From Village to Metropolis

Writing in 1878, the historian John S. Hittell described San Francisco as the "leading center of population, commerce, industry, wealth, luxury . . . intellectual, political and financial activity" of the Pacific Coast. San Francisco was, he observed, "the most brilliant center of civilization in the bosom of the North Pacific and the metropolis of the western coast of the United States." As Hittell suggested, cities like San Francisco were supremely important in the development of the Pacific Coast. Urban centers acted as catalysts transforming the back country into settled areas. San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Portland led the growth of the Pacific Coast to become in the early twentieth century one of the more heavily urbanized sections of the United States. Even as they altered the Pacific Coast, the cities themselves changed. As they grew, they became more and more spatially dispersed and increasingly diverse in terms of the social and economic backgrounds of their residents.

While rapidly growing and changing, the Pacific Coast cities were hardly unique. The United States was becoming a distinctly
urban nation in the years between the Civil War and World War I. Through transportation improvements, especially the telegraph and railroad, America became more and more a nation of interconnected large cities, in which regional and national urban networks grew. The story of the rise of Pacific Coast cities is, in part, an account of the roles they played in the development of urban networks in the United States in general and in the Far West in particular.

Economic Growth

From the outset, the Pacific Coast grew up as largely urban, one of the more heavily urbanized regions in the United States. In fact, Pacific Coast cities developed rapidly in the late nineteenth century—so quickly that some of them differed fundamentally in their early development from the evolution of most other cities in the United States. They were “instant cities,” centers compressing the process of urbanization normally requiring many decades to complete into just one or two generations. Such development was most pronounced in San Francisco (and beyond the Pacific Coast in Denver and Chicago), but all of the other major Pacific Coast cities shared to some degree in that pattern of growth.

San Francisco quickly became the preeminent commercial center of the Pacific Coast. Possessing one of the two good natural harbors on the coast (Seattle had the other), San Francisco had

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well-established trade connections with the Atlantic Coast, Europe, Mexico, Latin America, Hawaii, and the Far East even before the discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill in 1848. Nonetheless, it was the tremendous expansion of commerce resulting from the gold rush that provided the city with its initial spurt of growth. As the jumping-off point for the diggings, San Francisco controlled the gold rush of the late 1840s and early 1850s. While San Francisco’s basic economic function as a transshipment point did not change from Mexican to American times, the goods handled did. Gold became the chief export, reaching $54 million in value at its highest point in 1853. Imports became increasingly varied: lumber from Maine, agricultural goods and more lumber from the Pacific Northwest, flour from Chile, silk and rice from China, and manufactured products from the cities of the East Coast. From a hamlet of fewer than five hundred residents in 1846, San Francisco became a boomtown of fifty thousand a scant ten years later.

By 1870 San Francisco was a city of nearly 150,000; and ten years later it had become a metropolis of 234,000, the ninth largest city in the United States. Trade continued to drive San Francisco’s growth. Well into the late nineteenth century, the city controlled nearly all of the commerce within California, most of the coastal trade of the Pacific Coast, and much of the foreign trade of the region. San Francisco emerged as the financial center of the Pacific Coast. The actions of William Ralston, the president of the Bank of California, force-fed the growth of San Francisco in the early and mid-1870s. An urban entrepreneur, Ralston used bank funds and his own income, both derived from the control the bank exerted over the silver mines of Nevada’s Comstock Lode, to finance the construction of theaters, hotels, carriage works, woolen mills, sugar refineries, and furniture factories in San Francisco. Ever an optimist, Ralston eventually overreached himself, however. In 1875 the Bank of California was forced to close its doors, and Ralston was found dead a short time later, an apparent suicide.

