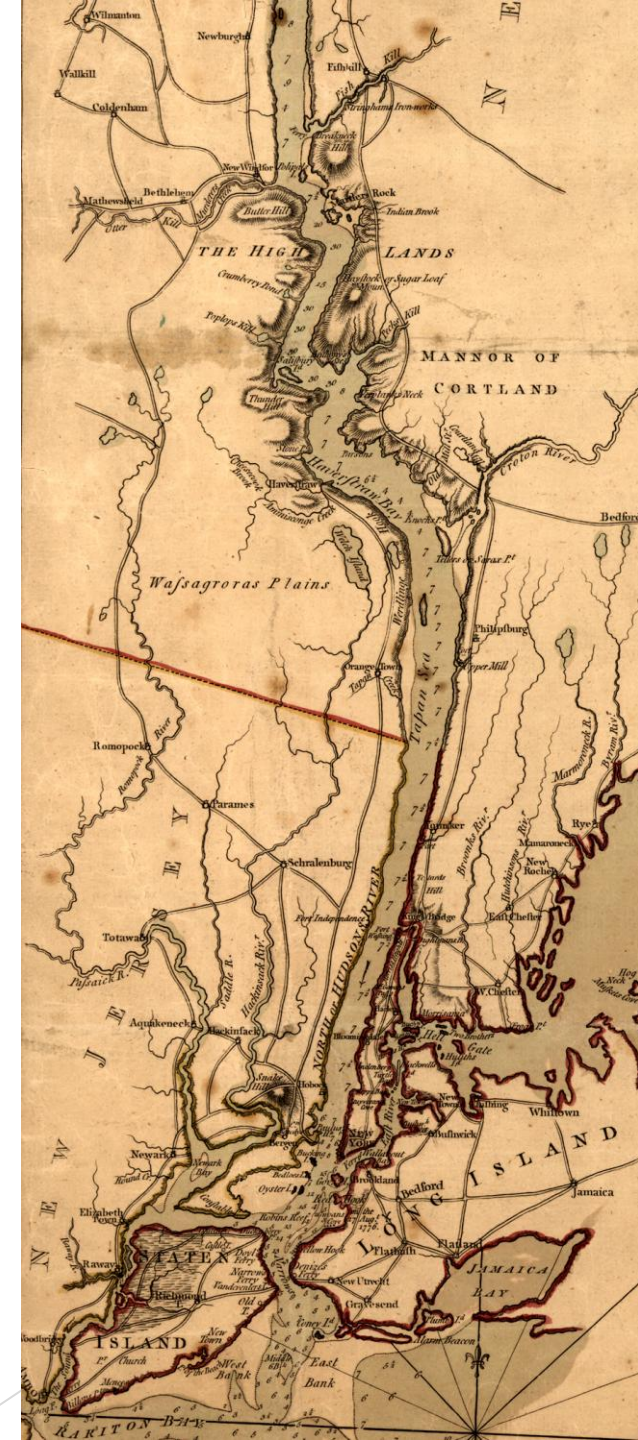
1. Setting the Table: America in 1865
2. The Second Industrial Revolution
3. Reconstruction
4. The Energy of Manifest Destiny
5. The Urbanization of America
6. Gilded Age New York
7. Three Robber Barons
8. Inadvertent Empire



# Gilded Age New York

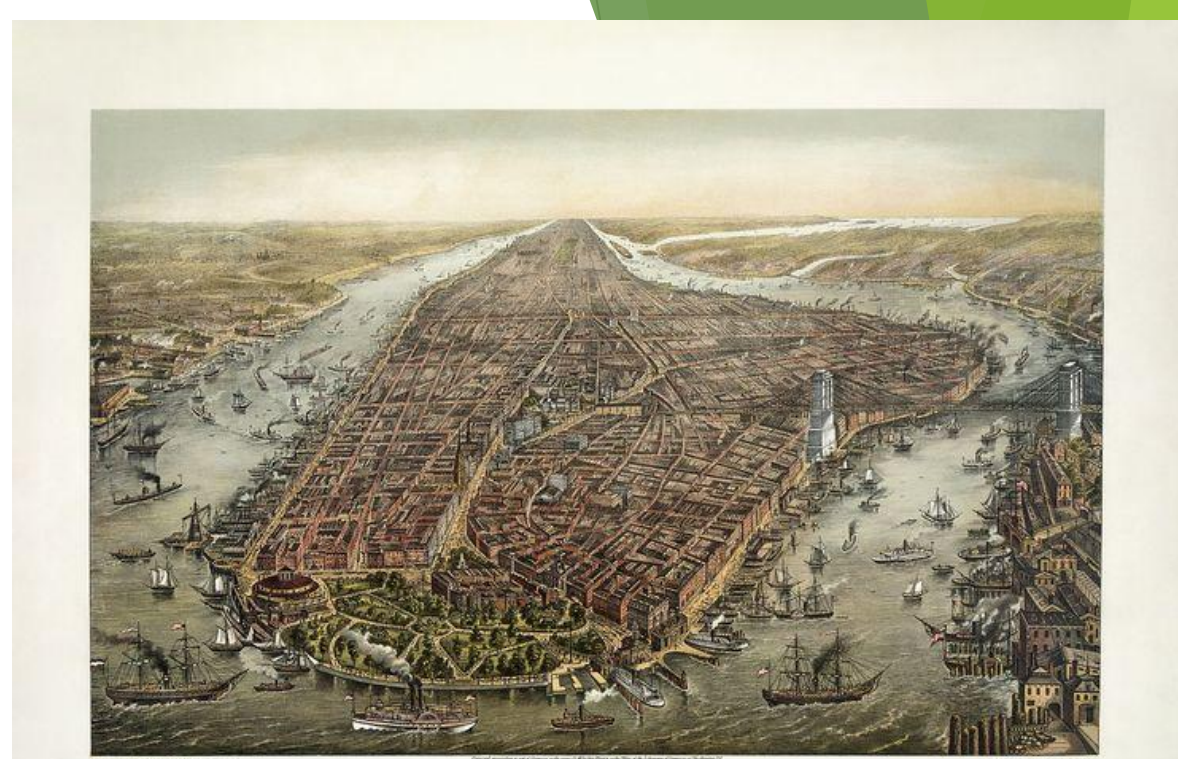
## The advantages of NYC

- Since its founding in the 1624, New York City (New Amsterdam under the Dutch) provided international and coastal shipping, distribution to New England and the middle states, and artisan manufacturing.
- NYC has protected deep-water port with river connections to up state NY via the Hudson River. Eventually the Hudson would be connected to Lake Erie via the Erie Canal in 1825



