CALIFORNIA CONTENT STANDARD 11.5.7

Technology Changes America

Specific Objective: Describe the rise of mass production techniques, the growth of cities, the impact of new technologies, and the resulting prosperity and effect on the American landscape.

Read the charts to answer the questions on the next page.

Changes in the Early 1900s

- Mass production—Henry Ford and other industrialists used assembly lines to increase the speed of production. For example, Ford reduced the time it took to produce one car from about twelve hours in 1910 to about two hours in 1913. By the 1920s, many goods were produced much faster than previously.
- New transportation—Electric streetcars helped people travel within cities. Cars quickly became popular—by the late 1920s about one in every five Americans owned one. Mail delivery by air began in 1918 and commercial passenger flights in 1927.
- Expansion of cities—Cities grew along with the expansion of industry.
 The automobile industry led to the growth of new cities built around related industries.
- Electricity—Factories used electricity
 to power machines and light their
 buildings. Factories no longer needed
 to be located near waterpower. New
 technology allowed electricity to be
 more easily transmitted over a distance,
 meaning that homes away from the
 center of cities could have electric
 lights and appliances.

Effects on the Economy and Landscape

- General prosperity—The 1920s was generally a time of prosperity. Improved technologies helped factories produce more goods and workers earn more money. Faster production made goods less expensive. Many people bought goods on credit.
- Roads—Growth in the number of automobiles led to the need for better roads.
 In 1916, the federal government began to pay half of the cost of highways built by states. By 1930, most major cities in the United States were connected by paved roads. Trucks competed with railroads to deliver goods. Roadside businesses such as gas stations, motels, and restaurants sprang up.
- Changes in cities—Improvements in construction techniques and materials made skyscrapers possible. Skyscrapers allowed cities to make better use of land and allowed more people to live and work in less space. Changes in transportation allowed cities to grow outward into suburbs. People lived farther away from work or other services because they could travel more easily. This expansion away from the center is sometimes called urban sprawl.