

## POLITICAL EVENTS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

### The Election of 1824 and John Quincy Adams's Presidency

The election of 1824 marked a major turning point in presidential elections. Prior to 1824, electors, who selected the president in the electoral college, had been chosen by a variety of methods. State legislatures chose many electors, although with each election the number of states using this method decreased. By 1824, a majority of states allowed voters to choose their presidential electors directly. In earlier elections, **congressional caucuses**, or groups of U.S. Congressmen, had chosen their parties' nominees, and electors, often chosen by those same congressmen or by their friends, had not challenged the choices. With more people voting directly for presidential electors, however, there was less and less voter support for the candidates nominated by party leaders in this era before primaries and caucuses. When the Democratic-Republican caucus chose William H. Crawford in 1824, others—among them John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson—decided to challenge the nomination. Their opposition, along with their accusations that the party caucuses were undemocratic, brought about the **demise of the caucus system**. Of the four, Andrew Jackson received the greatest number of popular votes and electoral votes; however, as none of the four had won a majority, the election was decided in the House of Representatives.

There, Speaker of the House Clay threw his support to Adams, thereby handing Adams the victory. Adams subsequently named Clay secretary of state, a position whose previous holders included Adams, Monroe, and Jefferson and that was therefore considered the gateway to the presidency. Jackson and other opponents of Clay's appointment alleged that Adams and Clay had struck a "**corrupt bargain**" and immediately vowed to see both removed in the election of 1828.

Adams's presidency was impeded by a contrary Congress. (Remember, more congressmen had initially supported Jackson than Adams.) He had also been a Federalist congressman and was the son of a Federalist president, and every effort he made to strengthen the central government was thus viewed with deep suspicion. Jackson's supporters strongly favored **states' rights** and thwarted all of Adams's efforts to initiate improvements through the federal government. His proposals to impose new protective tariffs, build interstate highways, and establish federal schools and research centers were all met with steep opposition, though he did go on to found a naval college and become an influential congressman.

#### John Quincy Adams and Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism was a belief, widespread among 19th-century Christians, that Jesus would only return after a thousand-year golden age brought about by humankind. It was therefore a major progressive force in America, with adherents such as John Quincy Adams. Here is our sixth president calling for the U.S. to adopt the metric system—in the 1820s!

*"But if man upon earth be an improvable being; if that universal peace, which was the object of a Saviour's mission, which is the desire of the philosopher, the longing of the philanthropist, the trembling hope of the Christian, is a blessing to which the futurity of mortal man has a claim of more than mortal promise; if the Spirit of Evil is, before the final consummation of things, to be cast down from his dominion over men, and bound in the chains of a thousand years, the foretaste here of man's eternal felicity, then this system of common instruments to accomplish all the changes of social and friendly commerce, will furnish the links of sympathy between the inhabitants of the most distant regions; the metre will surround the globe in use, as well as in multiplied extension; and one language of weights and measures will be spoken from the equator to the poles."*



## The Jackson Presidency and Jacksonian Democracy

Despite the political incorrectness of his policies by today's standards and reevaluation of Andrew Jackson by modern-day historians, the era of Jackson as president is an important period in American history. There are always more than a few multiple-choice questions on this material, and often one of the essay questions pertains to Jackson's administration or the concept of Jacksonian democracy.

Furious that he had been denied the presidency in 1824 despite winning a plurality of the vote (more votes than any other candidate, but short of a majority), Jackson put together a support network to assure wide popular support. A coalition of state political organizations, newspaper publishers, and other community leaders rallied around the campaign. That group became the present-day **Democratic** party. The campaign was vicious. While the candidates themselves stayed out of the fray—no presidential candidate would campaign on his own behalf until Stephen Douglas in 1860—their surrogates showed no restraint in slinging mud. Jackson's men accused Adams of being a corrupt career politician, while Adams's men accused Jackson of being a stupid and violent drunkard. Jackson was particularly infuriated by accusations that his wife was a bigamist—which was technically true, as she had married Jackson before her divorce was final. The **Coffin Handbill** accused Jackson of murdering his enlisted men during the Indian Wars. Those who consider today's smear campaigns unprecedented haven't studied much American history.