## Before the Gilded Age

- Valued “republican simplicity” and class-less equality
- NYC social classes consisted of trading merchants, bankers, insurance underwriters and lawyers and other professionals, and artisans and laborers.
  - o Merchants
    - Merchants acted as wholesalers and retailers of agricultural commodities and manufactures; esp. acting as tobacco and cotton factors and financiers
    - Wealthier merchants were “merchant bankers” and investors in real estate, ships and insurance companies
    - Often owned or co-owned merchant ships
    - Provided insurance for shipments with other merchants
    - Offered multiple products due to bartering due to limited specie in circulation
    - Specialized beginning in 1820s
    - Early merchants included Astors



- Bankers, Insurance and Lawyers
  - Bankers were often ex-merchants who specialized; also merchants with excess cash
  - Financed ships and operating expenses
  - Provided currency exchange and market for bills of exchange
  - Insurance underwrote shipping risks and property risks
  - Some became very wealthy

- Artisans
  - Hand manufactures of shoes, custom clothes, barrels, jewelry, ship parts, silverware, etc.

- Laborers
  - Unskilled and semi-skilled workers, dockworkers, etc.



## Artisan Shops (Manufacturers of the time)

- Variety of artisan shops, which varied in size depending on the type of craft, # employees, success of the business.
- Artisan shops relatively small, often consisting of a single room or a small workshop. Also served as a retail and display shop. Most goods made to order.
- Typically located in densely populated areas part of the bustling urban landscape.
- Master and family and apprentices often lived behind or above shop.
- Included cabinetmakers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and other skilled trades.
- Apprentice system in New York City common way for young people to learn a skilled trade.



## Apprentice Indentures

- **Contracts:** Apprenticeships were formalized through indentures, legal contracts between the apprentice and the master.
- **Terms:** The typical term of an apprenticeship ranged from 3 to 7 years, depending on the trade and the age of the apprentice.

## Roles and Responsibilities

- **Master:** Master responsible for teaching the apprentice the skills & knowledge. Apprentice graduated through different levels of production sold by master. Master provided food, lodging, and sometimes clothing for the apprentice. Sometimes an up-front fee provided by parents or apprentice.
- **Apprentice:** Expected to work diligently, obey the master, and learn the trade. Often started with basic tasks and gradually took on more complex work as they gained experience.



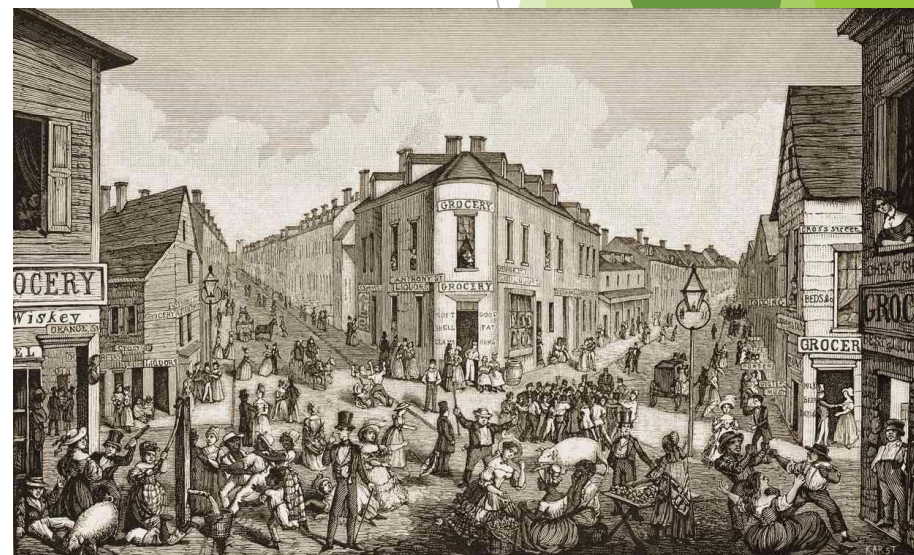
## Trades

- **Variety of Trades:** Apprenticeships in a wide range of trades, including blacksmithing, carpentry, shoemaking, printing, and tailoring. Each trade had its own specific skills and techniques that apprentices needed to master.

## Regulation and Oversight

- **Guilds and Associations:** Some trades were regulated by guilds or trade associations, which set standards for apprenticeships, quality of product, price of product, death benefits to members and ensured that masters provided proper training.
- **Alms-House and Bridewell Commission:** In some cases, apprenticeships were arranged through institutions like the Alms-House and Bridewell Commission, which provided support for orphans and indigent children by placing them in apprenticeships.

Apprentice system essential part of the labor market in early 19th-century New York City, providing young people with the skills and opportunities to become skilled tradespeople.