Merchants, bankers, and real estate men—not manufacturers—made early San Francisco. Yet, although not as important as commerce in San Francisco’s development, manufacturing rose in significance as time passed. As early as 1860, San Francisco ranked ninth among American cities in the value of its manufactures, but 52 percent of all of the manufacturing in the city had to do with the refining of gold and silver. During the next five decades, the
city developed a more varied industrial base in food processing, the fabrication of clothing, ironmaking, and shipbuilding. By 1910 some 32 percent of the city's work force had manufacturing jobs, compared to 39 percent in trade and transportation.10

Across San Francisco Bay, Oakland grew up as a bedroom suburb of San Francisco, with many of its inhabitants embarking daily by ferry to work in the larger city. One real estate brochure of the 1880s claimed that "seven thousand San Francisco merchants own superb homes in Oakland and educate their children here." Oakland's residents prided themselves on the bucolic nature of their town. Streets lined with oak trees and beautiful real estate subdivisions won their praise and the accolades of visitors to their town. "We stopped at Oakland for the reason that we had heard so much of the beauty of the place," wrote a visitor from New York in 1880. "We found it beautiful indeed." A pamphlet distributed by the Board of Trade stressed the advantages of living in Oakland in terms of its climate, noting that "its atmosphere is pure, and at the same time mild; bracing, yet with an Italian softness."11

Oakland emerged as a major Pacific Coast city in the years 1890 through 1910. As late as 1890, Oakland possessed only one-sixth of the population of San Francisco, but two decades later Oakland was one-third the size its larger neighbor. By 1910 Oakland possessed three-quarters as many residents as Portland, three-fifths as many as Seattle, and one-half of the number living in Los Angeles. The Oakland Chamber of Commerce closed one of its meetings in 1906 with the simple statement, "Oakland is to be the metropolis of the West."12 Both commercial and industrial developments lay behind Oakland's growth. Harbor improvements allowed Oakland to take over much of the coastal and foreign trade once going through San Francisco, until by 1910 about 30 percent of the freight tonnage passing through the Golden Gate was handled by Oakland merchants. Oakland also became a center of industry. The city had always possessed some local industries: breweries, canneries, and cotton mills. With better transportation links resulting from the improvements to their harbor and the entrance of additional railroads to their city, Oakland manufacturers were able to increase the scope of their operations. They benefited as well from the earthquake and fire that destroyed much of San Francisco in 1906, since many of the damaged city's industries relocated in relatively intact Oakland.13
Developments in Southern California seemed more difficult to explain. Writing in 1902, a San Francisco insurance man wondered about the growth taking place in Los Angeles. Like many people of his time, he was baffled by the city’s rapid expansion. Neither manufacturing, foreign trade, nor the possession of a productive hinterland seemed to lie behind the city’s development. Like many other San Franciscans, however, he viewed Los Angeles as a growing threat to his city’s hegemony over the Pacific Coast. As he put it in a business magazine:

The oftener one visits Los Angeles the more certain he becomes that it is a freak creation. There is really no actual reason for its being—i.e. as a handsome big city. It is not a manufacturing town, nor a commercial city; neither has it a big productive area around it. . . . All the same there is no disputing the fact that it is here. A big fine-appearing city—architecturally infinitely superior to San Francisco or any other coast town.14

Far from being a new settlement when California entered the Union in 1850, Los Angeles was almost seventy years old; but there was little about the town that foreshadowed its development as a great metropolis. Los Angeles was a nondescript agricultural village of 1,610, geographically isolated from the rest of the United States. Nor did that status change quickly, for the gold rush passed Los Angeles by. Lacking San Francisco’s good harbor and nearby natural resources, Los Angeles seemed destined to obscurity. In 1876 the town still possessed only six thousand inhabitants.15

The coming of the railroad changed the situation. In 1876 the residents of Los Angeles approved a $600,000 subsidy to attract the Southern Pacific Railroad. When the line was completed a few years later, Los Angeles possessed its first transcontinental connection, and a second was added when the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad entered the town in 1883. To increase traffic the railroads sought to attract settlers and mounted a national advertising campaign that pictured Southern California as a Garden of Eden. Rate wars meant that cheap overland transportation was available (for a time in 1887 the cost of traveling from the
Mississippi Valley to Los Angeles was reduced to only one dollar.\textsuperscript{16}

