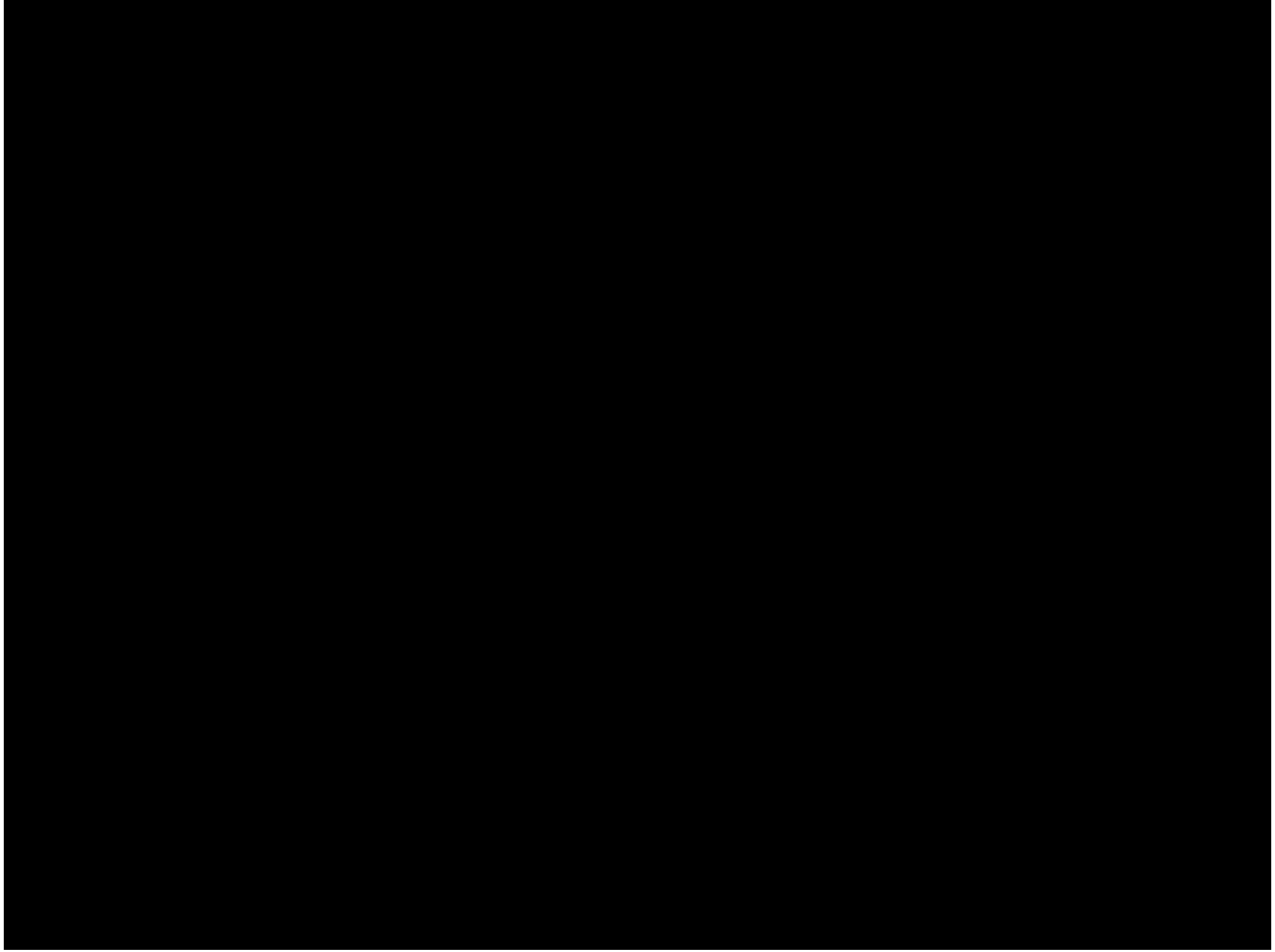


Dance Crazes of the 1920s

Charleston
Lindy Hop
Foxtrot
Jitterbug
Swing Dance

WEEK 8:
“BIRTH OF THE MODERN”--1920s

LECTURE 1:
“The Business of the American People is Business”

Quiz—Week 7—1920s

1) The 1920s was a decade marked by economic hard times and high unemployment.
T) True F) False

2) In 1920s slang, what was a “flapper”?
A) a fast car B) a movie with sound C) a liberated woman D) a jazz musician

3) Which political party dominated the federal government in the 1920s?
A) Democratic B) Republican

4) What religious movement emerged as a major force in American cultural and social life in the 1920s?
A) Fundamentalist Christianity B) Reform Judaism C) the African American church
D) Conservative Catholicism

5) What musical form found great popularity in the 1920s?
A) Ragtime B) Jazz C) Rock and Roll D) Folk music

6) The 1920s saw an outburst of African creativity in the arts and literature. What was the name given to this movement?
A) Jazz Age B) Harlem Renaissance C) Black Modernism

7) In the reading “Only Yesterday,” author Frederick Lewis Allen focuses on what about the 1920s?
A) new technologies B) rising stock market values C) changing social attitudes and behaviors of young people
D) how the women’s vote changed politics

8) The Scopes trial, the subject of the other two readings this week, was about what?
A) Birth control B) Teaching evolution in public schools C) Censorship of literature
D) Immigration restriction

Discussion Points

What is the meaning of the word “modern” and how does it apply to the 1920s?

What demographic trends shaped American life in the 1920s?

What was the state of the 1920s economy? And how did lay the foundation for modernity of the 1920s?

What were some of the key new technologies of the 1920s and how did they transform American life?

What kinds of social and cultural changes were occurring in the 1920s?

What kind of reaction did these changes trigger in much of small town and rural America?

What was the role of fundamentalist Christianity in this reaction?

How did the teaching of evolution in public schools become such a hot button issue in the 1920s?

What triggered the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan and how did it differ from its earlier manifestation in the Reconstruction era?

Can we see echoes of the 1920s in our country’s current “culture wars?”

Mod • ern

1. relating to the present or recent times as opposed to the remote past.

Mod • ern

2. a departure from traditional styles or values.

Mod • ern

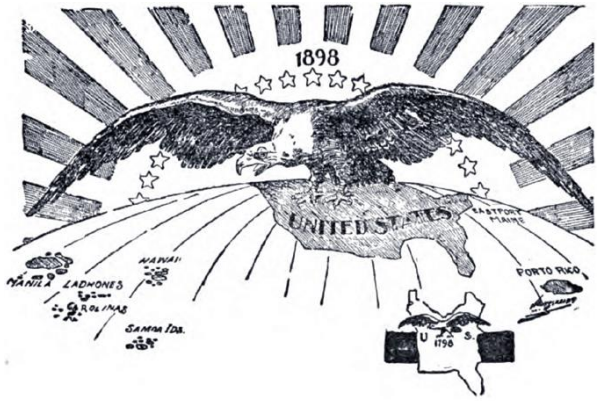
3. an embrace of the new and the up-to-date

The Early Twentieth Century and the Birth of the Modern

Progressivism (1900s and 1910s): New ideas about the role of GOVERNMENT in the economy and society; new attitudes about capitalism and how to make it work; social engineering; the use of science and expertise to improve society



Imperialism and World War I (1890s-1918): New ideas about FOREIGN POLICY an expanded role for America in the world; a new interventionism abroad; the rise of the United States as a military and, especially, as a financial and economic power

