

The Industrial Revolution



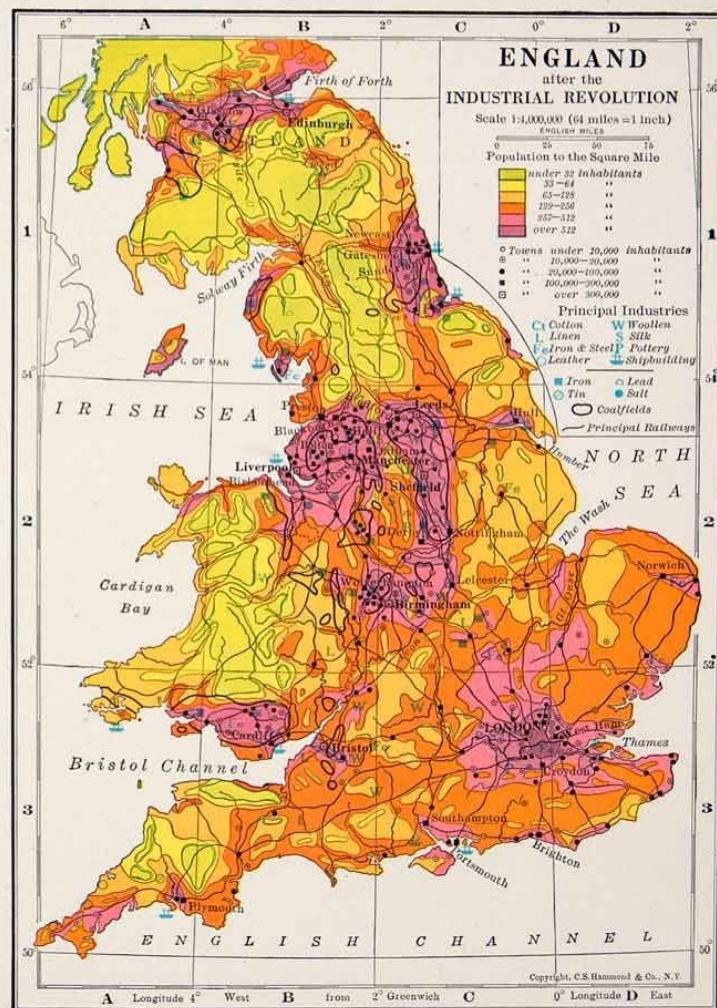
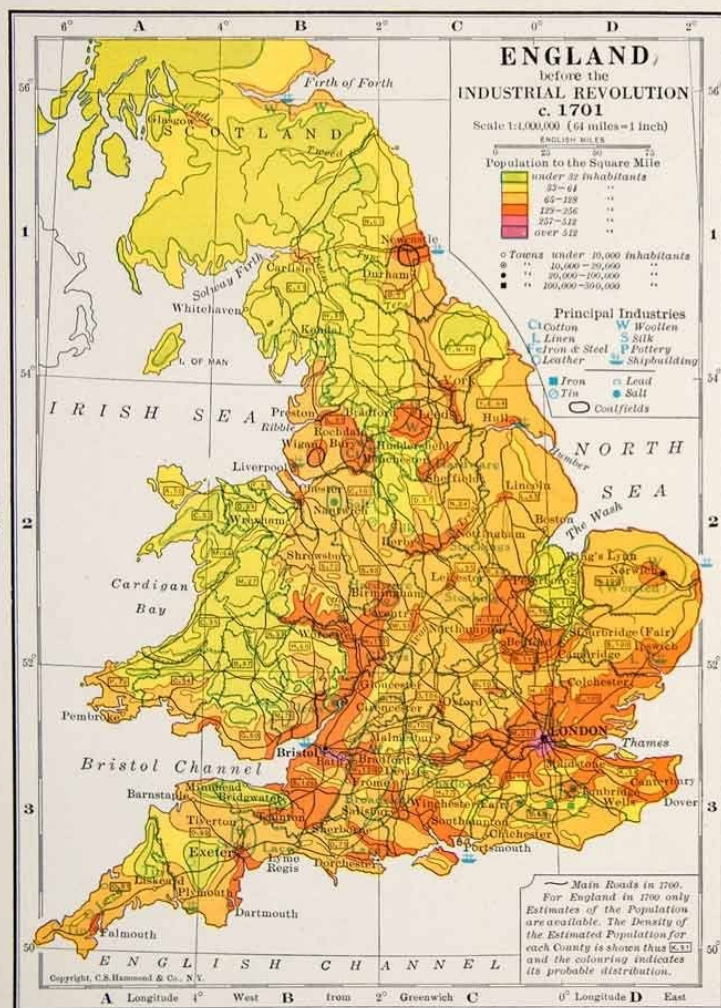
Waterdown's Smokey Hollow during the height of its Industrialization (end of the 19th century). Photograph by Will Reid.

- The Industrial Revolution came gradually. It happened over a century (or roughly during the reign of Queen Victoria, 1837-1901). However, when measured against over the centuries people had worked with their hands, it must have seemed very sudden.
- The Industrial Revolution was born in the United Kingdom – the very heart of the British Empire (the top political and commercial institution in the world) – and spread rapidly throughout the world (especially the United States).



- Remember that most Canadian cities in Upper Canada (and west) were born during the Industrial Revolution – this includes Waterdown (settled in 1805, established in 1830).
- Some of the most important changes brought with the Industrial Revolution were:
 - The invention of machines to do the work of hands and hand tools.
 - The use of steam, and later kinds of power, in place of muscles of human beings and animals (example: Mills powered by water in places like Waterdown's Smokey Hollow).
 - The adoption of the factory system.
 - The adoption by the British Empire of a system of indentured (bonded or coerced) labour which followed the abolition of slavery in 1834.¹
- The “beginning” of the Industrial Revolution is said to be the invention of John Kay's “Flying Shuttle” (an innovation in spinning yarn out of wool) in 1733.
 - The increase in demand due to the flying shuttle exceeded the capacity of the spinning industry of the day, and prompted development of powered spinning machines which could produce strong, fine thread in quantities needed. These innovations transformed the textile industry in Great Britain.
- By 1750 large quantities of goods were being exchanged among the European nations, and there was an increased demand for more goods than were being produced.
- At the same time, **land enclosures** across Great Britain were forcing landless people off of their estates and into cities –creating a pool of available workers.
 - This created the conditions for massive social and political change. Farm labourers and artisans were transformed by industrial centres into workers.
 - Cities grew rapidly, as the percentage of the rural population declined.

¹ The indentured labour system in India initially began within the French Empire.



Fun fact: Sanitation was so bad at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution that European cities only started growing from their own birthrates (and not people moving to them) in the 1900s!

- The change from domestic work to the factory system meant a loss of independence to the worker.

Benefits of working as a home/farm/artisanal worker:

What happens when you enter the factory system:

Remember
Hal Poohack

Time?

Children?

Rights?

Relationship to work and other workers?



- The Industrial Revolution created a new “class” called the middle class (factory owners, merchants and professionals such as doctors and lawyers). In England, this middle class demanded to be heard in government, challenging its traditional control by the British landed aristocracy.
- The labourers soon began to see the hopelessness of their situations, uniting together into “unions” against the factory owners to demand better wages, working conditions and reasonable hours. These same workers began reading the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.
- The British Empire officially abolishes slavery on August 1st, 1834.

Historian Jessica Brain writes:

- As part of the act, slavery was abolished in most British colonies which resulted in around 800,000 slaves being freed in the Caribbean as well as South Africa and a small amount in Canada.

- Once the law took effect a transitional phase began which included reassigning roles of slaves as “apprentices” which was later brought to an end in 1840.
- Sadly, in practical terms the act did not seek to include territories “in the possession of the East India Company, or Ceylon, or Saint Helena”. By 1843 these conditions were lifted. A longer process however ensued which not only included freeing **slaves but also finding a way to compensate the slave owners for loss of investment.**²
 - No compensation or reparations have been paid to enslaved peoples, nor their descendants.
- The emancipation of enslaved African peoples across the British Empire during the Industrial Revolution created a need for labourers.

Ashutosh Kumar writes, in *Coolies of the Empire: Indentured Indians in the Sugar Colonies, 1830-1920* (2017):

In 1834, the British government in India introduced what came to be known as the ‘indenture system’, through which Indian labourers could go overseas to work on the colonial sugar plantations on fixed-term contracts. From 1834 to 1920, the recruitment of Indians to work on the colonial plantations of various islands was organized through this system. The model of Indian indenture system was borrowed from a practice that originated in Europe in the thirteenth century, but it became a common practice in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when European planters in the United States deputed European and Chinese labourers on their plantations. South American planters used this policy to obtain Chinese labour from the Portuguese settlement of Macao. Under that system, labour was recruited for the planters by their agents to work for a certain period of time (usually five years), during which the employer was legally obliged to provide fixed wages, medical attention and other amenities for the labourers. After the period had elapsed, the labourer could either renew his/her term of employment, or return to his/her native land.²

² Brain, J. (2019, June 12). The abolition of slavery in Britain. Historic UK. Retrieved March 6, 2022, from <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Abolition-Of-Slavery/>

The Indian indenture system had largely the same general terms and conditions, with only minor variations between the different colonies. The main feature of the Indian indenture system was that emigrants had to commit themselves to a fixed term of labour in advance by signing an agreement, popularly known as '*girmit*', which committed them to work for five years in their destination colony³ (Appendix I). A form of agreement was available where the preconditions of engagement were declared in English, as well as in regional languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Malayalam, Kannada and Telegu, etc. The agreement form clearly mentioned the kind of work to be done, hours of work and remuneration, and the availability of various other facilities such as accommodation, hospital and rations etc. (Appendix II). Another technically attractive and significant provision of agreement was an optional return passage at the emigrants' own expense after the end of the first five years or a free return passage to India at the termination of a further five years of 'industrial residence' in the colonies.⁴ The extent to which migrants were able to fully understand, or planters were willing to genuinely uphold the terms of these agreements has been the subject of much debate, at that time and since.

- Many saw the Indian indenture system as kidnapping Indian people and forcing them into a new form of enslavement. Abuse was rampant, including instances of torture. Numerous means were used to induce Indians to remain beyond their period of indentured labour, including replacing passage home with grants of land in the territory they now fund themselves in.
 - This system of indentured labour continued from one that had brought hundreds of thousands – mainly Irish – people to the British Caribbean, British North America and later Australia. It is important to note that many Irish people were transported against their will as political prisoners or those who had been defined as "undesirable" by the English state.

Indo-Caribbean Population imported using indentured labour system:³

Country or Colony	Population Imported	Time Frame
British Guiana	239,960	1838–1917
Trinidad	143,939	1845–1917
Suriname	43,404	1873–1916
Guadeloupe	42,236	1854–1885
Jamaica	37,027	1845–1885
Martinique	25,404	1854–1899
French Guiana	8,500	1862–1885
Grenada	3,200	1857–1885
Belize	3,000	1880–1917
St. Vincent	2,472	1861–1880
St. Lucia	2,300	1858–1895
St. Kitts	361	1860–1861
Nevis	342	1873–1874
St. Croix	325	1863–1868
14	551,470	

- Other areas of Indian migration due to indentured labour includes Fiji, South Africa, Mauritius and Réunion.
- Today there are approximately 2.5 million descendants of these people.

³ Roopnarine, L. (2020, November 8). "Indentured emancipation, 100 years later: What can we say ..." Guyana Chronical. Retrieved March 7, 2022, from <https://guyanachronicle.com/2020/11/08/indentured-emancipation-100-years-later-what-can-we-say/>

The Industrial Revolution and the United States:



MAP 18-2 The Growth of American Cities, 1880-1900 Several significant trends stand out on this map. First is the development of an urban-industrial core, stretching from New England to the Midwest, where the largest cities were located. And second is the emergence of relatively new cities in the South and West, reflecting the national dimensions of innovations in industry and transportation.

The Industrial Revolution meets the Reformation:

What do you notice?

