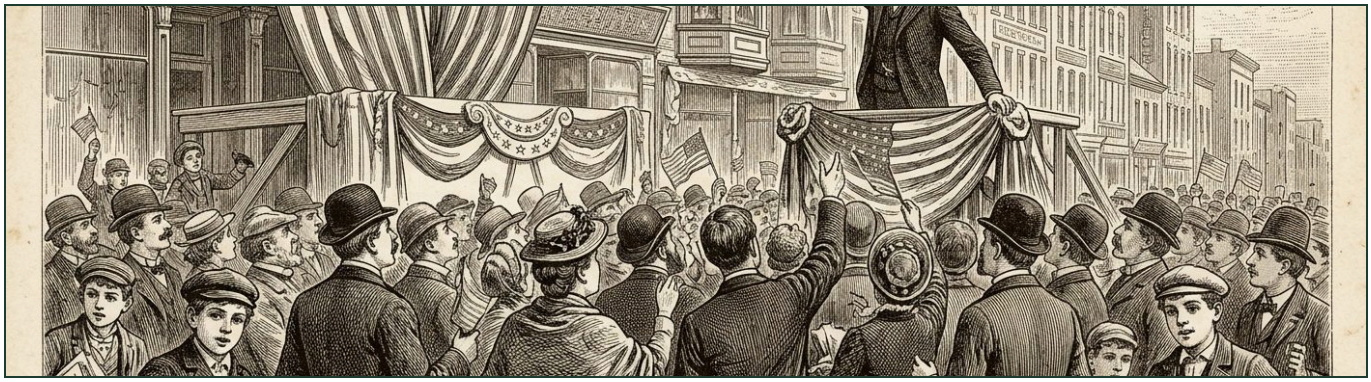


1890 – 1920

Progressive Era Timeline

The Progressive Era was a period of sweeping reform in the United States – when journalists, activists, and politicians fought to rein in the power of corporations, clean up government corruption, improve conditions for workers, and expand democracy.

1890

Muckrakers Begin

Investigative journalists called 'muckrakers' begin exposing corruption, dangerous working conditions, and exploitation hidden beneath Gilded Age prosperity — reaching mass audiences through popular magazines.

> **Why it mattered:** *The muckrakers gave Americans the evidence they needed to demand reform — by publishing in mass-circulation magazines, they built the public pressure that drove Progressive legislation, demonstrating that journalism could change the law.*

1901

Theodore Roosevelt Takes Office

After President McKinley's assassination, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt takes the presidency at age 42 — the youngest president ever — and makes trust-busting, conservation, and consumer protection the agenda of the White House.

> **Why it mattered:** *Roosevelt transformed the presidency into an active force for reform — his willingness to challenge the great industrial corporations (he sued Standard Oil and broke up other trusts) proved that government could limit the power of big business.*

1906

The Jungle and Food Safety Laws

Upton Sinclair publishes The Jungle, exposing horrifying sanitary conditions in Chicago's meatpacking industry; public outrage leads directly to the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act within the year.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Jungle was the era's most powerful example of muckraking — one book produced immediate, sweeping legislation and created the federal role in food safety regulation that protects Americans today.*

Progressive Era Timeline *continued*

1909 — **NAACP Founded**

W.E.B. Du Bois and other activists found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to fight racial discrimination, lynching, and the denial of voting rights to Black Americans.

> **Why it mattered:** *The NAACP's founding highlighted the Progressive Era's central contradiction — reform movements that championed workers and consumers often left racial injustice untouched; the NAACP began the decades-long legal fight that led to the Civil Rights Movement.*

1913 — **16th Amendment and Federal Reserve**

The 16th Amendment establishes a federal income tax; the Federal Reserve Act creates a central banking system to stabilize the economy and prevent panics like 1893.

> **Why it mattered:** *These two acts gave the federal government the fiscal tools and financial stability to manage a modern industrial economy — the income tax made it possible to fund expanded government programs, while the Federal Reserve became the backbone of American monetary policy.*

1913 — **17th Amendment — Direct Election of Senators**

The 17th Amendment changes how US Senators are chosen — from appointment by state legislatures (easily corrupted) to direct election by voters, one of the Progressive Era's key democratic reforms.

> **Why it mattered:** *The direct election of Senators removed a major tool of corporate corruption — wealthy industrialists could no longer simply buy state legislators to appoint friendly senators; now senators had to answer directly to voters.*

1919 — **18th Amendment — Prohibition**

The 18th Amendment bans the manufacture and sale of alcohol — the culmination of decades of temperance campaigning that viewed alcohol as the root cause of poverty, family breakdown, and crime.

> **Why it mattered:** *Prohibition proved the limits of legislating morality — it reduced alcohol consumption but also created a massive criminal underground, widespread contempt for the law, and organized crime syndicates that outlasted Prohibition itself.*

1920 — **19th Amendment — Women's Right to Vote**

The 19th Amendment guarantees women the right to vote nationwide — the climax of over 70 years of suffrage campaigning that began at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848.

> **Why it mattered:** *Women's suffrage doubled the electorate and proved that persistent political organizing could change the Constitution — it was the Progressive Era's most enduring democratic legacy and a direct result of women's decades of activism.*