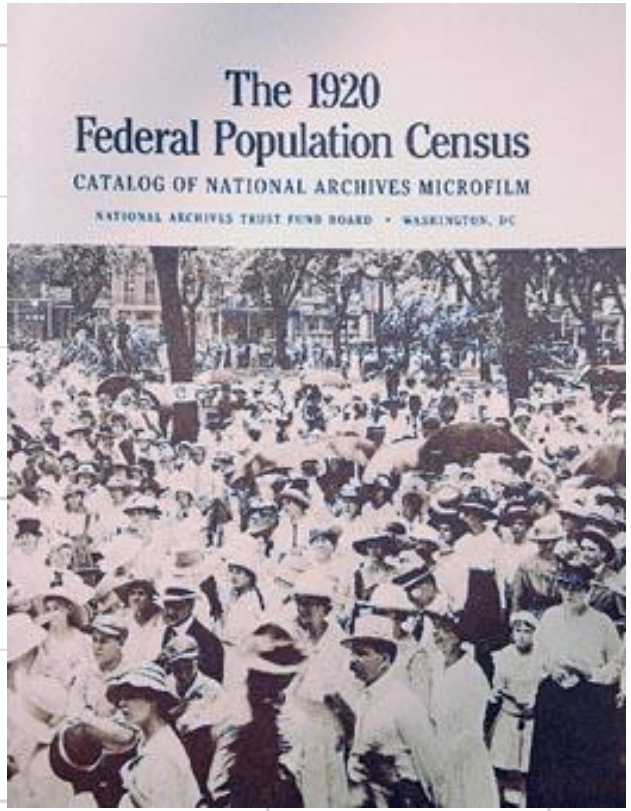


1920s: New attitudes about morality and social behavior; new ways of living in the PRIVATE SPHERE; new forms of entertainment; new patterns of living; new patterns of consumption

Ten thousand miles from tip to tip.—Philadelphia Press.



% of American workforce in agriculture, 1840-2000



70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

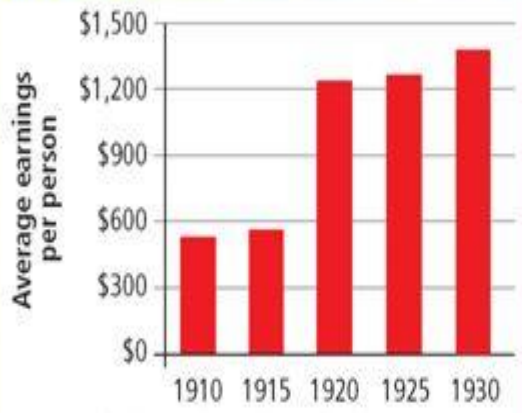
1840 '60 '80 '00 '20 '40 '60 '80 2000

Source: USDA,

Booming Economy

The 1920s were a time of rapid economic growth in the United States.

Earnings of Nonagricultural Employees, 1910–1930



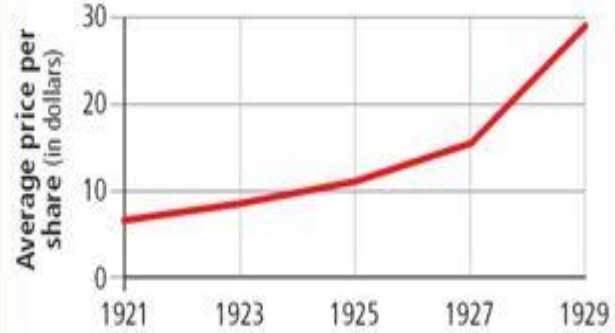
SOURCE: *Historical Statistics of the United States*

Gross Domestic Product

Year	Value of goods produced (in millions of dollars)
1921	68,355
1923	82,994
1925	87,359
1927	94,161
1929	101,444

SOURCE: *National Bureau of Economic Research*

Average Price of Selected Stocks, 1921–1929



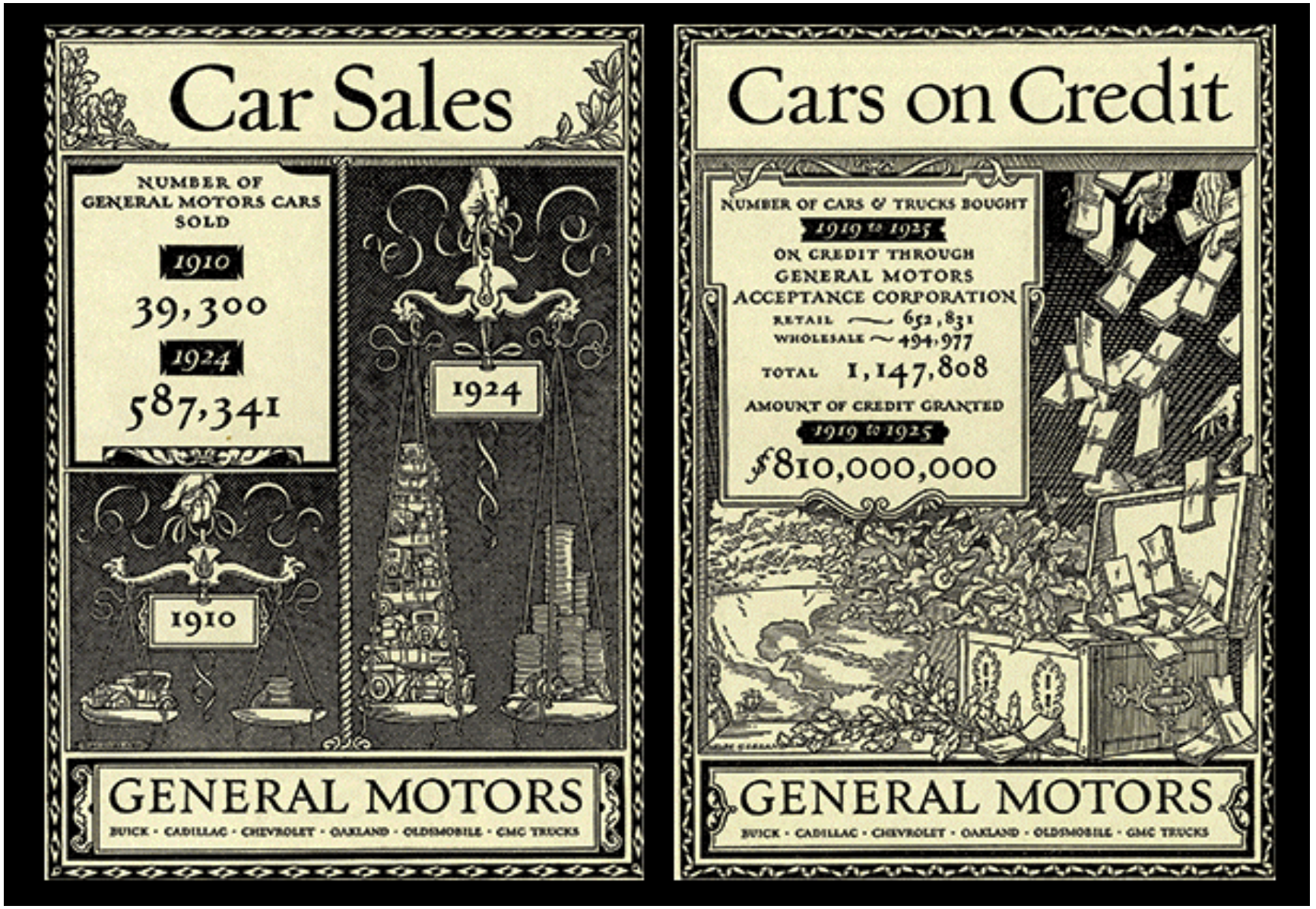
SOURCE: *Standard and Poor's*



Whittier Boulevard, 1920s

The Engine (literally) of the American economy of the 1920s

New Car Sales=26 million or one for every four persons



Buying on Credit:

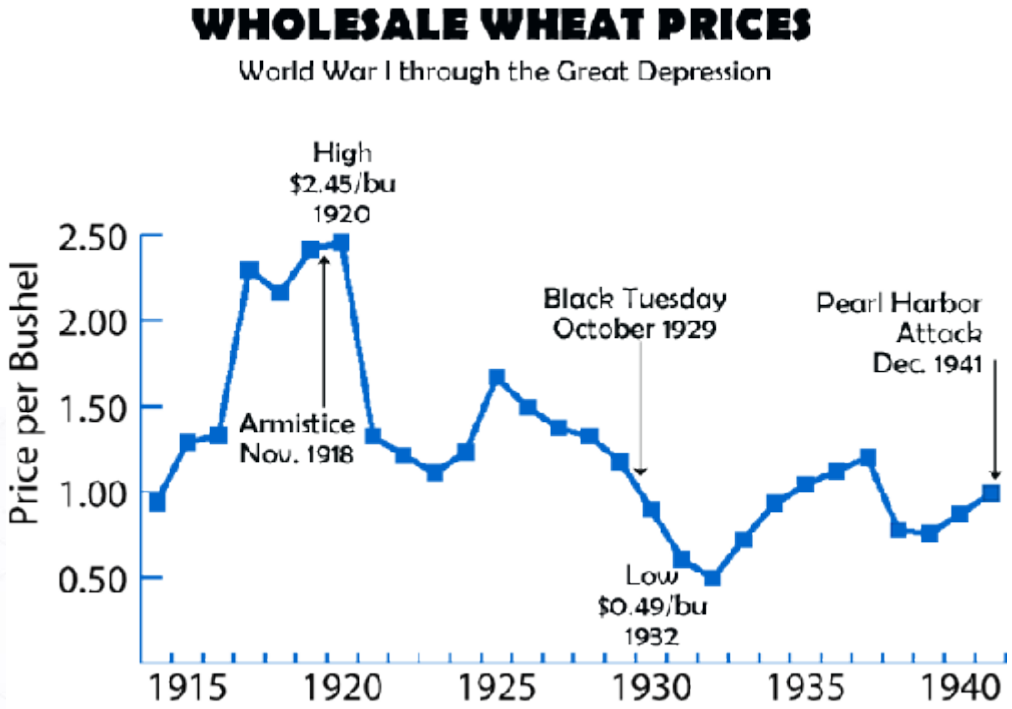
New Attitudes about Borrowing and Debt

Trouble on the Farm, circa 1920s



Property of Maple Valley Historical Society

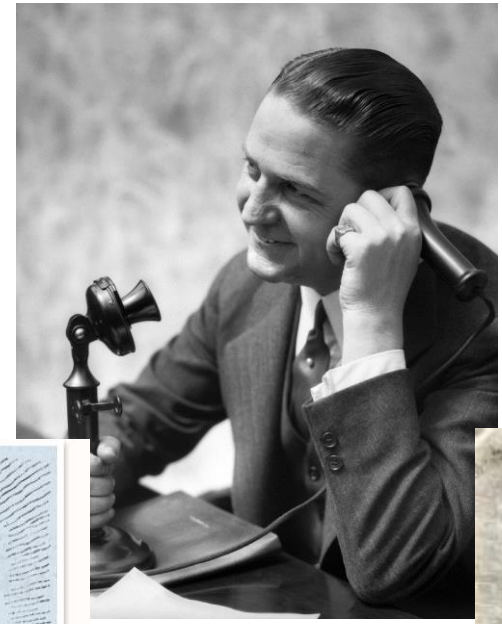




New or Newly Spreading Technologies of the 1920s



Household Appliances



Telephone



Air Conditioning



Truck



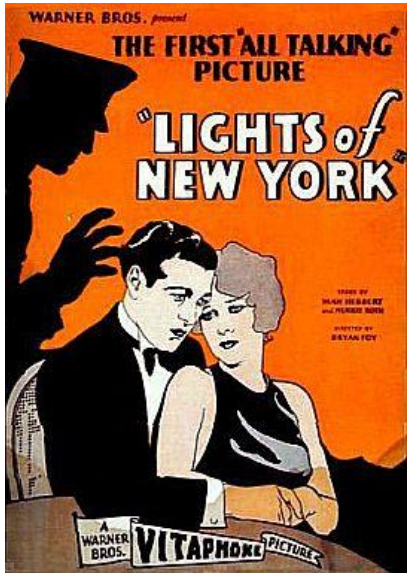
Automobile Registration:

1919: 6.8 million
1929: 23.1 million



Number of Homes with Radios:

1920: Less than 1 percent
1929: Nearly half



Movie Attendance:

1929: 70 percent of adult Americans going to the movies weekly

From New York to Los Angeles

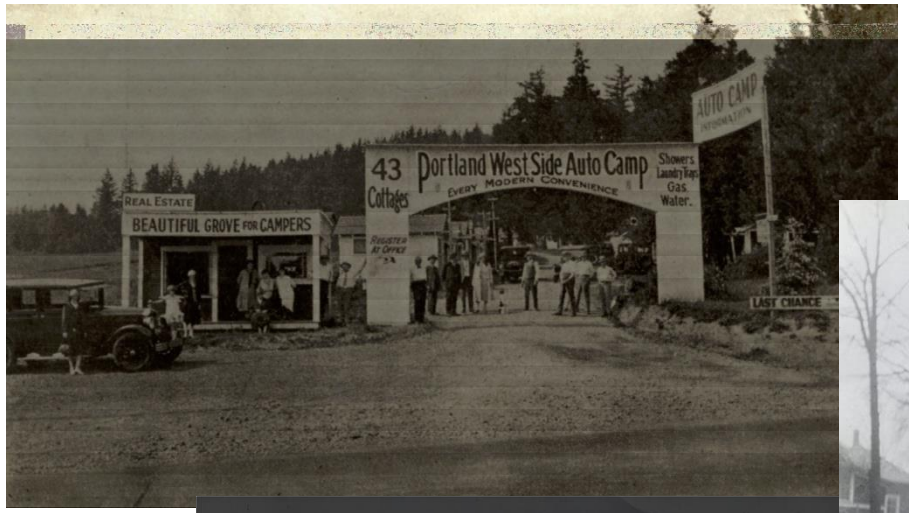




Transformative Technology #1:

The ~~Horseless Carriage~~ Automobile

The New Car Culture of the 1920s





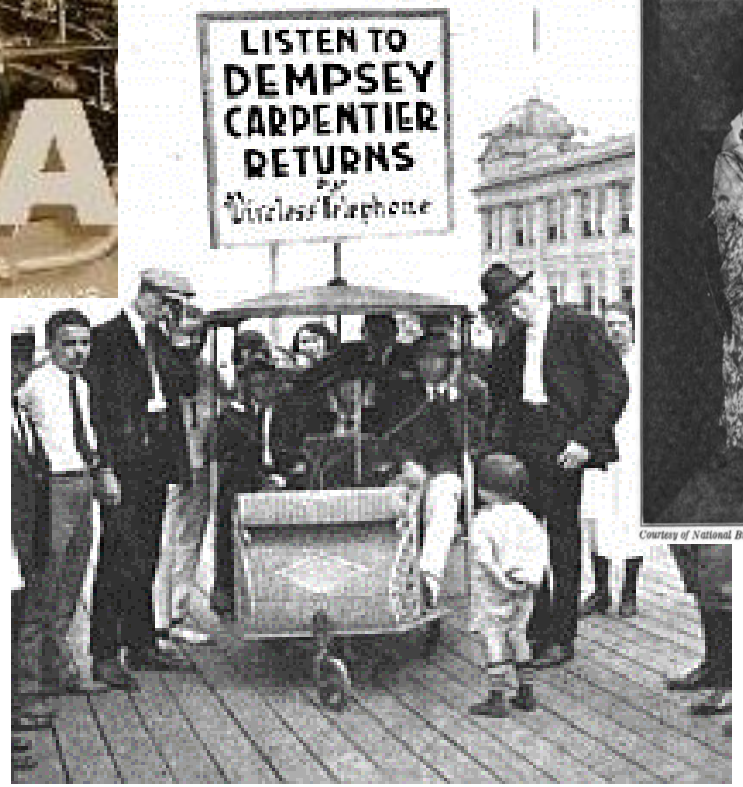




Touring, Eating, Fueling…..and (uh oh!) “Necking and Petting”

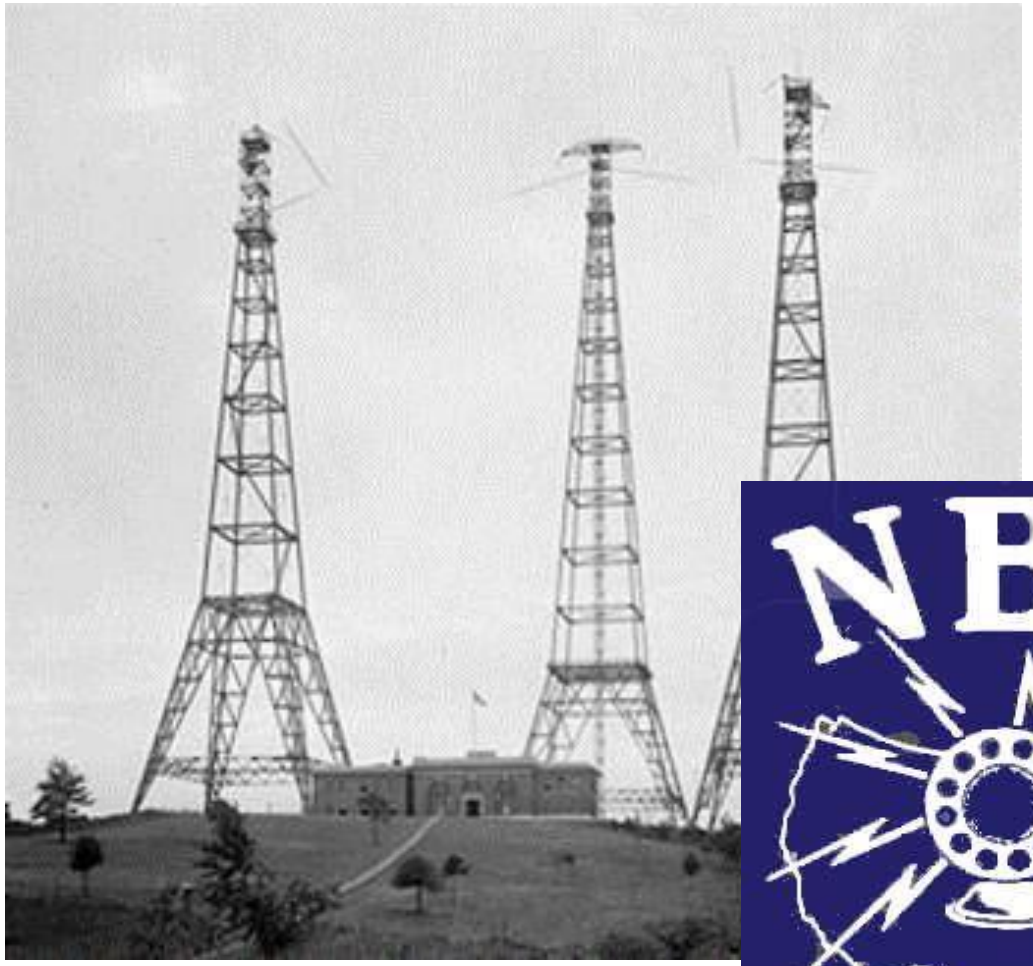
Transformative Technology #2: Radio







Courtesy of National Broadcasting Co.



Commercial Radio Stations in America:

1920: 1
1930: More than 500

Radio Networks:

NBC: 1926
CBS: 1927

Regulation:

1927: Federal Radio Commission (now Federal Communications Commission)

