

HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL LEVELS OF U.S. IMMIGRATION

1776-1976

250,000/yr. Average

First Two Centuries Tradition: From the beginning of the nation to the Bi-Centennial. The longest, largest sustained flow of immigrants into a single nation in world history up to that point. Changed a sparsely populated wilderness into a continent of industries, farms cities, suburbs, railroads and roads accommodating the third largest population on the globe.

1776-1819

6,500/yr. Average

New Nation Tradition: The new nation was trying to populate Eastern frontiers.

1820-1879

160,000/yr. Average

Continental Expansion Tradition: Immigration was used to encourage settlement of all frontiers from the Atlantic to the Pacific; driving Indians into reservations, virtually eliminating the buffalo/grasslands ecology of the Prairies and all but small tracts of Wilderness.

1880-1924

580,000/yr. Average

Great Wave/Robber Baron Tradition: The Robber Barons of the Gilded Age of rapid industrial expansion imported massive amounts of foreign labor instead of employing America's freed slaves (keeping most on Southern plantations). **With a plentiful supply of immigrant workers, the Robber Barons were able to avoid many productivity investments and gains, depressing the rise of wages of most Americans while successfully busting unions.** They used their political clout to block repeated attempts in Congress to lower immigration back toward previous Traditional levels.

1925-1965

180,000/yr. Average

Rise of Middle Class Tradition: Reacting to excesses of the Great Wave, Congress limited numbers to the previous Tradition. **The resulting tight-labor market allowed most Americans to move into the Middle Class for the first time and made possible the Civil Rights Movement.**

1965- 1989

500,000/yr. Average

Post-1965 Chain Migration Tradition: Accidentally started by a 1965 Act intended primarily to make it easier for Asians to compete for immigration slots. President Kennedy proposed it, promising no new wave of immigrants, saying there were no new frontiers to populate or massive factories needing unskilled labor. But opening family-chain migration into all the world, without hard numerical caps, flooded the country with numbers nearly as high as the Great Wave.

1990-2005

1,000,000/yr. Average

New Robber Baron Tradition: Industries became addicted to cheap foreign labor, and a growing class of affluent Americans depended on a foreign servant class. Together, they kept immigration at double Great Wave levels of a century earlier, even as many Americans' occupations collapsed declined below Middle Class standards.