One vivid example of the expansion and change that were occurring in the United States in the late 1800s was the phenomenal growth of America's cities. Americans had been moving from the country to the city ever since the mid-eighteenth century, but never before on such a scale. The mechanization of farming lowered demands for agricultural labor while growing industries created job opportunities in urban areas. In addition, the 1880s saw the beginnings of a huge wave of immigration from Europe, with most of the new arrivals settling in cities. The result was that between 1880 and 1890 New York City's population grew by 50 percent, Chicago's by more than 100 percent, and Minneapolis-St. Paul's by 300 percent; other cities showed comparable rates of growth.

This urban explosion created an urban emergency. American cities had always suffered from crime, disease, poverty, and overcrowding, but such problems now threatened to become overwhelming. Rapidly increasing numbers both magnified existing difficulties and ensured that more people would be affected by them. It was essential to do something before cities became unlivable. In confronting these problems, American people of the late 1800s and early 1900s essentially invented the modern American city. The story was not always pretty, being attended with considerable amounts of graft, greed, corruption, inefficiency, and failure, but in the end the foundations for many of the basic features of modern city life were laid. Public mass transit, municipal water and sewage disposal systems, the grid for generating and distributing electricity, and the telephone network, among other things, became characteristic of American urban life during this period. In addition, the problems that resulted from having so many people of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, and class backgrounds living so close together created a demand for higher standards of public comfort and safety to be maintained by professional police and fire-fighting forces. And ethnic diversity and the cultural variety and interaction it generated contributed to an enhanced vitality and creativity in artistic and intellectual life.

In the following selection, David Nasaw focuses on New York City, but much of what he says about the attractions and drawbacks of urban life there can be applied to other American cities around the turn of the century.

The early twentieth-century city was among the wonders of the New World.
Concentrated within it were the marvels of the age. Electric lights made night into day. Subways, streetcars, and the elevated sped commuters through the streets. Steel-girded skyscrapers and granite railroad stations expressed its solidity and its power. Lobster palaces, vaudeville palaces, movie palaces, and department store palaces of consumption recreated in the present the mythic splendors of the past.

American cities had expanded in all directions in the decades surrounding the turn of the century: up with the skyscrapers, down into the subway tunnels, outward across the bridges and tunnels to the new streetcar suburbs. The central business districts, once crowded with warehouses but not much else, had been enlarged and subdivided into financial, government, manufacturing, warehousing, shopping, and entertainment districts, each with its army of workers.

Every morning swarms of commuters boarded their trolleys, trains, cable cars, elevateds, and subways for the ride to town. Three quarters of a million people flowed daily off the elevated into the Chicago Loop. They arrived in downtown Boston from Roxbury, West Roxbury, Dorchester, and the surrounding "streetcar suburbs." In Cincinnati, Columbus, and Pittsburgh, they took electric streetcars from the heights into the "flats" of the central city. In Manhattan, they trooped to work across the bridges, on the ferries, and by streetcar, elevated train, and subway. Theodore Dreiser described the procession from his vantage point at the Williamsburg Bridge. "Already at six and six-thirty in the morning they have begun to trickle small streams of human beings Manhattan or cityward, and by seven and seven-fifteen these streams have become sizable affairs. By seven-thirty and eight they have changed into heavy, turbulent rivers and by eight-fifteen and eight-thirty and nine they are raging torrents, no less. They overflow all the streets and avenues and every available means of conveyance. They are pouring into all available doorways, shops, factories, office-buildings - those huge affairs towering so significantly above them. Here they stay all day long, causing those great hives and their adjacent streets to flush with a softness of color not indigenous to them, and then at night, between five and six, they are going again, pouring forth over the bridges and through the subways and across the ferries and out on the trains, until the last drop of them appears to have been exuded."

Those who arrived in the central business districts came to work, but they stayed to be entertained and to shop. The city's palaces of consumption were as new, as exciting, and as spectacular as its skyscrapers and bridges. The downtown department stores, huge as factories, luxurious as the most opulent millionaire's mansions, and jammed full of goods were a relatively new phenomenon in the life of the city. Until the 1870s, there had been no real downtown shopping streets. City folk did their shopping in neighborhood stores or from itinerant peddlers. Local shops were specialized: butcher, baker, and candlestick maker had their own establishments where they produced and sold their own goods.