## New Social Structures NYC in the Gilded Age

- The New Elite Class ("Gilded Elite")
  - Dominated by families like the Astors, Vanderbilts, and Morgans.
  - Wealth largely came from industrial enterprises, banking, and real estate; railroads
- New to the City often moving to NYC from Mid-West (Rockefeller, Carnegie) or New England
- Extravagant lifestyles, epitomized by mansions on Fifth Avenue and opulent summer homes in Newport. Valued British luxury and class adherence
- Participated in high society events like balls and opera, setting social standards and public space (e.g. Central Park)



*Bethesda Fountain. Central Park.*

*New York.*

## Gilded Age Clash between Old Rich and New Rich

- Old Rich were merchants, bankers, lawyers, insurance and finance men
- Manufacturers were looked down on as “handworkers”, not “brainworkers”
- New Rich were manufacturers and railroad owners
- Alva Vanderbilt’s ball of 1883 was where new rich Vanderbilts incorporated into old rich New York of the Astors.
  - Caroline Schermerhorn Astor, often referred to as “The Mrs. Astor,” leader of old rich.
  - Ward McAllister, a prominent social arbiter and confidant of Mrs. Astor, coined the term “The Four Hundred” to refer to the elite members of New York society who were considered the most fashionable and influential
- Feud between patrons of old rich Academy of Music and new rich Metropolitan Opera



## The “New” Middle Class

- Growing due to the expansion of “white-collar” jobs in finance, law, education, business administration, and commerce.
- Emulated Elite Class in purchasing and lifestyle aspirations
  - Advocated for cultural refinement and upward mobility.
- Lived in neighborhoods like Harlem and parts of Brooklyn as they became accessible through improved transportation.



## Working Class and Poor (50-60% of NYC)

- Comprised of factory workers, dockworkers, and domestic laborers, often recent immigrants.
- Faced precarious economic conditions, long hours, and unsafe working environments.
- Crowded into tenements in Lower East Side, where living conditions were often dire.



## The Gilded Age Middle Class Victorian Home

- Industrialization meant separation from workplace from home
- Roles of men and women changed from both contributing to the economic well-being of the farm to women as mistress of the home and men as master and bread winner
- Increased salaries for middle class gave rise to a home furnishing market of couches, parlors and isolated family lodging



## Victorian Middle-Class Values in the Gilded Age

- Strong Work Ethic and Self-Improvement
- Education: Means for upward mobility. Middle-class prioritized schooling for their children and sought to improve their own skills and knowledge.
- Respectability and Morality
- Family-Centered Life
  - Domesticity: Middle-class women were often responsible for maintaining the household and raising children. The ideal of the "cult of domesticity" emphasized the importance of a well-kept home and nurturing environment.
- Consumerism and Material Comfort
  - Consumer Goods
  - Leisure Activities
- Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility
- Civic Duty. Sense of responsibility to help those less fortunate. Many middle-class families supported charitable causes and were involved in efforts to improve urban living conditions.



## Victorian Upper-Class Values in Gilded Age

- Lavish Lifestyles. Opulence and display of wealth through extravagant homes, clothing, and social events. Lavish parties, such as the Bradley-Martin Ball, were common among the elite.
- Conspicuous Consumption
- Social Status and Exclusivity
- Family Lineage: Ancestry and family lineage were important markers of social status. Marriages were often arranged to maintain or enhance family prestige but also business partnerships and relationships.
- Philanthropy and Patronage
  - Patronage of the Arts
  - Education and Refinement
- Children attend prestigious schools and universities. A well-rounded education, including knowledge of literature, languages, and the arts, was highly prized.

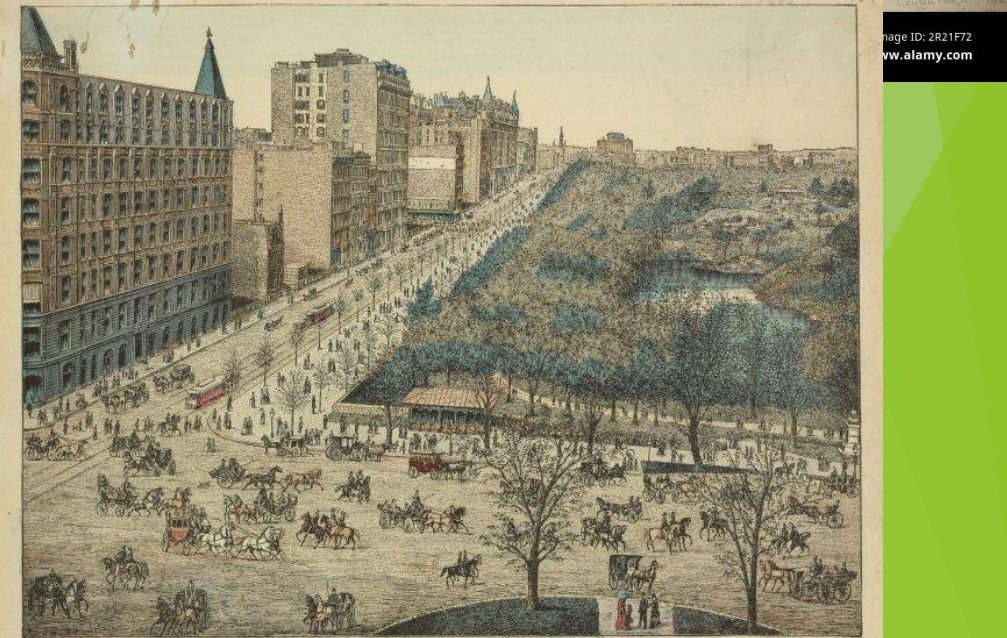


- Refinement: Refinement in manners, dress, and behavior was essential. The upper class adhered to strict codes of etiquette and propriety.
- Influence and Power
  - Political Influence: Using resources to shape public policy and protect their interests.
  - Business and Industry: Many upper-class individuals were industrial magnates who controlled major industries such as railroads, steel, and oil.



## NYC Elite Control of Public Spaces

- Creation of Grand Public Spaces:
  - Elite invested in and controlled public spaces to showcase their wealth and taste.
  - Spaces like Central Park and public libraries were designed for civic improvement but were shaped by upper-class ideals.
- Central Park as a Cultural Battleground:
  - Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, it was intended as a “democratic” space.
  - Elite preferences dictated rules of decorum, such as bans on certain games, picnicking, and working-class activities.
  - Product of “Exclusionary Urban Planning”



Grand avenues like Fifth Avenue became symbols of wealth, lined with mansions and restricted from commercial use.

