

Overview

Following the despair of the Great War, one of the most extravagant, prodigal, and excessive eras of American history, The Roaring Twenties, began. This era is distinguished by new ideas, behaviors, technology, and popular culture, and the clash between new and traditional views that ensued. Most notably, the invention and affordability of the automobile allowed average Americans to travel longer distances to and from work. This led to the development of suburbs. The youth began to develop a new identity from the generation of their parents, often embracing new ideas and letting go of traditional ones.

The most prominent example of the clash of traditional and new ideas was the 18th amendment to the constitution which banned the manufacture, transport, and sale of alcohol. This amendment was typically supported by the traditional rural America, but was outright violated in urban areas dominated by less traditional ideas. Illegal bars, called speakeasies, proliferated during prohibition. Organized crime also blossomed during this time as large gangs took control of the illegal alcohol trade and supplied the bars.

At this time, women began to experience greater personal freedoms. After gaining the right to vote by the 19th amendment, women held newfound political influence. The image of the flapper, a young, energetic, bold, and defiant woman took root in society and encouraged women to act independent. However, it is questionable whether the flapper image was a creation of women or of clever advertisers.

For the first time in American history, advertisers used psychology to appeal to the fears and desires of consumers. As a result, "Consumerism" became nearly synonymous with "American Economy" as spending and the GDP rose to incredible levels.