The extension of the streetcar lines into the suburbs and the new concentration of white-collar workers downtown provided retailers with hundreds of thousands of customers. Old-fashioned dry goods stores were expanded into department stores and then relocated and rebuilt along the busiest streetcar and subway lines to make
shopping as convenient as possible for suburban women, tourists, and downtown workers.

Visitors to the city joined the commuters and workers on the shopping streets where the department stores were located. In Manhattan, the first "Ladies' Mile" was situated along Broadway and Fifth and Sixth Avenues between Eighth and Twenty-third Streets. There was nothing like it anywhere in the world. Wanamaker's, a sixteen-story cast-iron giant, was at Eighth Street and Broadway, Hearn's was on Fourteenth Street, and Siegel-Cooper's on Sixth Avenue and Eighteenth Street with its main attraction, "The Fountain," a circular marble terrace surrounding a mammoth marble and brass statue of "The Republic" shooting jets of water, "illuminated by myriad colored lights." Across the street from the Big Store was B. Altman's, a short walk away were Stern Brothers, Lord and Taylor, Arnold Constable, Best and Company, Bonwit Teller's, W. and J. Sloane, and Macy's.

As the city moved northward so did the department stores. Macy's in 1901 broke ground on its new Herald Square store—with one million square feet of floor space. Within a decade all the other downtown stores had relocated on Fifth Avenue or close by.

In Chicago, State Street was as grand a tourist attraction as New York's Fifth Avenue. One could wander up and down the avenue for days without running out of stores to visit and windows to peer into. There was Marshall Field's with its forty acres of shopping and its forty-five plate glass windows; Carson, Pirie, Scott's in its new building designed by Louis Sullivan; Fair, Rothschild's, Siegel, Cooper and Company; the Boston Store; Mandel Brothers; and the Stevens Store—all within walking distance of one another.

Every city had its own special stores, stores which had grown up with the downtown areas and, in the beginning, helped lure customers from the outskirts: Jordan Marsh's and Filene's in Boston, the original Wanamaker's and Gimbel's in Philadelphia, Kaufmann's in Pittsburgh, Abraham and Straus in Brooklyn, Rich's in Atlanta, Neiman-Marcus in Dallas, Goldwater's in Prescott and then in Phoenix, Arizona, I. Magnin's in San Francisco, Hudson's in Detroit, and Lazarus in Columbus.

The department stores were more than containers of goods or huge indoor markets. They were living encyclopedias of abundance designed to overwhelm the consumer with the variety of items available for purchase. The department stores brought together under one roof an unimaginable collection of commodities, catalogued by department, arranged by floor. Furniture, rugs, and bedding were on the upper floors; ready-to-wear clothing and shoes for women and children on the middle floors; bargain goods and groceries in the basement. The street-level floors displayed clothing and accessories for men, who it was feared would not take the time to ride to the higher floors; and for the women, dozens and dozens of alluring, lower-priced items: cosmetics, notions, gloves, stationery, and hosiery.

What overwhelmed was not simply the variety of goods, but the variety and abundance of luxury goods, "from silk dresses and chocolate-covered candies to bicycles, cigarettes, and pink popcorn, which consumers had not produced themselves and which they did not need."
The department stores, by so artfully juxtaposing the necessary and the frivolous, redefined and intertwined needs with desires. There was so much there, at such a range of prices, it was difficult to know what to buy. Sister Carrie, recently arrived in the city from the countryside and looking for work, was directed by a policeman to "The Fair," one of Chicago's more massive and imposing stores. "Carrie passed along the busy aisles, much affected by the remarkable displays of trinkets, dress goods, stationery, and jewelry. Each separate counter was a showplace of dazzling interest and attraction. She could not help feeling the claim of each trinket and valuable upon her personally, and yet she did not stop. There was nothing there which she could not have used—nothing which she did not long to own. The dainty slippers and stockings, the delicately frilled skirts and petticoats, the laces, ribbons, hair-combs, purses, all touched her with individual desire."