People came to Los Angeles in a series of booms. A health boom attracted many in the 1880s as they sought Southern California’s year-long, mild, Mediterranean climate and natural beauty. With its “perpetual spring,” Los Angeles was, its boosters declared, “a veritable sanitorium.” Still others came to Los Angeles to retire. By 1910, 21 percent of the city’s residents were over the age of fifty-five, a proportion considerably higher than the 14 to 17 percent in most American cities. The possibilities of growing fruit, especially oranges, drew others into the region. An oil boom beckoned to still more. By 1914 California had moved into first place among the oil-producing states of the nation, with much of the oil gushing from wells in Southern California.\textsuperscript{17}

More significant than either oil or oranges was real estate speculation. Beginning in the 1880s, the work of subdividers eager to attract buyers advanced the economy of Los Angeles in a series of booms and busts. The interaction of immigrants with real estate men was the force that seemed to create in Los Angeles its insubstantial quality. The work of Henry Huntington was of special importance. In a manner similar to William Ralston several decades earlier in San Francisco, Huntington played the role of urban entrepreneur. Through his control of companies in a triad of interrelated industries—real estate, electric street railroads, and electric power generation—Huntington both built up Los Angeles and bolstered his private fortune during the first two decades of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{18} Only in the very late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did Los Angeles start becoming a center for commerce and industry, and even then the activities of real estate developers remained more significant than those of merchants and manufacturers in the city’s advance.\textsuperscript{19}

What San Francisco was for the entire Pacific Coast, Portland was on a smaller scale for many years to the Pacific Northwest, the premier commercial city. Founded in 1844 on the banks of the Willamette River just upstream from its confluence with the Columbia River, Portland possessed valuable water connections to the Pacific Ocean. Portland’s first significant burst of growth came with the gold rush to California. Abandoning the mines, some people settled in Oregon. More importantly, San Franciscans needed food grown in Oregon’s rich Willamette Valley and
lumber from the forests of the Pacific Northwest, and much of the trade in those goods passed through the hands of Portland’s merchants. Through their control of that commerce and of local trade, Portland businessmen were able in the 1850s and 1860s to achieve dominance over their rivals in nearby communities, boosting their town to a position of regional power.²⁰

Portland continued to develop as a commercial center for the next half century. When the demands of San Franciscans slackened, Portland merchants extended their reach for markets; and in that action they were aided by the coming of transcontinental railroads to their city in the 1870s and 1880s. The railroads helped Portland’s business leaders both participate in America’s growing national market and extend their sway over a regional hinterland reaching from Oregon into eastern Washington and parts of western Idaho and Montana.²¹ As a center for increasingly diversified trade, Portland experienced steadier growth than Los Angeles or San Francisco for most of the nineteenth century and had a population reaching forty-six thousand by 1890.²²

Growth soon accelerated. Portland’s population doubled in the 1890s and then doubled again in the first decade of the twentieth century to reach 207,000. Much of Portland’s development continued to be based on trade. The expansion of farming in western Oregon and the upper Columbian Basin led to a population increase of 500,000 in Portland’s interior hinterland in the opening years of the twentieth century. Portland also benefited from a substantial increase in demand for Pacific Northwest lumber. Associated with the trade expansion was the growth of industry, as Portland businessmen set up furniture factories, canning plants, and flour mills to process the fruits of field and forest. Still more was involved. Portland became large enough to support manufacturing and service industries geared to its home market, which in turn helped set off a real estate boom that pushed the value of new building permits granted in Portland up 400 percent between 1905 and 1911. By 1910 Portland was in the midst of prosperity. There was, wrote one of the city’s journalists, “no cloud on the horizon.”²³

Such optimism was partially misplaced, for Seattle was rapidly replacing Portland as the leading center of commerce, industry, and population in the Pacific Northwest. Founded in 1851 on Elliot Bay in Puget Sound, Seattle was in its early days a lumber
town, with San Francisco as its major market. An Indian scare, poor transportation links to the rest of the country, a scarcity of women (only twenty of its two hundred inhabitants in 1860 were women), and recurrent fires limited Seattle’s growth. The town possessed only 3,533 inhabitants in 1880.24

