The Roaring ’20s:

The Age of Excess
Politics in the 1920s: The Republican Era

• Warren G. Harding (1921-1923)
• Most remembered for the scandals
• Numerous affairs
• Too many close friends holding high positions = abuse of power
• Teapot Dome Scandal (oil reserves on public land in Wyoming)
Teapot Dome Scandal

- Oil reserves were originally under the control of the US Navy Dept
- Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall (former senator) convinces Harding to move control over the oil reserves to his dept
- After receiving bribes & gifts, Fall gives exclusive leases to wealthy oil man Harry Sinclair
Senate Investigation of the Teapot Dome Scandal

• Lasts for several years
• Numerous witnesses
• Fall and Sinclair refuse to cooperate
• US Supreme Court rules that the leases are illegal because of the bribes and returns control of the oil reserves to the Dept of the Navy—McGrain v. Daugherty (1927)

• The Supreme Court also ruled that the US Congress did have the right to subpoena individuals for testimony

• 1929—Fall goes to jail for a year and is fined $100k
President Calvin Coolidge
(1923-1929)

- Harding dies in office in August 1923
- Coolidge becomes president
- Strong believer in “laissez faire” economics
- “hands off” or “let alone”
- No regulation of the stock market or other financial institutions (banks)
- Less government is better
- “Business of America is business!”
President Herbert Hoover (1929-1933)

- Stock Market Crashes in 1929
- Billions of dollars are lost
- Unemployment skyrockets
- 25-30 percent across the country
- 50 percent across the industrial Midwest
- Hoover refuses to take action; strong believer in “laissez faire” economics
- Believes that the market naturally goes through ups and downs
Social Changes of the 1920s

Prohibition

• 18\textsuperscript{th} Amendment (1920)
• Bans the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol (exception religious purposes)
• Women’s Christian Temperance Union
• WCTU believes that alcohol is to blame for society’s ills
Rise of Organized Crime

- Big bucks could be made “bootlegging” alcohol
- Speakeasies
- The Mafia
- Mobster like Al Capone (Chicago)
- Murder rates rise dramatically
- Gang Wars
Cultural Changes

- The Jazz Age (born in Harlem)
- **Duke Ellington**
- Later referred to as the Harlem Renaissance
- Gains popularity across the country
- Swing dancing
Professional Sports

- Professional Baseball: Babe Ruth
- Professional Football: founded in 1920
- Early on college football was more popular
- By the 1930s, pro football was gaining in popularity
- Horseracing
Changes for Women (urban areas)

- Flappers = young women who were more open with their sexuality; willing to challenge the norms of society
- Pushing the envelope as to what was socially acceptable
- Shorter skirts
- Shorter hair
- Smoking in public
- Vamps = young woman willing to do anything
Culture War

- Traditionalists vs. New Urban Lifestyle
- Traditionalists believed that American Society was being corrupted
- Return to traditional values
- Many traditionalists blamed foreigners (xenophobia)
- Anti-immigration laws to limit the amount of immigration
- Religion vs. Science
- The Scopes Trial

“Another Pied Piper,” E. J. Pace’s widely reprinted editorial cartoon (from William Jennings Bryan’s Seven Questions in Dispute, 1924)
Hyper-consumerism

- Throughout the 1920s, hyper-consumerism existed
- Products make life easier: electric appliances, washing machines, automobiles, electric lighting, etc.
- Availability of credit
- Buy whatever is new!
Gambling on Stocks

- Buying on Margin
- People would borrow money to invest in the stock market
- Very dangerous practice
- People believed that the Stock Market would rise forever
- 1929 Crash = Huge sell off
- Economic Panic
- Bear Market vs. Bull Market
Economic Depression

Three Major Causes:
1. Overproduction
2. Huge personal debt
3. No government regulations
   - The country would be in an economic depression until WWII
   - Change in economic theory
   - Keynesian Theory (more government involvement)
   - FDR elected in 1932
   - The New Deal