o Prices fell as farmers tried to sell produce
  o 1921 alone – most farm prices fell by 50%
  o 100s of rural banks collapsed
    ▪ 5x as many farm bankruptcies in 1920s as in 1900s and 1910s
• Not all farmers affected
  o Rich Americans wanted fresh fruit and veg throughout year
    ▪ Shipments of lettuce to cities rose from 14,000 crates (1920) to 52,000 (1928)
  o For most farmers 1920s were time of hardship
• Serious issue – ½ all Americans lived in rural areas
  o Most worked on farms or in businesses that sold goods to farmers
  o Problems in farming affected over 60 million
• 6 million rural Americans, mainly farm labourers forced off land in 1920s
  o Many were unskilled workers who migrated to cities where there was little demand for their labour
  o African Americans particularly badly hit
    ▪ Had always done least skilled jobs in rural areas
    ▪ As they lost jobs on farms – ¾ of a million of them became unemployed

Did all Americans benefit from the boom?

• Workers in older industries did not benefit – coal, leather, textiles
  o Coal suffered from competition from new industries like oil and electricity
  o Leather and textiles were protected from foreign competition
    ▪ Not from domestic competition
    ▪ Suffered from development of new man-made materials
    ▪ Struggled to compete with cheap labour in southern states
  o Even if workers in these industries got pay rise, wages didn’t increase on same scale as company profits or dividends paid to shareholders.
• 1928 – strike in coal industry in North Carolina
  o Male workers only paid $18 and women $9 for 70hr week
    ▪ $48 per week was considered minimum for decent life
      ▪ Majority of US wages remained below that figure
      ▪ Estimated 42% of US lived below poverty line

AA = African American
Many bought smaller items on credit – e.g. phonographs and radios

- Chicago became centre of growing record industry specialising in Polish and Italian records for immigrant communities

- Poor whites didn’t benefit much from new chain stores which had revolutionised shopping in 20s
  - Stores sold same standard goods all across country
  - But served mostly middle classes
  - Nearly all were in middle class districts
  - Poorer white industrial workers preferred to shop at local grocer’s where owner was more flexible and gave them credit, even though they could save money in chain stores

- Poor did not join movie craze
  - 100s of cinemas in Chicago – 4 performances per day
  - Working people spend over ½ their leisure budget on movies
    - Even those receiving Mothers’ Aid Assistance (very poor) went
    - Only cost 10c or 20c
  - Cinema-going even separated rich and poor
    - They went to local cinema as they couldn’t afford $1 admission and bus fare to more luxurious town-centre cinemas

- By 1930 – 1 radio for every 2-3 households in poorest districts of Chicago
  - Those without went to shops or neighbours to listen
  - Communal activity – most families listened to radio together

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**The USA in the Roaring Twenties**

**Growing cities**

- 1920 – for first time in US history – more Americans lived in small towns and cities than in country
  - Throughout 1920s, cities grew fast
  - People flocked from all over USA
  - Growing city with imposing skyline of skyscrapers was one of most powerful symbols of 1920s USA
o In NY – skyscrapers were built due to no more land available
o Even small cities, where land was in short supply, wanted skyscrapers to announce they were sharing in boom

• Throughout 20s – tension between rural and urban USA
  o Many in country thought traditional values, which emphasised religion and family – were under threat from growing cities
    ▪ Thought cities were full atheists, drunks and criminals
  o Certain rural states, especially south, fought a rear-guard action against ‘evil’ effects of cities throughout 20s

Entertainment

• During 1920s – entertainment industry blossomed
  o Average working week dropped from 47.4 to 44.2 hours
    ▪ People had more leisure time
  o Average wages rose by 11%
    ▪ Workers had disposable income
    ▪ A lot of spare money and time channelled into entertainment

Radio

• Almost everyone listened to radio – most household had one
  o Those who couldn’t afford outright, bought in instalments
• Choice of programs grew quickly
  o Aug 1921 – only 1 licenced station in US
  o End of 1922 – 508 stations
• By 1929 – NBC making $150 million a year