Seattle’s rapid development, like that of Los Angeles and Oakland, began when the city acquired rail connections to the Midwest and East. In the 1880s, Seattle secured indirect links through the Northern Pacific; and in 1893 the Great Northern designated Seattle as its western terminal point, giving Seattle direct connections to eastern markets.25 The rail lines were completed just in time for Seattle to benefit from further developments in the 1890s. With much of the Great Lakes states cut over, America came to depend more heavily than before on the Pacific Northwest for its lumber; and Seattle, like Portland, helped supply that demand. Weyerhaeuser Lumber made Seattle its new home as the firm moved west. Even more explosive, although also more short-lived, was the impact on Seattle of the gold rush to Alaska. Possessing a fine natural harbor and ambitious merchants, Seattle benefited more than San Francisco or Portland as an outfitting point for the North.26 At the same time, local railroads opened coal mines and farming areas near Seattle. The exploitation of its regional hinterland was as important as the opening of national markets for Seattle’s continuing development. Pushed by those events, Seattle’s population reached forty-three thousand by 1890 and eighty-one thousand ten years later.27

Seattle’s population then tripled to 237,000 in 1910. Much of the growth occurred as an extension of trends begun earlier. The lumber industry, a rich farming hinterland, and coastal and foreign trade remained important underpinnings in the city’s development. In addition, new industries developed beyond the small-scale, local stage: shipbuilding, the salmon industry (Seattleites controlled the Alaskan as well as the local fishing industry), and ironmaking. Perhaps most importantly, as was taking place at about the same time in Portland, Seattle became a large enough market in and of itself to spur the growth of a wide variety of manufacturing and service businesses. As a result, Seattle’s economy became more diversified than in earlier years.28

All of the Pacific Coast cities thus grew initially as commercial cities exploiting natural resources in the hinterlands at their com-
mand. San Francisco received its boost from the gold rush to California, and Oakland initially fed upon San Francisco's development. Los Angeles benefited from a series of health, real estate, fruit-growing, and oil booms in Southern California. Portland and Seattle owed their growth to numerous causes, but most importantly to the control they exerted over the agricultural and lumber industries of the Pacific Northwest.

Commerce would long remain at the heart of the Pacific Coast cities, and, indeed, is still very important to them today. Unlike some eastern and midwestern cities, those on the Pacific Coast did not become national industrial centers. Commerce lay at their core into at least the 1920s. Nonetheless, the economies of the Pacific Coast cities became increasingly diversified with the passage of time. Industrial and service businesses developed to serve the growing populations of the cities and their hinterlands; and in some cases, most notably in that of San Francisco, the new businesses reached beyond local markets to regional and even national markets. In short, as time passed, Pacific Coast cities—like many cities elsewhere in the United States—moved beyond their origins to become complex centers of economic activity.

Spatial and Population Development

As the Pacific Coast cities developed, they spread outward to cover larger areas and their populations became more diverse. New methods of transportation, especially electric street railroads, enabled the cities to cover more and more land, just as was happening in urban centers elsewhere in America. At the same time, the movement of immigrants into some of the Pacific Coast cities and the differentiation of their economies led to division of the populations into distinct groups. Neighborhoods distinguished by race or income level formed. The growth of industry, however hesitant, also contributed to social divisions, as socioeconomic classes began developing. Social conflict, both real and perceived, came to characterize the cities, as people of different classes and
backgrounds lived in spatially separated neighborhoods that seemed to have little in common.

San Francisco never possessed a socially homogeneous population. As a magnet for fortune-seekers of all sorts, the city attracted a diverse citizenry from the first, and that diversity persisted into the twentieth century. In 1900, 30 percent of the city’s population was foreign-born, and an additional 40 percent had parents who were born abroad. While 94 percent of the population was white (5 percent was Chinese or Japanese, and 0.5 percent black), many nationalities were represented—Irish, Germans, English, and Italians being the most common. Socio-economic divisions also separated San Franciscans. By the early twentieth century, San Francisco was the most heavily unionized city on the Pacific Coast, and one of the more heavily unionized in the United States. Labor-management conflict was common, often going beyond the lines of single crafts to pit workers against employers throughout the city almost as warring groups, especially from 1901 onward.

