

Southern New Hampshire University

Nativism and Discriminatory Laws:

The Chinese Exclusion Acts' effect on Immigration Laws and Immigrants during the 19th and
20th centuries

A Capstone Project Submitted to the College of Online and Continuing Education in Partial
Fulfillment of the Master of Arts in History

By

Sandra Ippolito

Philadelphia, Pa

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Seth J. Barteo

Capstone Instructor

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Date



Associate Dean of Liberal Arts
Southern New Hampshire University

May 21, 2019

Date

Dedication

To my two children, Isabella and my unborn child, to show that when you put your mind to something anything is possible. Also, to Ryan, my husband, best friend, and the father of my children, for always pushing me to do my best. Thank you so much this is for you.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
List of Illustrations	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: A Brief History of Nativism in the United States	11
Chapter 2: The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882	25
Chapter 3: New Immigration Laws of the 20 th Century	42
Chapter 4: The Immigrants Experience	55
Conclusion	68
Bibliography	78

List of Figures

Figure 1: Ben Franklin	13
Figure 2: Cartoon Image depicting the Chinese Exclusion Act.....	29
Figure 3: Cartoon Image of Immigrants being blocked from entrance	49
Figure 4: Immigrants coming to America during the Gilded Age.....	55

List of Illustrations

Picture 1: “Naturalization Act of 1795.” www.slideserve.com/lucius/united-states-voting-rights-timeline (accessed May 6, 2019)	2
Picture 2: “Young Solon Champions California’s Stance in Favor of Chinese Exclusion.” www.metnews.com/articles/2006/perspectives101606.htm (accessed May 6, 2019)	4
Picture 3: “European Immigration.” http://go.owa.edu/~rdfusch/immigration_table14.jpg (accessed May 6, 2019)	7
Figure 1: “Benjamin Franklin.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Franklin#/media/File:Benjamin_Franklin_by_Joseph_Du_plessis_1788.jpg (accessed May 6, 2019)	14
Picture 4: “The Pope looking at America map.” www.churchpop.com/2016/01/11/16-old-time-anti-catholic-cartoons-to-put-things-in-perspective/ (accessed May 6, 2019)	15
Picture 5: “John R. Commons.” http://digicoll.library.wise.edu/WIReader/Images/WER1579.html (accessed May 6, 2019)	18
Picture 6: “Josiah Strong.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josiah_Strong#/media/File:Josiah_Strong_in_Book_news_August_1893.jpg . (accessed May 6, 2019)	22
Picture 7: “Hogan’s History-Immigration & Urban Growth.” www.slideserve.net/williamhogan52/h-45711073 (accessed May 6, 2019)	23
Picture 8: “Denis Kearney.” www.sfmuseum.net/hist-91brycenotes.html (accessed May 6, 2019)	27
Figure 2: “Chinese Exclusion Act.” http://blogs.baruch.cuny.edu/hist10051tag/chinese-exclusion-act/ (accessed May 6, 2019)	30
Picture 9: “Chinese Exclusion Act.” www.slideshare.net/MrsHeller/Chinese-Exclusion-Act-5829709 (accessed May 6, 2019)	31
Picture 10: “Chinese Families on Ellis Island.” http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/webcast.htm (accessed May 6, 2019) ...	33
Picture 11: “William L. Scott.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Lawrence_Scott#/media/File:William_Lawrence_Scott_(Pennsylvania-Congressman).jpg	37
Picture 12: “Immigration & Education.” www.slideshare.net/ksugroup/immigration-education (accessed May 6, 2019)	41

Picture 13: “U.S. Demographic History.” www.immigrationeis.org/eis-documents/us-demographic-history (accessed May 6, 2019) 43

Picture 14: “Woodrow Wilson.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodrow_Wilson#/media/File:President_Woodrow_Wilson_\(1913\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodrow_Wilson#/media/File:President_Woodrow_Wilson_(1913).jpg) (accessed May 6, 2019) 45

Figure 3: “Immigration cartoon, 1916.” www.gilderlehrman.org/content/immigration-cartoon-1916 (accessed May 6, 2019) 50

Picture 15: “Immigration by Countries.” www.nausa.uni-oldenburg.de/zuroev/immig.htm (accessed May 6, 2019) 54

Figure 4: “True Immigrant Tales.” <http://vinceparillo.com/2015/01/20/true-immigrant-tales-the-many-interpreters-at-ellis-island/> (accessed May 6, 2019) 56

Picture 16: “No Irish Need Apply.” <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/37817> (accessed May 6, 2019) 58

Picture 17: “William P. Dillingham.” www.milestonedocuments.com/documents/view/dillingham-commission-report (accessed May 6, 2019) 62

Picture 18: “KKK and Immigration.” www.slideshare.net/mrlocke/kkk-immigration (accessed May 6, 2019) 64

Picture 19: “America Melting Pot.” <http://eportfolios.macaulay.cuny.edu/friedlander11/2011/03/21/> (accessed May 6, 2019) 66

Picture 20: “Immigration by Country of Origin.” <http://historiana.eu/case-study/irish-diaspora-1840s/immigration-north-america-country-origin> (accessed May 6, 2019) 67

Picture 21: “Nativism.” <http://slideplayer.com/slide/106676871> (accessed May 6, 2019) 69

Picture 22: “Irish Stereotype.” http://thomasnastcartoons.com/irish-catholic-cartoons/irish_stereotype/ (accessed May 6, 2019) 73

Picture 23: “Immigrant Population.” <http://cis.org/Report/Immigrant-Population-Hit-Highest-Percentage-Ever-8-Years> (accessed May 6, 2019) 77

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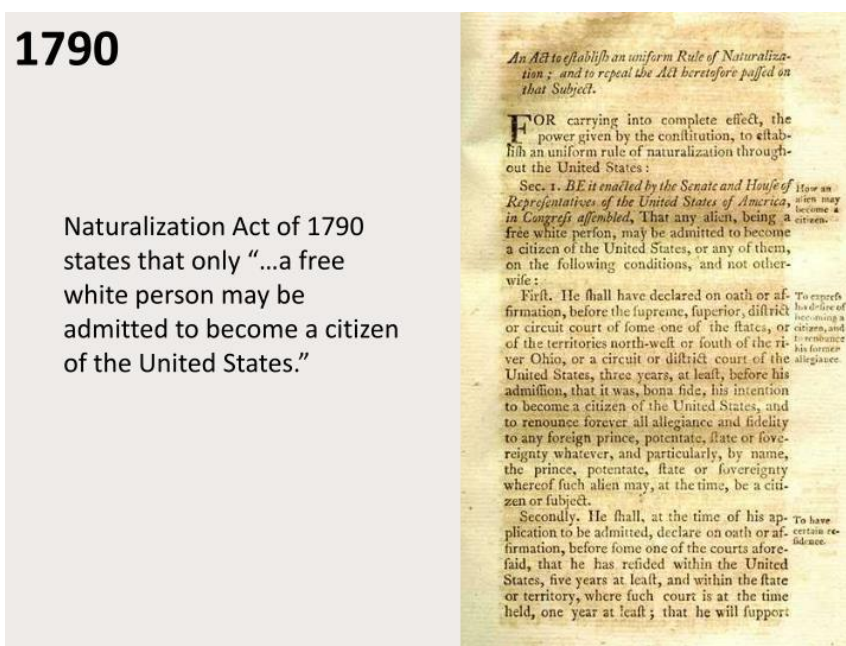
Introduction

Immigration is an issue that has shaped our way of life in America even before the United States was its own country. The migration of nationalities to other areas has created a unique cultural and enlightening people in the world and without those people we would not be who we are today. While most believe that America is a melting pot of cultures that has always been accepting to all, only part of that is true. This paper is going to show that while we are a melting pot of cultures, the idea that everyone in America has always been accepting to every nationality is definitely not true. It will also show how the creating of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 opened the door to more intense laws that would try and keep other races out or limited in America for many reasons.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries, as this paper will show, created immigration laws that would target other nationalities due in part to nativism and many other factors, starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The History of immigration goes hand in hand with the History of the United States. America has had its ups and downs when it came to immigration and it still does today. Many historians have written about different areas of this topic, like Roger Daniels, Jack Cashmen, Alan Kraut, and many others. Many have also written about the laws that came out of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that would shape immigration in new ways.

The image below is the first act in the United States to ever address the naturalization of immigrants in the country. While it was not the goal in the 1700s to block any from the country, it would be the goal in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The idea of immigration would also

not be a novel concept as the 1800s started, especially after the Civil War. The laws prior to 1882 would both be used against incoming immigrants and those that had already come over. The fight would culminate in laws that would be very hateful, discriminating, and restricting towards so many, with some loopholes.



Picture 1: 1790 Naturalization Act

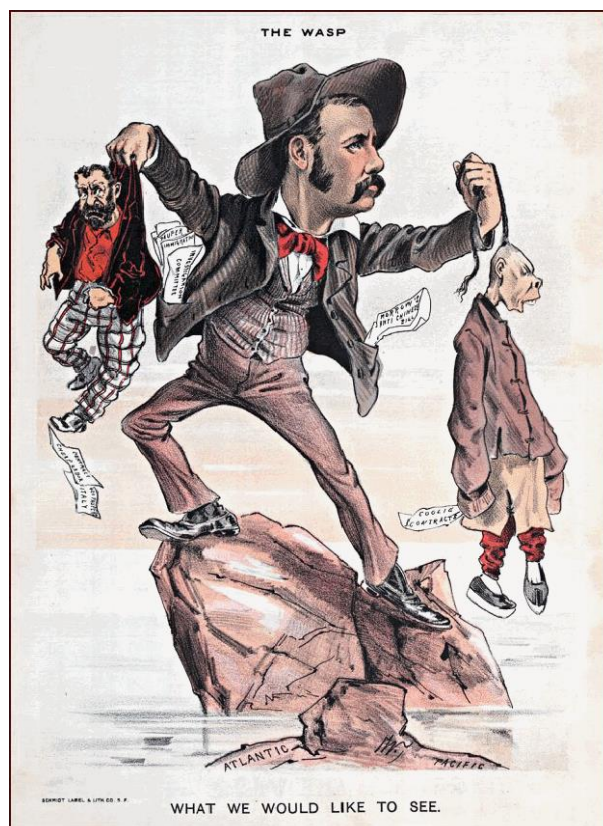
There were many factors that would come to play a role in these laws throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It has depended on who was coming over and when, during good times and those of trouble for America, and especially in terms of race. Other factors would also have to do with economics, discrimination, and even politics. Politicians on both sides played a part on the issues and would use their influences to get people on their sides. There were times in America's past when certain factors would shape the outcome of these issues.

Nativism, fear, racism, ignorance, and other factors have played a role in whether to bar or limit those that have come to the United States for a better life. During the late 19th and early

20th century, America would develop some of its harshest immigration laws that were discriminating towards so many immigrants from all over starting with the Chinese. They would be the first of many that would be discriminated against just because they were not what some believed were “American-looking” enough.

This era would show how fear and ignorance affected so many that came over to the United States. Anyone that looked different or that were deemed “undesirable,” for example being illiterate, were criticized. The idea that people could judge others for things like nationality, skin color, illiteracy, or religion shows us that America’s past was clouded and not this culturally accepted country. Many nationalities would be singled out, like Asians and other immigrants, through various immigration acts during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The picture below really captures the hate and un-wanting of immigrants in America that some people had. This would be a hard time for not only those trying to come to America, but for those already living in America for some time. People had been coming over for a long time and now they were being treated like second-class citizens due in part to factors that were not even their fault. America was not an immigrant friendly place for many, unless you came from the countries that were deemed “acceptable.”



Picture 2: Young Salon Champions

Chinese exclusion would show how some Americans felt about non-whites, how they got the government to make such laws, how other laws would be created by building off of this one act, and how fear would shape the lives of those immigrants. Many historians have interpreted this period of American immigration with some similarities and differences as well. Immigration has always been an issue throughout the History of the United States. It would also continue well into the mid-1900's, as well as, getting a resurgence today.

Each chapter throughout this paper will focus on an aspect of immigration throughout this time. Chapter One will focus on nativism and how it evolved to play a very important role on the immigration acts during the late 19th and early 20th century. Chapter Two will focus on the Chinese Exclusion Act and the acts that would build off it, as well as how the Chinese fought

back. Chapter Three will focus on the laws that came after the Exclusion act and how Nativism evolved during this time. Chapter Four will deal with the experiences that immigrants went through throughout the whole issue of immigration during this time-frame. The Conclusion will sum up the paper and show how the issue of immigration evolved through the effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act, nativism, and other factors like economics and racism.

The methodology used to complete this work has been to use primary and secondary sources that explain the laws that were created and how they built off of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Each historian that has written on the subject of immigration, in various and unique ways, has had a hand in helping to create a paper that emphasizes this thesis. Immigration laws were changed during this time-period and shaped the way the federal government handled the situation. The nativists and their followers shaped the way immigrants were treated and the sources compiled here will help show this throughout this work.

While there are many primary sources from the laws passed that can be found on many websites like the National Archives and Our Documents, there are also many primary sources like poems. Jonzo Bandwagoner wrote a very compelling poem that really expresses the immigrant experience and how scary it was for them. In this poem, you can feel his fear, worry, and wonder about America. He says he may be in the wrong America, which helps show that the immigration policies were affecting how immigrants were treated and not all welcomed.

These primary sources, and many others, help to express both sides of the immigration issues during the late 19th century and early 20th century. We can also see how Asian immigrants felt about their situation at work and home. They also will pair great with the secondary sources on the history of immigration, the experiences during the time, and many other topics. The

secondary sources help us understand the feelings we hear about in such primary sources, like the poem by the Polish Immigrant. There are countless other journals, poems, and stories that go along the same path, while others have a different experience.

There are many historians that have written books and articles about immigration. They also help us to understand nativism and the politics behind the laws and policies. One historian, Roger Daniels, is a professor of history at the University of Cincinnati. He wrote two books and a great essay on immigration from many angles, which helps us understand immigration during the Gilded Age. His audience for all three sources is any student wanting to understand immigration, nativism, and the Gilded Age. In *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, he takes us through the long road to America's immigration history.

His argument is showing us different forms of laws and policies that have been put into place in America. It helps us see how the immigrants were shaped by these experiences as well as well as how its shaped America over the Gilded Age. He also shows us how nativism shaped the laws in 1882 and can help us see that fear and racism can affect so much. A great book that deals with the Immigration Act of 1882 is *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and immigrants since 1882*, by Daniels as well. He helps us see how the Chinese were affected by this and how it would lead to other harsher laws and policies in the early 20th centuries.

In this book, he shows us how nativists attitudes shaped the 1880's and help bring about the baring and limiting of immigrants. In his source, he uses the most up to date information to show the anti-immigration of the late 19th century. Daniels helps us see what fear and ignorance

can do when it comes to creating laws and policies that affect things like immigration. Another of his sources comes from an essay in “The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America” called *The Immigrant Experience in the Gilded Age*. He shows us how the Gilded Age and Immigration go hand in hand and follow along with his other books on immigration. He uses new statistics to help us understand what the immigrants felt, how they dealt with the laws, and how others treated them during this time.

