

# 15.6

## Mass Culture in the 1950s



## **As a Young Historian, I will be able to...**

- Examine the rise of the suburbs and the growth of the interstate highway system.
- Explain the causes and effects of prosperity in the 1950s on consumers.
- Discuss postwar changes in family life.
- Describe changes in education in the postwar period.
- Describe the rise of new forms of mass culture.

# **Suburban Migration**

**People began to flock to the suburbs because of a shortage of urban housing**

**Suburbs began to build in a formula to build houses in weeks rather than months**

**Installment plans allowed people to move in quickly & pay off slowly**

**The government began to invest in communities by building highways**

# Car Culture

**People began to define themselves by the cars they drove & almost everyone commuted to work**

**Interstate Highway Act- Funded 41,000 miles of highways to connect nations major cities**

**Belief this would increase economy, boost nations defense, & strengthen nations prosperity**

**Drive-in movie theaters & drive-thrus were developed to increase car dependency**

# Consumption & Consumerism

**Consumerism-** You buy as much as you want, when you want.

**Median Family Income-** Average family income, rose almost 2x during the 1950s

People began to buy more on credit “Buy Now, Pay Later!”

Shopping became a pastime for people & new technology such as washing machines & TVs were needed in every home

# Families & Communities

The idea of the “perfect family” began. Men were the breadwinners & women stayed home

**Nuclear Family-** Household consisting of a mother, father, children to make American society

**Benjamin Spock** wrote *Common Sense Book of Baby & Child Care* to teach the importance of child care

People began to spend more on their children & pop culture toys became “must haves”

# Religion

**Church attendance rose from 50 to 80 million & church helped strengthen communities**

**Billy Graham-** Evangelist who traveled the nation to begin religious revivals

**Congress added “In God We Trust” to the dollar bill & “under God” to the pledge**

**Televangelists began to speak to people through the family TV**

# Educational Opportunities

College attendance almost tripled after WWII, almost 90% of nation had high school degree

The federal government began to fund public schools, guaranteeing free education through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade

**California Master Plan-** Set up three tiers of high education: research universities, states college, & community college

***Brown V. Board of Education*** ended segregated schools

# Television Shapes Culture

**E. B. White** wrote “ It is going to be the test of the modern world, we shall stand or fall by the television.”

TVs sold faster than radios or cars & people stayed home to watch *Howdy Doody* or the *Mickey Mouse Club*

50 million people would tune in to watch shows like *I Love Lucy*

Pop-culture began to affect the dominate culture