Hemmed in by geographic barriers—San Francisco Bay to the north and east, high hills to the west—San Francisco was more densely populated than the other Pacific Coast cities, and in the 1870s and 1880s distinct neighborhoods grew up. Most lasted with only a few changes into the twentieth century: the South of Market District of young, unskilled men living in boardinghouses, the Mission District made up of skilled workers, often Irish, the Italian North Beach, Chinatown, the middle-class Western Addition, the upper-class Nob Hill and Pacific Heights, and so forth. In the early twentieth century tunnels were bored through the hills and streetcar lines built to open new areas to settlement—the Richmond District, a middle-class area, being the most notable. Neighborhood developments reinforced the economic and ethnic divisions perceived by some of San Francisco’s business leaders, barriers they hoped to break down through city planning.

Across San Francisco Bay, Oakland possessed a more homogeneous population. However, small black, Japanese, and Chinese populations established themselves, each living in its own part of town; and, as the city developed an industrial base, a wider variety of whites settled there. More noticeable than the development of ethnic neighborhoods was the growth of middle-class and upper-class areas—Piedmont, Montclair, Trestle Glen, the Crocker High-
lands—within the existing city limits, a development made possible by the rapid adoption of the electric street railroad. Oakland also grew by annexation, especially in the years 1897 through 1910, when it acquired Temescal, Linda Vista, Peralta, Claremont, Fruitvale, Melrose, Fitchberg, and Elmhurst. Much less densely populated than San Francisco, Oakland covered sixty-three square miles by 1910, up from only a few square miles thirty years before.34

Like Oakland, Los Angeles had a more uniform population than San Francisco. In the nineteenth century native white Americans and immigrants from western Europe comprised most of the population of Los Angeles, but the city’s population grew more diversified in the early twentieth century as Los Angeles attracted immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Mexico, and Japan. Even so, only 4 percent of the population was non-white in 1910, and only 19 percent was composed of foreign-born whites. Much of the population was made up of farmers and small-town folk who moved from the Midwest or Great Plains to retire. As the historian Robert Fogelson has noted, the great majority of the residents of Los Angeles “fit well within the broad range of the middle class, had rural midwestern, or at least native American backgrounds.”35

More than any other Pacific Coast city, Los Angeles sprawled. Real estate subdividers working with the owners of streetcar lines (often the same people, as in the case of Henry Huntington) led to an “unmatched residential dispersal” in Los Angeles. Already larger in area than its Pacific Coast rivals by 1910 (though still smaller in population than San Francisco), Los Angeles continued to outpace them in succeeding years. By 1930 Los Angeles trailed only New York in area among American cities, and it was nearly twice as large as the combined areas of San Francisco and Oakland.36

Sharper divisions among different segments of its citizenry accompanied Portland’s growth. By 1910 about 21 percent of the city’s residents were of foreign birth and another 25 percent were of foreign or mixed parentage. Immigrant neighborhoods developed. Jewish communities, which had long existed, increased in importance to the point that they had their own newspaper and a leader acknowledged as their mayor. One section of the city became the center of an Italian colony, and another was inhabited by Greek railroad workers. Substantial bodies of blacks, Chinese, and Japanese also lived in the town.37
When compared to the much more heavily unionized cities of San Francisco and Seattle, Portland was relatively free of labor-management strife. Like Los Angeles, Portland was known as a nonunion town. Nonetheless, organized labor increased its strength in Portland during the opening decade of the twentieth century. In 1908 the city’s unions formed a Central Labor Council to coordinate their activities, and a few months later business leaders set up the Employers Association of Oregon in opposition. Growing class divisions found political outlets. In 1909 the Portland Labor Press led a successful drive to deprive a real estate developer of the city’s mayoralty because his “administration, if he is elected, will be a riot of business, big business.” Two years later, the Longshoremen’s Union spearheaded a movement that organized the Workingmen’s Political Club, which endorsed candidates with “the labor point-of-view” for election to city offices.38

