



# The Morbid Victorian

Genealogy Off the Shelves

# An Overview

# Jun 20, 1837 – Jan 22, 1901

- ◇ Western Expansion – aided by the Homestead Act
- ◇ The United States forced the Cherokee from Georgia to make room for white settlers and their slaves.
- ◇ The Mexican-American War brought about the annexation of Texas
- ◇ Oregon, with her rich soil and promise of abundance, called to the young and hale..
- ◇ Mormons and the Great American Desert.
- ◇ Gold Rush - Where the men went, indigenous peoples were banished... and white women eventually followed.
- ◇ The American Civil War was fought. 620,000 Americans died; more than in any other war.
- ◇ The Emancipation Proclamation freed three-fourths of enslaved Africans.
- ◇ The United States government authorized over 1500 wars, attacks, and raids on indigenous peoples. The Indian Wars ended in the late 19th century, after extensive genocide.
- ◇ Transcontinental Railway
- ◇ Electric lights
- ◇ The Great Chicago Fire destroyed a significant portion of the city and many lives were lost.
- ◇ The Spanish-American War began and ended in 1898.



# 2 Sides of the Same Coin

- ◆ Industrialization
- ◆ Population Influx
- ◆ Disease
- ◆ Poverty



- ◆ Grueling Labor
- ◆ Venturing into the Unknown
- ◆ Lawlessness
- ◆ Contention



Why Were They So Obsessed  
With Death?

# Proximity

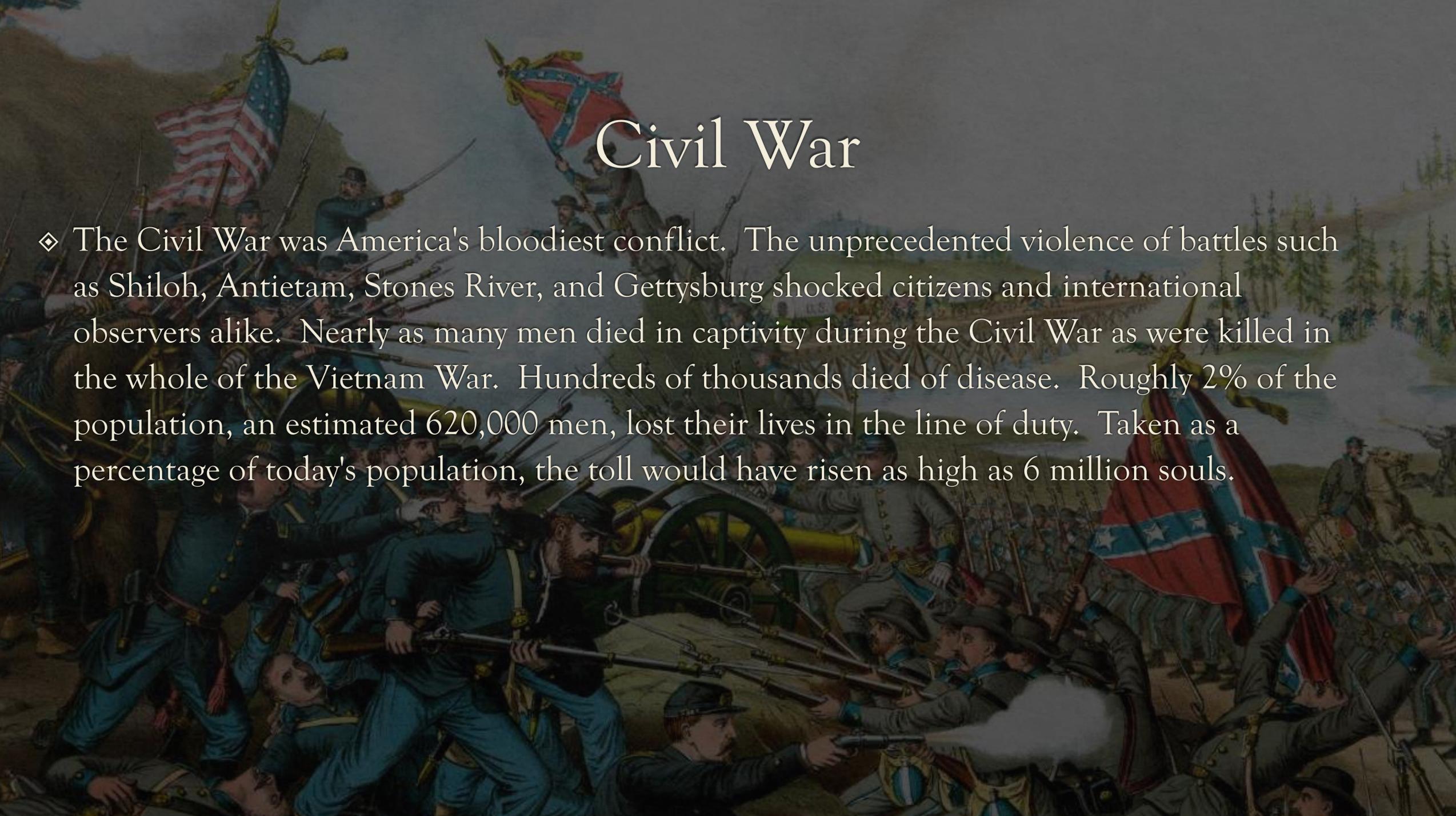
- ◆ Daily Exposure to Death
- ◆ Civil War
- ◆ Funerary Proceedings Typically  
Happened at Home
- ◆ Garden Cemeteries



