

New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865-1905

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New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865-1905 provides a fascinating look at one of the most crucial chapters in U.S. history. Rejecting the stereotype of a "Gilded Age" dominated by "robber barons," author Rebecca Edwards invites us to look more closely at the period when the United States became a modern industrial nation and asserted its place as a leader on the world stage. Employing a concise, engaging narrative, Edwards recounts the contradictions of the era, including stories of tragedy and injustice alongside tales of humor, endurance, and triumph. She offers a balanced perspective that considers a number of different viewpoints, including those of native-born Anglos, Native Americans, African Americans, and an array of Asian, Mexican, and European immigrants. Beginning with Emancipation and ending with the first deployment of U.S. troops overseas, New Spirits traces the roots of today's diverse and conflicted nation. Organized around major themes, the text consists of three parts. Opening with the legacies of the Civil War, Part I focuses on the era's political and economic transformations. Part II explores upheavals in family life, scientific thought, and religious faith. Part III follows the depression of the 1890s and its aftermath. The book reveals a world of hopeful immigrants and striving professionals; generations in conflict with one another; a new West and South; and religious, political, intellectual, and sexual experimentation. Offering a fresh, sweeping narrative, New Spirits is ideal for readers seeking an introduction to this critical epoch, and for undergraduate and graduate courses on the Gilded Age, the Progressive Era, and 20th-century U.S. history.

Rebecca Edwards is at Vassar College.

"Rebecca Edwards' analysis reveals the complex dichotomy of angst and optimism that filled the decades from 1865 to 1905. This is not the romanticized story of a more innocent time. Instead, New Spirits uncovers a complex period of economic, political, and cultural diversity that mapped the main pathways to the contemporary United States in a global context."--Kriste Lindenmeyer, University of Maryland-Baltimore County

"Finally, we have a fresh historical interpretation of the most neglected half-century in American history. Edwards has done the seemingly impossible--written a book that keeps a superb balance between the material, regional, political, religious, ethnic, and literary sides of the story; purveys key facts in a highly readable way; never bogs down in abstraction; and, at moments, is humorous to boot. Not only is she sensitive to class, cultural, racial, and gender diversity both in her text's scope and tone, she also sounds themes whose continuity with the present any reader can easily discern. This book should have the classic staying power and meet the same needs of that favorite text of an earlier generation, Robert Wiebe's *The Search for Order*."-- Louise W. Knight, author of *Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy*

Other Books

Twentieth-Century Multiplicity. The book describes the ways in which American thinkers and artists in the first two decades of the twentieth century challenged notions that a single principle explained all relevant phenomena, opting instead for a pluralistic world in which many truths, goods, and beauties coexisted. It argues that the bracketing of the

idea that all knowledge was integrated allowed for a new appreciation of the importance of context and contingency.

Modern painting and sculpture gets its due from Matthew Baigell, *A Concise History of American Painting and Sculpture* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), Richard Brettell, *Modern Art, 1851-1929: Capitalism and Representation* (Oxford: Oxford ..."