Like most of the other Pacific Coast cities, Portland experienced rapid spatial expansion. In 1891 Portland, East Portland, and Albina consolidated, boosting Portland’s area from seven to twenty-five square miles. During the next twenty years, the electric street railroad opened outlying areas to settlement; and, as real estate developers worked with the owners of streetcar companies, suburbs grew up. Particularly important was the growth of the area east of the Willamette River, for conflict between businessmen in that newly developing area with those in the long-established district west of the river would make it difficult for Portland’s business community to reach agreements on city planning measures. At the same time, interurbs made Portland’s downtown business district accessible to the residents of nearby communities. As those people began shopping in Portland, the economic bases of their towns eroded, and many of the formerly independent towns were annexed to Portland.39

Those developments increased Portland’s size to nearly fifty square miles by 1915. The spatial growth segmented Portland physically, for it was haphazard. Despite a consolidation movement, Portland still possessed several competing streetcar lines serving the city in an uncoordinated manner in the early twentieth century. The city’s geography, like that of Seattle and San Francisco, also made geographic unity difficult to achieve. High hills and the Willamette River divided parts of the metropolis.

As Seattle entered the twentieth century, its population lost
whatever homogeneity it may have had when the city was a frontier town. As in Portland and Los Angeles, about 20 percent of Seattlite natives were of foreign birth in 1910. Most of the immigrants came from the German states in Seattle's early days; but many came from Scandinavia, Canada, China, and Japan as well. Ethnic neighborhoods grew up—a Chinatown, a Japantown, a Jewish area, a Little Italy, a Russian neighborhood, and Scandinavian enclaves—but they never assumed the importance of ethnic neighborhoods in San Francisco or in many eastern cities. Despite the influx of some foreigners, Seattle, like Los Angeles, maintained something of a midwestern flavor, with about one-quarter of its residents having been born in the Midwest and with many of its foreign-born inhabitants having lived there for substantial periods before moving on to Seattle.40

Although ethnicity became increasingly significant in segmenting Seattlite groups, occupational and economic status was of greater importance.41 While some members of different groups were dispersed throughout Seattle, residential patterns based on occupation developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Moreover, like San Francisco, Seattle was heavily unionized and experienced much labor-management strife during the opening decades of the twentieth century. As in San Francisco and Portland, geographic features, hills and bodies of water, also help define neighborhoods. Finally, Seattle greatly expanded its area by annexing many previously independent towns—Ballard, Wallingford, Georgetown, and others—in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, making any sense of civic unity difficult to achieve.42

Urban Networks and
Intercity Rivalry

Cities have always been important in the development of the United States, but their rapid growth after the Civil War greatly increased their significance. As early as the 1840s and 1850s, according to the urban geographer Allan Pred, an urban network
was fast arising. By those decades, he observed, “the total pattern of interurban relationships, or interdependencies, that either continued or appeared for the first time was complex to a degree that suggests a more than rudimentary integration among the expanding membership of the nation’s city-system.” Other scholars have traced the emergence of such a network to the late nineteenth century. It was then, the urban historian Blake McKelvey has explained, that “a closely integrated galaxy of cities” grew up. In 1860 the United States possessed 141 centers of at least eight thousand inhabitants, but by 1910 the number of such towns and cities had increased nearly sixfold. By 1920, for the first time in the history of their nation, more Americans lived in towns and cities of twenty-five hundred or more inhabitants than resided on farms or in villages.

