

## II. A US CULTURE EVOLVES

### Objective 2.02

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the new nation began to see its own national culture displayed in art, literature, and language. A new sense of US nationalism, thanks largely to America's victory in the War of 1812, swept over the country. Even the **neoclassical architecture** of the day showed the confidence citizens had in their young country. Particularly common in Washington, DC, and the South, it imitated the architectural styles of ancient Greece and Rome, and suggested that the US was destined for similar greatness. Examples of neoclassical architecture included the White House, the US Capitol, and Thomas Jefferson's home at Monticello.



The White House

Even those from outside the United States were beginning to take note of US culture. In his famed work, *Democracy in America*, French traveler and writer **Alex de Tocqueville** (1805–1859) praised the young nation's political system and called the United States a land of opportunity where, "most of the rich men were formerly poor."

## LANGUAGE, ART, AND LITERATURE

The early part of the 1800s saw the publication of **Noah Webster's** (1758–1843) first *Webster's Dictionary*. It was published in 1806 and was significant because it modified the traditional British spelling, usage, and pronunciation of many words. In effect, it helped to create a distinctly "American" language. Webster also championed public education as a means of instilling in young citizens a sense of national unity and patriotic values.

Art and literature began to reflect a national culture as well. The **Hudson River School of Artists**, which flourished from 1825 until the late 1800s, was the first group of US artists to develop a uniquely US style of landscape painting. Unlike the traditional European landscapes that tended to feature peaceful countrysides, the Hudson School featured canyons, rivers, and scenes of the untamed frontier. It was art that reflected the wild and pioneering spirit of the United States itself.

The period also saw the emergence of many great writers. The **Knickerbocker School** produced authors who focused on distinctly "American" themes. **Washington Irving** (1783–1859) was the first US author to win international praise and would influence future writers with stories like *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. **Edgar Allan Poe** (1809–1849) achieved fame as one of the nation's greatest poets, short story writers, and literary critics. Other great writers included **James Fenimore Cooper** (1789–1851) and **Nathaniel Hawthorne** (1804–1864). Cooper's five novel series, *The Longstocking Tales*, which included the classics *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Pathfinder*,



Washington Irving

depicted life on the American frontier and tackled the issue of white settlement on Native American lands. As a result, Cooper's works were considered to be the first truly American novels. Meanwhile, Hawthorne wrote works like *The Scarlet Letter*, which depicted life in Puritan New England.

## TRANSCENDENTALISM



Ralph Waldo Emerson

The first half of the nineteenth century also saw the rise of a literary and philosophical movement called **transcendentalism**. This movement emphasized individualism and self-reliance, rather than religious faith. Believing that there was an element of human nature beyond understanding, transcendentalists felt that human fulfillment came through an awareness of truth and natural beauty. They were also critical of conformity, and believed that each individual should follow their own path of understanding. Essayist and poet **Ralph Waldo Emerson** (1803 – 1882) and writer and philosopher **Henry David Thoreau** (1817 – 1862) were among the more famous members of this movement.

### Practice 2: A US Culture Evolves

- In which of the following ways did *Webster's Dictionary* help to form a distinctly "American" language?
  - It adopted words from Native American languages to mix with traditional European words.
  - It removed British words from the vocabulary and replaced them all with American words.
  - It modified the traditional British spelling, usage, and pronunciation of many words.
  - It depicted life on the US frontier and dealt with issues relevant to US society.
- Which of the following did artists of the Hudson River School and James Fenimore Cooper have in common?
  - They were both famous for their contributions to transcendentalism.
  - They both depicted neoclassical architecture in their works.
  - They both were distinctly "American" in that they depicted life on the US frontier.
  - They both were praised by Alex de Tocqueville upon his visit to the United States.
- In what ways did the White House, the US Capitol, and Monticello display a national attitude?