Home Entertainment, 1900s



Home Entertainment, 1920s



Transformative Technology #3: Movies









Rudolph Valentino in “The Sheik”,
1921



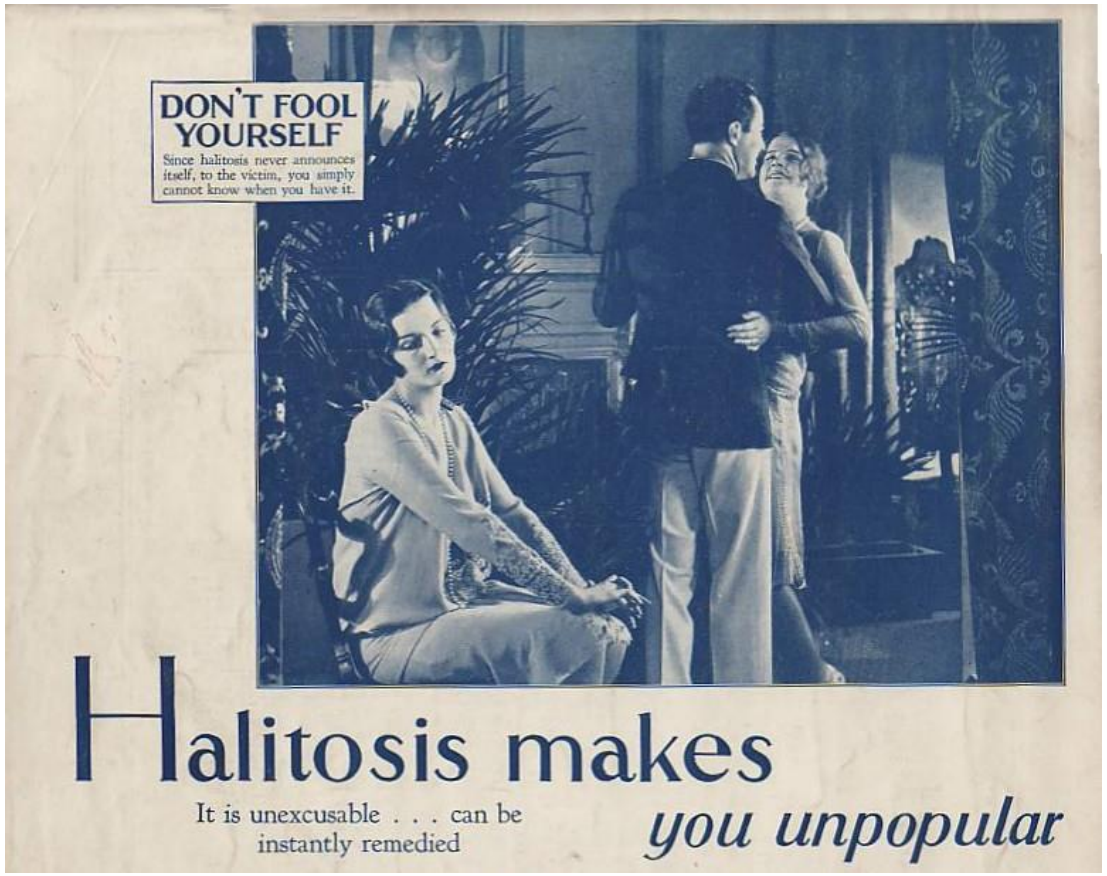
Rudolph Valentino’s Funeral, 1926





Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle
Scandal of
1921-1922

Advertising of the 1920s



A disease you never heard of…but probably have



Light up, ladies!



Your house could be cleaner

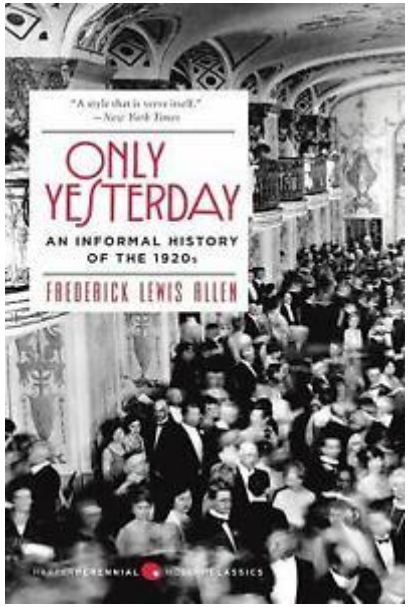
Women's Fashions, 1900s



Women's Fashions, 1920s







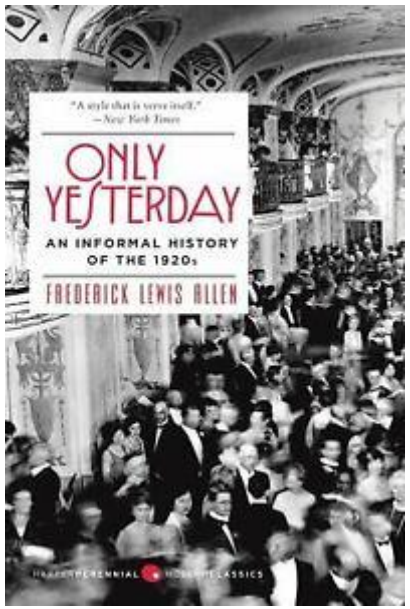
FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN,
ONLY YESTERDAY: AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF THE NINETEEN TWENTIES,
1931

A FIRST-CLASS REVOLT AGAINST THE accepted American order was certainly taking place during those early years of the Post-war Decade, but it was one with which Nikolai Lenin had nothing whatever to do. The shock troops of the rebellion were not alien agitators, but the sons and daughters of well-to-do American families, who knew little about Bolshevism and cared distinctly less, and their defiance was expressed not in obscure radical publications or in soap-box speeches, but right across the family breakfast table into the horrified ears of conservative fathers and mothers. Men and women were still shivering at the Red Menace when they awoke to the no less alarming Problem of the Younger Generation, and realized that if the constitution were not in danger, the moral code of the country certainly was.

This code, as it currently concerned young people, might have been roughly summarized as follows: Women were the guardians of morality; they were made of finer stuff than men and were expected to act accordingly. Young girls must look forward in innocence (tempered perhaps with a modicum of physiological instruction) to a romantic love match which would lead them to the altar and to living-happily-ever-after; and until the "right man" came along they must allow no male to kiss them. It was expected that some men would succumb to the temptations of sex, but only with a special class of outlawed women; girls of respectable families were supposed to have no such temptations.

FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN, *ONLY YESTERDAY*



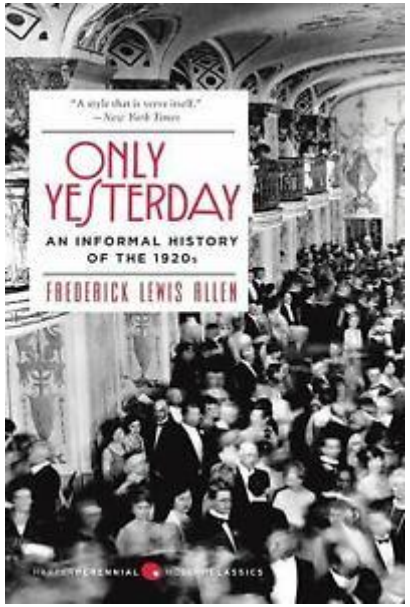


The war had not long been over when cries of alarm from parents teachers, and moral preceptors began to rend the air. For the boys and girls just growing out of adolescence were making mincemeat of this code.

The dresses that the girls-and for that matter most of the older women-were wearing seemed alarming enough. In July, 1920, a fashion-writer reported in the *New York Times* that "the American woman . . . has lifted her skirts far beyond any modest limitation," which was another way of saying that the hem was now all of nine inches above the ground. It was freely predicted that skirts would come down again in the winter of 1920-21, but instead they climbed a few scandalous inches farther. The flappers wore thin dresses, short-sleeved and occasionally (in the evening) sleeveless; some of the wilder young things rolled their stockings below their knees, revealing to the shocked eyes of virtue a fleeting glance of shin-bones and knee-cap; and many of them were visibly using cosmetics.

The current mode in dancing created still more consternation. Not the romantic violin but the barbaric saxophone now dominated the orchestra, and to its passionate crooning and wailing the fox-trotters moved in what the editor of the Hobart College *Herald* disgustedly called a "syncopated embrace." No longer did even an inch of space separate them; they danced as if glued together, body to body, cheek to cheek. Cried the *Catholic Telegraph* of Cincinnati in righteous indignation, "The music is sensuous, the embracing of partners--the female only half dressed--is absolutely indecent; and the motions--they are such as may not be described, with any respect for propriety, in a family newspaper.



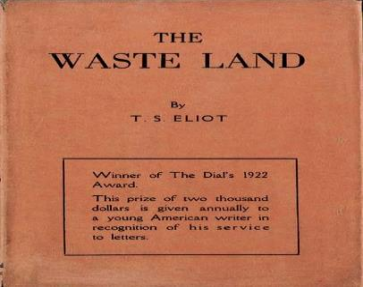


FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN, *ONLY YESTERDAY*

[I]nnumerable families were torn with dissension over cigarettes and gin and all-night automobile rides. Fathers and mothers lay awake asking themselves whether their children were not utterly lost; sons and daughters evaded questions, lied miserably and unhappily, or flared up to reply rudely that at least they were not dirty-minded hypocrites, that they saw no harm in what they were doing and proposed to go right on doing it. From those liberal clergymen and teachers who prided themselves on keeping step with all that was new came a chorus of reassurance: these young people were at least franker and more honest than their elders had been; having experimented for themselves, would they not soon find out which standards were outworn and which represented the accumulated moral wisdom of the race? Hearing such hopeful words, many good people took heart again. Perhaps this flare-up of youthful passion was a flash in the pan, after all. Perhaps in another year or two the boys and girls would come to their senses and everything would be all right again.