One did not have to go inside to be touched by the magic of the stores. Plate-glass windows with superbly crafted displays highlighted by "the planned adoption of electrical lighting and of a new color technology, of drapery and mechanical props, of reflectors and wax mannequins, and even, occasionally of living models . . . consciously converted what had once been dull places stuffed with goods into focused show windows, 'gorgeous' little theatrical stage-sets, sculpted scenes, where single commodities might be presented in the best possible light." The banks of show windows opened up the street, extending the interior opulence of the palaces onto the sidewalks and inviting the passers-by to pause and dream of the splendors inside. Window-shopping, in essence no more than a dignified form of loafing, became a new and acceptable pastime.

If shopping brought people downtown, entertainment establishments kept them there after dark or, to be more accurate, after the sun went down. There was, in reality, no more "dark" in the theater districts. Street lighting, first by kerosene and gas, then by electric arc and incandescent lights, extended day into night. Theater marquees, billboards, and restaurants with plate glass windows revealing and highlighting the gaiety within converted dark, deserted streets into well-lit thoroughfares of fun and fantasy. Broadway, the Great White Way, illuminated for two miles between Madison and Longacre Squares, was the prototype for the all-night entertainment district, but every city had its theaters, its restaurants, its hotels, its vaudeville palaces, and motion picture shows.

Night life, once the province of lower-class characters and men who acted as if they were, had moved out from the tenderloin and vice districts into the lights of the new and expanded "Broadways." Every city had its cheap public dance halls, saloons, and whorehouses, but for those who wanted to be entertained without shame and guilt and in the company of respectable women, there were new and proper places to do it.

The vaudeville theaters were the first establishments to, quite literally, clean up their acts. Once a men-only affair, with prostitutes cruising the aisles, profanity rampant, "girly shows" on stage, and the aroma of stale beer inescapable, vaudeville had, in the 1870s and 1880s, been transformed into acceptable, wholesome entertainment for the entire family. 'Jeering, drinking, smoking, and soliciting were all but abolished by policing. Managers also clamped down on vulgar stage language and
actions, creating a strict system of censorship that outlawed the uttered 'hell' and 'damn.' Animal acts, magicians, pantomimes, and ladies who played the "concertina, banjo, and xylophone" were brought in to replace the "blue" acts that had once been standard.

Though vaudeville shows could be seen in every town, at country fairs, and at amusement parks, it was in the cities that the theaters attracted the largest number of customers. In New York City there were, by 1910, thirty-one different vaudeville houses. Chicago had twenty-two, Philadelphia thirty.

Vaudeville brought the middle classes in the thousands downtown for the show. It was not, however, the only attraction of the entertainment districts. There were also the variety theaters and the music halls, where on any given night one could see operettas, new musical comedies like *Little Johnny Jones* and *George Washington Junior*, melodramas, or Shakespeare. Arnold Bennett, on his trip to the United States in 1912, was astounded to find "nearly twice as many first-class theaters in New York as in London."

Within walking distance of the theaters were restaurants to wine, dine, and be seen in. Dining out, once the preserve of society people who could afford fancy hotel dining rooms and restaurants like Delmonico's and of working men who frequented taverns, chophouses, and rathskellers, had become an acceptable - and accessible - form of entertainment for middle-class men and women. In New York City, the dozens of new "Broadway" restaurants which opened their doors between 1899 and 1912 "helped make the life of conspicuous consumption available to a wider portion of the city and the nation."

Patrons were not only wined and dined but also treated like kings and queens on holiday. Restaurateurs created sumptuous new interior decors to bedazzle their customers with a taste of luxury. "In Murray's [on Broadway in New York City], patrons entered the main dining room through a black and gold mosaic-lined foyer. The main dining room was built to resemble the atrium of a Roman home, complete with an open court with colonnades on each side. Surrounded by trees and statues and gazing out on an ancient barge fronting a terraced fountain crowned by a classical temple rising clear to the ceiling, diners enjoyed the illusion of being in ancient Rome or at a villa in Pompeii... The classical porticos and temples provided a sense of restful magnificence, while the enormous height of the room and open space suggested the lofty opulence and power of the diner."

Entering the room was only the beginning of the treat. Eating in a lobster palace, like shopping in a department store, was an adventure, an excitement, an event to be savored. The beginning to a proper meal in hotel dining room or lobster palace was oysters (when not in season, clams could be substituted), followed by soup, hors d'oeuvres, fish, the entree, the main course (usually a roast), the game dish, and dessert and coffee.