David Gerber, a professor and historian at the University of Buffalo, wrote a great source if you wanted to get an introduction to the history of immigration. *American Immigration: A Very Short History* is a good starting point and coincides with many other sources when wanting to understand nativism, what it meant, what it led to, and how it affected the laws in 1882. When it comes to comparing these laws and policies not only does this source give great background, but also has other sources that can be found to get any paper done. It also helped to narrow down my topic. Jackson Lear, a professor at Rutgers University, also wrote a great source that can help when discussing how nativism shaped the acts in 1882.

In *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*, gives us an idea of all the changes that were going on in America and with the good comes the bad. Lear shows how immigration was shaped by the ignorance and fear from nativism. It also shaped future laws that would be shaped for immigration. It also helps show how the act of 1882 affect Asian immigrants and show how laws progressively got worse for those that came over to the United States. The Gilded Age saw the laws that barred the Chinese, had literacy tests, and other factors that withheld many from getting in.

A Patriot's History of the United States by Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen gives us an idea on how immigration was shaped by racism from nativists. It puts everything into a bigger perspective about United States history from the viewpoint of those that were winners. The loser's that suffered did not really have a major place in those parts of history. There are many other sources that also focus on immigration and coincide great with the primary sources. Each one holds its own when it comes to the laws like Katherine Benton-Cohen, who is a professor of history at Georgetown University, compiled a book to help show how immigration laws have been shaped since the early 20th century including the 1917 immigration act. She describes how the Dillingham Commission pushed for stricter policies since the 1882 immigration act by adding quotas, a literacy test, and many other regulations.

This will be great when comparing how the immigration acts would get progressively worse for immigrants. This Commission, as Cohen describes, was formed to counteract the immigration issue that people saw was going on. The book shows how the commission pushed for new regulations, all of which were approved and implemented into law. It also showed how a group of people in government could make immigration policies like this and hold power over who could enter and who could not.

This source and many others will help show that the barring or limiting of immigration has always been going on. Whether it was a Commission, the nativists, or many others, people have wanted to keep many from coming over to the United States. The sources will help round out my paper to express that the melting pot theory did exist, but they were not all accepted. The politics on immigration was shaped by the Immigration Act of 1882 and the history of immigration has a long dark history.

There are many gaps in the existing literature because there are so few who tell history from the side of the underdog or the “undesirable.” If you look at each one you can see how the 1882 immigration act led to other acts like the 1917 Immigration act. By writing about how the Chinese Exclusion Act was used as a catalyst to build off of, I can fill in the gaps to show how there can be a trickle-down effect when it comes to making laws like immigration. Each one can have an influence on the other and this paper will show how the 1882 act did influence other acts. Each of my sources will also help elaborate this and the fact that America was not always accepting of all immigrants. Each historian has a unique way of interpreting immigration in American History and I plan on using each to help prove my thesis.

From the exclusion act would come others that would target any whom others felt were too different. While nativism would start the issue, fear and racism would take over when it came to making laws that would affect so many. While we may see that as wrong, to those who would enact the laws as well as fight for them, it was a way of keeping all those whom they deemed as “unworthy” to be in America. It would also shape how immigrant families would be raised in America.

As the great-great granddaughter of immigrants from all over, I know from stories about those fears they had for their children. The treatment many had for different nationalities were affected by things like war and depressions. One example I know of is how my German family would say they were from Switzerland, especially during World War I and II, and would not even speak their native tongue out in the open for fear of violence. They did it to not only protect themselves, but their children as well. From their experiences, I have been raised to know that many have hatred in them, even if they may not realize it. It could be something that

you never thought you had, but things can influence those fears and bring out hatred that you may eventually regret later in life.

The Table below shows Statistics of Immigrants that came to America in the various decades starting with 1820. We can see how there have been increases and decreases depending on years, economics, immigration bans, and by regions, which will be discussed throughout this paper. You can see the favoritism of some regions, while others are less because of racial ideologies that were ingrained in American society.

Table 1.2. Immigrants to the United States, 1820-1969, by Region or Nation of Origin and Percent of Decadal Total

	Northwest Europe			Other NW ^a Europe	Germany	Italy	Spain, Portugal and Greece	Eastern ^b Europe	U.S.S.R. and Baltic States	Asia	Canada	Latin American	All Other Countries	Total No. (in thousands)
	Great Britain	Ireland	Scandi- navian											
1820-1829	20.5%	40.2%	0.2%	9.3%	4.5%	0.3%	2.1%	—	0.1%	—	1.8%	5.8%	15.2%	129
1830-1839	13.8	31.7	0.4	8.4	23.2	0.4	0.5	0.1	—	—	2.2	3.7	15.0	538
1840-1849	15.3	46.0	0.9	6.4	27.0	0.1	0.1	—	—	—	2.4	1.1	0.5	1,427
1850-1859	15.8	36.6	0.9	4.4	34.7	0.3	0.4	0.1	—	1.3	2.3	0.7	2.7	2,815
1860-1869	25.6	20.5	4.6	3.4	34.7	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.1	2.6	5.7	0.6	0.9	2,081
1870-1879	21.1	15.4	7.6	4.3	27.4	1.7	0.7	2.6	1.3	4.9	11.8	0.8	0.4	2,742
1880-1889	15.4	12.8	12.8	3.8	27.6	5.1	0.4	6.9	3.5	1.3	9.4	0.6	0.3	5,249
1890-1899	8.9	11.0	10.6	3.3	15.7	16.3	1.3	17.7	12.2	1.6	0.1	0.9	0.4	3,094
1900-1909	5.7	4.3	5.9	2.2	4.0	23.5	2.9	20.3	18.3	2.9	1.5	1.9	0.6	8,202
1910-1919	5.8	2.6	3.8	2.5	2.8	19.4	5.7	19.9	17.4	3.1	11.2	5.7	0.3	6,347
1920-1929	7.9	4.8	4.7	3.2	9.0	12.3	3.8	12.1	2.1	2.6	22.1	14.9	0.4	4,296
1930-1939	7.7	5.1	2.4	4.6	17.1	12.2	3.3	10.0	1.3	2.6	23.3	9.5	0.8	699
1940-1949	14.6	2.6	2.6	8.7	13.9	5.9	2.4	3.9	0.5	3.5	18.8	19.5	2.9	857
1950-1959	12.4	2.4	2.1	6.3	24.6	8.0	2.8	5.6	0.1	5.7	15.3	12.6	1.8	2,300
1960-1969	7.1	1.3	1.4	3.7	6.5	6.2	6.0	3.6	0.1	11.0	13.5	38.9	1.1	3,212
Total No. (in thousands)	4889 10.9%	4714 10.6%	2,473 5.6%	1,635 3.7%	6,896 15.2%	5,149 11.5%	1,155 2.6%	5,384 12.1%	3,387 7.6%	1,431 3.2%	3,942 8.9%	3,087 6.9%	463 1.0%	44,588 100.0%

^a Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, and Switzerland.

^b Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Turkey in Europe, and Yugoslavia.

^c Not including persons born in Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, or Canal Zone.

Adapted from Donald J. Bogue, *Principles of Demography* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969), p. 807 and *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1969 and 1970*.

Picture 3: Immigration in the U.S.

Chapter 1: A Brief History of Nativism in the United States

Many Americans had long held feelings towards immigrants in general and certain types of immigrants in particular – a position that has come to be known as nativism.¹ These were feelings brought over from the countries they came from when they colonized America. Those fears and ignorance towards other races would shape how immigration laws were put in place and stated. It would also affect those immigrants effected the most, especially Asians in the 1880's and others in the decades to come after that. When we think of immigration, we think of thousands just looking for work or a better life, but what most who were deemed “un-American” or “non-white” found was hate.

Nativism would breed and add upon feelings of fear, ignorance, and racism that were already being felt. Some Americans will probably always have those feelings, which is wrong and unfortunate. Some of these fears have to do with economic reasons, while others are based on factors of appearance and religion. The world is made up of many different races, religions, traits and skills, which would be deemed by many as “undesirable” for the American way of life. Many historians throughout history have touched based on Nativism, especially Roger Daniels, John Higham, and many others.

Gerber states “American history has witnessed cycles of open borders, followed by the movement for state action to seal off those borders.”² These cycles would create many problems

¹ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 7.

² Daniel A. Gerber, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 16.

for those looking for work, a better life, and many other factors. Those living in those areas that wanted state action would eventually look towards the federal government for action instead. For so long states controlled this issue, but it would eventually come to the point when they were not doing enough, at least to those that did not like the outcomes that were created by state action. Nativists would come in and change that in time.

There was never a time when nativists attitudes were not present in American society. They existed in the colonial period and are enjoying a revival today. And while nativists have always been able to point to some specific danger, real or imagined – Franklin’s fear of the German language and culture taking over Pennsylvania, for example, or the Federalists fears of Irish and French political subversions – successful nativists movements have almost always been linked to more general fears or uneasiness in American society.³ Even some of our founding fathers, whom all of us look to for inspiration, were known to have some feelings about immigration and those that came over.

It does not matter if you are rich or poor, hatred and racism can be found in all types of people. Some of the most influential people in the world have had their roles on the issue of immigration and nativism could be found in their writings even if we could never think they could be that cruel. In America, our influential founders played a big role, whether for or against the immigrants, that would help shape future laws. Some would even say things that would come back to bite them in the future aspirations they may have, as will be seen in the next few chapters.

³ Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 265.



Figure 1: Ben Franklin

Figure 1 is a picture of Ben Franklin and it just shows us that no matter how good and inspiring a person is, they can say things in their past that you may not think they would say or feel. Franklin is quoted saying in his “*Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind*” in 1751, as Daniels states:

“Why should the Palatine boors be suffered to swarm into our Settlements, and by herding together establish their Language and Manners to the Exclusions of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of *Aliens*, who will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion.”⁴

⁴ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 8.

Here we can bluntly see racism in its truest form at a time when the United States wasn't even its own country yet. While he would change his stance in the future, his original feelings shaped the minds of many who would have a role in nativist feelings in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The practice of using the American colonies as a dumping – ground for undesirables continued into the eighteenth century, and was brought to an end only by the Revolution.⁵ For the colonists, the British empire's use of getting rid of their unwanted citizens was wrong, as Maldwyn Jones helps us see. They had enough problems of their own and to have more poor people and criminals added to the mix was not what they wanted or needed. Hate would build up, as Jones has shown, not only against the immigrants, but against the British as well. Nativism and racism were starting to build up in many ways, even though it would be another century before those fruitions would take place.

Though it was generally acknowledged that a constant influx of newcomers was an essential condition of colonial expansion, the social problems that immigration introduced or intensified led, if not to organized nativism, at least to widespread popular hostility toward certain classes of newcomers.⁶ One of our most influential founders is shown saying he thought that certain peoples could not and would not assimilate to the English way of life. These feelings would be built upon during the late 19th and early 20th centuries to create laws that would bar and limit other nationalities, like the Asians from coming to America. They would be seen as people who would never be able to assimilate into our culture, stealing jobs from Americans who were entitled to those jobs, and many other reasons.

⁵ Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 18.

⁶ Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration*, 34.

One thing the “old” immigrants and the “new” faced in common was the onslaught of nativism, defined by its leading historian, John Higham, as “intense hostility to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign (or ‘un-American’) connection.”⁷ Nativism would shape the experience of immigrants throughout United States history. However, the idea of nativism did not get invented in America. Those feelings were passed on generation after generation, which is not fair or right.

How other cultures would affect their own played a major role in the issue of nativism and Roger Daniel shows us that many influential people would influence how the people would also view the issue of immigration. Other factors that played a role were economic, religious, and many other factors. Those that came over wanted to come for work, practice their faith, and make a better life for themselves and their families, just like the original colonists did when they first came to the New World. The greatest cause for concern among Americans was the arrival of poor peasants and artisans, especially from Ireland and the German states, many of whom were Roman Catholic.⁸ This was the biggest issue before the Civil War.

America was founded on Protestant views and their dislike for Catholicism and the Pope ran deep in the veins of all who lived there. Nativists would exploit these views to speak out against letting in others of different religions. John Higham, a leading historian on nativism, touched base on these topics in his book, *Strangers in the Land*, and talks about how racist views and persecution against those of the Catholic faith really played a role on the immigration issue. By far the oldest and - in early America – the most powerful of the anti-foreign traditions

⁷ James P. Shenton and Kevin Kenny, “Ethnicity and Immigration,” in *The New American History: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1997), 361.

⁸ Daniel A. Gerber, *American Immigration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 20.

came out of the shock of the Reformation. Protestant hatred of Rome played so large a part in Pre-Civil War nativist thinking that historians have sometimes regarded nativism and anti-Catholicism as more or less synonymous.⁹

Anti-Catholic imagery, as can be seen below, would be used to show it as evil and that those coming over were only doing the Pope's bidding. This image can be found on many websites, including www.churchpop.com and shows the imagery found during the 1800's to promote anti-Catholic propaganda. While it was just propaganda, for a country founded on Protestant values, it was at the heart of what they did not want from immigrants coming over. This would really be prominent during the mid-1800's when they were coming over.

For the Americans to feel that way is kind of ironic considering their own ancestors that colonized the New World were leaving because of religious persecutions themselves. To go around and do it to another faith is kind of a slap in the face to those that suffered as well. In a way, you can see why they did it because their own ancestors were persecuting against by Catholics, but it is like they never learned the lessons of the past. That is the story of religions in the world, constant persecution on all sides, and nativists in America would use that to their advantage.

For the Irish and Germans, and many other Catholics coming to America, they were seen as spies for the Pope. They felt the Pope was trying to gain control of their country and would take it out on the immigrants, who were just trying to look for a better life. While this did play a role, the biggest factor that fed nativism was on the economic level. During the late 19th and

⁹ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 58.

early 20th centuries, these immigrants would be used by employers during times of strikes and for many other reasons. These fears would intensify after the Civil War leading to new laws that people didn't think could or would happen.



Picture 4: Pope Looking at America

Jack Beatty, historian and author of *Age of Betrayal: The Triumph of Money in America, 1865-1900*, shows us that employers would use any means necessary to earn their bottom line. He helps us see that immigrants would be used and instead of the employee and unions taking it out on the employers themselves, they blamed the immigrant workers. Beatty, like many other historians, show us that during the late 19th and early 20th century, money corrupted many aspects of American life and the employers did not care who they exploited or had taken the fall as long as they got their product out and made more money.

The engine that kept migrants and immigrants in motion was the international market for labor. The half century after the American Civil War was a crucial epoch in the globalization of capitalism. Open labor markets were the key to the expansion of capital beyond national boundaries. A huge influx of immigrants created a reserve labor supply that served employers interests by dampening down wages.¹⁰ This would cause major friction with American workers who saw them as stealing their jobs.

