



The Dawn of Innovation: The First American Industrial Revolution

By Charles R. Morris

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In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, America went from being a largely rural economy, with little internal transportation infrastructure, to a fledgling industrial powerhouse—setting the stage for the vast fortunes that would be made in the golden age of American capitalism. In *The Dawn of Innovation*, Charles R. Morris vividly brings to life a time when three stupendous American innovations—universal male suffrage, the shift of political power from elites to the middle classes, and a broad commitment to mechanized mass-production—gave rise to the world's first democratic, middle-class, mass-consumption society, a shining beacon to nations and peoples ever since. Behind that ideal were the machines, the men, and the trading and transportation networks that created a new, world-class economic power.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

An unprecedented 3.9 percent average annual rate of economic growth—sustained for more than a century—propelled the U.S. to global economic leadership. Morris chronicles the remarkable story behind the remarkable number. To begin with, it is a story of American shipwrights frenetically attempting to match Great Britain in building warships during the War of 1812. Peace meant that American industrialists turned to making shoes, stoves, steam engines, and locomotives, yet they still strove to wrest world economic leadership from Britain. Readers soon realize that American capitalists who surmounted daunting technical challenges (through homegrown Yankee ingenuity and through industrial espionage) also solved a formidable social problem. Instead of building British-style Coketowns that enriched a few while immiserating the masses in the factories, America's economic pioneers spread the benefits of modern productivity throughout a mass-consumption society. Morris concludes with a provocative comparison of the nineteenth-century duel pitting the U.S. against Great Britain and today's rivalry between China and the U.S. Economic history freighted with social and political relevance. --Bryce Christensen

Review

A Daily Beast Favorite Book of the Year

A Wall Street Journal Best Business Book of the Year

Kirkus

"The author is at his best when he focuses on the people behind the technology.... Morris' research is thorough.... Ambitious."

Paul Steiger, editor-in-chief of ProPublica and former managing editor of the Wall Street Journal

"Charles Morris, fast becoming our leading narrative historian of economic success and scandals, tells how nineteenth-century America outproduced, outmarketed, outdistributed—and stole technology from—the former No. 1 power, Great Britain, to displace it on the world stage. The fascinating tale also holds crucial lessons for Americans as China races to unseat the U.S. as the world leader."

Charles H. Ferguson, director of Inside Job and author of Predator Nation

"A fascinating book that pulls together the strands of American development into a sweeping and vivid account of the nation's rise to economic preeminence. Charles Morris has a special gift for making complicated subjects accessible and even entertaining."

Booklist

"An unprecedented 3.9 percent average annual rate of economic growth—sustained for more than a century—propelled the U.S. to global economic leadership. Morris chronicles the remarkable story behind the remarkable number... Morris concludes with a provocative comparison of the nineteenth-century duel pitting the U.S. against Great Britain and today's rivalry between China and the U.S. Economic history freighted with social and political relevance."

USA Today“Morris obviously possesses an inquiring mind.... [He] explicates ... developments skillfully.”

PublishersWeekly.com“Morris's analysis shines brightest in the final chapter as he compares the United States' past economic growth with the current hyper-expansion of China. Only then, by examining the hurdles China faces in its ascendance to economic superpower, does Morris show how truly innovative the transformation of America was and why it will be impossible to repeat in the future.”

Tyler Cowen, New York Times Magazine, One-Page Magazine“The early 19th century as a pep talk for today.”

John Steele Gordon, Wall Street Journal

“[A]n illuminating narrative that shows, among much else, what happened when Yankee ingenuity met the Industrial Revolution.... Post-Civil War industrialization had an important and largely overlooked predecessor in the first decades of the 19th century. It is a story well worth telling, and Mr. Morris tells it well.... The author's in-text illustrations and diagrams are very helpful in showing the cleverness and ingenuity of mechanisms designed by such forgotten giants as the clockmaker Eli Terry, the gun maker Thomas Blanchard and the steam-engine designer George H. Corliss. Mr. Morris's deft character sketches bring them to life as well. The steam engine powered the steamboat and the railroad, which knitted the country together into one huge common market, allowing industrial economies of scale that would, in the later 19th century, astonish the world....”

Civil Engineering“In an elegantly written assessment of how the current situation is like—and unlike—its 19th-century analogue, Morris flashes the knowledge and insight that landed him on the Council on Foreign Relations and crafts an effective coda for his paeon to American innovation.”

Michael Lind, New York Times Book Review

About the Author

Charles R. Morris has written twelve books, including *The Coming Global Boom*, a *New York Times* Notable Book of 1990; *The Tycoons*, a *Barron's* Best Book of 2005; and *The Trillion Dollar Meltdown*, winner of the Gerald Loeb Award and a *New York Times* Bestseller. A lawyer and former banker, Mr. Morris's articles and reviews have appeared in many publications including the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

Users Review

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