For those who preferred to keep the good time rolling late into the night, there were cabarets and nightclubs, another early twentieth century addition to city night life. Fast dancing, once practiced only in the cheap dance halls and bawdy houses, was a major attraction in the new clubs. And when people danced, they danced - not waltzes
or two-steps - but the turkey trot and the grizzly bear to the syncopated ragtime beat of black musicians who, had they not been playing in the band, -would never have been allowed in such respectable downtown establishments.

As Lloyd Morris has noted, it was just three miles from Rector's on Broadway where twenty dollars would buy a dinner for five with two bottles of champagne, to the lower end of Orchard Street, where another restaurant "served a dinner of soup, meat stew, bread, pickles, pie, and a 'schooner' of beer for thirteen cents."

In New York City, as in Chicago, Boston, Cincinnati, Columbus, and almost every other city in the nation, the "other half" lived close by and a world away from the downtown business, shopping, and entertainment districts. H. G. Wells noticed during his visit in 1905 that there were "moments when I could have imagined there were no immigrants at all" in American cities. "One goes about the wide streets of Boston, one meets all sorts of Boston people, one visits the State House; it's all the authentic English-speaking America. Fifth Avenue, too, is America without a touch of foreign-born." And yet, Wells recognized, the America of the immigrant and the working class, though out of sight, was just around the corner, just down the street, just over the hill, "a hundred yards south of the pretty Boston Common," "a block or so east of Fifth Avenue," an elevated stop from the Loop in Chicago.

The two urban worlds did not mingle or mix. Each recognized the presence of the other, but neither went out of its way to cross over into the other's workplace or neighborhood. As Robert Shackleton noted in Chicago, the sellers and customers in the department stores were almost all "Americans." "The great foreign population of the city lives and does its shopping mainly in its own districts."

Most residents of the working-class city had no reason to travel downtown. Why leave the neighborhood where goods were cheaper and shopkeepers spoke your own language? Why go elsewhere to be entertained when you had little free time and the local streets provided all you needed in friends, family, neighbors, social clubs, saloons, and coffee houses?

Working men and women stayed behind in their own neighborhood because they were comfortable there. While the neighborhoods were not ethnically homogeneous, there were always enough "landsmen" clustered to establish and sustain churches, lodges, patriotic groups, food shops, bakers, butchers, restaurants, theaters, banks, and newspapers.

Settlement-house workers at the turn of the century and historians, more recently, who portray the working-class immigrants as helpless, hopeless, uprooted victims misread the historical record. On the downtown business, shopping, and entertainment streets the Italian, Polish, and Russian Jewish immigrants wearing dirty overalls and speaking foreign tongues might have been out of place. But in their own communities, they were at home.

The two cities, though geographically distinct, shared the same congested, polluted urban space. There were many constants in city life. No matter where you lived or worked, you were assaulted daily by the smoke, soot, and dust in the air; the noise of
clattering cobblestones, cable cars, trolleys, and the elevated; the smell of horse dung on the streets. In the working-class and immigrant residential districts, these annoyances were intensified a hundredfold. It was in the city of the "other half" that the sewers were always clogged and the streets and alleyways filled with garbage. It was here that dead horses lay for days, bloated and decaying, children poking at their eyes and putting out their hair to weave into rings. It was here that cats roamed at will through the streets, alleyways, backyards, roofs, and interior hallways, alley cats with gaping wounds, flesh hung loosely on starving bodies, wide frightened eyes, and the look, smell, and howl of starvation. It was here that tuberculosis raged and babies died of exposure or cold or heat or spoiled milk; that pushcarts, streetcars, and horse-drawn wagons fought for space and children were crushed to death in the duel.

The residents of the working-class districts lived in a variety of dwellings: multistory tenements, converted single family row houses, double-deckers, triple-deckers, wooden shacks and shanties. Wherever they lived, they were likely to live piled together, several families in space designed for one, several persons to a room.

Families made the best possible use of their limited space, rearranging their flats every evening to provide maximum sleeping room for children, relatives, and boarders. On his first evening in the New World, Marcus Ravage, future historian and author of An American in the Making, looked on in amazement as his relatives transformed their apartment into a "camp." "The sofas opened up and revealed their true character. The bureau lengthened out shamelessly, careless of its daylight pretensions. Even the washtubs, it turned out, were a miserable sham. The carved dining-room chairs arranged themselves into two rows that faced each other like dancers in a cotillion. . . . The two young ladies' room was not, I learned, a young ladies' room at all; it was a female dormitory. The sofa in the parlor alone held four sleepers, of whom I was one. We were ranged broadside, with the rocking-chairs at the foot to insure the proper length. And the floor was by no means exempt. I counted no fewer than nine male inmates in that parlor alone one night. Mrs. Segal with one baby slept on the washtubs, while the rest of the youngsters held the kitchen floor. The pretended children's room was occupied by a man and his family of four."

