The Progressive Era Photography Project

The Progressive Era was filled with pockets of grass-roots coalitions that mounted reform movements on the local, state and national fronts by lobbying for policies that would correct political, economic and social inequities. By allowing individuals to initiate and petition for these reforms, it expanded the democratic process for many, but it also increased the people’s dependence on the federal government to solve problems. This expansion of the government’s responsibilities along with their ability to make long-term systemic changes enabled them to extend their power during another national crisis- The Great Depression.

Photography emerged as a form of technology, communication and art during the mid-1800s. By the start of the1900’s there were thousands of photographers that captured different events, which depicted various lifestyles in the United States. Photography brings history to life; therefore it is an important part of the study of the American experience during the 19th and 20th centuries. Thousands of photographs, which are available from the Progressive Era, characterize the time by featuring reactions to the great changes that occurred in America during the late 19th century due to industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. In the last few years, many photographs have been digitized, which allows people to access them online. Over the new couple of days, we will examine photographs that exist on the Internet and analyze them for their historical significance.

Websites:

The Triangle Factory Fire:

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/>

Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/davis/photography/slideshows/slideshows.html>

Touring America: Photographs from the Detroit Publishing Company:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/touring/index.html>

Lewis W. Hine Child Labor Photographs:

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/index.html>

<http://education.eastmanhouse.org/discover/kits/kit.php?id=8>

Votes for Women: Suffrage Pictures:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/vfwhtml/vfwhome.html>

Photographs from the Chicago Daily News:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/ichihtml/cdnhome.html>

Jacob Riis:

<http://www.masters-of-photography.com/R/riis/riis_articles1.html>

Lower East Side Tenement Museum:

<http://www.tenement.org/research.html>

Photographs of the Progressive Era:

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/progress/autos/>

American Photographs: The First Century

<http://nmaa-ryder.si.edu/helios/amerphotos.html>

Photography and Social Reform:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/davis/photography/reform/progressive_era.html>

American Memory Project:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

Museum of Fine Arts:

<http://educators.mfa.org/galleries/slideshow/2268>

While you look for 5 photographs, keep in mind that the objective is to locate photographs that tell a story. Look for photographs that raise questions in your mind with regards to the premise of the picture, the people in the picture, and what the image represents.

You should save the links to your photographs by copying and pasting them onto a Microsoft Word document. You may choose to find 5 photographs and then analyze the pictures OR select and analyze photographs one at a time.

A.      Corporations and Labor: Child labor, unions, worker and consumer protection, Triangle Fire, The Jungle, etc.

B.      Urbanization and Immigration: Growth of cities, nativism, and settlement houses, etc.

C.      Women’s Rights: Birth control movement, suffragettes, changing role of women in society.

D.      Progressive Reformers: Politicians, muckrakers, crusaders.

E.       Political changes: Votes for women, government reforms, progressive political interventions.

F.       Temperance/Prohibition: Moderation or banning of alcohol.

G.      You may also select a theme of your own choosing-- consider: conservation, social welfare, tariffs, anti-trust action, youth reform, socialism.

**What you need to do:**

* Choose 5 photos that represent a theme of progressivism
* With each photo include a link to the image
* What is going on in each photo and how does it fit with your theme you selected