Social Classes & Status
Importance in the 1920s

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Social Status in the 1920s

Having high paying jobs that didn't require large amounts of physical work helped to feed the idea of leisure activities. You were considered to have a high status if you performed a lot of leisure activities, showing that you didn't have to spend all of your time working "The working day was gradually shortening and many jobs were not as physically demanding as the hard labour required of farm and factory work"("Class In 1920's America" crossrefitinfo, September 10th 2015)

Some Leisure activities included:

• Golfing
• Going to parks
• Camping
Highest and Lowest Social Class

What did the highest social class look like?: with the new invention of the radio, information was easier to access, which brought about celebrities. The best of these were professional athletes. They were so widely admired because they were paid money to play leisure activities.

What did the lowest social class look like?: What did it look like to have a lower status? The lowest status contained mostly people of a minority. They often did hard labor and didn't make very much money, and did almost no Leisure activities.
How were social classes different in the 1920s?

- As consumerism formed a new level of the middle class, there was a large amount of income disparity occurring. Income disparity, also defined as income inequality, basically is a two-sided coin. Either you were rich or you were poor. This inequality hurt the lower class, as most of their hard-earned money (mostly in minimum amounts) were distributed amongst many of their family members and were used to pay for living expenses. "As relating to the entire population of the United States subject to Federal income tax, the proportion filing returns was 6.85 per cent. The per capita net income reported was $223.87 and the per capita income tax was $10.14" (Mellon par. 6).
What were the social classes defined as in 1920s America?

During the 1920s, the upper class basically split into two types of wealthy citizens: the ones with new money and the ones with old money. F. Scott Fitzgerald coined this phrase in his book “The Great Gatsby”, published in 1925. “New money” refers to people who used to reside in the lower class but obtained or earned money and wealth within their own generation, rather than the previous generation. This newfound wealth pushes their social status to the near-top, as wealth defined one’s social status in the 1920s. “Old money” refers to people who have obtained wealth based solely on inheritance. Their wealthy status occurred because of their ancestors and their generation. People who held “old money” usually looked down upon people who held “new money” because they had held that money throughout their entire life, rather than acquire it just recently. Finally, the lower class, or the class that had virtually “no money”, referred to the poverty-stricken individuals and families who were affected by the increasing income disparity. The phrase “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer” truly defined the 1920s.
How was wealth gathered?

- The 1920's were a time of change
- People were going to the money which meant there were more people moving to cities and less living on farms
- The stock market was booming
- history.com stated "economic growth swept many Americans into an affluent but unfamiliar consumer society" ("The Roaring Twenties" par. 1)
How did they get wealthy quick?

- Ponzi Scheme
- Pyramid Scheme
- Stock Market
- Florida Land Boom

A Pyramid Scheme is as stated by Slideshare "essentially robbing Peter to pay Paul" ("1920s Get Rich Quick Schemes" par. 12).
Nouveau Riche

What does the French phrase Nouveau Riche mean, and what did it mean to people of the 1920s? This term means newly rich, and is usually used derogatorily. The dictionary definition is "a person who has recently become rich and who likes to spend a lot of money." This may explain the sudden economic crash that follows this period. The 1920's has many rich people, a few middle class, and many lower class. This term also means lacking of class.
Sources


- "'Roaring Twenties' a Time of Economic and Social Change" many things.org. Web, September 10th 2015