- Poor and working-class communities were displaced for elite-driven urban projects.

- Control Through Institutions

- Elite philanthropists funded cultural institutions (e.g., the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Public Library).

- While these were technically open to the public, their programming often catered to upper-class sensibilities.



## Influential Styles of the NYC Rich and Famous

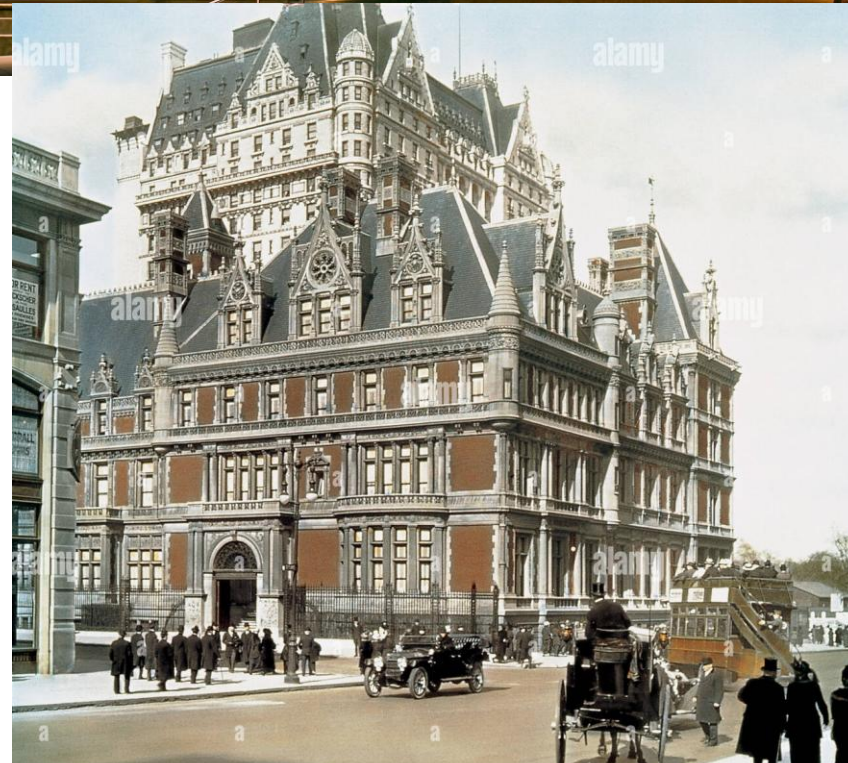
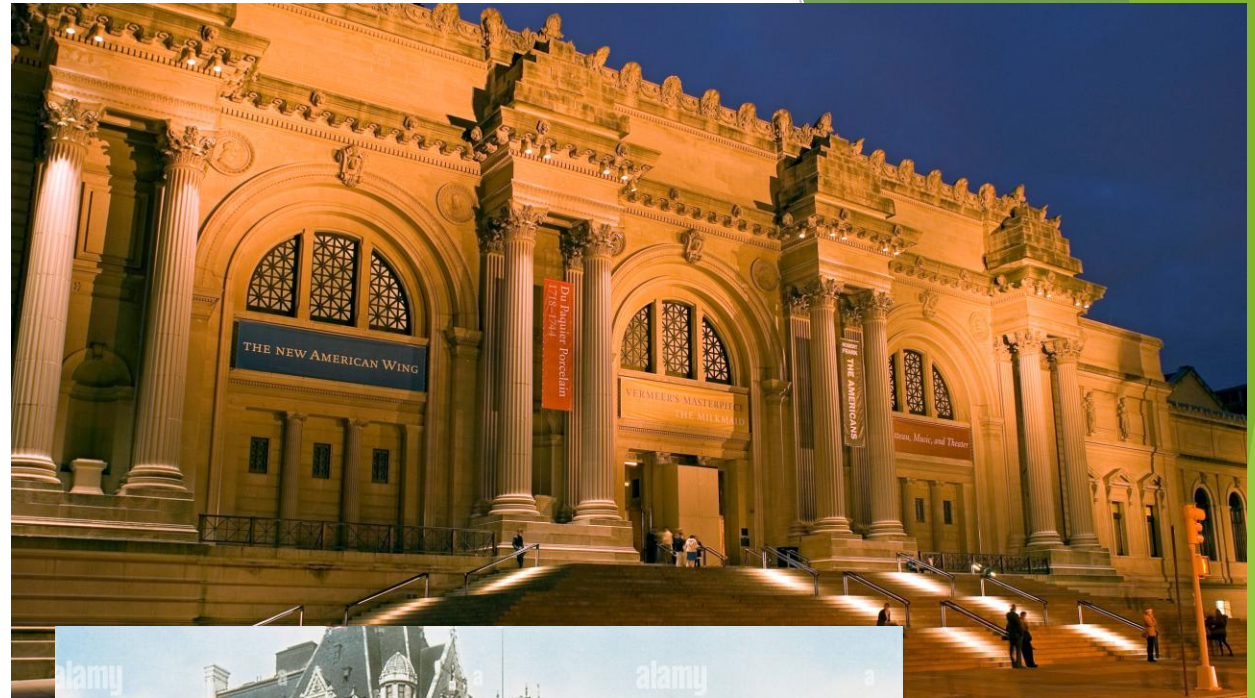
### Beaux-Arts style

Originating from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Emphasized classical Greek and Roman architecture, with elaborate ornamentation and symmetry.

Examples: Notable examples include the New York Public Library and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

### French Château Style

- Influence: Inspired by the grand châteaux of the French Renaissance, this style featured steeply pitched roofs, ornate facades, and intricate detailing.
- Example: Vanderbilt Mansion on Fifth Avenue, designed by Richard Morris Hunt, is a prime example.