They were wrong, however. For the revolt of the younger generation was only the beginning of a revolution in manners and morals that was already beginning to affect men and women of every age in every part of the country.

New Literary Stylings



April is the cruelest month



A clean, well-lighted place



I don't want to repeat my innocence. I want the pleasure of losing it again.

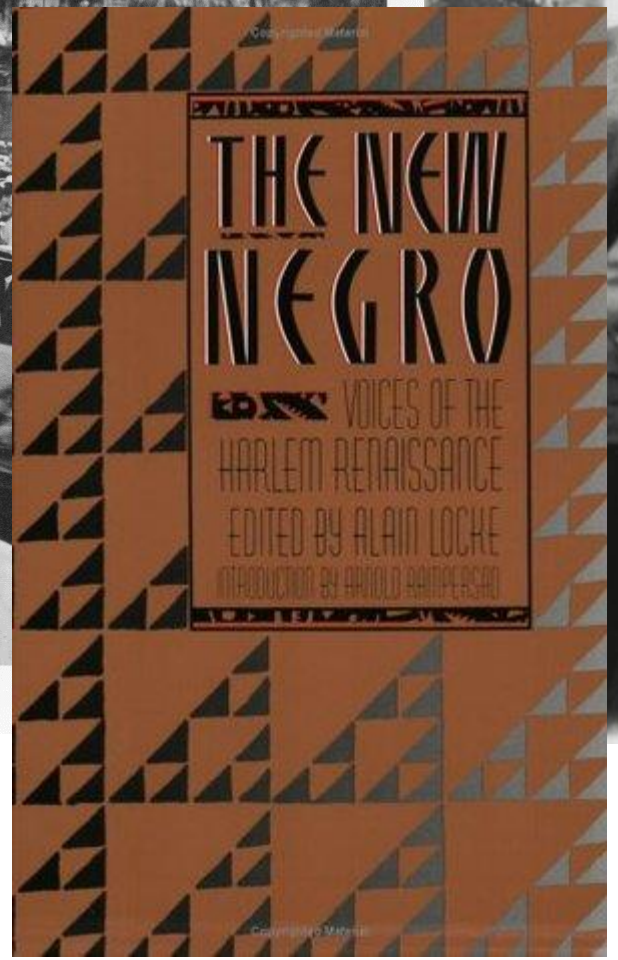
It was not until F. Scott Fitzgerald, who had hardly graduated from Princeton and ought to know what his generation was doing, brought out *This Side of Paradise* in April, 1920, that fathers and mothers realized fully what was afoot and how long it had been going on. Apparently the "petting party" had been current as early as 1916, and was now widely established as an indoor sport. "None of the Victorian mothers - and most of the mothers were Victorian-had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed," wrote Mr. Fitzgerald. " . . Amory saw girls doing things that even in his memory would have been impossible: eating three-o'clock, after- dance suppers in impossible cafes, talking of every side of life with an air half of earnestness, half of mockery, yet with a furtive excitement that Amory considered stood for a real moral let-down. But he never realized how widespread it was until he saw the cities between New York and Chicago as one vast juvenile intrigue." The book caused a shudder to run down the national spine; did not Mr. Fitzgerald represent one of his well- nurtured heroines as brazenly confessing, "I've kissed dozens of men. I suppose I'll kiss dozens more"; and another heroine as saying to a young man (*to a young man!*), "Oh, just one person in fifty has any glimmer of what sex is. I'm hipped on Freud and all that, but it's rotten that every bit of real love in the world is ninety-nine per cent passion and one little *soupcon* of jealousy"?

--From Allen's *Only Yesterday*

Harlem Renaissance and the "New Negro"