In 1828 Jackson won the election by a large margin; in so doing, he became the first president who wasn't either born in Virginia or named Adams. He was considered to have the interests of the West in mind, and was seen as the epitome of a self-made man. Among his first acts, he dismissed numerous government officials and replaced them with political supporters. While almost every one of his predecessors had done exactly the same thing, because Jackson was the first true outsider-president, administration jobs that had previously circulated among a relatively insular circle of political supporters fell into new hands. Those who lost power criticized Jackson, but so too did the public, who noticed for the first time the cronyism already inherent in their government. Trading jobs for political favors came to be known as the "**spoils system.**"

Jackson's popularity ushered in the age of **Jacksonian democracy**, which replaced Jeffersonian republicanism. Jefferson had conceived of a nation governed by middle- and upper-class educated property holders, in which the government would be only as large as necessary to provide an acceptable level of services. Jefferson also envisioned a nation of yeoman farmers—farmers who owned their land—whose liberty would be protected by limiting the power of the central government. Jacksonian democracy, on the other hand, benefited from **universal white manhood suffrage**, meaning the extension of voting rights to all white males, even those who did not own property.

A strong presidency also characterized Jacksonian democracy. Jackson parlayed his wide popularity into a mandate to challenge both Congress and the Supreme Court in a way that none of his predecessors had. You should note that, unlike Jeffersonian republicanism, Jacksonian democracy is *not* a coherent vision of how a government should function. Jacksonian Democrats saw themselves as champi-



### When “the West” Wasn’t that West

In colonial times, any settlement that wasn’t located right on the Atlantic Ocean was said to be located in “the west.” By the early 19th century, definitions had changed—but not to their modern meanings. “The Northwest” consisted of northern states west of the Appalachians, such as Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, which are now considered “the Midwest.” (This is why Northwestern University is located not in, say, Seattle, but in Chicago.) “The Southwest” consisted of southern states west of the Appalachians, such as Alabama and Mississippi, which are now considered “the Deep South.” Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson were considered the foremost Westerners of the period, and they were respectively from Kentucky and Tennessee.

ons of liberty, but they did not always act as such. Jackson was not as great a thinker as Jefferson, the Enlightenment scholar.

No policy of Jackson’s has received more criticism by modern scholars than Jackson’s treatment of the Cherokees with the **Indian Removal Act**, passed by Congress in 1830. This in some ways represented a natural continuation of policy toward American Indians. Originally, it had been the British who established the concept that Native Americans were “foreign nations,” and as such, the government could go to war and make treaties with them. Often these treaties established what the British termed “Indian territory,” as was the case with the **Proclamation of 1763** issued at the close of the **French and Indian War**.

When the Americans gained their independence, the U.S. government continued the treatment of Native Americans that had been established by the British. Some Americans, however, among them Thomas Jefferson, suggested assimilation into American culture as a solution to the “Indian Problem.” Jefferson and others believed that if the Native Americans gave up their “hunting and gathering” lifestyle and adopted American farming techniques and culture—in essence, “learned to live on less land”—then the Americans and Native Americans might coexist peacefully.

By the time of Jackson’s presidency, there were “Five Civilized Tribes” living in the South in the area east of the Mississippi River, among those the Cherokee nation. The Cherokees had developed a written language, converted to Christianity, and embraced agriculture as a way of life. Some Cherokees even owned slaves. (How much more “civilized” could these Native Americans become?!) The Cherokees had developed their own government and deemed themselves to be an independent republic within the state of Georgia. The problem arose when gold was discovered on Cherokee land and the citizens of Georgia demanded that the Cherokees comply with the provisions of the Indian Removal Act, a policy suggested by Monroe but enacted during Jackson’s tenure in office. This act demanded that the Native Americans resettle in Oklahoma, which had been deemed Indian territory. Jackson, for his part, argued that moving away from white society was the best way to protect themselves from white encroachment and maintain their traditional customs. The Cherokees refused and brought their case to the Supreme Court. Although John Marshall, Chief Justice at the time, sided with the Cherokees in two cases, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), Andrew Jackson refused to comply with the Court’s decision and is reputed to have sneered, “John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it.” Between 1835 and 1838, thousands of Cherokees walked to Oklahoma under the supervision of the U.S. Army in what has come to be known as the “Trail of Tears.” Thousands died of sickness and starvation along the way.