Popular nativists feeling has always possessed an emotional, bigoted component that invites political leaders to seek gain in recognizing and exploiting the passions of the electorate.¹¹ The political leaders would use tactics, like playing on the fears of its residents and even making people think there was a problem that they didn't know existed, like immigrants taking their jobs when they were being exploited themselves. This was and still is a very popular political tactic that gains voters and support on issues like immigration. Nativists would use this to not only gain power, but get laws passed that they wanted.

Gerber states that "Nativism need not always be racists or mean-spirited, those who want the state to limit immigration and access to citizenship may have little against immigrants, and instead may be concerned about the welfare of the nation's established residents."¹² That is the other side of nativism, which shows us that some just wanted to make sure that the people already in America were looked after first. There can be enough work and other things for all people, but in times of a depression or famine it can be harder. With work, some employers

¹⁰ Jackson Lear, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern American, 1877 – 1920* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 112.

¹¹ Gerber, *American Immigration*, 15.

¹² Gerber, 16.

hired immigrants because they could pay them less than other people, which fueled the nativists fire.

“To labor economist John R. Commons,” as Lear’s states, “the sheer number of immigrants combined with their degraded habits and values to depress wages and widen the gap between managers and workers. By undermining worker’s purchasing power, immigration threatened to reinstate the very problem that the American empire was designed to solve: overproduction.”¹³ Employers were exploiting that to their own profit, while it caused problems for those Americans who wanted better working conditions and pay. To fight this, labor organizers would form groups that would help and also fuel nativists values.



Picture 5: John R. Commons

Nativists organizations formed first among urban Anglo-American Protestant workingmen, and called for the suppression of mass immigration and the seemingly effortless

¹³ Jackson Lear, *Rebirth of a Nation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 287.

path to citizenship.¹⁴ Employers that fueled this did not realize what they were doing, or so we may think. These organizations would look to lawmakers to make sure that immigrants stopped coming over because they saw it as taking money from the working-class Americans that deserved it. The immigrants, who just wanted a new lease on life, were being discriminated against for something that wasn't even their own fault.

These organizations were trying to implement change and would stop at nothing to make that happen. Daniels states, "For the labor movement this was a Rubicon: from then until the very end of the twentieth century its basic stance was anti-immigrant, and although most of its leaders and its academic apologists claim that the opposition was based completely on economic grounds, racism was a major factor."¹⁵ This would be the turning point for nativism and it would evolve into something more. From this a new form of racism would also form.

Unlike the nativists of the mid-nineteenth century, the new advocates of radical change in immigration law and policy did not have much faith in reforming immigrants, but instead demanded reform in national policy.¹⁶ This would lead to more laws that would spread to more racist's views of suppressing immigration for a lot of different nationalities. Other groups would form to make policies that would be based on a new form of racism. This form would target specific features of nationalities as well as trying to show that they would never fit in, which was far from the truth.

¹⁴ Gerber, 21.

¹⁵ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 17.

¹⁶ Gerber, 37.

There were three phases when it came to the evolution of immigration and nativists views. The first phase, anti-Catholic, was aimed at Irish Catholics and to a lesser extent German Catholic immigration and flourished from the late 1830s to the mid-1850s. The second phase, anti-Asian, much more specific, was triggered by Chinese immigration and flourished from the early 1870s until the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Finally, the third phase, anti-*all* immigrants, began in the mid-1880's, when a movement for general restriction of immigration gained popularity, and finally triumphed in the Immigration act of 1924, which dominated American immigration policy for the next forty years.¹⁷

The first phase did have an impact, but it was more of a stepping stone for the next two phases. They would inevitably change the way immigration was looked at and how it was handled. They would also be viewed from the new form of nativists viewpoints that were evolving with the 19th century. The most active pressure group was the Immigration Restriction League, founded by a group of Harvard graduates in 1894. The League's leaders caught up in what its historians have called the "Anglo-Saxon Complex," campaigned relentlessly for an immigration policy based on ethnocultural discrimination.¹⁸

This form of racism and nativism would shape the course of immigration history in America. Increasingly over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Asians of a variety of origins were barred from entrance because of race and some Europeans were excluded because of health, disability, political beliefs, criminal record, literacy, or poverty,

¹⁷ Roger Daniels, *Coming to America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 265.

¹⁸ Roger Daniels, "Immigrant Experience in the Gilded Age," in *Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America* (Landham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 93.

and finally in 1921 and 1924 restricted through quotas on the basis of national origin.¹⁹ This is where nativism would show a new side and become more about race and racists views. It is a situation that lead to many discriminating laws that would simply bar or limit anyone coming over because of how they looked or what faith they practiced.

Race has formed a principal line of fragmentation within American society, and, as such it threads its way insistently throughout the story of immigration.²⁰ Gerber shows us that nativism led to racists views because, just like the views of Africans in the United States, a lot of immigrants were seen as second-class, though not the same it did build upon it. Nativists would even try and get African Americans on their side by playing on the fears that they were getting the rights they themselves were consistently denied and they were United States citizens. While this was wrong, pitting them against each other would help their cause, so they would see it as a means to an end.

Inevitably, the issue of the New Immigration, given its timing, would to some degree bear the imprint here and there of the “findings” of scientific racism. The Reverend Josiah Strong, whose reputation as a writer was made by the success of *Our Country* (1885), wrote in 1893 that “there is now being injected into the veins of the nation on a large amount of inferior blood every day of every year.”²¹ The picture below, of Josiah Strong, gives us an image of the man who would say these words, which would resonate with so many nativists at the time. To those that believed this type of reasoning, they saw the immigrants that were coming over as an

¹⁹ Gerber, 6.

²⁰ Gerber, 3.

²¹ Roger Daniels, “Immigrant Experience in the Gilded Age,” (Landham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 23-24.

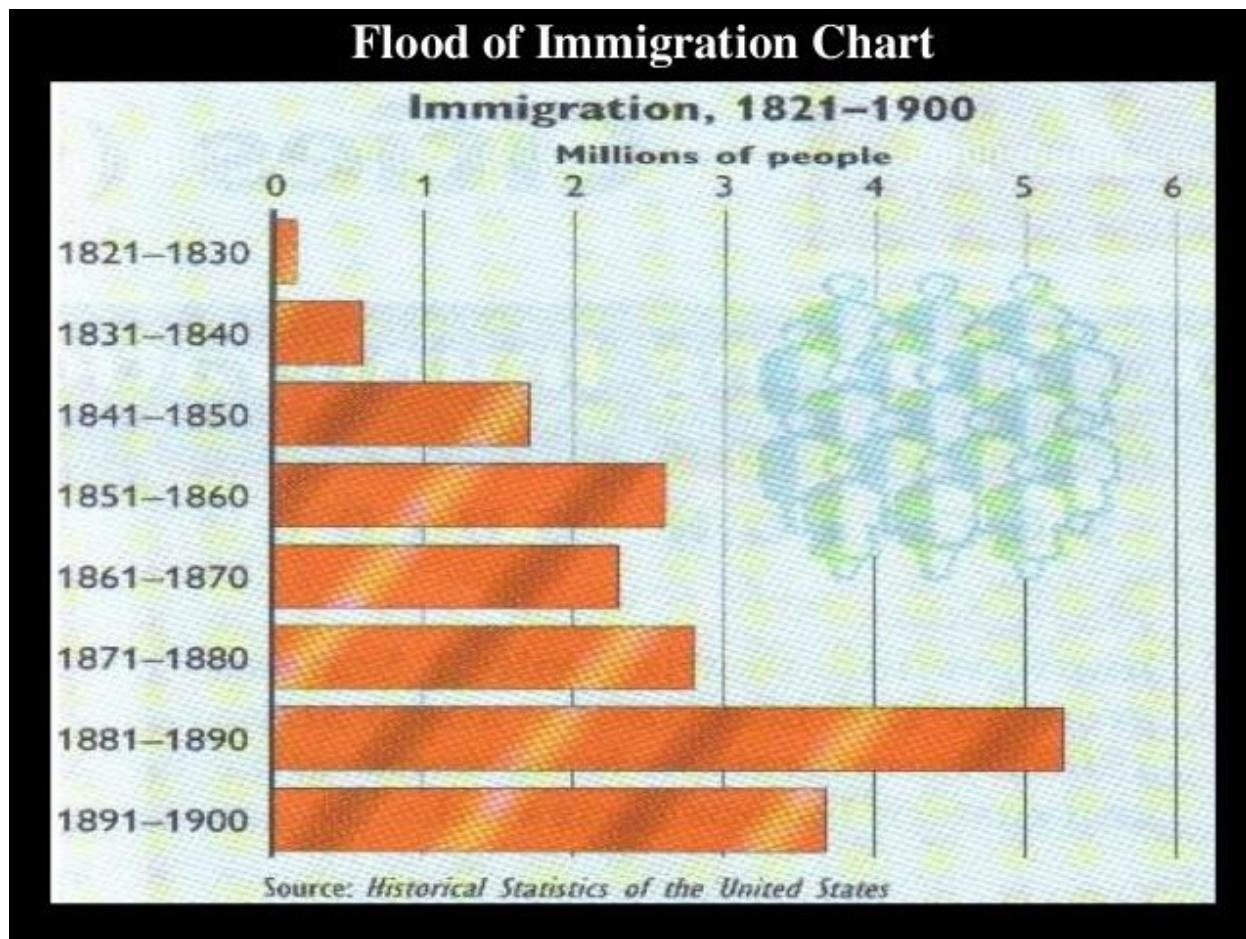
inferior people that did not deserve to be there. They also did not think co-mingling with them would be good for their people as well.



Picture 6: Josiah Strong

Gerber also states that “yet amid the vast tide of newcomers, they have been deeply divided on whether mass immigration is a benign development, or a necessary one, or an evil to be eradicated.”²² There were those that fought against the nativists for various reasons and when it came to passing laws there would be those that would fight for the rights of the Chinese and Europeans that were here and coming over. Below we can see in the chart the flow of immigration during the 19th century, as well as see the various rises and falls of immigrants coming over during different decades, depending on what was going on in the country.

²² Gerber, 4.



Picture 7: Immigration Chart

The first of these discriminatory laws that nativism and racism would get passed was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and from there would come more laws that would stay enacted for the better part of the 20th century. In the next chapter, we will see how the law came to be, what was going on to make it happen, and how it could be used to develop other laws in the 20th century that would change immigration on a whole new level. The Chinese, both living in America at the time and trying to come over, would hit a road block the likes of which they had never seen before.

Chapter 2: The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

The United States may be a melting pot of cultures, but it was not always welcoming or accepting to all nationalities. In the 1700s, the idea of immigration was started and, in the decade, or so after its founding was implemented. Congress enacted the 1790 statute specifying that naturalization was restricted to “free white persons.” The obvious intension was to bar the naturalization of blacks and indentured servants. This naturalization act, as amended, was used later to bar the immigration of Asians, but there is no evidence that Congress had Asians in mind in 1790.¹ This chapter will explain how this happened to Asians in America.

There have been many laws passed on the issue of immigration, however, until the mid-to-late 19th century they were not specific toward a race or discriminatory. Legislation passed between 1864 and 1917 barred from entering the United States: laborers who had signed contracts of employment abroad (1864, 1885) in fear of the effect on wage scales of contracts of negotiated with workers completely ignorant of American conditions; convicts and prostitutes (1875); paupers, beggars, and people with tuberculosis, epileptics, the mentally ill, the developmentally disabled, and other chronically ill or physically impaired (1882, 1903) who might become public responsibilities; and illiterate (1917).² It wasn't until the 1880s, however, that any nationality would even be barred. The first nationality to become barred, as has been written by many historians, were the Chinese.

¹ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 7.

² David A. Gerber, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.

We know that nativists and racists feelings would come to shape the immigration laws that would inevitably be passed. For the Chinese, their troubles would start after the Civil War and get tangled up with not only the racial tensions, but economic tensions between the workers and employers. During the late 19th century, employers used immigrants, like the Chinese, to work because they did not have to pay them as much or worry about overworking them. This caused friction with American born workers, who instead of blaming the employers and companies, blamed the immigrant workers.

Although there were only 43 Chinese documented in the United States before 1850, the discovery of gold in California in 1848 resulted in an influx of Chinese immigrants, more than 225,000 Chinese males arrived in the United States.³ The gold rush brought about the need for workers to dig it up, with some actually making it rich. After that, those that came over needed to find other employment. Erika Lee, a leading historian and author of immigration and Asians in America, shows us in her books that they had many obstacles in their way.

In *The Making of Asian America*, she states: “Anti-Asian racism moved across national boundaries and contributed to an emergency worldwide system of immigration.”⁴ For the Chinese, they came to America to work and most of the time go back home with enough money for their families. Some did stay and work, as well, but workers and other Americans would come together to try and get them, one: out of the country and two: barred from coming over at all. Lee helps us see that this would only be the beginning and that for the Asians in America

³ Uma Segal, *A Framework for Immigration: Asians in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 43.

⁴ Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 16.

life would only get harder. They would not take it lying down, however, and would fight for their rights, sadly it would not have the outcome they hoped for.

In the nativists imagination, Chinese immigrants were the source of strange cuisine, seductive drugs, and diabolical sexual practices, but most importantly, they were cheap labor.⁵ Here we see the evolution of nativism at its core with racism at the lead. They made an assumption about the Chinese and those feelings would be part of the catalyst for the Exclusion Act. It would bring together almost all Americans, whether one generation removed or more from immigration themselves, to oppose them being here. They would also work to get the government involved in their removal as well.

Organized opposition to Chinese immigrants came from a coalition of workers, small farmers, and shop owners, energized by the harsh depression of the mid-1870s.⁶ To them the Chinese were invaders taking money and jobs away from their families. Depressions can bring out the worst in people and during the late 19th century that is exactly what happened. Tensions would continue to arise, and it wouldn't just be from white Americans who would fight against the Chinese, other immigrants descendants and African Americans would also have their say. One such leader against the Chinese was Denis Kearney, an Irish immigrant himself.

⁵ Jackson Lear, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 113.

⁶ Otis L. Graham, *Unguarded Gates: A History of America's Immigration Crisis* (Landham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 10.



Denis Kearney

Picture 8: Denis Kearney

Denis Kearney of the California Workingman's Party, composed substantially of immigrants, mostly Irish, provided passionate, even angry leadership behind the slogan "The Chinese must go!"⁷ This would be a slogan heard all over the West, as Figure 2 expresses in its image. Kearney, as well as many other leaders like him, would try and force their views on everyone. They would also not be the only minority group to speak out against the Chinese. Nativists would also recruit African Americans to their cause as well.

⁷ Otis L. Graham, *Unguarded Gates* (Landham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 10.

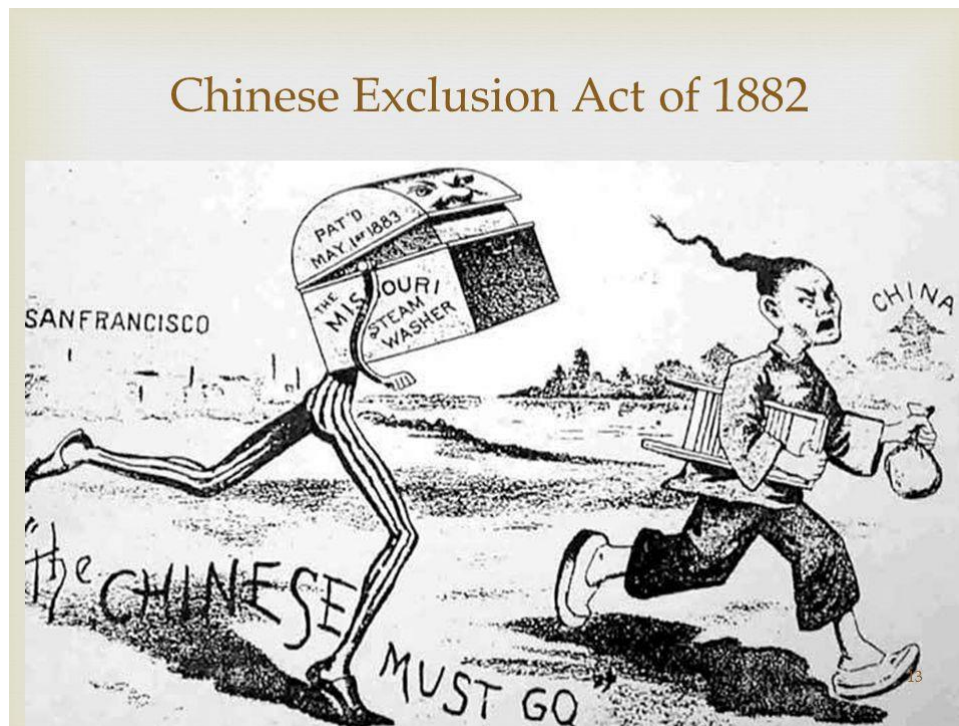


Figure 2: Cartoon Image depicting the Chinese Exclusion Act

The call for banning the Chinese gained widespread support among other racial minorities. African American newspapers, for example, denounced Chinese immigration as a threat to the precarious economic status of black workers.⁸ To them, the Chinese were taking rights away from them and it would be easy for nativists to gain their support. The idea that another group of people had the audacity to come to America and take away rights and privileges that African Americans themselves were fighting for was something they did not want to happen. They would use their news outlets to make their voices heard on this issue, much to the approval of the nativists.

⁸ Daniel A. Gerber, *American Immigration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 28.

Black newspapers often joined the condemnation of the “disease-breeding, miserly, clannish, and heathen Chinese,” in the words of the *Washington Colored American*.⁹ It’s crazy to think that those who themselves, both African Americans and other descendants of immigrants, would go after another race in that way. Their ancestors themselves went through similar nativist hatred, and in the case of African Americans were still going through it. It seems easier to go after another group of people if you think it will better yourself and those already in America.

Cultural, racial, and economic anxieties fed a visceral fear and animosity that spilled over regional boundaries and eventually led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.¹⁰ It was not just on the West coast that anti-Chinese feelings were found as well. It was found all over the country because to American’s, the Chinese workers were just there to take their jobs away from them. Employers would also use them for ways around getting their products out too. The way they would do that would only cause more problems and fuel the fire of hate in the country.

Anti-Chinese settlement erupted also on the East coast when significant numbers of Chinese laborers arrived and some were used as strikebreakers in Massachusetts and New Jersey.¹¹ Strikebreakers were used by employers as a slap in the face to those on strike trying to better their working conditions and lives. Jack Beatty really shows this in his book *Age of Betrayal* and describes how the Unions and workers fought back against tactics like this. It would not be easy for the Chinese as the decades would keep going into the direction towards barring them in the country.

⁹ Graham, *Unguarded Gates*, 11.

¹⁰ Jackson Lear, *Rebirth of a Nation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 116.

¹¹ Graham, 10.

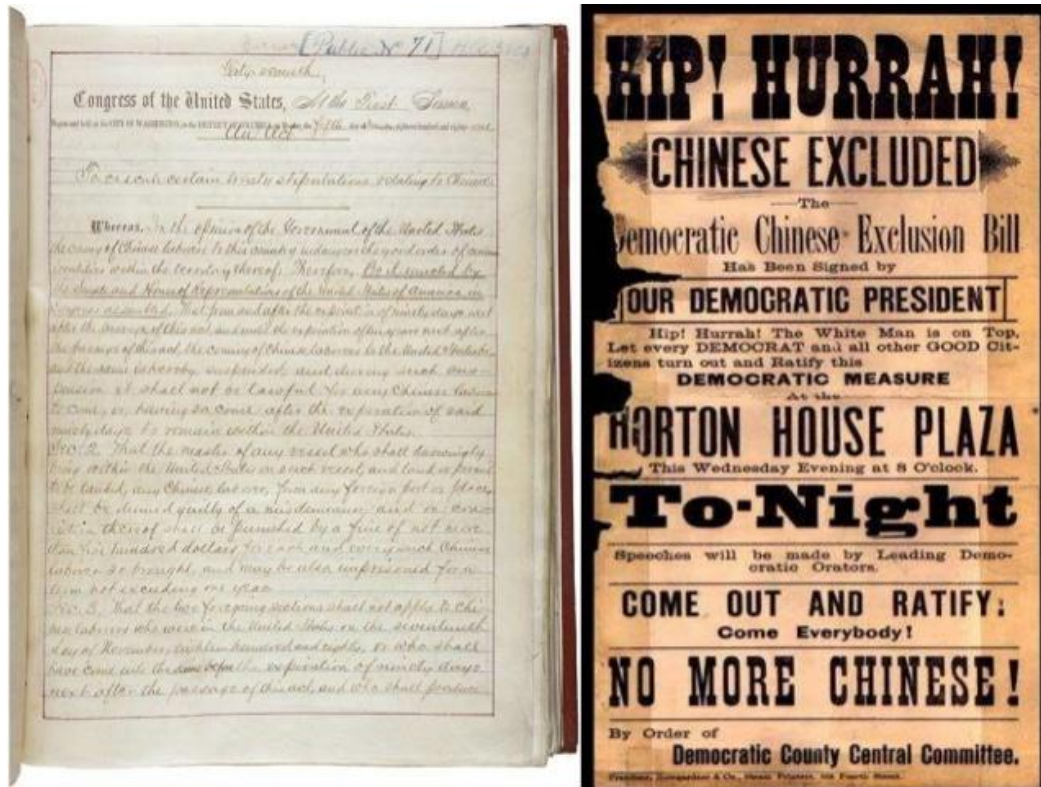
Beyond posing an economic threat to American workers, the Chinese were almost universally thought entirely unassimilable for permanent settlement.¹² This was because of racial ideologies that formed through Nativism in the late 19th century. The idea that someone could not assimilate into American society just because of their race or looks would expand from the Chinese to other races as the decades went on. It would only get worse and new laws would start to form that would show American hate in a new way.

In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was periodically renewed until made permanent in 1904.¹³ Also called the immigration Act of 1882, it would bar, at first Chinese laborers and then eventually all Chinese as the decades went on into the 20th century. The 15-section act, as can be found on the *Our Documents* website, details why they were barring the Chinese, as well as, how it would be done. On the site it states: “Whereas in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof.”¹⁴

¹² Graham, 10.

¹³ Gerber, *American Immigration*, 20.

¹⁴ “Chinese Exclusion Act (1882),” Our Documents – Chinese Exclusion Act, in *National Archives*, (April 19, 2019), www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=47.



Picture 9: Chinese Exclusion

The image above depicts a headline that celebrated the Exclusion Act. It radiated with the sentiments of the country and shows the racists values that were coming out. Again, we know that it wasn't always about racism, for those that were happy about having more jobs for the American people, it was a victory for the working class. The image also shows the act itself to express what the image was celebrating.

The United States during this time, as Daniels states, “marked the moment when the golden doorway of admission to the United States began to narrow and initiate a thirty-nine-year period of successive exclusions of certain kinds of immigrants, 1882-1921.¹⁵ It would set off a

¹⁵ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 3.

chain of events that would take decades to change and would effect so many. The Chinese were the first of many immigrants that nativists started to discriminate against. This sentiment would progressively get worse as time went on. The Chinese would have a fight on their hands, as well as the many other immigrants that would also be affected.

The experience of enforcing the Chinese exclusion laws was clearly a major influence in the formation of the immigration service's culture. Its officers were not fools: they came to understand very quickly that they faced a community conspiracy and that many of the Chinese people who came before them for admission, were attempting to commit fraud.¹⁶ The Chinese would have obstacles in their way as time went on but the law at first really only affected the Chinese laborers that came over. They were seen as the bigger threat because they were stealing jobs from Americans, or that is what those that passed the law wanted people to think to make themselves look better.

Chinese exclusion and subsequent efforts began the evolution of American immigration law and policy, as the historian Mae Ngai observes, into an engine “for massive racial engineering” that sought to use state power to define the demographic and cultural character of the nation.¹⁷ It would be the first of many racial tactics to force their views and policies on the country. It would also be the start of more laws for barring the Chinese even more throughout the late 19th century. New laws and revisions to the Exclusion act would put new obstacles in their way.

The image below shows Chinese families trying to come over during the Exclusion era. It would be a hard road for them and as the decades past would only get worse. There would be

¹⁶ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 25.

¹⁷ Gerber, 28.

restrictions put on them and they would find that many Americans did not want them there any way. To know that people felt that way must have been harder and you can see on their faces the hope that they could possibly have a better life for their families.



Picture 10: Chinese families coming to America

Altogether about 105,000 Chinese eventually applied for and received certificates so that they could not only remain in the United States but also could, once again, leave the country and return. But the 1893 added new barriers for Chinese in exempt classes, particularly those whom the immigration services came to call “treaty merchants.”¹⁸ The Chinese would continue to try and fight this. They would come together and even get lawyers to help them on their way to make it so that they could stay.

¹⁸ Daniels, 22.

The problem for enforcement was sorting out those barred from those eligible.¹⁹ The new legislation put together an Immigration service for the first time and it would be up to them on who was telling the truth. The question was how they were going to be able to do that. It would take a lot of time, questioning and even trust to do that. The main problem was that most people thought they were all liars. They would do anything to stay in the country, in their minds.

The presumption of government immigration agents was that all Chinese seeking entrance were lying about their status.²⁰ They would be seen as people who would say and do anything to stay in America, or even be allowed to enter the country legally. The agents needed to find way of weeding out the liars from those telling the truth, however even if they were telling the truth the agents did not care. Nativists were slowly getting their way and American workers were getting those people out whom they felt did not deserve to be in their country or have their rights. It's sad to think that the Chinese would have to endure such harsh treatment, but they would only be the first.

The elaborate documentation and close interrogation stood in sharp contrast to the perfunctory questioning of most Europeans seeking entrance.²¹ They were not seen or treated the same as their European counterparts for many different reasons. They did not look the same or even, in what nativists saw, seem like they could even pass for a respectable American citizen. While this was how it was for the Chinese now, eventually some Europeans would feel the effects of nativist and racists values. The Chinese were just the tip of the iceberg of the late 19th century.

¹⁹ Gerber, 29,

²⁰ Gerber, 29.

²¹ Gerber, 29.

The Chinese American community, which had successfully applied to state and federal courts for protection from various discriminatory state statutes and municipal ordinances, now appealed to the federal courts for protection from this federal law.²² The government had never truly played a role in immigration laws until this time and it was now hearing from those most affected by the laws. Although some Chinese Americans did get to stay it would only fuel the fire of the nativists. More amendments to the original law, plus the passage of stricter acts would come.

Approximately 125,000 Chinese arrived by the 1880s. Despite legal restrictions imposed after 1882, they were joined by another 55,562 arriving between 1890 and 1920.²³ This would be a catalyst upon which more restrictions would come on, but the Chinese were trying to show that they would not be stopped. While there would be restrictions, many that did get to come into the country, even after the laws got worse, and they had to show reasons why and prove it on their end. The burden of proof really fell to them in the end, but many did not get to come over. Some did lie, but even though they did come over they would not receive the same rights and privileges that they thought they might have gotten.

In 1884 the original act was amended to bar the entry of *any* Chinese person except as otherwise authorized.²⁴ This was put in place because nativists didn't want any Chinese to be allowed to stay, but the one thing the Chinese did have on their side was the 14th amendment. That one particular amendment made it so that any child born in the United States was a citizen and could not be sent away or bared from entry into America. It would also come in handy when

²² Daniels, 20.

²³ Allen Kraut, *The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921* (Arlington Heights, Virginia: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982), 2.

²⁴ Daniels, 20.

they went to court because after the loss of the 1890 census, a lot of Chinese would say they were born here and that they were recorded on that particular census.

Meanwhile, although the Chinese American population was beginning a long period of decline, anti-Chinese agitation and violence continued throughout the West. Some of the worst outrages, such as the Rock Springs, Wyoming, Massacre of 1885, followed rather than preceded the exclusion act.²⁵ Nativists and racists views were still at the heart of a lot of feelings and it caused more problems. They wanted more laws that would be implemented to stop the incoming of Chinese. They were even willing to cause chaos and feed the anger of Americans to make it happen.

They truly believed that the Chinese could not and would not be able to assimilate into the American culture. This idea, as many historians have stated, goes back to before the founding of the country and would continue to go on. The next law that would be passed would not only negate a lot of the court cases, but also complicate those who thought they were safe by doing the right thing by the law. They followed the letter of the law and now the law would take that right from them, but they would try and fight that as well.

Congress then passed the so-called Scott act, named for Representative William L. Scott of Pennsylvania, who was Grover Cleveland's campaign manager, which unilaterally cancelled the certificates although the treaty proscribing them was still in effect.²⁶ The government thought they could just say all those that received those certificates would not be valid and could then be deported and they would in the end. This would not sit well with the Chinese Americans and they would fight this law just like they did the others. They felt that their rights were being

²⁵ Daniels, 20.

²⁶ Daniels, 20.

violated and they were. It's sad to think that nativists and racists values would have such a strong hold on American laws for so long.



Picture 11: William L. Scott of Pennsylvania

Attorneys for Chinese interests challenged the Scott's act in federal courts because it was a clear violation of the 1881 treaty, but the courts upheld the government in the *Chinese Exclusion Case* and established the rule of law that in case of conflict between acts of Congress and treaties, which were each the law of the land, whichever came later should prevail.²⁷ This would be the point of a downward spiral for Chinese Americans and would make it seem like no matter how much they fought it would lead to no avail. They would continue to be knocked down and made to think they were nothing in the eyes of the law.

²⁷ Daniels, 21.

By the 1890s, the relentless augmentation of the labor force by foreign workers had shifted attitudes of the American workers from solidarity to resentment.²⁸ This would come to a head as time passed and for Chinese workers they would be discriminated against by their fellow workers. To make things harder for them new implementations would be put in place and new facilities would be created to stop the immigration of those workers on both the East and West coasts. It would play a major role in the immigration history of the United States for years to come and shape the way immigrants would see, not just America, but Americans as well.

The passage of the 1891 Immigration act and the opening the next year of the immigration station on Ellis Island marked the real beginning of an immigration service and one that grew rapidly.²⁹ This would be the entry point of countless immigrants on the East Coast, while on the West, they would come through Angel Island. These places would weed out those aloud to enter the United States, or those whom the immigration agents thought deserved to come through, for many decades to come. It would also be the only part of America that many would ever see.

In May 1892, as the original term of exclusion was about to expire, Congress passed the Geary act, which extended exclusion for another ten years and placed harsh and unprecedented restrictions upon Chinese persons living in the United States.³⁰ For the Chinese that maybe hoped for the laws to hopefully be lifted, they were just made worse and lasted longer. They would only continue to get worse from there, and not just for the Chinese. This would be

²⁸ Graham, 19.

²⁹ Daniels, 35.

³⁰ Daniels, 21.

another turning point for immigration in America and not for the better. Things would only get worse from here on out.

Newly arrived Chinese, whatever their income or status, were prevented from becoming citizens until 1943 when Wartime exigencies compelled the United States to back away from this policy.³¹ This would make life hard for those that did get to enter the country, while it was still possible. They would not be citizens, not have rights to do much, and had to live with the fear of being deported at any moment. The fact that they had to live that way at all is beyond thinking for some. While they did have some in politics and society on their side, it really did not matter in the end. The Chinese were seen as a hinderance to the American workers and Unions.

Underlying the anti-Chinese movement was a larger campaign to impose and sustain White supremacy in the West. Californians had long envisioned their state to be an Edenic, unspoiled land where free labor might thrive.³² While this was not just as west coast feeling, the fact that the anti-Chinese sentiments started there really expressed how they really felt. Erika Lee really shows us how racism and discrimination really took nativism to a new level during the Exclusion Era. The Chinese had to endure so much hate and trouble it's a wonder why they kept trying to come over. However, other factors always play a role on the experience they went through at home to make them come to America, which will be discussed later in this paper.

After the Chinese were excluded, calls to restrict or exclude other immigrants followed quickly, and the rhetoric and strategy of these later campaigns drew important lessons from the anti-Chinese movement.³³ This would take a different turn during the early 20th century and

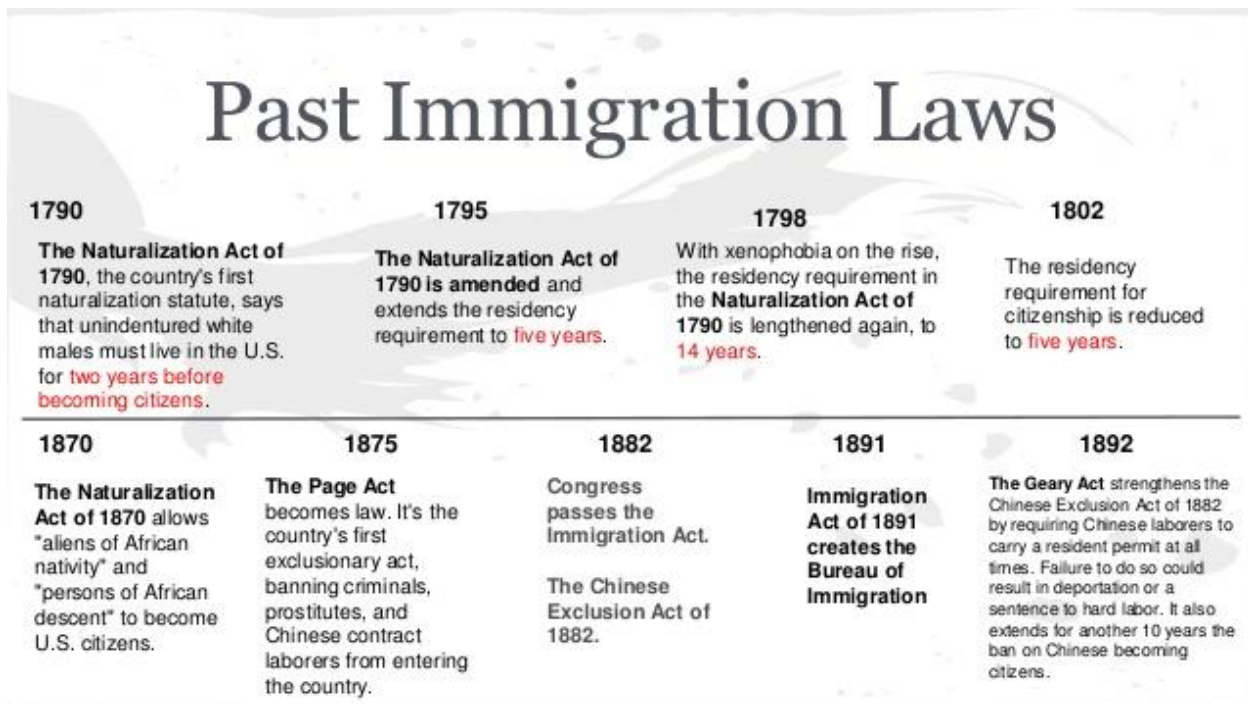
³¹ Alan Kraut, "Nativism: An American Perennial," *Center for Migration Studies*, February 8, 2016, (April 19, 2019), <http://doi.org/10.14240/cmsny028016>.

³² Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 27.

³³ Erika Lee, *At America's Gates* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 30.

show that other laws would be imposed that built upon the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Exclusion Act of 1882 would open the door for nativists to extend their agenda to any they themselves saw as unfit to be in America or were deemed “undesirable” for the American way of life.

The depiction below is an image that shows the evolution of immigration laws from the 1790s to the Exclusion era. We see the laws that were discussed and it will help us express how immigration laws would evolve from there. It also shows a timeline of immigration laws that also show how nativism played a role at first. It would only get worse from there, as we will see in the next chapter.



Picture 12: Immigration Laws

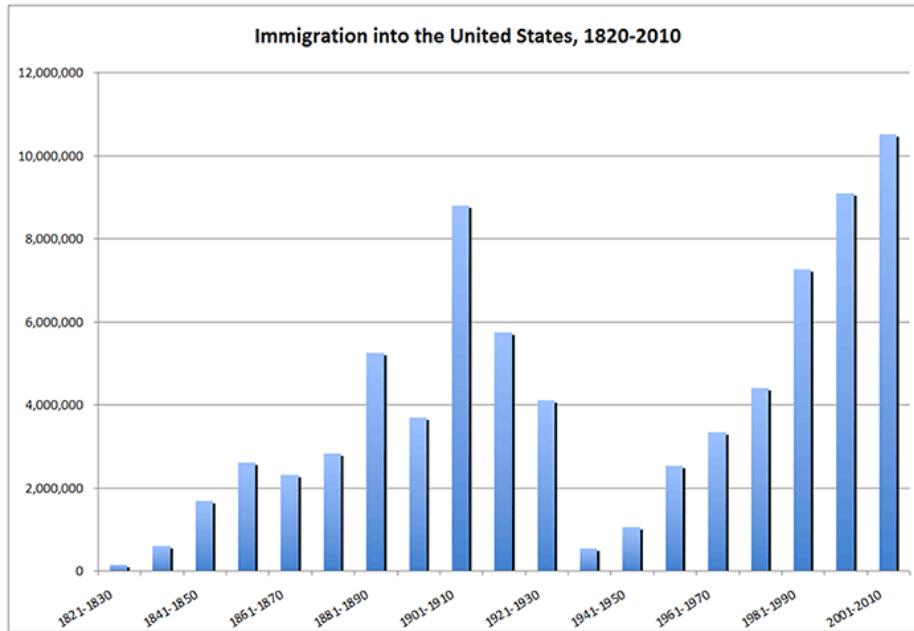
Chapter 3: New Immigration Laws of the 20th Century

Persisting alongside the recognition of the need for immigration labor has been nativism, which has manifested itself in fear and dislike of foreigners and the perception that immigration destabilizes politics, society, and culture.¹ This dislike would be intensified after the creating of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The issue would be expanded towards other immigrants, both already living in America and those trying to come over. Immigration was about to get a whole new look as the 20th century started.

Frustrated efforts to enforce Chinese exclusion joined other sources of immigration-related anxiety: growing racial consciousness among the white majority based on contemporary science and popular attitudes; increasing concerns with a resurgence of mass European immigration, about the need for more effective regulation of immigration, borders, and citizenship processes; imperial conquests; and large numbers of mobile, U.S. – bound non-white people from Asia, the Pacific, and the Caribbean.² Nativism would expand into the 20th century and they would use the basis of the exclusion acts to get their ideas passed. Political parties would also be playing a bigger role in parts of immigration as well. As the times passed and the idea that some groups of people should not be allowed entrance or that they should put limits on them, would spread throughout America.

¹ David A. Gerber, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15.

² David A. Gerber, *American Immigration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 30.



Picture 13: Immigration flow chart

The image above shows the steady growth and decrease in immigration from the late 1860's until 1918. We see patterns of spikes in immigrants coming over, then they drop during the times when laws are being passed or times of depression, which happened a lot during the late 19th century. We also see with the passing of the 1917 law a drop because of the law and what it implied, as will be discussed later.

Acknowledging the need for some sort of filter or selection process, part of the Democratic platform in 1892 was to “heartily approve all legitimate efforts to prevent the U.S. from being used as the dumping ground for the known criminals and professional paupers of Europe” but “denounce any and all attempts to restrict the immigration of the industrious and worthy.”³ They would come into problems with nativists and those that backed them, as well as

³ Otis L. Graham, *Unguarded Gates: A History of America's Immigration Crisis* (Landham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 16.

the American Unions and workers themselves. To them, the Democratic party was basically saying it was ok for those to come over and take jobs away from them and their families. As the next election approached more reforms were being tossed around by all sides because a depression would hit that would cause much more hatred towards immigration and immigrants by the American people.

Both major parties and the National People's Party (Populists) were especially adamant about immigration reform in the depression year 1896, though how the government would limit immigration was unclear.⁴ Many people would also speak out against the immigrants, especially some who would eventually be in the political spotlight themselves. Like Franklin, Woodrow Wilson would come out and speak about immigrants and his feelings about them. They would come back to haunt him in the future, but like Franklin we see that some very influential, presidential candidates say things about areas of government that shows how in their youth they believed in what they were fighting for, until it came to gaining votes.

Political science professor Thomas Woodrow Wilson, later two-term president of the United States, wrote in *A History of the American People*:

“Throughout the century men of the sturdy stocks of the north of Europe had made up the mainstream of foreign blood which was every year added to the vital force of the country, or else men of Latin-Gallic stocks of France and Northern Italy; but now there came men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meaner sort of Hungary and Poland, men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence.”⁵

⁴ Otis L. Graham, *Unguarded Gates* (Landham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 16.

⁵ Graham, *Unguarded Gates*, 24.

These sentiments were from a democratic candidate and showed that there were some in their party that did feel that way about all immigrants coming over. However, as has been stated, they did align themselves with some immigrants for votes.



Picture 14: Woodrow Wilson

Furthermore, in the East, where the Immigration question was most pressing, the Democratic party since its inception had allied itself with the foreign-born.⁶ They saw the as people wanting a better life and that there were some that deserved to come over. Mostly, they still had racists sentiments, as can be seen by Wilson's speech, and only wanted certain types of immigrants from certain places to be allowed to come over. While they did show some leniency

⁶ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 98-99.

towards immigrants, they still saw the need for some reforms to restrict them. They would have that in common with Republicans as well.

From the onset the Republican party provided the main vehicle for restrictionist sentiment. It never monopolized or committed itself wholly to the movement, but it supplied the principal leaders, most of the energy, and most of the votes.⁷ Nativists views took hold for the Republican party more so than the Democrats in the sense of restrictionist's values. However, they did have a hold on Democratic views as well in keeping out certain people because of how they were viewed. The first set of laws would start in the beginning of the 20th century that would affect all immigrants, not just Asians.

A 1906 statute regularized the previously haphazard naturalization procedures, providing that "no alien may be naturalized or admitted as a citizen of the United States who cannot speak the English language" and barred anarchists and polygamists from naturalization.⁸ Many nativists had wanted change to the naturalization laws of old and were finally getting their way. You can see how discriminatory the laws were becoming because if you could not speak English, you were not able to become a citizen. For those that were already in America that still had not learned the language, it was just another barrier that they had to overcome, but this was only the beginning.

It was relatively easy for these attitudes to shift from Chinese to other immigrants, particularly since a whole series of immigration commissioners drawn from the ranks of trade unions came to their posts with built-in prejudices against immigrants and persistently urged

⁷ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 98.

⁸ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 40.

Congress to enact further restrictions.⁹ They had biases going into their jobs and would allow them to shape the way they went into the interviews with the immigrants. This was not good for laborers in any way and would be one of the first restrictionist's acts that they would want passed. They would get this in the coming year, even if they couldn't get them completely barred like they did the Chinese.

In 1907, during a decade in which the Japanese immigrant population tripled in the mainland United States from 29,000 to 72,000, quotas, rather than a policy of exclusion, would be applied to Japanese laborers in response to protests, especially in California.¹⁰ This would benefit both parties because the restrictionist's got their quotas, while the Democrats got their laborers. The quota system was used as a way to get the best of both world's for nativists, it blocked some and limited others. However, they would have preferred to not have any immigrants at all.

The path to numerical limitation, which was ultimately embodied in the 1921 and 1924 quota law, began in 1907 with congressional establishment of the Dillingham Commission.¹¹ This commission was put in place to review the immigration issue and see what should be put in place without having any interference from the nativists. The nativists would try and get their way and with the findings the commission would suggest ideas that they would like. It would also negated certain assumptions that a lot of nativists said about immigration ports and other countries.

⁹ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 26.

¹⁰ Gerber, *American Immigration*, 31.

¹¹ Gerber, 39.

The commission listed seven methods and favored a literacy test and a ban on unskilled workers entering without families while suggesting another method of consideration – “the limitation of the number of each race [meaning nationality] arriving each year to a certain percentage of the average of that race arriving during a given period of years,” a murky statement tying immigration to the demographic aspect of the American past.¹² This would be the basis on which the quota system would evolve in subsequent laws. Many more laws would be passed as the decades went on and with it more restrictions and the evolution of nativism with racial means. It would also appease those not wanting laborers in America who would take their jobs, much to the chagrin of employers and companies.

The commission’s report endorsed limitations on immigration, recommended at its primary means to the end a literacy test, which was approved by Congress in 1917 over the veto of President Woodrow Wilson.¹³ This would have a big impact on those coming over to America and make things harder for them down the road. Figure three shows us a family of immigrants looking in and you have to wonder could they read or were the one of the many who would be sent back to their homeland. The 1917 law changed the way laws were being shaped and it would also affect more Asians as well. The wall in front of them probably would look scary if it were real at the time.

¹² Graham, 40.

¹³ Gerber, 41.

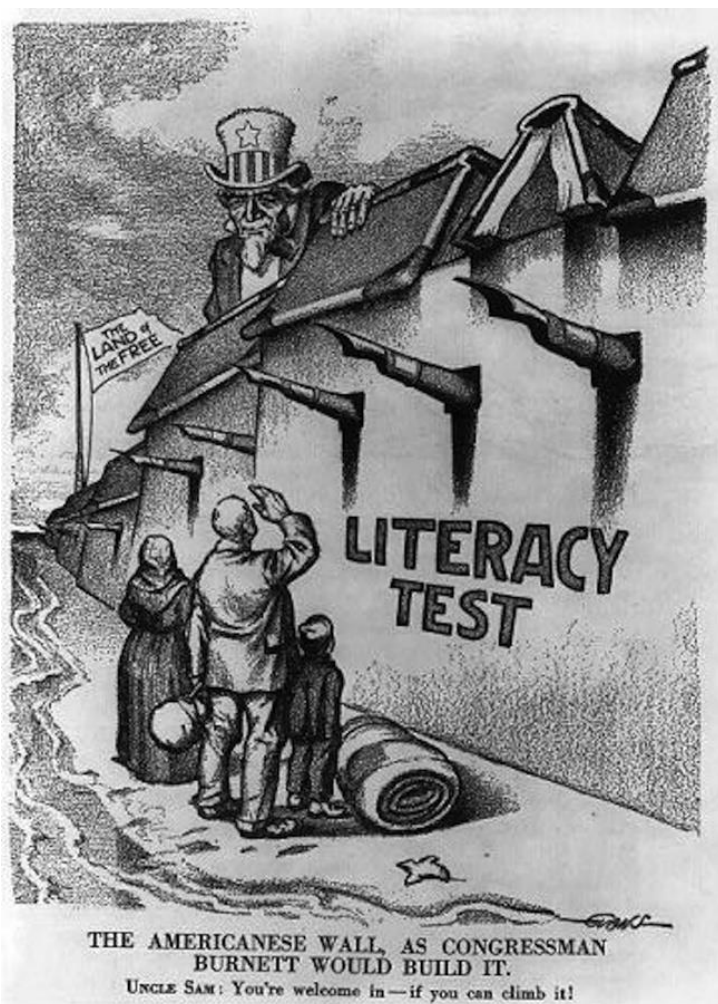


Figure 3: Cartoon Image of Immigrants being blocked from entrance

The law enacted in 1917 was the first significant general restriction of immigration ever passed. All future immigrants “over the age of sixteen years of age,” capable of reading “would have to be literate, although, in the case of family immigration, if the husband were literate the wife need not be.¹⁴ In the case of Figure three, that would have been the hope for that family, but there were many cases in which the father could not or the person over sixteen could not.

¹⁴ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 46.

They would have to go back to whatever they left in the first place. Nativists views and racists tendencies were taking root even more.

The law also created an “Asiatic barred zone.” By using degrees of latitude and longitude, South and Southeast Asians were added to the list of those denied entry, but people of the Russian Far East and Asians from Persia (Iran) West were admissible, if otherwise qualified.¹⁵ These had to do with racial tactics when it came to which people could come over and which were barred. A lot of these tactics and views had to do with ideologies that people from certain areas were deemed “undesirable” and people that could not assimilate into American society.

The 1921 act was a benchmark in immigration restriction: it marked the first time that a numerical cap had been legislated.¹⁶ This had been suggested before but now it was being implemented into law. These restrictions would be built upon from then on as the new laws of the 1920’s came into law. This decade would produce more laws than any of the decades before now in the 20th century. It would also be the first time that these caps would be based off of census records of the past.

In 1921, Congress passed an emergency immigration act, establishing a quota system by which annual immigration from any country could not exceed 3 percent in the United States in 1910.¹⁷ This was the biggest restriction so far out of all the immigration laws of the time and it would only get worse as the decade went on. Congress was catering to nativists views in a major way, as well as showing their racists ideologies through these laws. For the immigrants, it made

¹⁵ Daniels, 46.

¹⁶ Daniels, 49.

¹⁷ James P. Shenton and Kevin Kenny, “Ethnicity and Immigration,” in *The New American History: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1997), 362.

coming over harder because now on top of having to read and speak English to even be a citizen, you had to hope you made the cut of the quota.

The title of the 1921 legislation, *Emergency Quota Act*, mirrors contemporary attitudes. The law maintained the ban on Asians and imposed for three years a quota system that limited European immigration to 3 percent for individual groups based on their presence in the population revealed in the 1910 federal census. It limited entrance to 350,000 a year, 45 percent from Southern and Eastern Europe and 55 percent from Northern and Western Europe, substituting unlimited entrance with what Mae Ngai calls “hierarchy of desirability” among the Europeans instead of a complete ban.¹⁸ This goes back to the “Anglo-Saxon Complex” that many historians have discussed previously. It’s sad when we think about if you did not look a certain way, you were not allowed to come to America as much as certain other groups of people.

The next law that would be implemented took the quota system even farther than before. In 1924, the National Origins Act (or Johnson-Reed Immigration Act) banned immigration from East Asia entirely, reduced the quota system from 3 to 2 percent (about 165,000 a year, reduced to 150,000 in 1927), and pushed the base year back from 1910 to 1890.¹⁹ It marked the point when Asians would be barred even more and other immigrants from other areas that were not desirable were blocked as well each year by a cap. Sadly, this was not the end of these laws and another would come that would really take the cake.

¹⁸ Gerber, 41-43.

¹⁹ James Shenton and Kevin Kenny, “Ethnicity and Immigration,” (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1997), 362.

Still the assimilation of recent immigrants took time, and throughout the half-century following the Civil War, racial distinctions among Europeans preserved a powerful emotional charge – powerful enough to sustain a movement for immigration restriction that eventually resulted in the National Origins Act of 1924. This act created quotas for European immigrants (2 percent of the number from each country that had been in the United States in 1890) and excluded Asians altogether.²⁰ Racial ideologies can have a deep impact on how people view others and how laws are created. This form of nativism was used a lot during this time period and created a society that did not want any that did not live up to the standard of the “Anglo-Saxon Complex.”

Within a decade, almost all of these policy initiatives were implemented into law. They included a literacy test, a quota system that varied by nationality, the continued exclusion of Asians, and a panoply of new immigration rules.²¹ Benton-Cohen really puts the commissions policies and tactics into a perspective that opens up your eyes to what it set up for the laws to come. She also helps us see how it affected racial ideologies and why certain groups of people were excluded or barred as well. It does not make it right, but she does help you understand what their purpose was. Nativism was at it’s all time high during the twenties.

Beginning in 1927, immigration was to be limited to only 150,000 annually from the entire globe, exclusive of the Western Hemisphere, which was exempted from limitations in order to maintain good bilateral relations with neighbors and, via Canada and the Caribbean, with imperial Great Britain and in anticipation of the need for Mexican agricultural labor in the

²⁰ Jackson Lear, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 95.

²¹ Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Inventing the Immigration Problem: The Dillingham Commission and Its Legacy* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 1.

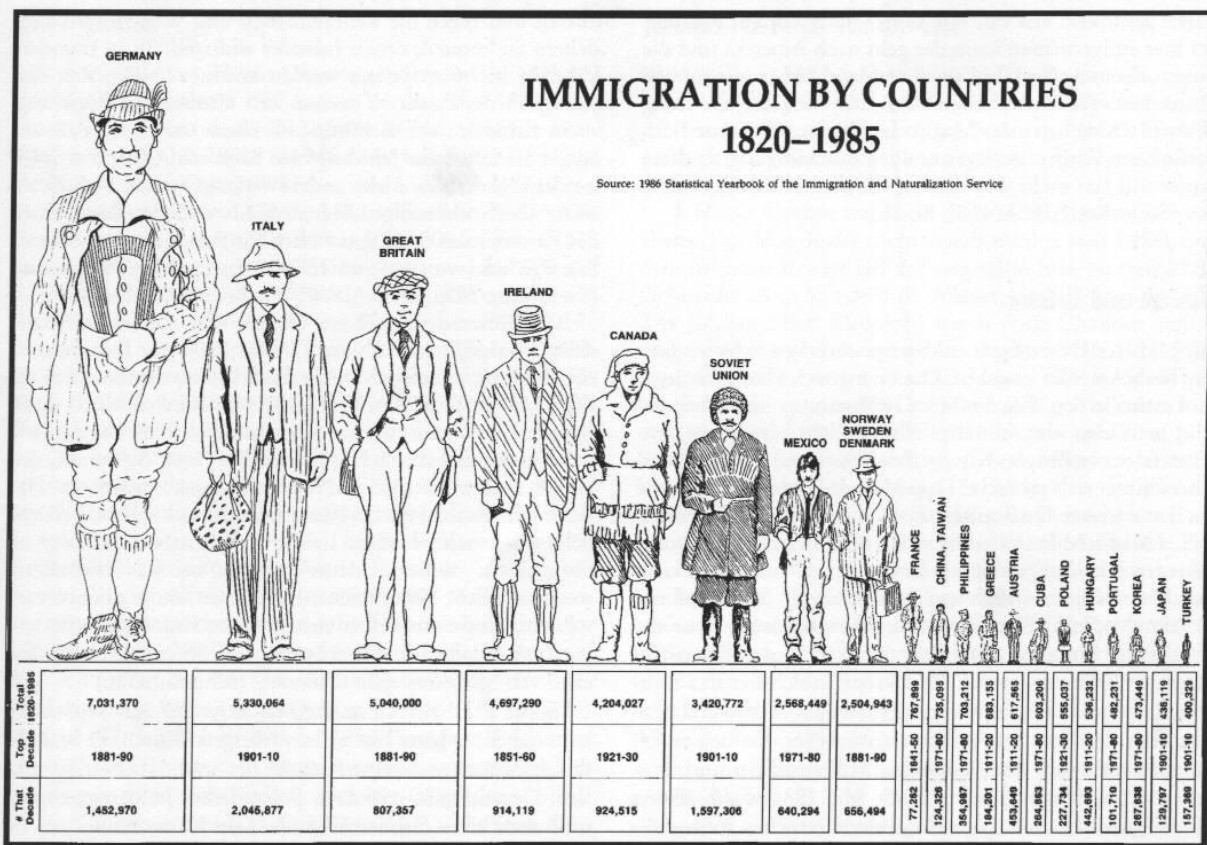
West and Southwest.²² There were always loopholes for certain groups, some of which would go through similar racial discriminations as well in the decades to come, but in the white Western Hemisphere you would always be welcome. For those not from those areas, you were limited each year and it made it very hard for people to come over as time passed in the 1920s.

The use of the 1890 Census was an intentional effort to limit the number of Southern and Eastern European eligible to enter the United States. The legislation reflected the desire of Congress to satisfy its racial apprehensions, its anti-Semitic prejudices, and its concerns about anarchists and communists entering the United States.²³ These prejudices would affect the immigrants that were not only a loud into the country, but already in this country during the eras of these laws. It would shape how they lived, expressed themselves in life and work, and how they raised their families. They would endure a lot of disrespect, discrimination, and nativists action as the 1930's and World War II came into being.

The image below really depicts the “Anglo-Saxon Complex” in terms of immigration really well. You see certain groups are coming over in more numbers than other because they were being excluded or limited in numbers based on the 1890 census. In the next chapter, we will see how the experience formed from these laws shaped immigrants in America. They would find ways to express themselves and would also work to keep true to their national origins, while trying to live in the new America formed by these laws.

²² Gerber, 43.

²³ Alan Kraut, “Nativism: An American Perennial,” *Center for Migration Studies*, February 8, 2016, (April 19, 2019), <http://doi.org/10.14240/cmsny028016>.



Picture 15: Immigration by nationality

Chapter 4: The Immigrants Experience

For the thousands of immigrants that came over to America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was not easy. Figure 4 shows various immigrants from all over the world interviewing to be a loud into the country. While some were turned away, others would make it into the country and try to live a better life. They would not have it easy, however, if they were admitted into the country. The laws would not be the only hinderance to happiness for them, they would also have to deal with various groups of nativists and others who did not feel that they should be there.



Figure 4: Immigrants coming to America during the Gilded Age

The descendants of those men and women who came over to colonize were trying to keep out any whom they deemed as unworthy to be an American. Immigration and immigrants have continually been criticized by the nativists abhorring the culturally and socially disorganizing presence of so many foreigners.¹ The new laws would come to affect so many different immigrants, from Asians to Irish and so many others, which would cause conflicts that would not only shape them, but America as well. The Gilded Age, the late 19th through the early 20th century, saw progress in many areas, but for immigration it would see the mistreatment and in some cases the barring and limiting of many nationalities.

As racism and nativism intensified among the Anglo-Saxon majority, so did minorities' sense of their Irishness, say, or their Jewishness.² They would join together and not hide from who they were. They would found organizations and unions of their own to prove that they belonged in the country. However, hatred would play a role in how they lived their lives and raised their families. They would find it hard to find work or even be treated with respect at the jobs they did find. For some they would even be discriminated against by people whose ancestors were immigrants themselves, but that saw themselves as American.

Below is an image of an ad for a maid, but they made it specific that they did not want any Irish girls to apply. It is a blatant form of racism toward a nationality of people just because they came from a certain area. Even though they would fit into the "Anglo-Saxon" image,

¹ David A Gerber, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

² Jackson Lear, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 113.

certain parts of Ireland were seen as “undesirable” for workers. It would be wrong and discriminate against workers who were trying to make a living for their families.

There would, of course, be many ways that immigrants would find helpful towards fighting the laws. The 14th amendment would be used against the immigration issue that nativists would find a hinderance to them. Gerber states: “In establishing this standard, the amendment would later create a legislation, deeply resented by nativists, in which American-born children of people’s, such as the Chinese and Japanese, whose immigration was tightly controlled or eventually banned, and who were originally barred by the 1795 law from becoming citizens, were nonetheless themselves American citizens.³ This would help many who had children in America because their children would be protected during this time.

Like the Chinese, other Asians and nationalities were looked down upon and treated harshly. Steven Erie writes a great account of the Irish- in America in his book, *Rainbow’s End: Irish-American and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985*. He follows the lives of those that came over from Ireland and would have seen images like this all over. There were also some historians that expressed their experiences as well. Erie shows us that even though it was easier for them to become citizens, due in part because they could speak English, they would still be discriminated against and do the discriminating themselves.

³ David A. Gerber, *American Immigration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 20.

J. H. JOHNSON, Song Publisher, 7 N. Tenth St., Philadelphia.

NO IRISH NEED APPLY.

Written and sung by Miss KATHLEEN O'NEIL.

WANTED.—A smart active girl to do the general housework of a large family, one who can cook, clean plates, and get up fine linen, preferred.
N. B.—No Irish need apply. *London Times Newspaper, Feb. 1862.*

I'm a simple Irish girl, and I'm looking for a place,
I've felt the grip of poverty, but sure that's no disgrace,
'Twill be long before I get one, tho' indeed it's hard I try,
For I read in each advertisement, "No Irish need apply."
Alas! for my poor country, which I never will deny,
How they insult us when they write, "No Irish need apply."

Now I wonder what's the reason that the fortune-favored few,
Should throw on us that dirty slur, and treat us as they do,
Sure they all know Paddy's heart is warm, and willing is his hand,
They rule us, yet we may not earn a living in their land,
O, to their sister country, how can they bread deny,
By sending forth this cruel line, "No Irish need apply."

Sure I did not do the like when they anchor'd on our shore,
For Irish hospitality there's no need to deplore,
And every door is open to the weary stranger still,
Pat would give his last Potato, yes, and give it with a will,
Nor whisky, which he prizes so, in any case deny,
Then wherefore do they always write, "No Irish need apply."

Now what have they against us, sure the world knows Paddy's brave,
For he's helped to fight their battles, both on land and on the wave,
At the storming of Sebastopol, and beneath an Indian sky,
Pat raised his head, for their General said, "All Irish might apply."
Do you mind Lieutenant Massy, when he raised the battle cry?
Then are they not ashamed to write, "No Irish need apply!"

Then they can't deny us genius, with "Sheridan"—"Tom Moore?"
The late lamented "Catharine Hays," and Sam Lover to the fore,—
Altho' they may laugh at our "Bulls," they cannot but admit,
That Pat is always sensible and has a ready wit,—
And if they ask for Beauty, what can beat their nice black eyes?
Then is it not a shame to write, "No Irish need apply!"

Och! the French must loudly crow to find we're slighted thus,
For they can ne'er forget the blow that was dealt by one of us,
If the Iron Duke of Wellington had never drawn his sword,
They might have had "Napoleon Sauce" with their beef, upon my word,
They think now of their hero, dead; his name will never die,
Where will they get another such if "No Irish need apply."

Ah! but now I'm in the land of the "Glorious and Free,"
And proud I am to own it, a country dear to me.
I can see by your kind faces, that you will not deny,
A place in your hearts for Kathleen, where "All Irish may apply."
Then long may the Union flourish, and ever may it be,
A pattern to the world, and the "Home of Liberty!"

J. H. JOHNSON, Stationer & Printer, 7 N. 10th St., Phila.

Picture 16: No Irish

Like the Irish, Asian Americans also were treated harshly as well. John Park, Erika Lee, Ronald Takaki, and Phillip Yang really help express their experiences and what they went through after the Exclusion era and beyond. Until after World War II, Asians were treated as peoples unfit for U.S. citizenship and as outsiders in American society. They were, as historian Ellen Wu has explained, “definitely not white” and were denied equal rights alongside African Americans and Native Americans.⁴

This would affect how they lived just like the other nationalities in America. They were not the only nationalities that also felt the hate. Germans, especially during the Second World War and the Polish would receive discriminating affects to their lives. Jonzo Bandwagoner wrote a poem that really shows the immigrant experience very well. You can see below in the poem the feelings behind it and could even put yourself in their shoes.

We traveled here when I was five.
Now I am ait, or so mum tells me.

I never thught this woud be a problem,
But mum tells me she doesnt know
How long the mounneys gonna last;
Never thought a paper dyed green woud hurt
Like an gang in the night:
It only helps if there on your side.

So they send me to the faktory from
Ait till ait, every day. There are
Other boys who wurk their too, but
I never get to talk cause the suit man,
He'll wip us good; but were all chaps

⁴ Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 7-8.

Cause we stick together behind their backs.

At night mum cries a lot, and my sis, she
 Climbs into my bed, she's so scared. I wake up
 Screaming-I had a dream the suit man
 Was chasin me-mum sings me to sleep.
 I wish papa were hear. Mum says
 If we don't get more mounney, sis might start work too.

Tooday at the faktory I forgot to watch my hands,
 The mashine came down; mum says the doc
 Won't be too much, but it's hard wurking without
 Two fingers now. We ate tooday, that was good.
 Sis joined me at the faktory, mum says she has to.

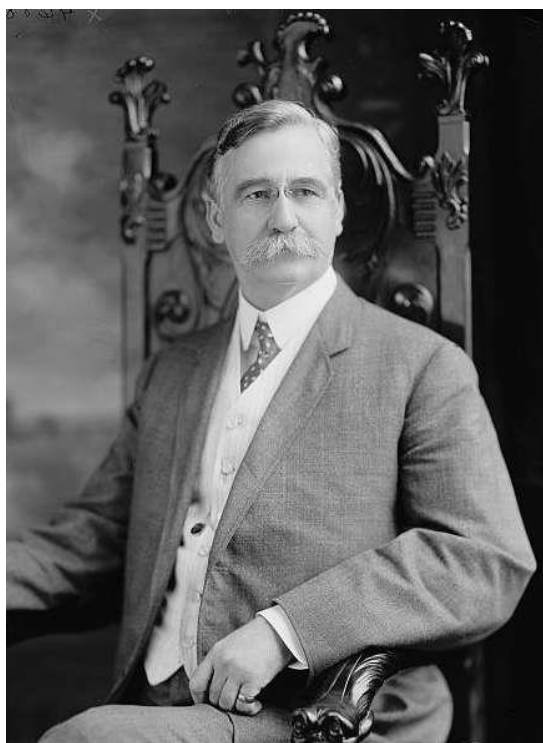
Walkin to work, we saw a poster naled to a door:
 'Oh America, America, so fine and fair your lands! '
 Sis looks me in the eye and says,
 'Maibee papa brought us to the wrong America.'

I nod my head.⁵

It is sad to think that immigrants just trying to live a better life would have to go through these times of tribulation. The Polish and many other Southern and Eastern Europeans, were seen as unfit and unskilled to come to America. They were really looked down upon because they were poor when they came over and with work and pay being scarce it would be even harder. The sister in this poem looks at the sign and asks did their dad bring them to the right America because they were told a different hopeful story to get them to come over.

⁵ Sophia White, Landrey, and Jonzo Bandwagoner, "1901 poem," from *The Journal of a Polish Immigrant, 1901*, Poemhunter.com, March 20, 2007, (April 19, 2019), www.poemhunter.com/poem/from-the-journal-of-a-polish-immigrant-1901/.

The Immigration act of 1882 marked the moment when the “Federal Government first took control of immigration.⁶ This would be the point in history when the immigrants discussed in this paper were really feeling the discriminating feelings from nativists and others. Below is an image of William P. Dillingham, head of the Dillingham Commission. His and his groups findings would make set the precedence for the immigration laws from 1917 and beyond in the 1920s. His commission would suggest certain factors be implemented, as has been discussed.



Picture 17: William P. Dillingham

Based partly on the commissioners’ on-site inspection of conditions at emigration ports in Russia, Germany, and Southern Italy, the report dispelled long held notions that European

⁶ Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Inventing the Immigration Problem: The Dillingham Commission and Its Legacy* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 16.

nations were emptying their poor houses and prisons and sending the inhabitants to the United States. It contained little criticism of the immigrants and praised their capacity for work and many sacrifices to achieve self-improvement.⁷ Those these did help some that were coming over, nativists still made it difficult for them when they got to America.

Michael McGerr author of *A Fierce Discontent*, really emphasizes how the resurgence of the Klu Klux Klan and World War I also had an impact on the immigrant experience. The KKK had a resurgence during the late 19th century and would not only go after Black Americans like before. They would also shift their efforts towards “undesirable” immigrants whom they saw as diluting the “Anglo-Saxon” blood of the American people. This really shows that not all of America was accepting to all those coming over.

They would have rallies and use imagery to gather followers to their cause. While this does not mean they were not still anti-black, they would also evolve into an anti-immigrant pattern as well. The image below gives us just a little idea of what they were fighting for when they reformed in the late 19th century. They were anti-many things and would use hate to make their ideas and fears felt by all. However, it is was not to all immigrants that they were anti, they accepted those deemed “Anglo-Saxon” who were mostly from Northern and Western Europe.

⁷ Gerber, *American Immigration*, 39-40.

The Ku Klux Klan

**Great increase
In power**



Anti-women's suffrage

Anti-bootleggers



- Anti-black
- Anti-immigrant
- Anti-Semitic
- Anti-Catholic




Picture 18: The KKK and Hate

World War I also brought fear, but it also helped united many immigrants and gave them the strength to fight. Not only does McGerr discuss this in his book by showing that the war brought the need for many workers, which the immigrants were more than willing to help with, but many other historians have showed how they did this as well. For immigrant workers especially, the wartime appeals, combined with the growing understanding that their lives and those of their families were now permanently embedded in American condition, fueled by union sentiment and determination to achieve these “American” standards, both of material life and civic status.⁸

⁸ Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (Landham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 210.

Prohibition, in part, reflected the anti-immigrant attitudes fanned by the war because of the belief that Germans and others brought a “drinking culture” to the United States.⁹ While this may seem a little extreme since America has always had a drinking culture even before it was a country of its own, the fact that many tried to make it seem like it was an immigrant problem shows the lengths they were willing to go too to get their views accepted by many. Once the war was over, however, things would start to look down again even more for immigrants because men would be coming back home and expecting things to go back to the way they were before.

The post-war reaction to the Bolshevik Revolution, increased domestic radicalism, and the disillusionment engendered by the obvious failure of certain American war aims helped push anti-immigrant sentiment to perhaps its highest peaks in American history. Added to this, there was the short but severe post-war depression: for all of 1921 recorded unemployment averaged almost 12 percent of the labor force.¹⁰ We know by the laws that would come out of the 1920’s that Nativism would really play a role in anti-immigrant feelings on top of this.

However, again we see how economics was playing a role in anti-immigrant feelings as well. This mini-depression put many out of work and those that came back from the war saw these immigrants working for cheap and were mad. They would see it as a slap in the face again to the working-class Americans that just fought for the freedoms of their country. Although the short-lived post-war depression was over, fears about job-stealing and the lowering of the standard of living by immigrants willing to work cheap were still shaping the national mood.¹¹

⁹ Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, *A Patriot’s History of the United States: From Columbus’s Great Discovery to America’s Age of Entitlement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 534.

¹⁰ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 47.

¹¹ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 49

Economics would again play a role in nativism and anti-immigration sentiment during the 1920's. To the immigrants, they were just trying to survive and did not realize again that they would be blamed for things that their employers were doing. They were not trying to steal jobs or affect the lives of Americans, they were just stuck in the middle. After the depression, as was discussed in the previous chapter, was the passing of the 1924 immigration act and the picture below shows the proposed plans, which many felt would counteract their problems that they believed the immigrants were causing.

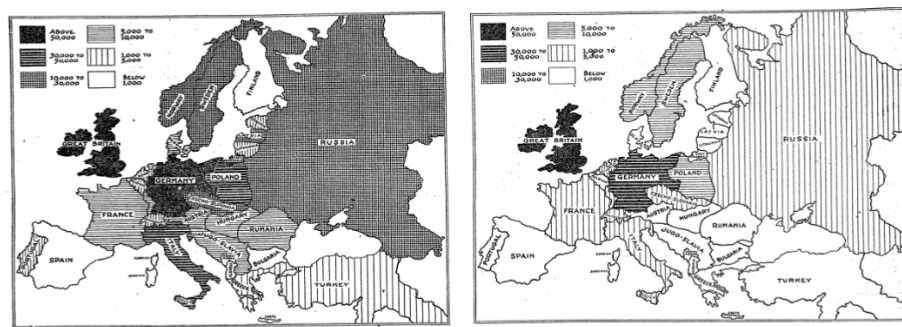
AMERICA OF THE MELTING POT COMES TO END

By DAVID A. REED, Senator From Pennsylvania.
New York Times (1923-Current file); Apr 27, 1924;
 ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2007)
 pg. XX3

AMERICA OF THE MELTING POT COMES TO END

Effects of New Immigration Legislation Described by Senate Sponsor of Bill—Chief Aim, He States, Is to Preserve Racial Type as It Exists Here Today

HOW NEW LEGISLATION WILL CHANGE THE FLOW OF IMMIGRATION FROM EUROPE TO THE UNITED STATES



FLOW UNDER THE PRESENT LAW

FLOW UNDER THE PROPOSED LAW
 (Under the House Bill 11,100 Would Be a Contour)

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Picture 19: Melting pot comes to an end

Of course, the next decade would only bring a much bigger depression and then another World War that would cause even more problems for Americans. It is blatant that the immigrants were the scape goat in all of this, however, nativists got their way with the passage of many discriminatory laws that would be built upon the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. That is a story for another paper and another time, this story was about how America may be a melting pot

of cultures, but nativists and racists views really shaped the America of an unaccepting country that only wanted certain groups to be allowed to enter their shores.

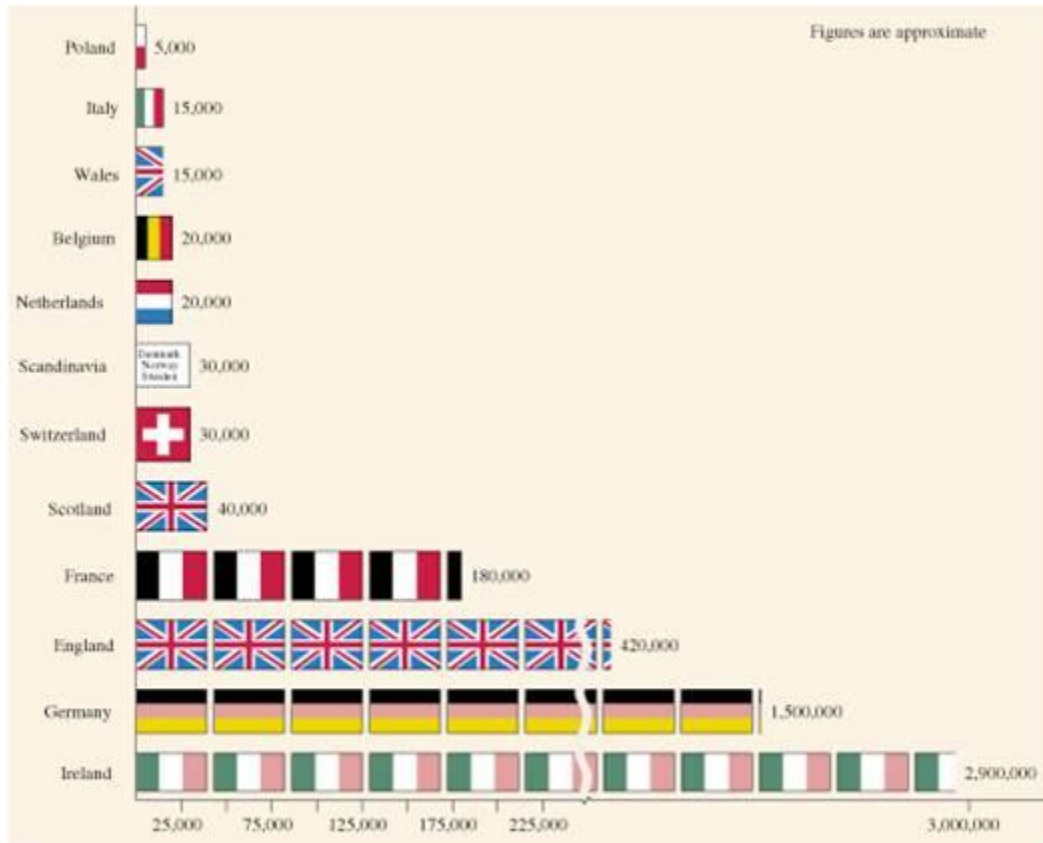


Figure 12.2° Immigration by Country of Origin, 1840–1860

Picture 20: Immigration Charts 19th century

Mass immigration has been a source of division among Americans, but the intensity of that division waxes and wanes over time.¹² There will always be a division on the issue of immigration, but the ones that really get hurt on both sides are the immigrants themselves. They will be put in the middle of arguments that makes them seen as either good or bad to society.

¹² Gerber, 4.

Politicians are just looking for votes and will say anything to get that. For Americans, they will be influenced by these factors and immigrants will be left out in the cold.

Conclusion

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 would shape the way that immigration laws would be created and how nativism and many other factors shaped them as well. They would progressively get worse due in part to many racists and discriminatory ideas that had been embedded and ingrained in Americans history. The image below gives a brief idea of nativism and how it affected immigration in America.



Picture 21: Nativism

Most Americans have long forgotten – if they ever knew – the history of the sweeps and detention of immigrants of the early decades of the last century.¹ Americans have a certain idea about the American past and immigration that is ideal, but the History of immigration is a very

¹ Peter Schrag, *Not Fit for Our Society: Immigration and Nativism in America* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2010), 2.

dark part of our history. That is why they go hand in hand because one could not have happened without the other, but with that comes hatred and racism. People have a certain idea of their country and during the late 19th and early 20th century, nativism would shape who came over and who did not.

The question, confusion, and controversy about race that began, even before the 1787 convention – at first, just about the black-white/north-south dichotomy, then about a growing multiplicity of ethnicities – have long since crept into countless national policy areas, including, for the past 150 years, questions about immigration.² These views would play a role in both main political parties, as well as other parties that would form to run against them, and would also affect government policies as well. This would be a time when the government would take control of the immigration issue and many immigrants would be barred just because of their looks and demeanors, or what the assumptions were about them.

Even as the promise of affordable land and abundant jobs lured foreigners, native-born Americans, some only a generation or two themselves from arrival or even less, sought to slam shit the door in fear of job competition, the distortion of their cultural values, challenges to their religious beliefs, or even the dilution of their gene pool by amalgamation.³ These nativists views, evolved as they were by racial ideologies and economic ideas, created a society that had assumptions about all immigrants that were coming over unless previously accepted by the “Anglo-Saxon Complex.” Not all Americans felt that way, but the majority did and they would gain control of immigration in the coming years.

² Peter Schrag, *Not Fit for Our Society* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2010), 23.

³ Alan Kraut, “Nativism: An American Perennial,” *Center for Migration Studies*, February 8, 2016, (April 19, 2019), <http://doi.org/10.14240/cmsny028016>.

The nativism of the 1870-1940 period came at a social, cultural, financial, and moral cost to society.⁴ This would be the period where Immigration laws would evolve into those filled with discriminatory ideas and racist ideologies that would hurt not only those coming over but the country as well. For the immigrants involved, they would go through times of hatred, barment, and limits based on where they were from and how they looked. Nativists had ideas of what the wrong sort was and what they felt was right for the country.

Between Chinese exclusion in 1882 and 1930, the United States had evolved from an open immigration regime to a carefully constructed system that controlled and prioritized potential entrants, based largely on racialized conceptions of acceptability.⁵ It was the first time in American history where immigration would be based on these conceptions. It had never been done that way. The start would be the Chinese being barred from entry into the country mostly started by economic ideologies.

The Chinese started to come over during the Gold Rush in the late 1840's and would come to work. Many employers and companies used them for cheap labor and as strikebreakers, which would not sit well with the American workers. Union leaders and workers would get together to force the government to take charge and help their American voters. For the Chinese, they would be stuck in the middle of a war between the two and would be the ones who got hurt in the end. They would be barred from entry, starting with the laborers and then extending from there.

⁴ Julia G. Young, "Making America 1920 Again? Nativism and US Immigration, Past and Present," in *The Journal on Migration & Human Security* 5, no. 1 (2017), *International Security & Counterterrorism Reference Center*, EBSCOhost, (April 19, 2019), 229, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/123150241700500111/>.

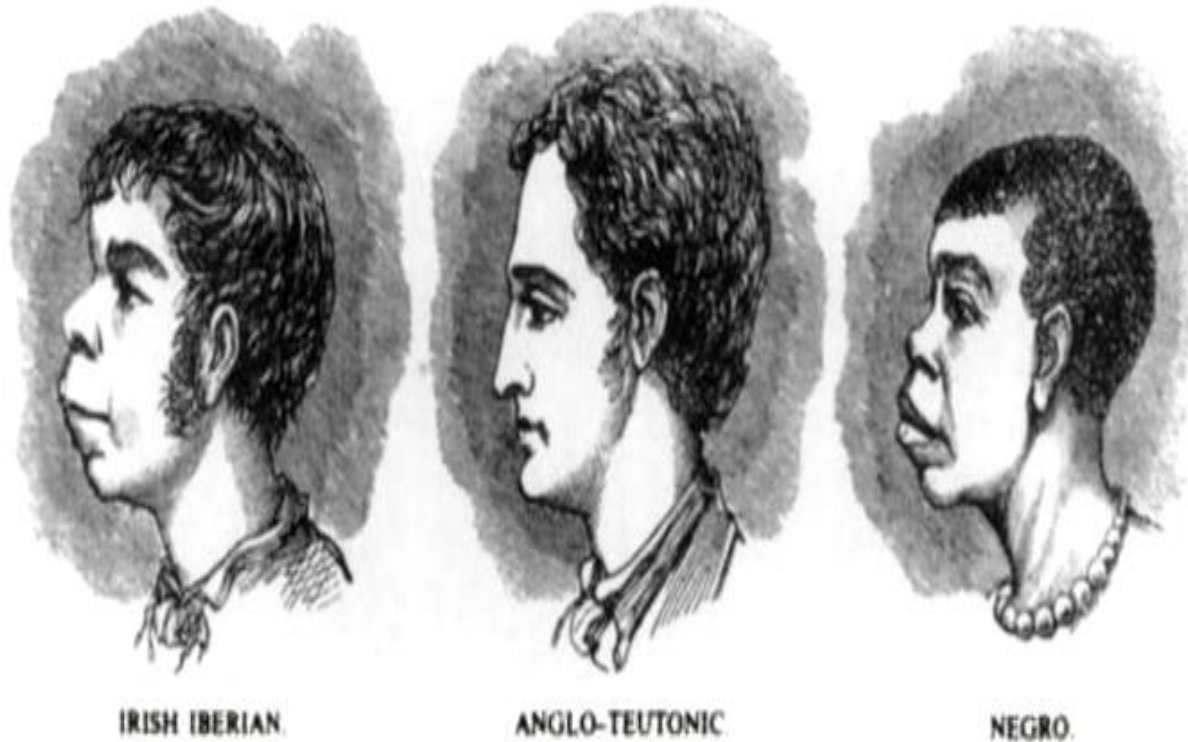
⁵ David A. Gerber, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 43.

Nativists had their views about the Chinese and would use propaganda to implement their laws. Labor leaders made analogies between existing tariff legislation and the restrictive immigration they desired; as Samuel Gompers expressed it, the country that kept out pauper-made goods should also keep out the paupers.⁶ They would expanded from Chinese laborers to other immigrants coming to America in the coming decades. It would be a turbulent period for immigrants and their families. They would see an America that was not described to them when they were being lured into coming over, as we have seen throughout this paper.

The movement to regulate and eventually restrict immigration grew slowly from the 1890s, eventually achieving its goals in the 1920s.⁷ The image below shows out racial views of what would be acceptable and what would not. They would make up their own histories about people to show that they were telling the truth. How this was made possible shows how hatred can have a major role and biases in people's minds. These and other images would affect the immigration laws to come during the 20th century.

⁶ Roger Daniels, "Immigrant Experience in the Gilded Age," in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on The Origins of Modern America* (Landham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 92.

⁷ James P. Shenton and Kevin Kenny, "Ethnicity and Immigration," in *The New American History: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1997), 361.



The Iberians are believed to have been originally an African race, who thousands of years ago spread themselves through Spain over Western Europe. Their remains are found in the barrows, or burying places, in sundry parts of these countries. The skulls are of low, prognathous type. They came to Ireland, and mixed with the natives of the South and West, who themselves are supposed to have been of low type and descendants of savages of the Stone Age, who, in consequence of isolation from the rest of the world, had never been out-competed in the healthy struggle of life, and thus made way, according to the laws of nature, for superior races.

Picture 22: Anti-Irish sentiments

Between 1903 and 1917 the United States made a succession of accretional changes in immigration administration, naturalization procedures, and immigration policy.⁸ They would put stipulations on how you could become a citizen: the main goal being that you had to speak the English language. They would also create an organization that administered who came over and

⁸ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and immigration since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 39.

whether they were deemed “American-looking enough” to be allowed entrance. A commission would also be created that would shape their new policies that would be passed.

William P. Dillingham and his group would review the immigration issue and create suggestions that they thought should be implemented. The Dillingham Commission’s unique power to create consensus around the idea of an “immigration problem” had singular and lasting impact on immigration bureaucracy and law.⁹ The first of these laws to be affected by this commission was the Immigration Act of 1917. This law would really shape the laws that would also be created in the 1920s.

The year 1917 was a turning point, with the codification of the existing legislation and the classification of thirty-three types of aliens to be denied entrance, among them “feeble-minded” persons, persons of “constitutional psychopathic inferiority,” and those who held “subversive” political views.¹⁰ People, Asians and others, would be barred from the country if they were not deemed one of the acceptable types of people that could enter the country.

These laws and others were discussed fully in Chapter three, but the statement above really shows us that racists views took nativism to a whole new level. Of course, the next decade would put more stipulations on immigrants. The immigrants that did get in would be put through the ringer to get here and when they did they were treated very harshly. The 1920s would be a decade of hate that would not only bring another depression and economic troubles that the

⁹ Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Inventing the Immigration Problem: The Dillingham Commission and Its Legacy* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 23.

¹⁰ James Shenton and Kevin Kenny, “Ethnicity and Immigration,” (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1997), 361.

immigrant workers would be blamed for, but it would also show us how the Government catered to a certain group of people.

Congress, in the twenties, put an end to the dangerous, turbulent, flood of immigrants (14 million between 1900 and 1920) by passing laws setting immigration quotas: the quotas favored Anglo-Saxons, kept out black and yellow people, limited severely the coming of Latins, Slavs, Jews. No African country could send more than 100 people; 100 was the limit for China, for Bulgaria, for Palestine; 34,007 could come from England or Northern Ireland, but only 3,485 from Italy, 51,227 from Germany, but only 124 from Lithuania, 28,567 from the Irish Free State, but only 2,248 from Russia.¹¹ We can see the changes in immigration over the decades and how the 1920's stated who could come over. Those able to come over a little more freely fit into a certain category, while others did not and were limited each year.

They would also be limited based off first the 1910 census and then that changed to the 1890 census. The nativists wanted a certain type of Anglo-Saxon people to come over so as to not dilute the blood of the American people. In a way, eugenics was taking point during this time and people were allowing it because they felt that immigrants were taking what was theirs. They also saw them as job-stealing people taking money from their families and as criminals that did not deserve to be citizens.

In the decades following World War II, even as the immigration laws and regulations were loosened and made less discriminatory, the second generation of immigration historians tended to assume that immigration would never again be a major factor in American life.¹² This would definitely not be the case. The issue of immigration will always be a part of American life

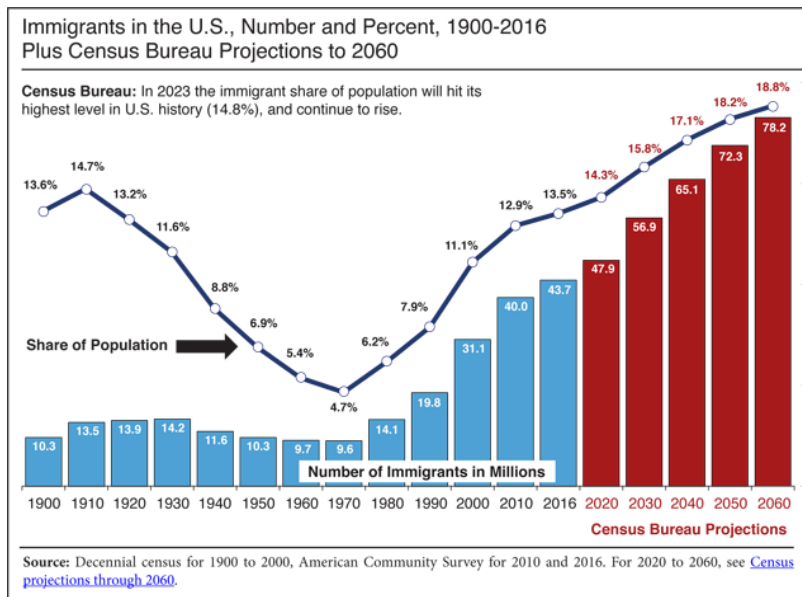
¹¹ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015), 382.

¹² Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 3-4.

and we will always have those who believe that many should not be allowed into the country.

The image below shows us immigration patterns from the 1900's to 2016. We can see that the number of immigrants continued to drop until the 1980s

We live in a country that is made up of the descendants of immigrants. It really is a melting pot of cultures, but with that comes the certain type of immigrants people, nativist wanted here, and the laws that were passed shaped that. The creation of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 would set up a chain of events that would create laws that would change the face of immigration until the mid-1960s. Asians would be barred and others would be limited by quotas. Laws became more discriminating and nativism took root at a time when it seemed immigration would continue to explode. We can see this evolution written all over our American history and it seems like it will continue on throughout the History of the United States.



Picture 23: Immigrants in the U.S. in the 20th century

As the great-great granddaughter of immigrants that came over during this turbulent time of immigration it make me feel curious about how they lived and felt during this time. I know for my German relatives during World War II was not easy and they had to lie about they nationality because of all the hate. However, I have ancestors from both parts of the lines of immigrations: some came from them acceptable areas like England and Northern Ireland while others from the unacceptable areas like Poland and Italy, and many other countries. Hopefully, one day we can learn that nativists views are not always the best way to live or create laws. We need to find new ways to handle the immigration issue and know that anyone can assimilate if given the chance.

Viewed from the perspective of the early twenty-first century, the exclusion act is clearly the pivot on which all American immigration policy turned, the hinge in which Emma Lazarus's "Golden Door" began to swing toward a closed position.¹³ Historians may have thought that immigration would never be a problem in our time, but the issue is back. The Chinese Exclusion act set off a chain of events that opened the door to laws that could and can be created to limit or bar immigrants. We are seeing it now, however, we don't know if it will create laws that were as discriminating and hateful as they once were.

This paper has hopefully showed how immigration is never going to go away and the issue will always be a problem. The issue will also always bring with it those that are for and against those coming over. One thing we can change is how America creates laws against it, so that we can be an accepting place for all nationalities. We are all humans and all bleed the same

¹³ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 19.

color, we need to try for peaceful ways to accomplish our goals that helps everyone, while also protecting those in the country as well.

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