Jazz

• Radio gave greater access to new music
• Jazz became obsession amongst youth
• African Americans who moved to cities brought jazz and blues with them
  o Blues particularly popular among African Americans
  o Jazz captured imagination of both young white and African Americans
• 1920s – Jazz Age
  o New dances – Charleston

AA = African American
• Heavily involved in:
  o League of Women Voters
  o Women’s Trade Union League
  o Women’s City Club (NY)
  o NY State Democratic Party (Women’s Division)
• Work concentrated on:
  o Bringing NY Democrats together
  o Public housing for low-income workers
  o Birth control info
  o Better conditions for women workers

**Prejudice and Intolerance**
• At same time as some young Americans experienced liberation, others faced intolerance and racism
• Vast majority of US were immigrants or descendants of recent immigrants
• 1901-1910: Immigration to USA at all time high
  o Immigrants flooded in
    ▪ Particularly Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia Fleeing persecution
    ▪ People from Italy
      ▪ Fleeing poverty
    • Many Italian immigrants didn’t intend to settle in USA
      o Hoped to make money to take back to families
• US always prided itself on being a ‘melting pot’
  o Individual groups lost their ethnic identity and blended together to just become ‘Americans’
    ▪ Wasn’t always case in practice
      • In USA’s big cities – more established immigrant groups competed for best jobs and housing
        o Irish Americans, French Canadian and German Americans
        o Groups tended to look down on more recent eastern European and Italian immigrants
- Many natives who owned land were giving up the struggle to survive in their traditional way and selling up.
  - Losing their culture
  - Children were sent to special boarding schools
    - Aim of schools was to ‘assimilate’ them into white American culture
    - Involved trying to destroy native’s beliefs, traditions, dances and languages
- 1920s became turning point
  - 1924 – natives granted US citizenship and allowed to vote
  - 1928 – Merriam Report proposed widespread improvement to laws relating to natives
    - Reforms introduced under Roosevelt’s New Deal (1934)

**The Monkey Trial**

- Became focus of ill-feeling between rural and urban USA
- Most urban people in 20s would have believed Darwin’s theory of evolution
- Rural Americans – religious – mainly Protestants
  - Argued Bible said God made world in 6 says
    - Took teachings literally
  - People with this view = fundamentalists
    - Particularly strong in ‘Bible Belt’ in e.g. Tennessee
- At school, most children taught evolution
  - Fundamentalists felt this was undermining their religion
  - Seemed to be another example of USA abandoning traditional values in rush to modernise
  - Decided to roll back modern ideas
    - So in 6 states – Fundamentalists – led by William Jennings Bryan – managed to pass law banning teaching of evolution
- Biology teacher John Scopes
  - Deliberately broke law so he could be arrested and put his case against Fundamentalists
    - Best lawyers brought in for both sides
Committed at least 300 murders

- Peak of violent reign at St Valentine’s Day Massacre 1929
- Capone’s men murdered 7 of Bugsy Moran’s gang
  - Used false police car and 2 gangsters in uniform to put Moran’s men off guard

**Why was prohibition ended?**

- St Valentine’s Day was turning point
  - Papers screamed that gangsters had graduated from murder to massacre
  - Seemed prohibition (“The Noble Experiment”) had failed
- Made the USA lawless, police corrupt and gangsters rich and powerful
- When WSC followed by Depression in early 1930s – were sound economic arguments for getting rid of it
  - Legalising alcohol would create jobs
  - Raise tax revenue and free up resources set up in task of enforcing prohibition
- Democrat FDR was elected in 1932
  - Prohibition repealed in Dec 1933

**The Wall Street Crash**

- 1928 – presidential election
  - Herbert Hoover was Republican candidate
    - No doubt he would win again
      - Economy booming
  - Opponent was Irish Catholic – Al Smith
    - ‘wet’ – opposed to prohibition
    - But highly successful governor of NY
  - Hoover won – landslide victory
    - Moved into office – March 1929
    - Pointed out Americans had more bathtubs, oil furnaces, silk stockings and bank accounts than any other country
- 6 months later
    - USA entered long depression that destroyed prosperity of 20s

AA = African American