Western cities were part of the urban network from their first days. San Francisco was connected to the East by sailing ships and was dependent upon eastern sources for all types of goods, from groceries to metal products. With the completion of transcontinental railroads to the Pacific Coast cities in the late nineteenth century, the centers became increasingly linked to national developments. Pacific Coast businessmen were proud of the growing roles their cities played in the national urban network. For them, it was a matter of some consequence that their cities be acknowledged as the equals of urban centers in the East and Midwest, for such recognition would, they thought, help them attract businesses and settlers. As a leading member of San Francisco’s Chamber of Commerce explained in 1911, a time when the city’s residents were considering civic improvements in preparation for the 1915 world’s fair, “the eyes of the world are . . . upon San Francisco. Prospective real estate investors the world over are looking toward San Francisco . . . Let us prepare for our guests by cleaning house.”

If Pacific Coast cities were part of a growing national urban network, they nonetheless remained tied to their West Coast heritages. They were members of a regional network of cities and towns. In fact, as their hinterlands developed, Pacific Coast cities became more and more active as regional centers. The importance of their regional hinterlands and their membership in a regional urban network was most apparent in the economic rivalry that developed among the cities of the Pacific Coast. Even
while they were concerned with the national reputations of their cities, the businessmen were also very interested in their regional rankings. To some extent, the intercity rivalry on the Pacific Coast mirrored rivalries that had grown between other groups of cities at earlier dates. Contests among Boston, Philadelphia, and New York had enlivened the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{46} Competition among Cincinnati, Lexington, St. Louis, Louisville, and Pittsburgh spurred the development of the Ohio Valley; and rivalry between St. Louis and Chicago contributed to the growth of the Midwest.\textsuperscript{47}

Central to the contest for hegemony over the Pacific Coast were battles to control its economic hinterland, with its rich resources in minerals, lumber, and agricultural products. The struggle for the interior took place in two overlapping stages. As they matured, Portland and Seattle eroded the control that San Francisco once maintained over the Pacific Northwest. Then contests developed at more local levels. Seattle and Portland battled for the Pacific Northwest, while Oakland and Los Angeles challenged San Francisco for dominance within California.\textsuperscript{48} San Franciscans were quick to bewail the change. As one merchant lamented in 1893:

\begin{quote}
Our city is in a state of lethargy and passes her time musing upon the past. . . . A visit to the southern part of the state must necessarily move the mind to a very serious consideration of our present inertia. Los Angeles, in a very homely western phrase that is suggestive, if not altogether true, says that we are “not in it.” Today Los Angeles imports directly and is competing with San Francisco in towns as far north as Merced. We have lost very largely our northern trade [to Portland and Seattle], and which country is fast becoming important in its commercial sense. Salt Lake and Ogden can today deal with the East to their advantage, and Mexico is now importing her mining machinery from that district, notwithstanding that our city could supply a superior article.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

Until the 1880s, San Franciscans controlled most of the interior of the Pacific Coast as their economic hinterland. Before the coming of the railroad, San Francisco served as the major distributing
point for supplies coming around Cape Horn for mining towns throughout the West. Even after the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869, San Francisco retained its dominant position when new mining strikes were made. By a circuitous water route, goods from San Francisco reached parts of eastern Washington, Idaho, and even Montana. In return, many of the products of the mines and farms of the Pacific Coast went east through San Francisco.\textsuperscript{50}

However, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century Seattle and Portland merchants took over most of the trade with the interior of the Pacific Northwest. With the completion of the Northern Pacific and Great Northern Railroads, the businessmen of the two cities extended their reach into the countryside; and the economic hinterland of San Francisco merchants correspondingly contracted. Although San Francisco merchants could wistfully consider competing with their northern counterparts for the trade of the Idaho Basin as late as 1912, such hopes had, in fact, proved illusory long before.\textsuperscript{51} Indeed, by the first decade of the twentieth century, Portland merchants, blessed by favorable railroad rates, had captured much of the trade of northern California.\textsuperscript{52}

As they broke the hold of San Franciscans over the Pacific Northwest, Seattle and Portland business leaders came into conflict with each other. Portland merchants viewed Seattlitees as brash upstarts invading what should be their natural trade territory—most of the Pacific Northwest, including eastern Washington. To combat the work of Seattle's businessmen, Portland's merchants mounted one trade excursion after another to try to keep the products of the interior flowing down the Columbia River to their city rather than across the Cascade Mountains by railroad to Seattle. In early May 1909, for example, seventy-five Portland merchants belonging to that city's Commercial Club traveled by train throughout eastern Washington "to advance the interests and influence of Portland throughout the territory."\textsuperscript{53} Seattle's merchants countered with their own excursions and in time won much of the trade in agricultural goods that had previously traveled to Portland for processing and shipment to market.