One of the major issues of Jackson's presidency focused on **nullification**. The doctrine of nullification, first expressed by Jefferson and Madison in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, holds that the individual states have the right to disobey federal laws if they find them unconstitutional. John Marshall had established that only the Supreme Court had the power of **judicial review**, in the landmark decision of *Marbury v. Madison* (1803). The **Tariff of 1828**, also known as the **Tariff of Abominations**, was passed during the Adams administration, but it almost turned into a national crisis during Jackson's administration. In 1828, **John C. Calhoun**, a South Carolinian who was Jackson's vice president, anonymously published "The South Carolina Exposition and Protest," arguing that states who felt the 50 percent tariff was unfairly high could nullify the law. By 1830, southern states were openly discussing nullification, as such protectionist tariffs cut into the trade with Britain on which the South relied to sell its cotton and buy British wools and certain other raw materials in return. Jackson, though a strong supporter of states' rights, thought nullification endangered the Union and was thus too extreme. After the **Tariff of 1832** failed to lower rates to an acceptable level, South Carolina nullified the tariff. Jackson had Congress authorize a **Force Bill**, threatening to call in troops to enforce the tariff, but Calhoun and Henry Clay (remember the Missouri Compromise?) brokered a behind-the-scenes compromise, lowering the tariff and diffusing tensions. Although the crisis subsided and South Carolina accepted the compromise tariff, no resolution was reached on the legality of nullification, and it would continue to be an issue until the Civil War.

Jackson's economic policies demonstrated his distrust of both big government and Northeastern power brokers. He spent much of his two terms "downsizing" the federal government and strengthening the office of the presidency through his extensive use of the presidential veto. He fought against the **reform** movements of the time that called for increased government activism against social and economic problems. He saw to it that the **Second Bank of the United States (BUS)** failed by vetoing Congress's attempt to recharter the bank and by withdrawing federal funds and depositing them in state "**pet**" banks. He felt that the BUS protected Northeastern interests at the expense of the West. Jackson argued that the bank was an unconstitutional monopoly, but the Supreme Court ruled against him using a loose interpretation of the commerce clause (*McCulloch v. Maryland*, 1819). He was also suspicious of paper money, preferring "hard currency" such as gold or silver. His **Specie Circular**, which ended the policy of selling government land on

#### The Bank of the United States

In the 19th century, paper money was issued not by the government but by private banks. If you went to a bank for a \$100 loan, the bank would print up some money for you. It didn't necessarily have to have \$100 worth of gold in its vaults to do this. If it had \$10,000 worth of gold in its vaults, a bank might issue \$100,000 in paper money—and as long as no more than 10 percent of that money was cashed in at the same time, the bank would be fine.

What kept such a bank from printing up a million dollars, or a trillion? The main answer was that people could pay their taxes with paper money, and that paper collected at the Bank of the United States. Fear that the Bank would attempt to cash in a huge amount of paper at once kept smaller banks from overusing the printing presses. Once Andrew Jackson killed the Bank of the United States, however, **wildcat banks** did indeed spring up and issue paper money with abandon. Add the fact that the government stopped accepting paper money in payment for land, and people realized that all their paper money was now nearly worthless—a recipe for a major depression.

With only gold and silver now considered to have value, the stage was set for the late 19th century, when arguments over these metals would dominate the debate over economic policy.



credit (buyers now had to pay “hard cash”), caused a money shortage and a sharp decrease in the treasury, and helped trigger the **Panic of 1837**. Congress overturned the circular in the final days of Jackson’s final term.

Slavery grew to be an ever more controversial issue during the time of Jacksonian Democracy. As the Northern abolition movement grew stronger, the South experienced several slave revolts, which resulted in the use of more brutal disciplinary measures by slaveholders. The most famous of the insurrections was **Turner’s Rebellion**. Turner, a well-read preacher, had a vision, and he took this vision as a sign from God that a black liberation movement would succeed. As a result, he rallied a gang that proceeded to kill and then mutilate the corpses of 60 whites. In retaliation, 200 slaves were executed, some with no connection at all to the rebellion. Fearful that other slaves would hear of and emulate Turner’s exploits, Southern states passed a series of restrictive laws, known as **black codes**, prohibiting blacks from congregating and learning to read. Other state laws even prevented whites from questioning the legitimacy of slavery. After Turner’s Rebellion, Virginia’s House of Burgesses debated ending bondage, but did not pass a law.