As the population and land values in the central cities increased, working people and the poor were forced to live in spaces that should have remained uninhabited. In Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Maryland, cities within the city were built in the alleyways. In Pittsburgh and Chicago, investigators discovered hundreds of families living below street level in cellars, basements, and dark, dreary, "cave-like" dwellings. In Chicago, where landlords had increased their profits - and the congestion - by building on every inch of land they owned, "rear tenements" and wooden shacks facing on alleyways were built in the back of long, slender lots.

Cities with massive, multistory tenements had the worst congestion. In New York City, where a higher percentage of residents lived in tenements than anywhere else in the country, the congestion inside and out was beyond belief. Theodore Dreiser, among those visitors to the Lower East Side overwhelmed by the sight, reported having seen "block after block of four-story and five-story buildings, "all painted a dull red, and nearly all . . . divided in the most unsanitary manner. Originally they were built five
rooms deep, with two flats on a floor, but now the single flats have been subdivided and
two or three, occasionally four or five, families live and toil in the space which was
originally intended for one."

Light, air, and privacy were at a premium for the working-class and immigrant
residents of the early twentieth-century cities. In the typical New York City tenement,
with fourteen rooms on each floor, only four - two in front and two in back - "received
direct light and air from the street or from the small yard at the back of the building." A
housing inspector testified that the inner kitchens and bedrooms on the lower floors of
the tenements he visited "were so dark that the lights are kept burning in the kitchen
during the daytime. The bedrooms may be used for sleeping at any time within the
twenty-four hours, as they exceed the Arctic Zone in having night 365 days in the year."?

Lack of windows meant lack of ventilation. The front and rear windows let in a
bit of air - along with the noise and stench of street and alleyway. The interior rooms
had windows, but because they opened onto airshafts and courtyards stuffed with
rotting garbage, most residents kept them permanently closed.

The flats were dark, the hallways darker. In most tenements, the only light in the
halls came from the front door when that was opened. A tenement house inspector
testified that, in his experience, "the most barbarous parts of [tenement] buildings are
the halls. A person coming in from the sunlight outside, plunges into these halls just like
a car filled with men plunges and disappears in the black mouth of a mine shaft. If he is
fortunate in not running against anybody, he stumbles along, finding his way with his
feet. . . . [H]e hurries forward as rapidly as possible and rushes out upon the roof or into
some open room, because the air is so dense and stifling [in the hallway] that he wishes
to escape quickly."

Privacy was as treasured and rare in the working-class districts as fresh air and
light. High rents forced families to economize on space and sublet rooms and parts of
rooms to boarders. City dwellers shared their flats, their rooms, even their beds and
their toilets with virtual strangers. In many tenements, the water closet was located in
the hall or the backyard, where it was used by several families and their boarders and
relatives. In Chicago, for example, a turn-of-the-century study found that only 43
percent of families had toilets in their flats, 30 percent had to use the water closet in the
yard, 10 percent had a toilet in the basement or cellar, and another 17 percent shared a
hall toilet with their neighbors on the floor.

Unventilated, overused water closets and backyard privies were bound to and
did overflow continually, seeping waste through the floorboards and into the yards. The
odor of human excrement joined that of horse dung from the streets and stables and of
garbage rotting in the airshafts, inner courtyards, streets, and alleyways.

If we were to be moved backward in time to the early twentieth-century city, we
would probably be most repelled not by the lack of privacy, or toilets, or space, air, and
light, but by this stench. Without proper ventilation, the interior halls and rooms of the
tenements retained their odors indefinitely. Inside and out, the air was not just heavy
and fetid but, at times, unbearable. Cities like Chicago, Cincinnati, and Kansas City, with
their slaughterhouses, packing plants, and streets clogged with hogs, sheep, and cattle
smelled the worst, but no city was free of what we today would consider an overpowering stench.

The residents of the central cities struggled as best they could to find a breath of air, cool, fresh, clean air. Men, women, and children herded themselves into streetcars and subways for interminable Sunday excursions to the parks and beaches, looking for grass to walk on and air to breathe. In the summertime, when the air was so heavy and hot "it was painful to draw one's breath," entire families - abandoning their last gasp at privacy - relocated on the docks, in the parks, at the stoops, the fire escapes or up on the roofs. As Mike Gold put it in Jews Without Money, "People went exploring for sleep as for a treasure." "Like rats scrambling on deck from the hold of a burning ship, that's how we poured on the roof at night to sleep. What a mélange in the starlight! Mothers, graybeards, lively young girls, exhausted sweatshop fathers, young consumptive coughers and spitters, all of us snored and groaned there side by side, on newspapers or mattresses. We slept in pants and undershirt, heaped like corpses. The city reared about us."

Light, air, and privacy were scarce commodities in the working-class districts of the cities. But to paint too grim a picture of life in the early twentieth century, to speak only of scarcity, to emphasize only poverty is to caricature the conditions of daily life for many. The city was no golden land, but it was also no desert. There was plenty mixed with the poverty, abundance interspersed with scarcity. The city was many things at the same time to the same people.

Marcus Ravage, who arrived in New York City from his native Vaslui, Rumania, at the turn of the century, tried hard to organize his perceptions of this new land. He could not resolve the contradictions. He was disappointed on his arrival, "bitterly disappointed" at the "littered streets, with the rows of pushcarts lining the sidewalks and the centers of the thoroughfares, the ill-smelling merchandise, and the deafening noise," at the congestion inside the homes, and the boarders crowded into too little space, stuffed into too few beds. (In Vaslui, he remembered, only the "very lowest of people kept roomers.") And yet, at the very same time, he was astonished at the material abundance displayed amidst the poverty. His landlady scrubbed the floor, not with sand, but with a "pretty white powder out of a metal can." "Moreover, she kept the light burning all the time we were in the kitchen, which was criminal wastefulness even if the room was a bit dark." There was "eggplant in midwinter, and tomatoes, and yellow fruit which had the shape of a cucumber and the taste of a muskmelon." There was meat in the middle of the day and "twists instead of plain rye bread, to say nothing of rice-and-raisins . . . and liver paste and black radish." And then, as if he had not seen enough such wonders in his first day in the country, the young men calling on his Cousin Rose arrived that evening "with beer in a pitcher from the corner saloon." Common people - with beer in a pitcher - at home.

The city - not just New York City, but every early twentieth-century city - overwhelmed with its abundance. There were enough goods to go around town and back again. The department stores and specialty shops got the best of the lot, but the
working-class districts, according to Harry Roskolenko, a poet and journalist who grew up on the Lower East Side, were stocked with their own "massive supplies of shoddy goods . . . leftovers from other years and seasons; things that could not be sold" elsewhere; and goods produced especially for sale to "the peddlers and the peasants and the proletarians jamming the sidewalks and gutters."

The pushcarts overflowed, the shops were littered with items for sale: umbrellas, stockings, boys' sailor suits with whistles attached, suspenders, gabardine overcoats, handkerchiefs, laces and ribbons and shoes and long underwear. There were carts filled with oranges and others loaded with bananas, herring came in barrels, milk was ladled out of forty-quart cans, potatoes dug out of fifty-pound sacks. Food, drink, and sweets could be purchased from peddlers and pushcarts, from stands, butchers, bakers, and grocers who sold it in cans, in boxes, in jars, in bottles, in packages, in bags.

Newcomers might have assumed that city markets had always displayed such variety and abundance, but many of the items now prominently displayed were as new to the city as the electric streetcars and lobster palaces. The banana, for example, among the most proletarian of fruits, had until the 1880s been almost entirely absent from the working-class shops and shopping streets. On arrival in New Orleans, "each fruit was wrapped individually in tinfoil and like a rare and precious object rushed to New York or New England, where, if it survived the journey, a single banana was worth a dollar."

Oranges were also a luxury item until the 1890s when, with the completion of the Florida East Coast Railway, they could be shipped north by rail instead of being imported from the Mediterranean.

Grapefruits were entirely new to the city. The old pear-shaped fruit, distinguished by its lack of juice, coarse rind, and expensive price tag had been redesigned by Florida growers who shipped them north in refrigerated boxcars. Between 1909 and 1920, annual consumption of the new pink fruit jumped from under a pound to over five pounds per capita.

The immigrants who arrived in American cities in the early twentieth century were astounded by the number of foods for sale and the variety of ways in which they could be purchased. Fruits, vegetables, soups, meats, even baby food, were sold fresh and in cans and tins. Propelled into the marketplace by new food companies alert to the advantages of national distribution, advertising, and brand name promotions, Campbell's soups, Heinz's fifty-seven varieties, and Libby's canned goods became part of the city's daily diet. Between 1909 and 1920, annual per capita consumption of canned fruits increased from under three pounds to over nine, canned soups from less than a third of a pound to two, and baby food from less than a tenth of a pound to over two.

The addition of fresh and canned fruits and vegetables to a diet that had once consisted of little more than bread, potatoes, crackers, and various forms of salted and preserved meats was no doubt beneficial. From a social standpoint, the availability of food in cans meant even more. Here was yet another item once exclusively the preserve of the wealthy (and of military expeditions which could survive on no other form of food) that had become part of the common folks' daily diet. The family that could now
for the first time eat peas for dinner was certainly more pleased by the new addition to its diet than it was distressed by the nutritional loss suffered in the canning process.

Of all the foods entering the diet of the working people, none were as enticing, as aristocratic, as luxurious, and as plentiful as the sweets. One by one, luxuries like refined white sugar and chocolate and homemade delights like fresh ice cream were mass-produced, distributed, and marketed in the cities. Candy consumption increased from 2.2 pounds per capita in 1880 to 5.6 in 1914 and 13.1 in 1919; ice cream from 1.5 pounds in 1909 to 7.5 in 1920. To wash it all down, there was Coca-Cola, invented as a "remedy for headaches and hangovers" by an Atlanta dentist in 1886.

The new sweets further broadened and "democratized" the urban diet. Luxuries became commonplaces available for pennies from neighborhood shops and pushcart peddlers. And yet, there remained significant differences between the diet of the downtown gentleman and the factory worker's family. Both ate sweets and vegetables and meat. But the sirloin and spring lamb served in the lobster palaces was a far cry from the meat soup "made up of leftovers and ends and bones which the butcher sold for six cents a pound instead of throwing it away." Bananas and oranges and grapefruits were, for the first time, available downtown and in the slums, but only for the few who had the money to pay for them. For the rest, they remained as inaccessible as they had been in the days before refrigerated boats and boxcars carried them north.

In the midst of plenty, poverty and hunger remained. Within sight of the carts and shops filled with enough food to feed armies, parents struggled to provide for their families. Children grew up with what actress Ruth Gordon has called "the dark brown taste of being poor." Hy Kraft, later a successful Broadway playwright, never forgot what it was like to grow up poor. "A boy stands in front of a candy store - in front, mind you. He sees a hundred varieties of sweets, but he doesn't have a penny, one cent. Or he's in the street; a vendor pushes his cart, calling 'Icacrimg, sendwich, pennyapiss.' Other kids holler up to their mamas, 'Mama, t'row me down a penny' and the mama wraps the penny in paper and 't'rows' it down. This kid doesn't have a penny - one cent. And there's no mama upstairs; she's in the back of the basement."

Poverty was not unique to the metropolis, but nowhere else did it coexist with such splendor and spectacle. As Charles Zueblin, an authority on American cities, noted in the preface to his widely read volume on American Municipal Progress, "There is poverty in the country, sordid and ugly. But city poverty is under the shadow of wealth. Luxury flaunts itself in the city."

The city was suffused with contrasts: between the electrically illuminated magnificence of the downtown shopping and entertainment districts and the grayish squalor of the slums, between the abundance of goods offered for sale on the streets and the paucity of resources available to pay for them. Poverty and plenty lived side by side, in the same city, on the same block, in the same tenement flat. The contradictions that assailed Marcus Ravage on his first day in the city were inescapable. Wise men peddled suspenders on the streets while fools lived like millionaires. People slept crowded one on top of another, but they ate meat several times a week. Families shared toilets with complete strangers, but they were able to purchase shoes, stockings,
and underwear for everyone - even for the children. It made no sense and yet it was real. It was the city.