Shortly after they had lost control of the trade of the Pacific Northwest, San Francisco businessmen found themselves seriously challenged within their own state by merchants from Los
Angeles. The contest for the interior of California centered upon the San Joaquin Valley, which became a valuable prize through the development of fruit and vegetable farming and by the discovery of oil there. Los Angeles merchants took advantage of the confusion following the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 to penetrate far north into the valley. San Francisco jobbers soon spotted that threat to their livelihood, and in response petitioned the California Railroad Commission to restructure railroad rates into the valley in a way that would favor them over their southern counterparts.\textsuperscript{54} The effort was of no avail. Accepting arguments from Los Angeles businessmen, the commission reduced rates from the southern city into the valley on the grounds that increased traffic justified lower rates. In 1911 the frustrated secretary of San Francisco's Civic League, an organization of the city's leading merchants, sourly described the railroad system of California and much of the West as being "in the form of a large funnel . . . with its spout at Los Angeles."\textsuperscript{55}

Closely related to the contests for the interior were struggles to control the coastal commerce and foreign trade of the Pacific Coast. Although by the twentieth century much of the mineral, forest, and agricultural goods going to the Pacific Coast cities stayed in them to be processed and consumed locally, much was also shipped out to other destinations. The imminent completion of the Panama Canal in the early twentieth century added a fillip to the competition in foreign trade.\textsuperscript{56} The merchants of all of the Pacific Coast cities expected the opening of the canal to increase their trade greatly. They, however, tempered their optimism with the uneasy realization that they would be in fierce competition with each other for that commerce. By the early twentieth century, Portland and Seattle, supported by their thriving hinterlands, were rivaling San Francisco as seaports. In 1910 the value of foreign trade passing through San Francisco was $87 million, that going through Seattle $66 million.\textsuperscript{57} Within California, Oakland and Los Angeles challenged San Francisco for trade. As part of their planning activities, the business groups sponsored a wide range of harbor improvements—new piers, breakwaters, and deepwater channels—and, prodded by shippers, city governments successfully wrested control of their harbors away from railroads, which, the merchants believed, were not doing enough to develop them.
The cities of the Pacific Coast developed primarily as trade centers, but in the twentieth century industry grew in significance; and here, too, intercity rivalry was important. Portland and Seattle came increasingly into conflict with each other for industrial markets. In 1911 and 1912, for example, Portland’s manufacturers led a Made in Oregon movement, designed to persuade their state’s residents to purchase products put together only in Oregon. In California the rivalry pitted manufacturers in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Oakland against each other. The earthquake and fire of 1906 slowed San Francisco’s industrial advance. Some firms moved to Oakland and Los Angeles, and relatively few new ones located in San Francisco. To reverse that trend, San Francisco industrialists mounted a drive for “home patronage of home industry,” but to little effect. Los Angeles, in particular, moved ahead as a center for oil refineries, rubber plants, aviation, and motion pictures, until by 1930 the value of those and other products surpassed that of San Francisco’s manufacturers.

It was to remedy the perceived problems and to take advantage of opportunities resulting from rapid economic, population, and spatial growth that some Pacific Coast urbanites, especially some businessmen, turned to civic improvements and city planning. Through planning they hoped to channel economic growth along desired lines and place their cities ahead of their urban rivals. Through planning they sought to win national recognition for their cities as mature members of the nation’s expanding urban network. Through planning they sought to create a sense of civic patriotism, thereby healing the population divisions in their urban centers, and through planning they hoped to reunite their spatially dispersed metropolises.