### III. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES (1800 – 1850)

#### Objective 2.03

#### TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND THE UNITED STATES ECONOMY

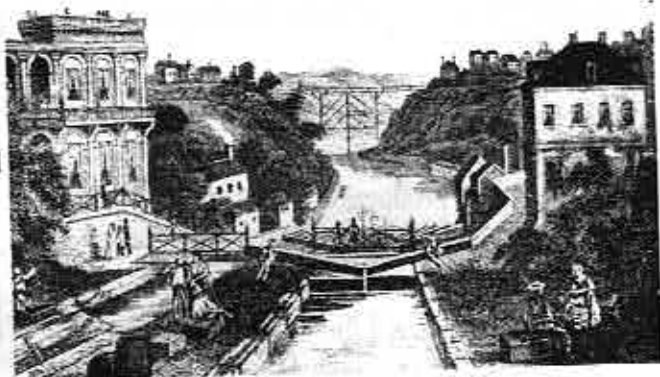
A number of inventions had great impact on the United States in the 1800s. These advances served to increase a sense of nationalism among citizens, while at the same time exposing regional **sectionalism**.

Eli Whitney's cotton gin greatly increased the rate at which cotton could be produced. As a result, the South became known as a **cotton kingdom**. The invention made many in the South rich as demand for the product grew in both the US and Europe. It also helped make the South a society greatly dependent on agriculture and the use of slave labor for survival. While Whitney's cotton gin greatly impacted the South, it was another of his innovations that transformed the economy of the North. After the cotton gin, Whitney began to manufacture muskets. In this industry, he introduced the idea of **interchangeable parts**. For the first time, each part of the musket was produced with such precision that it could fit with parts from any other musket. Whitney's concept of interchangeable parts spread to other industries and became the basis for industrial development in the northern United States.

During the eighteenth century, British manufacturers began replacing manual labor with machines, causing sweeping economic and social changes. Eventually known as the **First Industrial Revolution**, these changes later came to the US. Men like **Samuel Slater** (1768 – 1835) arrived from Europe, bringing with them a knowledge of machine manufacturing and factories. While the South became dependent on a **plantation system** (large farms using slaves to produce large amounts of cotton or some other cash crop), the North developed a **factory system**. The factory system relied greatly on the labor of the lower classes and immigrants to work in industrialized factories. Many of these factories produced textiles thanks to the invention of Elias Howe's sewing machine.

#### THE ERIE CANAL

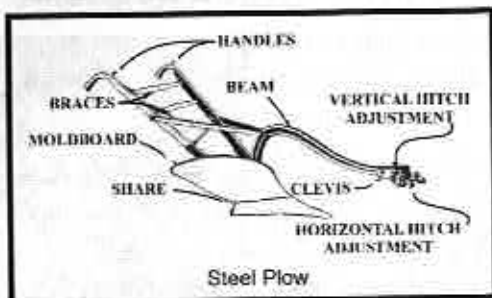
Another key development during this period was the completion of the **Erie Canal** in 1825. The canal provided a new shipping route from Lake Erie to the Hudson River. Because it connected New York City to the Great Lakes, the canal helped make New York a dominant commercial center by expanding its markets. It also allowed people to travel much more cheaply, carrying their household goods with them. As a result, whole families could



The Erie Canal

move west easier than had previously been possible. Along with **Robert Fulton's** (1765 - 1815) invention of the steam powered boat, the Erie Canal greatly enhanced the economy of New York City and the northeastern United States.

## TECHNOLOGY AND WESTERN EXPANSION



Steel Plow

Advances in technology also played a major role in western expansion. **Samuel F.B. Morse** (1791 - 1872) helped revolutionize the communication industry through his invention of the **telegraph**, thereby uniting the country through transcontinental communication. The **steel plow**, invented by **John Deere** (1804 - 1886) in the 1830s, allowed farmers to plow and grow crops in areas out west that would have otherwise been considered unfit for farming. At the same time, **Cyrus**

**McCormick's** (1809 - 1884) **reaper** made it easier to harvest wheat. These and other advances served to provide the US with national markets, increased productivity, and won the respect of other countries.