### **The Election of 1836 and the Rise of the Whigs**

Jackson’s Democratic party could not represent the interests of all its constituencies (Northern abolitionists, Southern plantation owners, Western pioneers), and inevitably, an opposition party, the **Whigs**, was formed. By 1834 almost as many congressmen supported the Whig Party as the Democratic Party. The Whigs were a loose coalition that shared one thing in common: opposition to one or more of the Democrats’ policies. For example, while the Democrats favored limited federal government, many Whigs believed in government **activism**, especially in the case of social issues. Many Whigs were also deeply religious and supported the temperance movement and enforcement of the Sabbath. Still, the defining characteristic of the Whigs was their opposition to the Democrats.

In the election of 1836, Jackson supported his second vice president, Democrat **Martin Van Buren**. Van Buren had the misfortune to take over the presidency just as the country was entering a major economic crisis (the Panic of 1837). Van Buren made the situation worse by continuing Jackson’s policy of favoring hard currency, thereby insuring that money would be hard to come by. The economic downturn lasted through Van Buren’s term, practically guaranteeing that he would not be reelected.

In 1841 former military hero **William Henry Harrison** became the first Whig president. He died of pneumonia a month after taking office. His vice president, **John Tyler**, a former Democrat, assumed the presidency and began championing states’ rights, much to his own party’s chagrin. Tyler vetoed numerous Whig bills, which alienated Whig leadership; eventually his entire cabinet resigned in protest. Tyler is often referred to as the “president without a party,” and his presidency lasted only one term.



## ECONOMIC HISTORY (1800–1860)

This section discusses economic developments in the United States during the first part of the nineteenth century. These developments played an important role in the political events that led to the Civil War, and helped to determine the different characteristics of the country's regions. Along with social developments (discussed in the next section), these economic factors laid the foundation for issues that would be important to American society for the following century (such as abolitionism, women's suffrage, and temperance).

### Beginnings of a Market Economy

From the time they first arrived until the Revolutionary War era, most settlers in the United States raised crops for subsistence, rather than for sale at market. Most people made their own clothing and built their own furniture and homes, and got by without many other conveniences. Cash transactions were relatively rare. Instead, people used ledgers to keep track of who owed what to whom, and typically settled accounts when someone moved away or died.

Developments in manufacturing and transportation changed all that, however. By making it possible to mass produce goods and transport them across the country cheaply, a **market economy** began to develop. In a market economy, people trade their labor or goods for cash, which they then use to buy other people's labor or goods. Market economies favor those who specialize. For example, farmers who grow a single crop (monoculture) usually do better in a market economy than those who produce many different crops: One-crop farmers can offer buyers more of what they want. These farmers also do not have to look for different buyers for their many products. The trade-off, of course, is that these farmers are no longer self-sufficient. Instead, they become dependent on the market to provide some necessities. Furthermore, such farmers sometimes fall victim to overproduction, resulting in an unexpected, unwelcome drop in the price of their crop.

Market economies grow more quickly and provide more services than subsistence economies, and they also make people more interdependent. However, they are also much more prone to change. Any number of factors can halt a period of prosperity and throw the economy into a skid like the panics of 1819 and 1837. These changes are referred to as "**boom-and-bust cycles**." During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the United States made a rapid transition from a subsistence economy to a market economy.

As stated earlier, the **War of 1812** and the events leading up to it forced the United States to become less dependent on imports, and, consequently, to develop a stronger national economy. Two key advances, both developed by **Eli Whitney**, also played a major part in the process. The **cotton gin**, invented in 1793, revolutionized Southern agriculture by making it much easier to remove the seeds from cotton plants. (The machine was 5,000 percent more efficient than a human being.) The cotton gin made it easier and cheaper to use cotton for textiles, and as a result, the demand for cotton grew very rapidly into the early 1800s. As demand grew, so did cotton production in the South. Because cotton farming is labor intensive, the



spread of cotton as the region's chief crop also intensified the South's dependence on slave labor.