# What to Expect on a Death Certificate

- ◇ Less Graphic Info for Women
- ◇ Average Life Expectancy: 45
  - Stillborn
  - Bronchitis
  - Consumption
  - Convulsions
  - Pneumonia
  - Inflammation
  - Dropsy
  - Natural Decay





# Civil War

- ◆ The Civil War was America's bloodiest conflict. The unprecedented violence of battles such as Shiloh, Antietam, Stones River, and Gettysburg shocked citizens and international observers alike. Nearly as many men died in captivity during the Civil War as were killed in the whole of the Vietnam War. Hundreds of thousands died of disease. Roughly 2% of the population, an estimated 620,000 men, lost their lives in the line of duty. Taken as a percentage of today's population, the toll would have risen as high as 6 million souls.

# Funerary Proceedings

- ◆ If you died 200 years ago in America, your family would wash and dress your body and place it in a bed surrounded by candles to dampen the smell of decomposition.
- ◆ Civil War - of the 600,000 that died in the war, 40,000 were embalmed.
- ◆ Upon the death of Lincoln's 11-year-old son Willie in 1862, he had the boy's body embalmed. When the president was assassinated three years later, the same doctor embalmed Lincoln in preparation for a "funeral train" that paraded his body back to his final resting place in Springfield, Illinois.



**Funeral Service Record**  
**SICKMAN & DUNNING FUNERAL HOME**  
**CLINTON, MISSOURI**

Body at Home      Funeral Home

3. (a) PRINT FULL NAME <u>Elizabeth A Jones</u>		1. PLACE OF DEATH	
5. (b) If veteran, name war <u>✓</u>		(a) County <u>Henry</u>	
5. (c) Social Security No. <u>✓</u>		(b) City or town <u>Summit Point</u>	
4. Sex <u>F</u> 5. Color or race <u>W</u>		(c) Name of hospital or institution:	
6. (a) Single, widowed, married, divorced <u>widowed</u>		(If not in hospital or institution, write street number or location)	
6. (b) Name of husband or wife:		(d) Length of stay: In hospital or institution:	
6. (c) Age of husband or wife if alive _____ years		In this community <u>3 years</u>	
7. Birth date of deceased: <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>1874</u>		2. USUAL RESIDENCE OF DECEASED:	
(Month) (Day) (Year)		(a) State _____ (b) County _____	
8. AGEs: Years Months Days If less than one day		(c) City or town _____	
<u>76</u> <u>2</u> <u>29</u> hr. min.		(d) Street No. _____	
9. Birthplace <u>Bartelsville Kentucky</u>		(If rural, give location)	
(City, town, or county) (State or foreign country)		(e) Citizens of foreign country? _____ (Yes No)	
10. Usual Occupation <u>Housewife</u>		If yes, name country _____	
11. Industry or business:		MEDICAL CERTIFICATION	
12. Name <u>Davis Bright</u>		20. DATE OF DEATH: Month <u>Sept</u> day <u>7</u>	
13. Birthplace <u>Knox Co Kentucky</u>		year <u>1950</u> hour <u>3</u> minute <u>55 P.M.</u>	
(City, town, or county) (State or foreign country)		21. I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from _____, 19____, to _____, 19____,	
14. Maiden name <u>Susan Hammons</u>		that I last saw h _____ alive on _____, 19____,	
15. Birthplace <u>Knox Co Kentucky</u>		and that death occurred on the date and hour stated above. Duration _____	
(City, town, or county) (State or foreign country)		Immediate cause of death _____	
16. (a) Informant <u>Daniel S Hall</u>		Due to <u>Dr J O Smith</u>	
(b) Address <u>Clinton Mo</u>		22. Signature _____ (M. D. or other)	
Place of Service <u>Shady Grove</u>		Address <u>Clinton Mo</u> Date signed _____	
Place of Burial or Removal <u>Shady Grove</u>		Hour of Service <u>2:00 P.M.</u> Day of Service <u>Sunday</u>	
Date of Burial <u>9-10</u> 19 <u>50</u>		Minister <u>Rev. Middleton</u>	
Relatives		Address	
<u>Sons: Daniel S Hall</u>		<u>Clinton Mo D.B.R.</u>	
<u>A B Hall</u>		<u>311 W Green St Clinton Mo</u>	
<u>Harland Helcomb</u>		<u>K C Mo</u>	
<u>Rev Nancy Jane Lowe</u>		<u>Stanta Kans</u>	
<u>Ida Mae Villarreal</u>		<u>Calif</u>	
Hair <u>\$10.00 Mother on ribbon</u>			