## SOCIAL ISSUES AND SECTIONAL DIFFERENCES

### SLAVERY

Sectional differences and tensions over slavery continued to grow as the South increasingly relied on agriculture and the North on commerce and manufacturing. Businessmen in the North resented the fact that they were paying for workers while plantation owners in the South had the benefit of slave labor. Meanwhile, more and more people in the North were beginning to see slavery as a moral issue and calling for its abolition. Southerners answered that the conditions under which many poor immigrants and factory workers lived in the North were just as bad, if not worse, than those of slaves on the plantations.

### COMPARING THE DIFFERENCES IN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

#### South

- agrarian (farming) economy based primarily on cotton
- cotton production was tied to the plantation system which relied on slavery
- few immigrants from Europe
- manufactured little, imported much; consequently, opposed high tariffs because they raised the price of imported goods and often caused foreign countries to impose tariffs on the South's exported products
- favored strong state government; feared federal government would restrict slavery



Slaves on a Southern Plantation



## North

- more industrialized economy based on manufacturing and commerce
- factories relied on poor immigrant laborers rather than slaves
- favored high tariffs to protect its own products from foreign competition
- wanted a strong federal government to build roads and railways, protect trading interests, and regulate the national currency



Immigrants Arriving in the 1840s

## IMMIGRATION AND NATIVISM

Between 1825 and 1855, more than 5 million immigrants (mostly from western Europe) entered the United States. These immigrants tended to settle together in poorer neighborhoods where they would preserve the language and customs of their previous country. Many of them were Roman Catholics, and therefore aroused the concerns of European Protestants. While industries of the North came to depend on immigrants for cheap labor, many northern **natives** (people born in the US) resented the newcomers taking jobs that otherwise would have gone to US citizens. Such feelings led to the rise of **Nativism**. Nativists opposed immigration in order to protect the interests of native born citizens. As a result, immigrants often suffered discrimination and violence. During the 1840s and 50s, many groups formed as part of this movement. The most powerful of these groups was a secret society called the **Know-Nothings**. Its name came from the practice of members saying, "I know nothing" when they were asked about the group. In the 1850s, Know-Nothing candidates actually won some state elections. By 1861, however, the party had no representation in Congress and soon disappeared from the political scene.

Sectional concerns surrounded immigration as well. Most of the nation's immigrants were arriving in the northeast, causing the North's population to swell. As a result, the South feared the North would come to have more representatives in Congress. Ironically, however, many of these same immigrants were allies of the South when it came to slavery. Immigrants opposed **abolition** (the end of slavery) because they feared freed slaves would move north and take their jobs.

**Practice 3: Economic and Social Issues (1800-1850)**

1. Which of the following was NOT an example of sectionalism in the early 1800s?
  - A. The South depended on slavery and the plantation system, while the North relied on immigrant labor and the factory system.
  - B. Southerners tended to favor states' rights while northerners tended to favor a stronger federal government.
  - C. Northern businesses were in favor of tariffs while southern plantation owners opposed them.
  - D. Northerners were more than happy to welcome large numbers of immigrants while southerners were not at all concerned about northern immigration.
  
2. How did the Erie Canal affect the economy of New York and the Northeast?
  - A. It opened waterways to greater trade, thereby making New York more dependent on foreign products.
  - B. It enhanced western settlements by making it easier for people to move west.
  - C. It broadened markets by making it easier to ship products to other parts of the country.
  - D. It devastated the New York economy as people and industries left the city to migrate west.
  
3. How did Eli Whitney's innovations affect the North and the South differently?

## **IV. POLITICAL EVENTS AND ISSUES CONTRIBUTING TO SECTIONALISM**

### **Objective 2.04**

With the end of the War of 1812 and the Federalist Party, the United States entered a period of national pride and political unity known as the *Era of Good Feelings*. It was during this period that President James Monroe issued the **Monroe Doctrine** in 1823. It stated that the United States would not tolerate European intervention in the affairs of any independent nation in the Americas. It also stated that the American continents were no longer open to colonization from European powers, and that the US would view any such attempts as acts of aggression. Finally, it promised that the United States would neither interfere in the internal affairs of other countries in the Americas, nor those of European nations.