Whitney's second innovation was the use of **interchangeable parts** in manufacturing. Whitney originally struck upon the idea while mass-producing rifles for the U.S. Army. Prior to Whitney's breakthrough, manufacturers had built weapons (and other machines) by hand, custom fitting parts so that each weapon was unique. The process was costly, time-consuming, and inconvenient, because replacing broken parts was extremely difficult. Whitney demonstrated the practicality of his invention to Thomas Jefferson and James Madison by disassembling a number of rifles, scrambling the parts, and then reassembling the rifles from whichever parts he picked out of the pile. Whitney's demonstration was a huge success, and soon his idea was being applied to all aspects of manufacturing.

Interchangeable parts gave birth to the **machine-tool industry**, which produced specialized machines for such growing industries as textiles and transportation. (Without interchangeable parts, such machines would have been impractical because they would have been too expensive to build and too difficult to fix.) Whitney's advances also helped promote the development of **assembly line production**. On an assembly line, products are constructed more efficiently by dividing the labor into a number of tasks and assigning each worker one task. Prior to assembly lines, each worker would create a product in its entirety. The result was a product that took longer to produce and was less uniform in quality.

## The North and the Textile Industry

The above-mentioned developments first benefited the textile industry. Advances in machine technology, coupled with a U.S. embargo on British goods prior to and during the War of 1812—England was then America's chief source of textiles—spurred the development of textile mills in New England. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, mills produced thread and hired local women to weave the thread into cloth at home. The mills would then buy the finished cloth and sell it on the open market. The invention of the first **power loom**, in 1813, meant that textile manufacturers could produce both thread and finished fabric in their own factories, and do so quickly and efficiently. The resulting product was both of high quality and inexpensive—so much so that women who had previously woven their own fabrics at home started to buy cloth.

The rapid growth of the textile industry resulted in a shortage of labor in New England. Consequently, textile manufacturers had to “sweeten the pot” to entice laborers (almost all of whom were women from nearby farms) to their factories. The most famous worker-enticement program was called the “**Lowell system**” (or “**Waltham system**”), so named after the two Massachusetts towns in which many mills were located. The Lowell system guaranteed employees housing in respectable, chaperoned boardinghouses; cash wages; and participation in cultural and social events organized by the mill. The system, widely copied throughout New England, lasted until great waves of Irish immigration in the 1840s and 1850s made factory labor plentiful. Later, as working conditions started to deteriorate,



workers began to organize **labor unions** to protect their interests. These early unions in the mid-1800s met with strong, frequently violent opposition from industry. Still, they ultimately succeeded. (We'll discuss labor unions in much more detail later, when we discuss the Gilded Age in the late 1800s and the Progressive era in the early 1900s.)

Other industries inevitably sprung up around the textile industry. **Clothing manufacturers**, also located primarily in the Northeast, transformed the textiles into finished products. **Retailers** sold the clothing and other manufactured products in their stores. **Brokers** acted as middlemen, buying and selling raw and finished products and trafficking them among manufacturers and retailers. **Commercial banks** lent money to everyone so that the wheels of commerce stayed well greased. Most significant, the **transportation industry** grew as a result of the need to ship these and other products across the country.

## Transportation: Canals, Railroads, Highways, and Steamships

Prior to the 1820s, travel and shipping along east–west routes was difficult, and most trade centered on the north–south routes along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The construction of the **National Road** from Maryland to West Virginia (and ultimately to central Ohio) made east–west travel easier, but the big change came with the completion of the **Erie Canal** in 1825. Funded entirely by the state of New York, the Erie Canal linked the Great Lakes region to New York and, thus, to European shipping routes. Suddenly, it became lucrative for a Midwestern merchant or farmer to sell his products to Eastern buyers, and as a result the Northeast soon established itself as the United States' center of commerce. The Erie Canal was so successful that, by 1835, its width and depth had to be nearly doubled to handle the traffic. Other regions tried to duplicate the Erie Canal's success, and during the 1830s thousands of miles of canals were constructed throughout the Northeast and Midwest. None performed as well as the Erie Canal, and a number of those canals failed. Meanwhile, the railroads developed into a convenient means of transporting goods; by 1850, the **canal era** had ended.