# Funerary Records

- ◇ Surviving Relatives
- ◇ Residences
- ◇ Obituaries
- ◇ Clubs/lodges
- ◇ Church Affiliations
- ◇ Pallbearers
- ◇ Life Insurance

# Where to Find the Records

Newspapers, Death Cert., Cemetery, Church Ledgers, Family Documents

Old/Closed: Genealogical or Historical Societies, Public Libraries

Funeral homes are NOT obligated to provide any information from their records. The best method is to **WRITE** to the funeral home. Give as much information as possible, including (as best you know):

- Name of the deceased
- The deceased's birth date and death date
- The deceased's person's Social Security number
- The deceased's last address (# street, City, State)
- The next-of-kin who was likely in charge of arrangements.
- The name of the spouse (who may not have been in charge).
- The names of children or immediate family (such as parents of a deceased minor).
- A copy of your ID ~ many places increasingly want to know "who" is asking for info.
- A copy of the person's death certificate if you have it.

# Garden Cemeteries

- ◆ In the early 19th century, as cities like Boston grew, inner-city burials were no longer cutting it. Land prices were rising and the small church burial grounds were overcrowding. Storms would flood the grounds with gruesome results. Outbreaks of diseases like cholera and typhoid fever had communities fearing urban burials.
- ◆ “garden of graves” or a serene “city of the dead”
- ◆ Sculptures, landscaping, manicured, inspired by European gardens