U.N.I.A. parade in Harlem, *1924.*







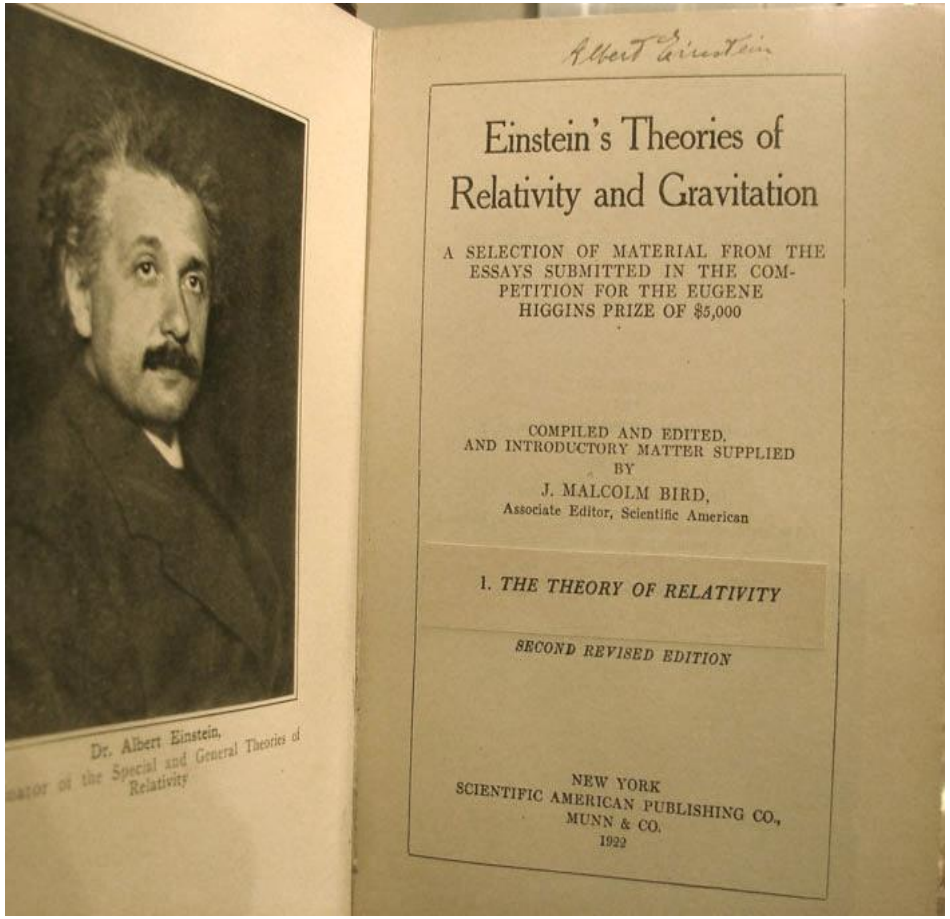


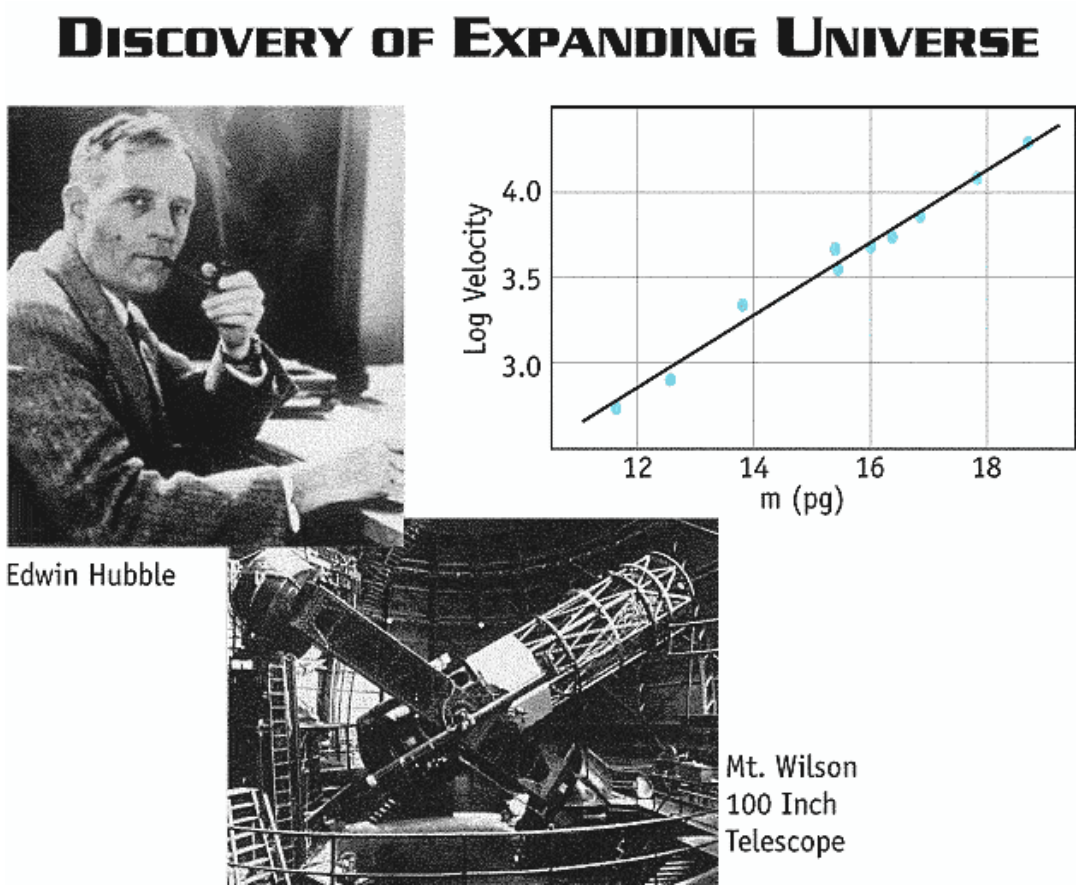


Jazz and the…

Syncopated Beat

Unsettling Ideas in Science

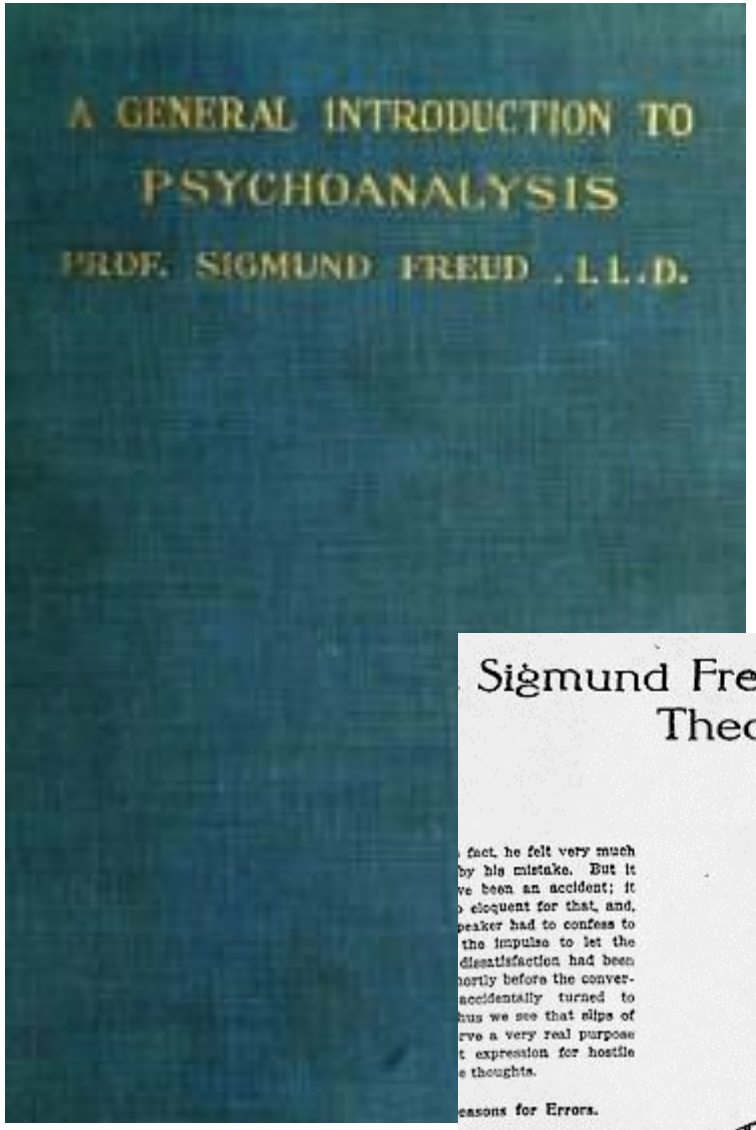




Reality is not what you think it is



Scientific Mating, from a Popular Science Magazine, 1924

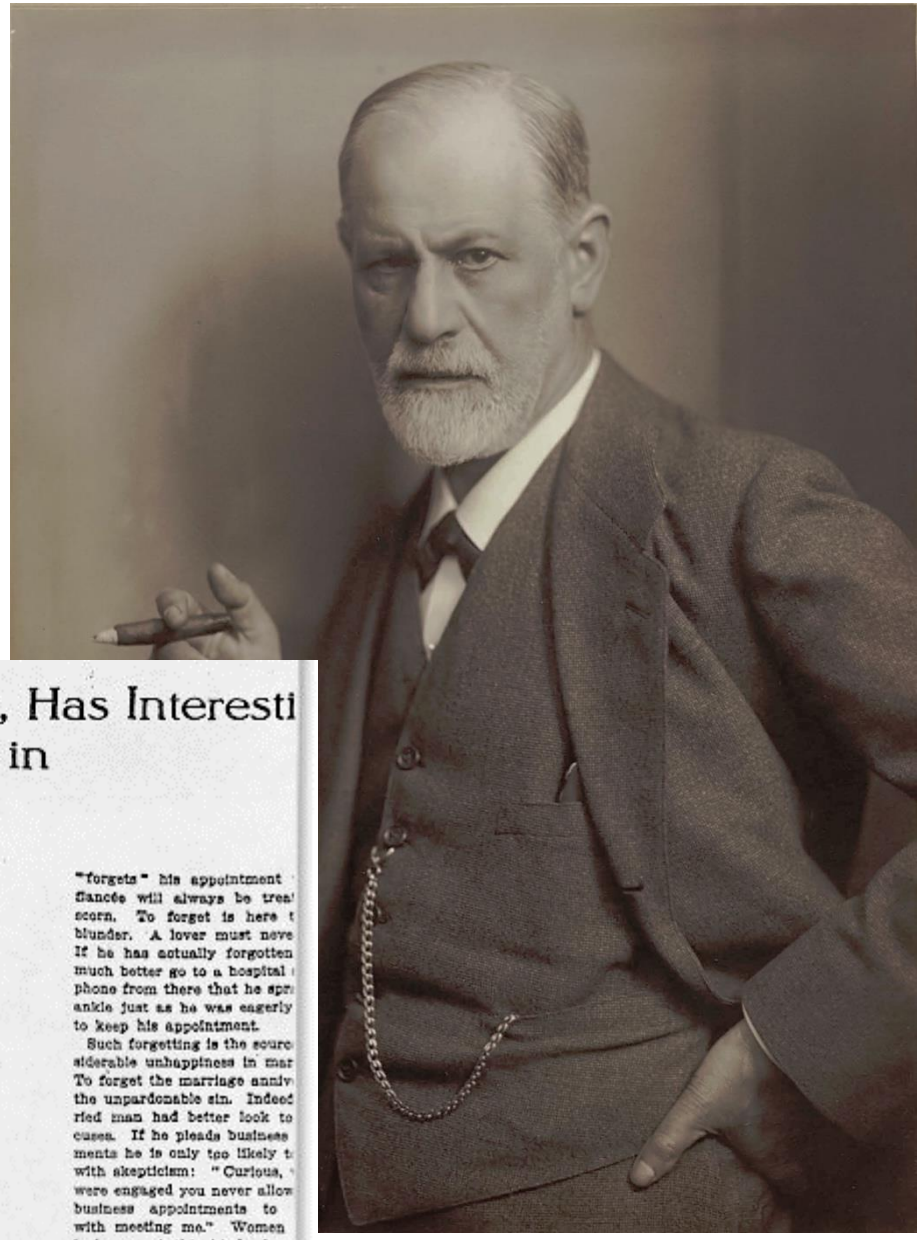


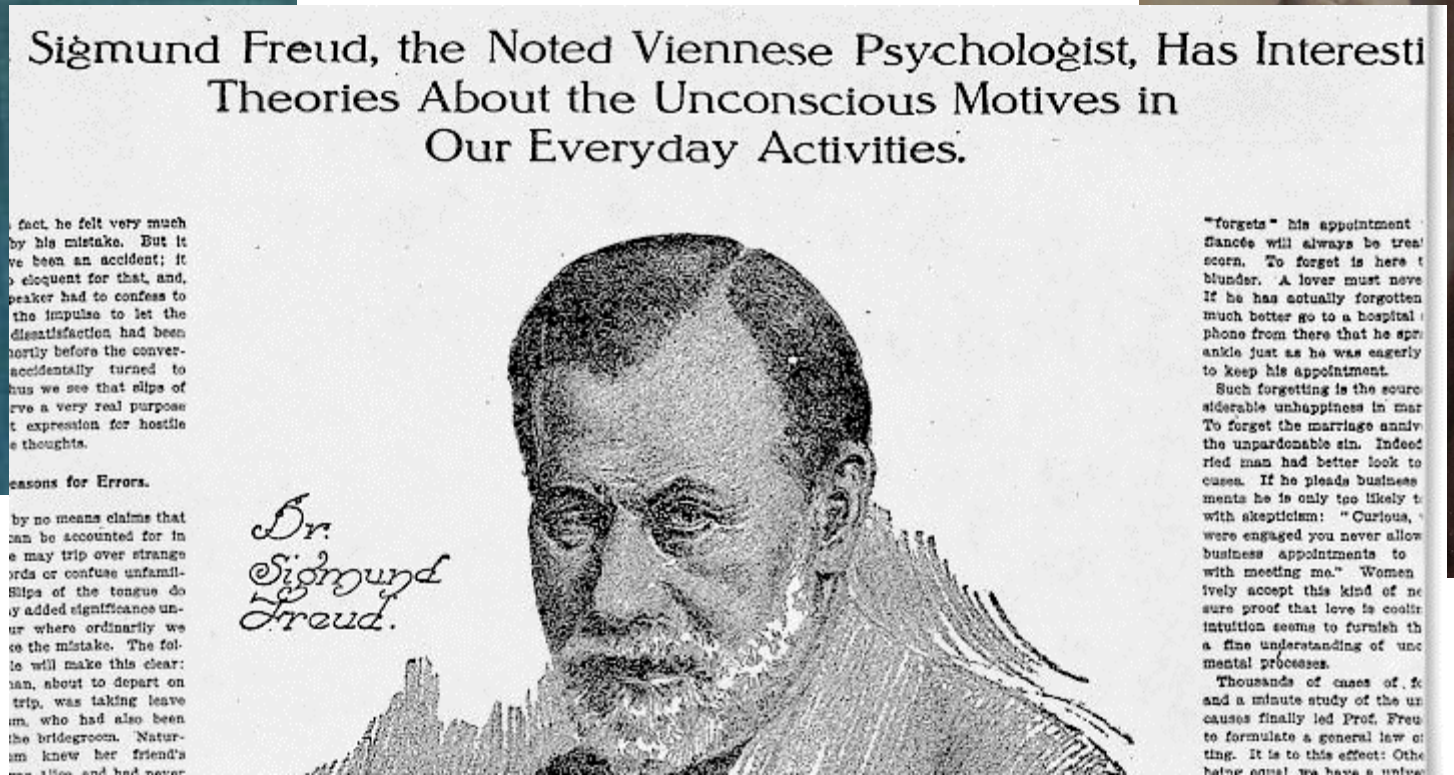
Unsettling Ideas in Psychology:

Your mind is not what you think it is

"I'm hipped on Freud and all that."

--Eleanor, Young Female
Character in *This Side of Paradise*





Sigmund Freud, the Noted Viennese Psychologist, Has Interesti
Theories About the Unconscious Motives in
Our Everyday Activities.

fact, he felt very much
by his mistake. But it
ve been an accident; it
eloquent for that, and,
peaker had to confess to
the impulse to let the
dissatisfaction had been
nortly before the conver-
accidentally turned to
hus we see that slips of
rve a very real purpose
t expression for hostile
e thoughts.

easons for Errors.

by no means claims that
an be accounted for in
e may trip over strange
rds or confuse unfamil-
Slips of the tongue do
y added significance un-
ur where ordinarily we
e the mistake. The fol-
le will make this clear:
an, about to depart on
trip, was taking leave
m, who had also been
the bridegroom. Natur-
m knew her friend's

Dr. Sigmund Freud.

"forgets" his appointment
fiancée will always be trea
scorn. To forget is here
blunder. A lover must neve
If he has actually forgotten
much better go to a hospital
phone from there that he spr
ankle just as he was eagerly
to keep his appointment.

Such forgetting is the sourc
siderable unhappiness in mar
To forget the marriage anniv
the unpardonable sin. Indeed
ried man had better look to
cuses. If he pleads business
ments he is only too likely t
with skepticism: "Curious,
were engaged you never allow
business appointments to
with meeting me." Women
ively accept this kind of n
sure proof that love is coolin
intuition seems to furnish th
a fine understanding of unc
mental processes.

Thousands of cases of fo
and a minute study of the un
causes finally led Prof. Freu
to formulate a general law o
ting. It is to this effect: Othe
being equal, we have a unive

The Reaction...Next Class



"Another Pied Piper," E. J. Pace's widely reprinted editorial cartoon (from William Jennings Bryan's Seven Questions in Dispute, 1924)