The end of this era, however, did not mark the end of shipping as an important industry. The invention of the steam engine allowed for **steamships**, which traveled faster than sailing vessels. Steamships became important freight carriers and replaced sailing ships for long sea voyages. By 1850 passengers could travel by steamship from New York to England in ten days; by sail the same trip had taken more than a month. Steamships were not without their problems though; exploding boilers, burning ships, and other disasters accompanied the technological advances.

Similarly, railroads redefined land travel. America's first **railroads** were built during the 1830s, the first typically connecting only two cities. As the nation's rail network grew, a major problem arose: Different railroad lines could not be connected to one another because the width, or **gauge**, of their tracks was different. As a result, rail development proceeded slowly. When different railways converted to compatible systems, the government often paid the bill even though the railroads were privately



### The transportation revolution

By 1855, the cost to send things across America had fallen to one-twentieth of what it had cost in 1825—and they arrived in one-fifth the time.

owned. This hastened progress, and by 1853, New York and Chicago were linked by rail, as were Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. (Southern rail development was much slower, and superior rails gave the North a huge advantage during the Civil War.) We'll discuss the railroads further in the post-Civil War period, during which railroad construction really "picked up steam."

The increase in travel and shipping was helped considerably by the invention of the **telegraph**, which allowed immediate long-distance communication for the first time. The telegraph was like a primitive telephone, except that people communicated in **Morse code** rather than by speaking to one another. Americans quickly understood the benefits of telegraphic communications, and widespread use followed its invention almost immediately. Transatlantic telegraph cables, however, would not be successfully laid until 1866, after the Civil War.

Developments in transportation and communication during the first half of the nineteenth century revolutionized American commerce and culture, but favored the Northeast and the West (today known as the Midwest). Products, people, and ideas traveled much faster in 1850 than they had in 1800.

### Farming

Although American manufacturing grew at a rapid pace, agriculture remained by far the most common source of livelihood throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Mechanization revolutionized farming during the period, as many machines came into common use during this time, including the mechanical plow, sower, reaper, thresher, baler, and cotton gin. The growth of the market economy also changed farming. In 1820 about one-third of all the food grown in the United States went to market. (The rest was kept for personal consumption.) By 1860 that fraction had doubled.

Farming continued in the Northeast, but not without difficulties. The region's rocky, hilly terrain was unsuitable to many of the machines that were making farming on the plains easier and cheaper. Furthermore, much of the farmland in the region had been over farmed, and as a result, the quality of the soil had grown poor. Unable to compete with Midwestern grain farmers, some New England farmers quit cultivating grain and started raising livestock and growing fruits and vegetables. Others quit farming entirely and headed to the cities to take manufacturing jobs.

As mentioned above, the Midwest became America's chief source of grains, such as wheat and corn. Midwestern farms—much larger than New England farms—were also much more adaptable to the new technology that allowed farmers to nearly double production. Banks sprang up to lend farmers the capital necessary to buy modern equipment, and the trade routes created by rail and ship provided access to the markets these farmers needed to sell their crops in order to pay off their loans. The system worked well, except during the various financial crises of the first half of the century. The panics of 1819 and 1837 resulted in bank foreclosures on mortgages and other business loans, not just in the Midwest but all across the country. Not surprisingly, many people were thrown into poverty.



In the South, plantations focused primarily on cotton, especially in the Deep South; tobacco continued to be a major cash crop in the Upper South. The majority of Southerners owned small farms and did not own slaves. (In 1860 approximately one-quarter of white Southern families owned slaves.)

## Westward Expansion

The Louisiana Purchase removed one major obstacle to U.S. western settlement, and the resolution of the War of 1812 removed another by depriving Native Americans of a powerful ally in Great Britain. By 1820 the United States had settled the region east of the Mississippi River and was quickly expanding west. Americans began to believe that they had a God-given right to the Western territories, an idea that came to be known as America's **Manifest Destiny**. Some took the idea of Manifest Destiny to its logical conclusion and argued that Canada, Mexico, and even all of the land in the Americas eventually would be annexed by the United States.

