



# The Robber Barons and the Sherman Antitrust Act: Reshaping American Business (Milestones in American History)

By Tim McNeese

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During the decades following the American Civil War, the economy of the United States experienced phenomenal growth. At every turn - in agriculture, shipping, merchandizing, manufacturing, and transportation - a new American system of production and distribution was born. As the economy grew, so did the personal wealth of a handful of intrepid investors, dealmakers, and Wall Street financiers. A new class of business leaders was born, dominating their sectors of the nation's ever-expanding industrial base. To some, they were the mighty titans of industry. To others, they were greedy robber barons. As the American people came to question the robber barons' self-serving business practices, observers called for reform. The call was answered in 1890 with the passage of the Sherman Antitrust Act, a piece of legislation designed to bring down these controlling interests in the U.S. economy. "The Robber Barons and the Sherman Antitrust Act" explores the foundations and repercussions of the law that reshaped American business.

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Tim McNeese is associate professor of history at York College in York, Nebraska.

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