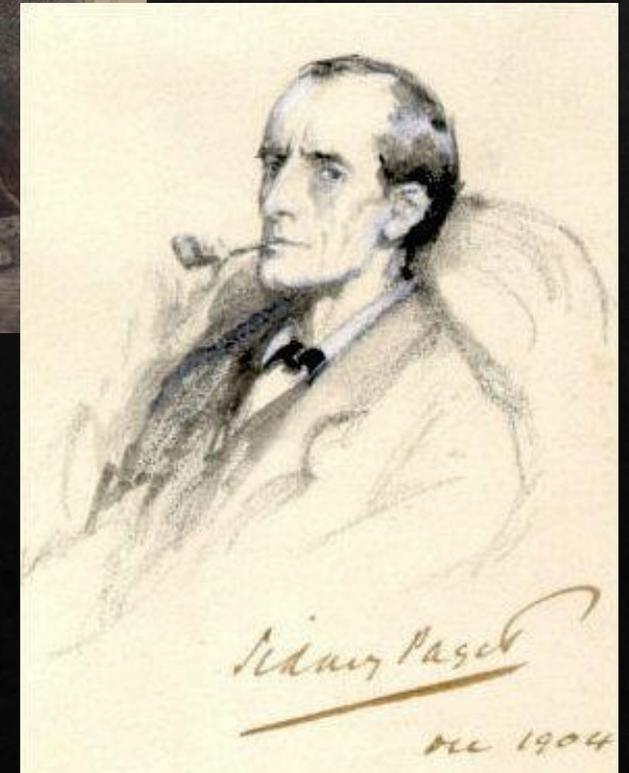
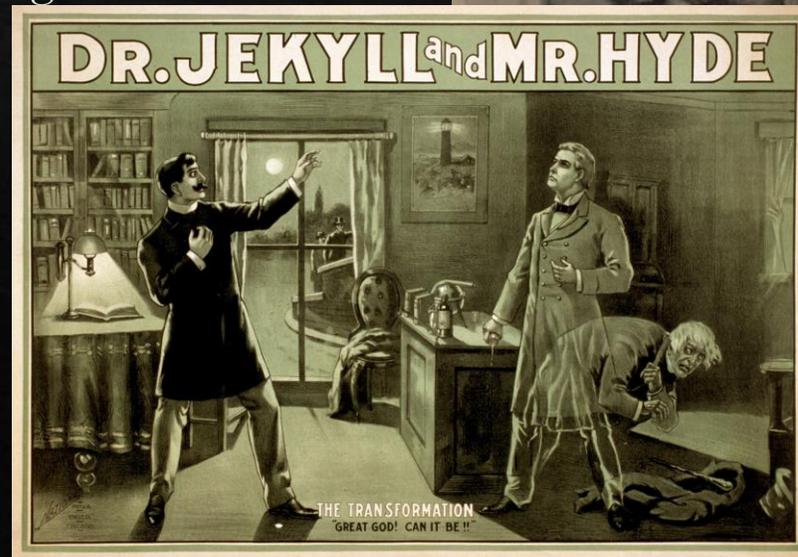
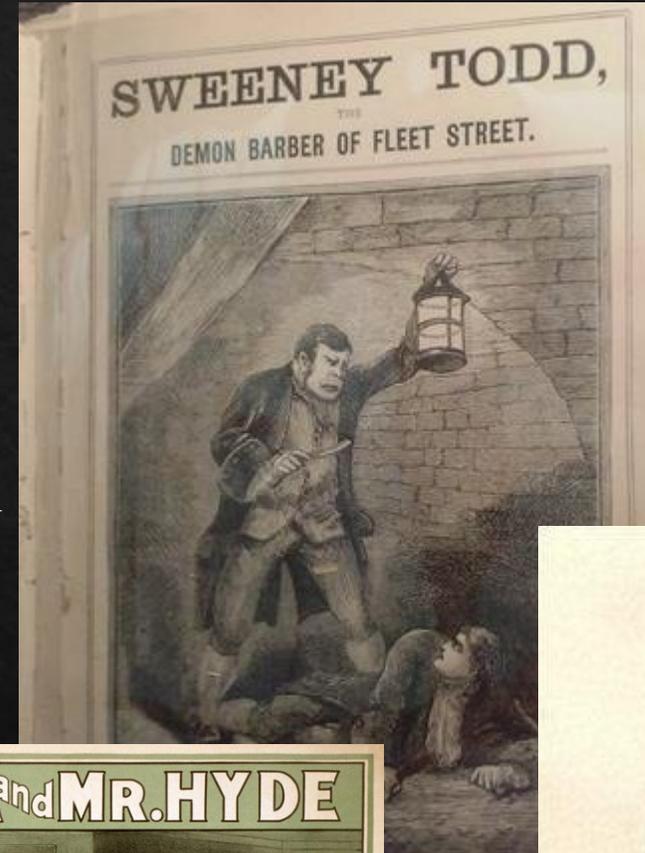
# Other Factors:

- ◆ Conflict Between Science and Folk Ways
- ◆ Public Figures
- ◆ New Rich

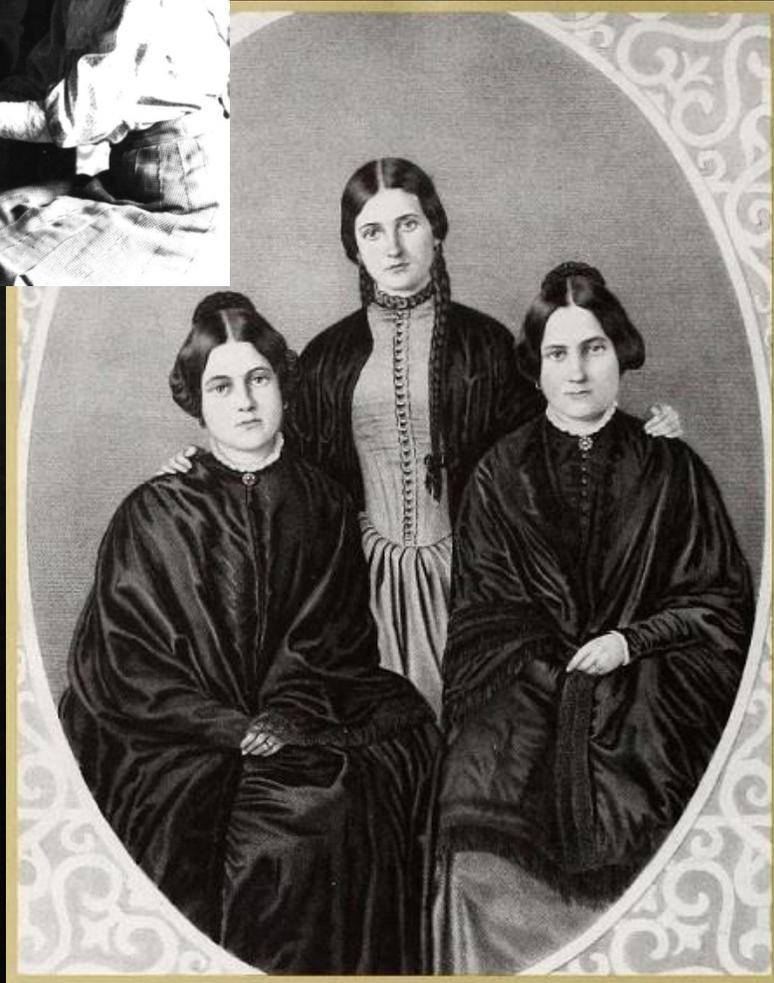


# Scientific Discoveries

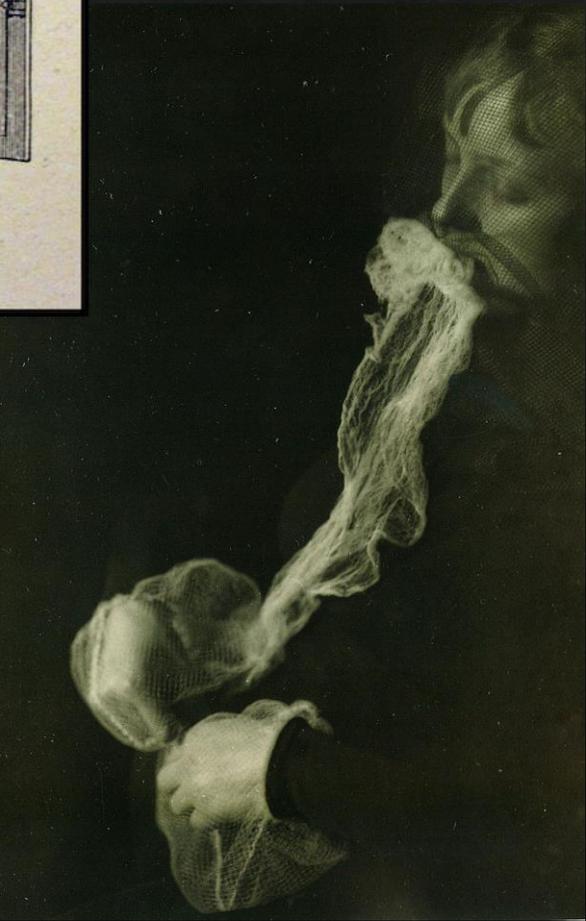
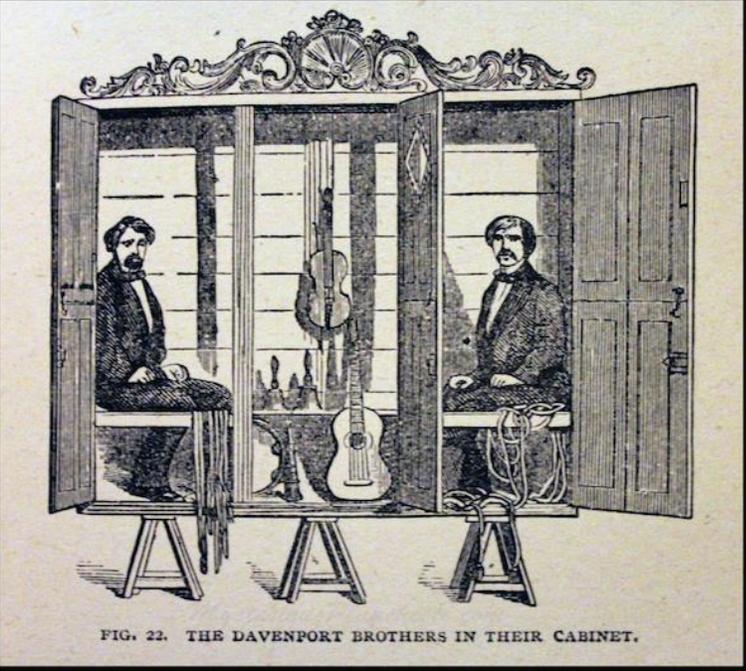
- ◆ Darwinism and Pasteurization
- ◆ Electricity, tele-communications, transportation
- ◆ Scriptural Geology
- ◆ Natural Theology and the Bridgewater Treatises