Western settlement was dangerous. The terrain and climate could be cold and unforgiving, and these settlers from the East were moving into areas that rightfully belonged to Native Americans and Mexicans, none of whom were about to cede their homes without a fight.

Texas presents a good case in point. When Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1821, the new country included what is now Texas and much of the Southwest, including California. The Mexican government established liberal land policies to entice settlers, and tens of thousands of Americans (many of them cattle ranchers) flooded the region. In return for land, the settlers were supposed to become Mexican citizens, but they rarely did. Instead, they ignored Mexican law, including—and especially—the one prohibiting slavery. When Mexico attempted to regain control of the area, the settlers rebelled and declared independence from Mexico. It was during this period that the famous battle at the **Alamo** was fought (1836). For a while Texas was an independent country, called the "**Republic of Texas**." The existence of slavery in the area guaranteed a Congressional battle over statehood, and Texas was not admitted to the Union until 1845.

Farther west and north, settlers were also pouring into the **Oregon Territory**. During the early 1840s, thousands of settlers traveled to the Willamette Valley, braving a six-month journey on the Oregon Trail. Again, the Americans were not the first ones in; not only was there a large Native American population, but the British were also there, claiming the territory for Canada. The Russians also staked a claim, and both the British and the Americans saw them as a threat. The Polk administration eventually settled the territorial dispute by signing a treaty with England.

By the late 1840s, though, those heading along the Oregon Trail had a new destination—**California**. In 1848 the discovery of gold in the California mountains set off the **Gold Rush**, attracting more than 100,000 people to the Golden State in just two years. Most of these people did not strike it rich, but they settled the area after discovering that it was very hospitable to agriculture. Its access to the Pacific Ocean allowed major cities such as San Francisco to develop as important trade centers.



## Economic Reasons for Regional Differences

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, three different sections of the country—North, South, and West, including what is today known as the Midwest—developed in very different directions. Accordingly, they did not see eye to eye on many issues; thus, historians often refer to **sectional strife** during this period.

The **North**, as mentioned earlier, was becoming industrialized. Technological advances in communications, transportation, industry, and banking were helping it become the nation's commercial center. Farming played less of a role in the Northeastern economy than it did elsewhere in the country, and legal slavery became increasingly uncommon in this region's states throughout the early 1800s.

The **South**, meanwhile, remained almost entirely agrarian. Its chief crops—tobacco and cotton—required vast acreage, and so Southerners were constantly looking west for more land. Anxious to protect slavery, which the large landholders depended on, Southerners also looked for new slave territories to include in the Union in order to strengthen their position in Congress and protect slavery from Northern legislators, who in ever-increasing numbers sought to make slavery illegal.

**Western** economic interests were varied but were largely rooted in commercial farming, fur trapping, and real-estate speculation. Westerners generally distrusted the North, which they regarded as the home of powerful banks that could take their land away. They had little more use for the South, whose rigidly hierarchical society was at odds with the egalitarianism of the West. Most Westerners wanted to avoid involvement in the slavery issue, which they regarded as irrelevant to their lives. Ironically, Western expansion was the core of the most important conflicts leading up to the Civil War.

Remember these generalizations about the different regions of the United States, because by using them and some common sense, you can often answer specific AP questions. Take, for example, a question dealing with a specific tariff. Even if you do not remember the details of the tariff—and chances are you will not—you should remember that the North, as a commercial and manufacturing center, would probably support it because a tariff makes imports more expensive and therefore reduces competition with American goods. Southerners would probably oppose it, because a tariff reduces competition and therefore raises prices. (Also, tariffs helped the North, and Southerners did not like the North.) Likewise, as the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth, Republicans tended to support a high tariff and the Democrats a lower one, so pay attention to who's in office, i.e., McKinley, Teddy Roosevelt, or Wilson. Note: The AP test asks about events that illustrate important general trends in American history. If there was a nineteenth-century tariff that the South supported and the North opposed, the test would not ask about it!



## SOCIAL HISTORY, 1800–1860

The growth of the American economy in the early nineteenth century brought about numerous social changes. The invention of the cotton gin, coupled with the advent of the Industrial Revolution in England, altered Southern agriculture, resulting in the region's increased reliance on slave labor. The development of commerce led to a larger middle class, especially in the North but also in Southern and Midwestern cities. Industrialization resulted in bigger cities with large (and often impoverished) migrant and immigrant neighborhoods. Westward migration created a new frontier culture as pioneers dealt with the uniqueness of the West's landscape and climate. Each of these sets of circumstances influenced people's attitudes and ambitions and set the scene for the social and political events of the era.

### The North and American Cities

As we discussed previously, the North became the nation's industrial and commercial center during the first half of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, it became home to many of the nation's major cities. In their early years, American cities faced numerous problems, chiefly the lack of powerful urban governments to oversee their rapid expansion. Modern waste disposal, plumbing, sewers, and incineration were still a long way off, and as a result, cities could be extremely toxic environments. The proximity in which people lived and worked, coupled with sanitation problems, made epidemics not only likely but inevitable.

City life was not, however, without its benefits. First, cities meant jobs. Many Northern farmers, unable to compete with cheaper produce carted in from the West and South by steamship and rail, moved to cities to work in the new factories. Craftsmen, such as tailors, cobblers, and blacksmiths, also found it easier to make a living in cities. Second, cities offered more opportunities for social advancement. In the 1830s and 1840s, as municipal governments grew, cities began to provide important services, such as public schooling. Labor unions began to form; although it would be many decades until they would come close to matching the power of business management, these unions still fought to bring about improvements in the lives of working people, even though they had quite limited success. Middle- and upper-class Americans in cities formed clubs and associations through which they could exert more influence on government and in society. Finally, cities provided a wide variety of leisure-time options, such as theater and sports.

Still, as in the South, there was a great disparity in the **distribution of wealth** in Northern cities. An elite few controlled most of the personal wealth and led lives of power and comfort. Beneath them was the **middle class**, made up of tradesmen, brokers, and other professionals. They worked to reach the plateau at which the women in their families could devote themselves to homemaking instead of wage earning. (Many middle-class women in their teens and early twenties worked—as sales clerks, teachers, and such—before settling down to marriage.) As wage-earning labor was more often performed away from the home, in factories and offices, the notion developed that men should work while women kept house and raised children. That notion, known as the **cult of domesticity**, was supported by popular magazines and novels that glorified home life. The middle classes also constituted



much of the market for luxury goods such as housewares and fine furniture. Members of the middle class often rose from the **working class**. In working-class families, men often worked in factories or at low-paying crafts; women often worked at home, taking in sewing. Others worked as domestic servants, and most worked throughout their lives. Such families lived just above the poverty level, and any calamity—loss of a job, injury, sickness, or a death in the family—could plunge them irretrievably into debt. Those in **poverty** were most often recent immigrants. Their numbers swelled in the 1840s and 1850s when the great **immigration waves** from **Ireland** (to the cities in the North) and then **Germany** (to the West) reached the United States. These immigration waves met with hostility, especially from the working classes, who feared competition for low-paying jobs. The Irish, in particular, were subject to widespread bias, directed in part at their Catholicism and because their education level was generally lower than that of the Germans.

Occasionally tensions would boil over, and American cities were frequently the sites of riots. Particularly in the 1830s and 1840s, religious, ethnic, and/or class strife could escalate to violence and even result in fatalities. Such disturbances were largely responsible for the formation of municipal police departments, which replaced privately run security companies in enforcing the peace.

## The South and Rural Life

There were few major urban centers in the South. The majority of Southerners lived instead in rural areas in near isolation. In 1860, the population density of Georgia was 18 people per square mile. Family, not surprisingly, played a dominant role in social life. After family came the church, and after the church, little else. There simply were not enough people around to support organized cultural and leisure events.

With almost no major cities, the South also had few centers of commerce, and while the North developed extensive networks of canals, railroads, and highways, the South's infrastructure remained fairly limited. The major city of the South, New Orleans, relied almost completely on waterways for its trade routes, and therefore grew much more slowly than did Northern cities such as New York and Boston. