



This family is shown in a New York City tenement in the early 1900s. Cramped, dirty, dark, and crowded, tenements spread disease and misery among inhabitants.

25.5 The Growth of Cities

Industrialization brought with it **urbanization**, or city growth. Most of the nation's new industries were located in **urban** areas. Immigrants and **rural** Americans flocked to these industrial centers looking for jobs. Chicago, for example, more than tripled its population between 1880 and 1900.

Urban Tenements As urban populations increased, demand for cheap housing exploded. To meet this demand, developers threw up cheap apartment buildings called tenements. One person described tenements as "great prison-like structures of brick, with narrow doors and windows,

cramped passages and steep, rickety stairs." By 1900, about two-thirds of New Yorkers lived in such buildings.

A poor family might occupy just one or two rooms in a tenement, usually with no heat or water. Friends or family often took in newcomers who arrived in cities without money for rent. As a result, tenement neighborhoods were some of the most densely populated areas on Earth.

Tenements were unclean and even dangerous places to live. Only a few rooms had windows to provide light and fresh air. The rest were

The Triangle Factory The Building and the Workers

Blanck and Harris located their thriving shirtwaist business on the top three floors of the ten-story Asch Building in New York City. They chose this space partly because of the morning sunlight that streamed in through the large windows. Their landlord, Joseph Asch, stated that when construction was completed in 1901, "the architects claimed my building was ahead of any other building

of its kind which had previously been constructed."

It may have been ahead of other buildings, but the Asch Building was far from perfect. It had only two staircases, even though the city building code required three. The city had agreed to count the building's fire escape as the third staircase. But the fire escape ended at the second floor. Nor was the Asch Building well de-

signed for evacuation during an emergency. Its staircases were narrow. In addition, instead of opening outward to let people escape easily, the building's doors opened inward. Despite previous scares from several small fires in the building, Asch had not addressed any of these problems.

The Triangle Factory's workforce was made up primarily of young immigrant women. Most of these women were Italians and Jews from Eastern Europe. Often their

dark and airless. In some tenements, the only source of water was a single faucet in a courtyard. Many lacked sewer services. In such conditions, diseases such as typhoid and cholera spread quickly, killing infants and young children. Fire was another constant worry.

urbanization the growth of cities

Cities Expand Upward As cities expanded, urban land costs shot up. In New York, land that had sold for \$80 in 1804 was selling for \$8,000 by 1880. Such prices inspired builders to construct more building space on less land by expanding upward. Using lightweight steel beams to support walls and ceilings, builders constructed skyscrapers that rose ten or more stories into the air. Electric elevators whisked people and freight effortlessly from floor to floor.

Businesspeople rented space in city skyscrapers for their offices and factories. Factory owners preferred the top floors. Rents were cheaper higher up, and the natural light was better, saving owners money on electric lighting. The cost of insurance was low as well because steel buildings were thought to be fireproof. By the early 1900s, more than half of New York City's workers labored above the seventh floor.

City Excitement For all their problems, cities were also exciting places to live. Stores were filled with products never seen by people who had grown up on farms. City dwellers enjoyed all sorts of entertainment, from operas and art museums to dance halls and sporting events. When writer Hamlin Garland came to Chicago with his brother, he found that "Everything interested us . . . Nothing was commonplace; nothing was ugly to us."

jobs provided their family's only source of income. Even if these workers had been aware of the building's safety problems, they would have hesitated to demand improvements for fear of being fired.

Like most factory workers, Triangle employees could afford housing only in crowded slums. "I lived in a two-room tenement with my mother and two sisters and the bedroom had no windows," recalled one employee. "There was nothing to look forward to."



The workers at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory lived in tenements like this one. They were not paid enough to afford better housing.