# Spiritualism



- ◇ While spiritualism, a belief system centered on a doctrine in which the dead can communicate with the living, existed long before the Civil War, it was not popularized until the mid to late nineteenth century. By 1897, it was believed that spiritualism had more than eight million believers in the United States and Europe, mostly drawn from the middle and upper classes
- ◇ The modern Spiritualist movement began on April 1, 1848, in the village of Hydesville, New York, when two teenaged sisters, Margaret and Kate Fox, claimed that they had communicated with the ghost of a man murdered at the house years before their family moved in.



# Spirit Photography

- ◆ Though Mary Todd Lincoln famously attempted to contact her husband, President Abraham Lincoln, following his 1865 assassination, her involvement with Spiritualism began three years earlier, when their son Willie died from typhoid fever at the age of 11. Mary Todd initially attended seances to cope with her grief but found them to be so comforting that she started hosting her own.
- ◆ According to the White House Historical Association, there is evidence that Mary Todd held as many as eight seances in the White House (specifically, the Red Room) following Willie's death, and that the president attended a few of them.



# Queen Victoria



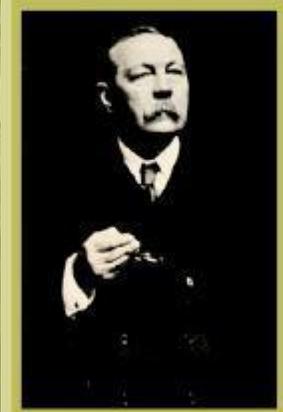
- ◇ Distraught over the 1861 death of her husband, Prince Albert, Victoria entered her “mourning period,” which lasted until the end of her life in 1901, and involved wearing all-black as well as mourning jewelry, which contained photos of Albert and locks of his hair. It also included attempts to contact Albert in the afterlife.
- ◇ Not long after Albert’s death, a 13-year-old medium named Robert James Lees claimed that the prince had gotten in touch during one of his séances saying that he had a message for the queen. Upon hearing this, Victoria arranged a séance with Lees, during which he referred to information no one else would know; most notably, a pet name he had for her.
- ◇ The teen performed numerous séances for the Queen at Buckingham Palace before turning over his mediumistic duties to another medium. Victoria continued holding séances at the palace and was known to seek her dead husband’s advice in political matters.

# Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

- ◇ It all started when Doyle joined a séance in 1880. Though he was initially a skeptic, he gradually became convinced that it was possible to communicate with the dead. In an 1887 letter to the weekly Spiritualist periodical *Light*, Doyle wrote that “it was absolutely certain that intelligence could exist apart from the body,” and that “after weighing the evidence, I could no more doubt the existence of the phenomena than I could doubt the existence of lions in Africa.”
- ◇ His interest grew much stronger after he believed he heard a personal message from his son. Holmes’ son Kingsley died from pneumonia contracted after being seriously wounded in the 1916 Battle of the Somme. Doyle ended up touring Europe and America to preach the wonders of Spiritualism and the afterlife.



The History of  
Spiritualism



Arthur C. Doyle

# Spiritualist Clues

- Oral history is a good starting place. Clues are aunts or grandmothers remembered as having “the gift,” “second sight,” “visitations,” or who were said to be “a little off.”
- Look for women active in women’s rights movements, as they might also have been Spiritualists. Their obituaries might list clubs or organizations known for activism.
- On headstones, watch for wording such as “Entered Summerland” (a term some Spiritualists use for heaven), epitaphs such as “There is no death,” or a “transition” date rather than a death date.
- Spiritualist communities: Lily Dale, New York; Lake Pleasant, Massachusetts; Cassadaga, Florida; or Chesterfield, Indiana. Lists of camps and churches are available at: National Spiritualist Association of Churches, Sunset Spiritualist Church, Directory of Spiritualist Centers in North America, and Association of Independent Readers and Rootworkers





# Records

Because Spiritualism has lacked uniformity, records and recordkeeping vary, but Spiritualist churches typically perform admissions to fellowship, naming services, marriages, and funerals.

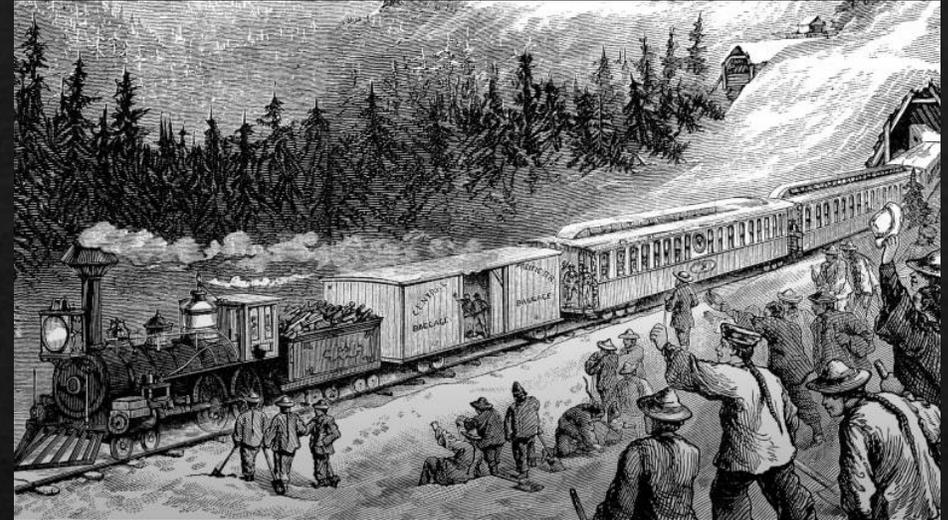
- Check city directories for Spiritualist churches and camps in the areas where ancestors resided. Also, look for ancestors advertising services as mediums or clairvoyants.
- Newspapers may report on visiting mediums, gatherings, and conventions, giving names of local churches and sponsors.
- Spiritualist church registers might still be with the church. If defunct, check with local and state historical societies, as well as university library collections, the American Antiquarian Society, the Library of Congress, and the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, searching on the keyword "Spiritualism."
- The website Ephemera collects Spiritualist records. See Listings of 19th Century Spiritualists for directories, registers, almanacs, newspapers, society membership lists, and convention proceedings.
- Review Ann Braude's "News from the Spirit World: A Checklist of American Spiritualist Periodicals, 1848-1900," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 99 (October 1989): 339-462; pdf edition, American Antiquarian Society (<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44539462.pdf>).

# New Rich



# Records For Industrial Times

- ◇ Railroad Records
- ◇ Labor Unions
- ◇ Non-Population Census Schedules, 1850-1880



Folger, J. A.	Coffee	20000	Steam	Coffee Roaster	2	7	5000	12	Miscellaneous	120	
+ Co	+ Spice Mills		Emps	Coffee Mills	2				Coffee	140,000 lbs	\$24,000
				Spice do	1				Spice	24,000 lbs	6,000
									Coal	57 Tons	325

- Folgers was founded as The Pioneer Steam Coffee and Spice Mills back in 1850 by 27-year-old William H. Bovee. According to the industry/multiplier schedule, in 1870 the company had 7 employees and 120,000 pounds of ground coffee in its inventory. One of the seven employees was James A. Folger, who later in 1872, bought out the partners of the coffee company, and renamed it J.A. Folger & Co.



