was a guest at President Theodore Roosevelt’s inauguration. His autobiography, which he dictated to S. M. Barrett, an Oklahoma school superintendent, appeared in 1907, two years before his death.

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Native Americans

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**Gilded Age**

HISTORIANS OFTEN use the term the *Gilded Age* to refer to the period from approximately 1877, which marked the end of the post–Civil War era known as Reconstruction, to approximately 1900. They adopted the name from *The Gilded Age* (1873), a novel by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner. This novel satirized the politics of the era and the fantasies of get-rich-quick dreamers.

The first historians to use the term felt that the term fit the period 1877 to 1900 for several reasons. First, the term *gilded* implies a false glitter over a cheap base. By using this word instead of *golden*, historians called attention to the materialism of the age, corruption in business and politics, and the great disparity between the splendor in which the nation’s wealthiest lived and the grinding poverty experienced by many Americans. They were suggesting that the prosperity brought by industrial expansion did not touch most of the nation’s working masses. Furthermore, although the Industrial Revolution had raised factory and farm productivity, business cycles of boom-and-bust, low wages, and rising farmer debt were causing deep discontent. To historians looking back, the government response to social problems seemed not only inadequate but compared unfavorably to the Progressive Era, when increasing numbers of individuals began to support a more active role for government in achieving public welfare.

Most historians today resist making too sharp a contrast between the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era. They recognize that many individuals during the Gilded Age sought ways to improve social and economic conditions and that some politicians took steps to address reform issues. Still, historians continue to use the term *Gilded Age* to indicate the period when reform was a smaller priority than it became after 1900.

FURTHER READING


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**Gilman, Charlotte Perkins**

- **Born:** July 3, 1860, Hartford, Conn.
- **Education:** school to age 15, art studies at Rhode Island School of Design
- **Accomplishments:** author, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), Women and