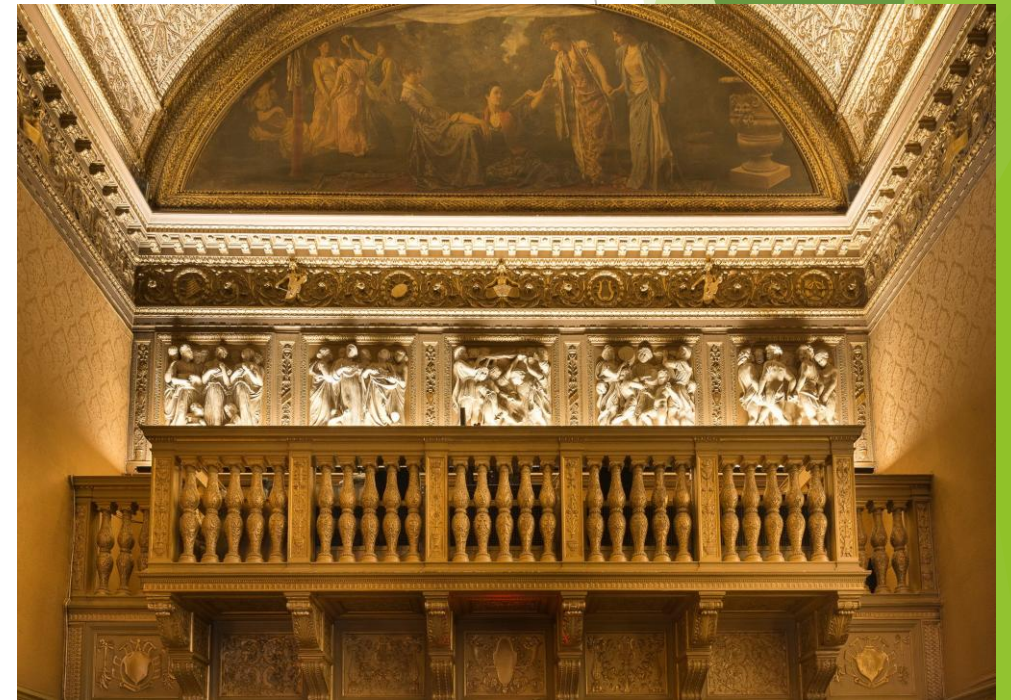
## Italian Renaissance Revival

- Influence: This style drew inspiration from the palaces of the Italian Renaissance, with features such as arched windows, columns, and elaborate cornices.
- Example: The Villard Houses, designed by McKim, Mead & White, showcase this style.



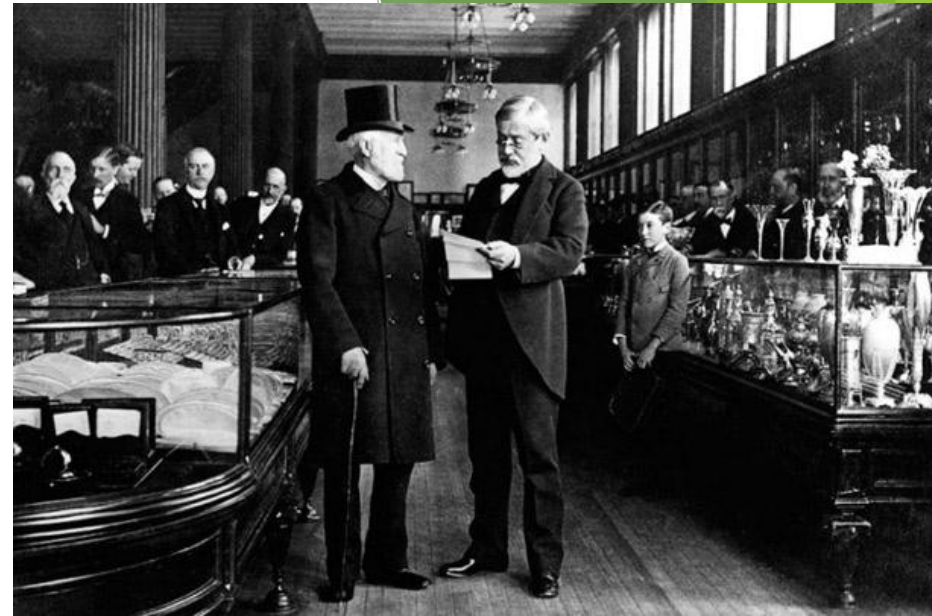
## Romanesque Revival

- Influence: Characterized by heavy stone construction, rounded arches, and robust, fortress-like appearances, this style was popular for both residential and public buildings.
- Example: The American Museum of Natural History, designed by Calvert Vaux and J. Wrey Mould, is an example of Romanesque Revival architecture.



## New York City Industry

- Manufacturing Industries
  - Textiles, garment production, and printing were significant industries
  - Factory systems replaced artisanal production, increasing efficiency but reducing labor autonomy
- Labor Force
  - Relied heavily on immigrant workers, particularly Irish, Italian, and Eastern European Jews.
  - Labor unrest and strikes, such as those by garment workers, became increasingly common.
- Innovation
  - Rise of mechanization and industrial techniques revolutionized productivity.
  - Companies like Tiffany & Co. and Steinway set standards for luxury manufacturing.



## Exports and Imports

### - Exports:

- Manufactured goods, textiles, processed food, and machinery shipped to international markets.
- The Port of New York was a hub for American agricultural exports like cotton and grain.

### - Imports:

- Luxury goods from Europe (e.g., French wines, Italian marble).
- Raw materials like rubber and silk for local manufacturing.

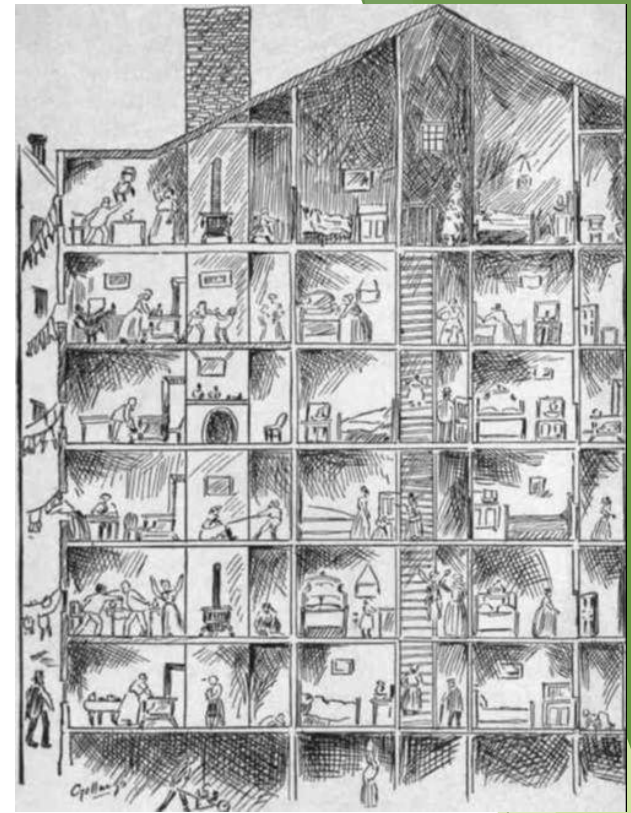
### - Role of Port:

- The city was the nation's largest and most active port, facilitating global trade.
- Infrastructure like piers, warehouses, and shipping companies made New York the centerpiece of U.S. commerce.
- Port majority tariff office of federal government



## NYC Poverty

- Conditions
  - Overcrowding in tenements led to squalid living conditions, poor sanitation, and frequent disease outbreaks.
  - Child labor was common, as families struggled to make ends meet.
- Charity and Reform
  - Organizations like the Charity Organization Society attempted to address poverty but often did so through a lens of moral reform.
  - Activists like Jacob Riis used journalism and photography (e.g., How the Other Half Lives) to expose poverty to the middle and upper classes.
- Responses to Poverty
  - Emergence of settlement houses (e.g., the Henry Street Settlement) provided services like education and childcare.
  - Municipal government was largely ineffective in addressing systemic poverty.



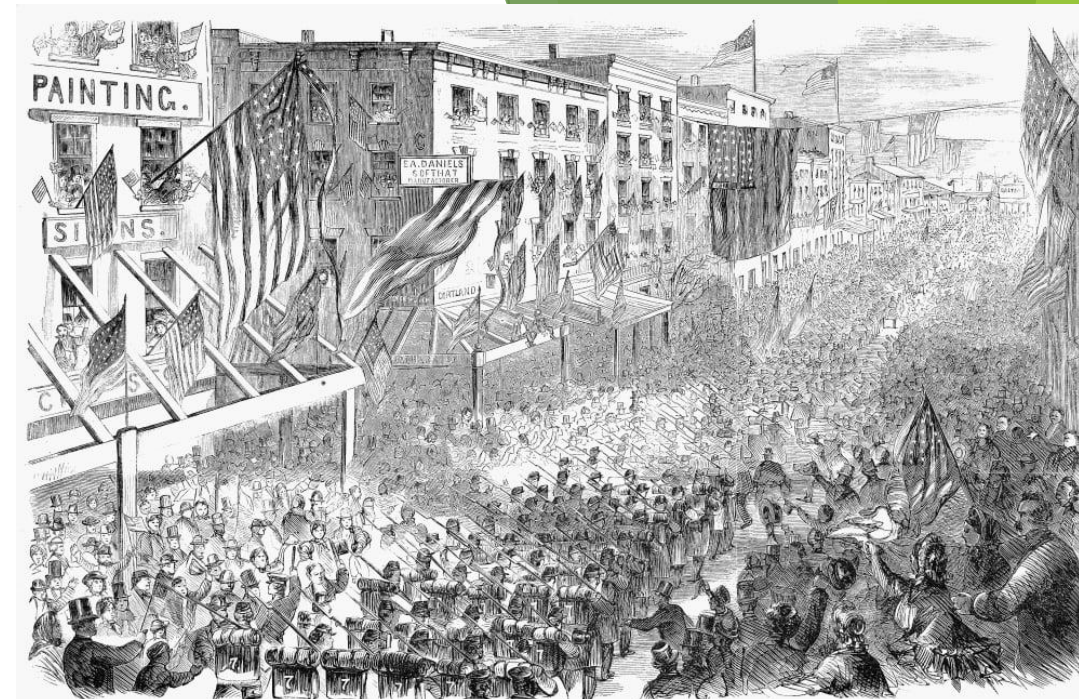
## Attitudes Toward the Civil War

### Elite Class

- Supported preservation of the Union but often did so for economic reasons, such as maintaining trade and the integrity of national markets.
- After the war, embraced quick reconciliation with the South, often prioritizing economic over social/moral concerns.

### Working Class

- Divided attitudes; resentment over draft laws led to violent opposition, most notably 1863 Draft Riots.
- Irish immigrants, in particular, viewed the war with skepticism, fearing competition from freed African Americans.
- African Americans
  - Many supported the Union cause and fought in the war but faced discrimination and limited opportunities in postwar New York.



THE SEVENTH REGIMENT OF NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-ONE STRONG, MARCHING DOWN CORTLANDT STREET, ON THEIR WAY TO THE PHILADELPHIA RAILROAD, EN ROUTE FOR THE CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, APRIL, 1861.



THE RIOTS IN NEW YORK: THE MOB LYING A NEGRO IN CLARKSON-STREET.—SEE PAGE 142.

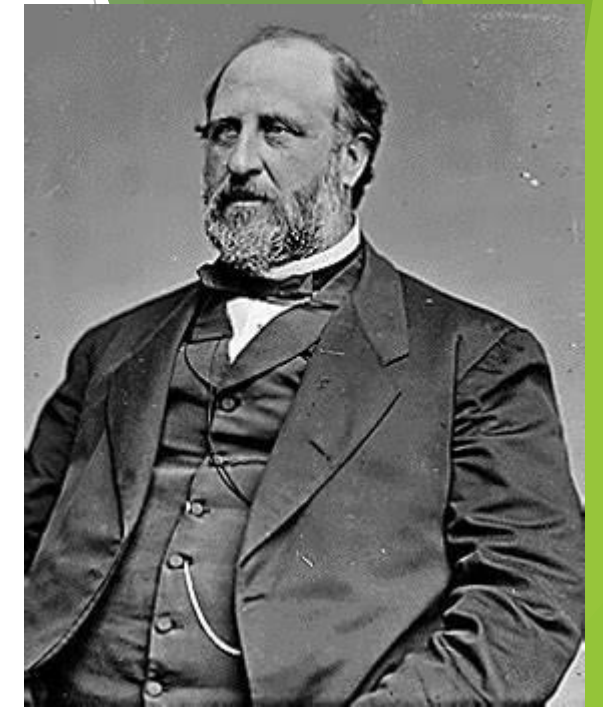
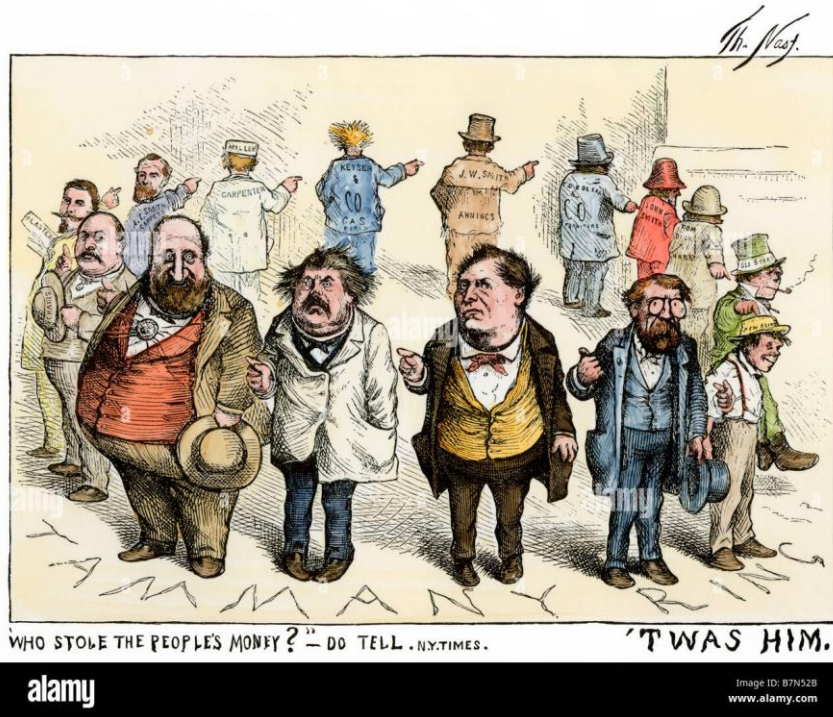
## Corruption in Gilded Age New York City

### - General Context:

Gilded Age was marked by rapid economic growth but also rampant political corruption.

- Corruption permeated city politics, business practices, and law enforcement, fueled by unregulated commerce and urbanization.

- Political machines, particularly Tammany Hall, epitomized the era's intertwining of politics and personal profit.



William "Boss" Tweed

## Tammany Hall and Its Role in Corruption

### - Origins and Structure:

- Tammany Hall was a Democratic Party political machine established in the late 18th century.

- By the Gilded Age, it had become synonymous with graft, patronage, and vote-buying.

- Operated under a hierarchical system with "ward bosses" who controlled local neighborhoods, supplying benefits to cultivate votes

### - Key Figures:

#### - William "Boss" Tweed:

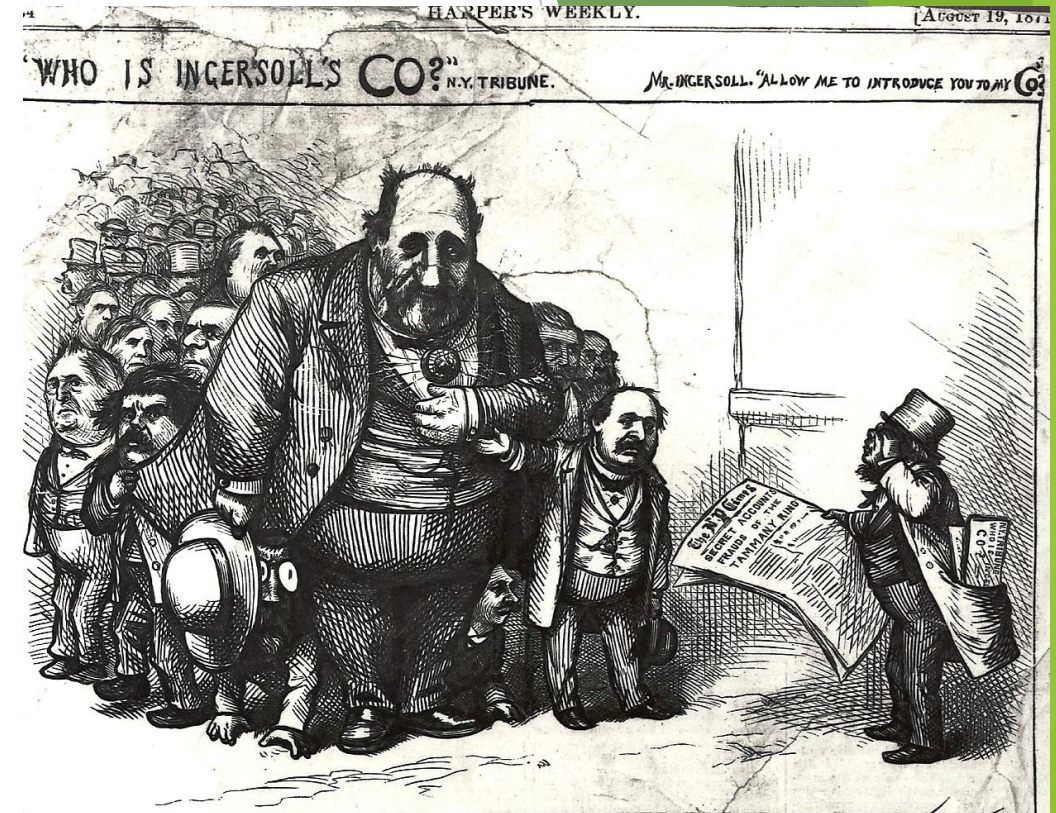
- Head of Tammany Hall during its peak of corruption in the 1860s and 1870s.

- Controlled city contracts, courts, and police, using them to enrich himself and his allies.

- Infamous for embezzling an estimated \$25–\$45 million (up to \$1 billion in today's dollars) through inflated public works projects.

#### - Richard Croker:

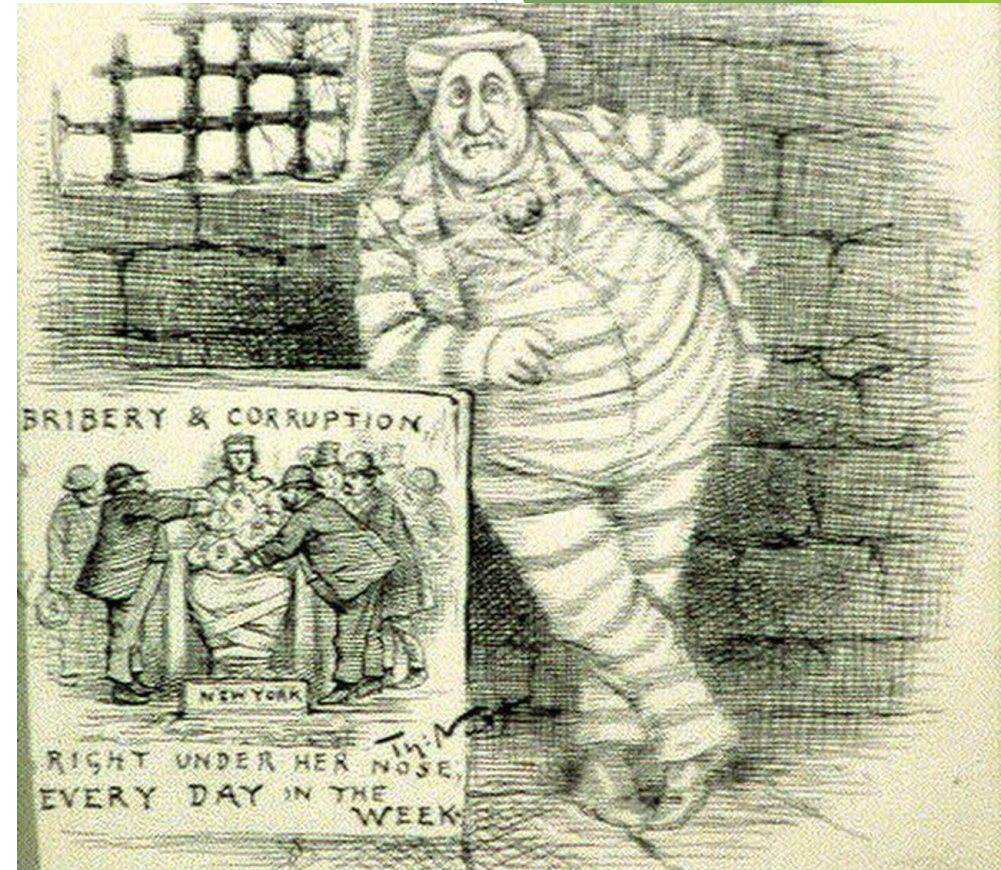
- Led Tammany Hall after Tweed's downfall, continuing its influence but with less overt scandal.



Thomas Nast cartoon portraying Boss Tweed

## Methods of Corruption

- Patronage:
  - Secured votes by offering jobs and aid to immigrants, particularly Irish Americans.
  - Controlled public employment and city contracts, awarding them to loyal supporters or for bribes.
- Election Fraud:
  - Used tactics like stuffing ballot boxes, voting multiple times, and intimidating voters.
- Graft in Public Works:
  - Inflated costs of projects like the New York County Courthouse (Tweed Courthouse), siphoning public funds.
- Monopolistic Practices:
  - Granted exclusive NYC commercial rights through politicians to businesses in exchange for kickbacks.



## Impact on the City

### - Negative Consequences:

- Drained public resources, exacerbating urban poverty and infrastructure issues.
- Stifled competition and innovation by favoring politically connected businesses.
- Fostered a climate of distrust in government institutions.

### - Positive Aspects

- Provided essential services and aid to immigrants, helping them integrate into urban life.
- Facilitated urban growth through infrastructure projects (albeit at inflated costs).
- Gave a voice to marginalized communities, albeit in a transactional manner.



## Gilded Age New York Legacy

### - Cultural Hierarchies

- The Gilded Age solidified divides between high culture and popular culture, with public spaces often reflecting these divides.

### - Democratization of Culture

- Over time, cultural spaces became more inclusive, though tensions over their use persisted.

### - Impact on Modern New York

- Gilded Age cultural institutions and architecture remain central to the city's identity, reflecting both its opulence and inequities.

- Style of NYC became style of many other cities.



## Next Week: Three Robber Barons