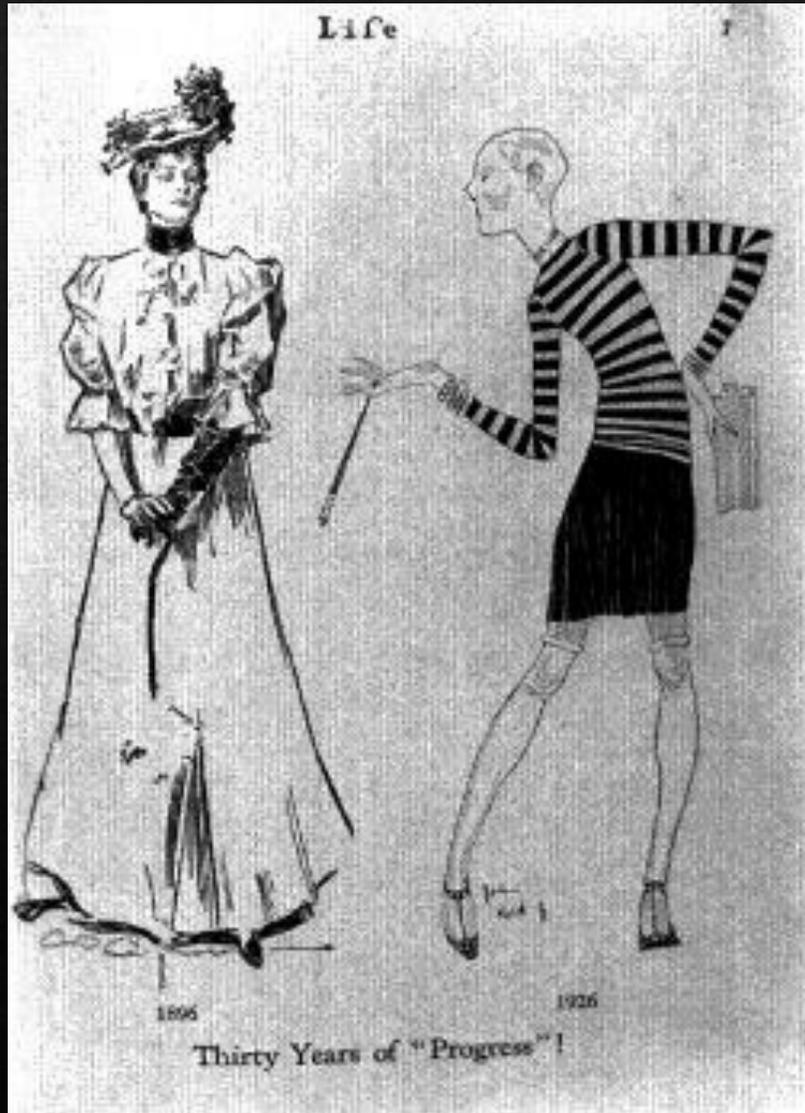
What Changed?

# WWI

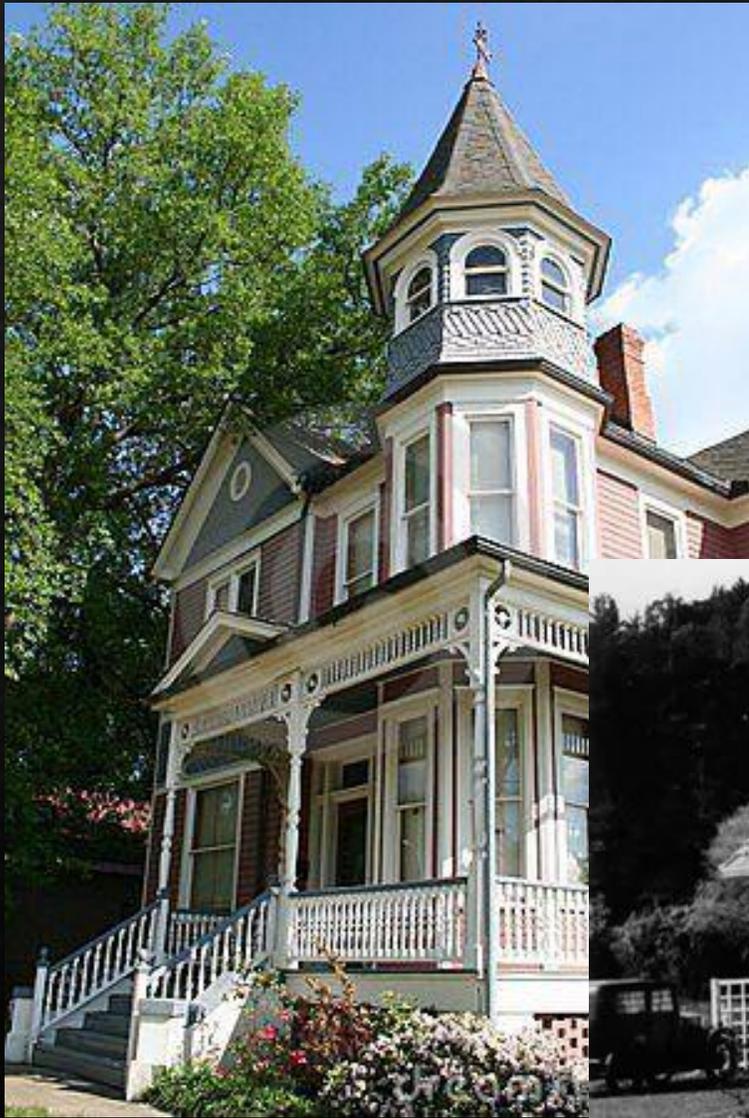


The Good  
Death was  
gone

# Socioeconomic Struggle



# The Great Depression





Thank you for  
joining me!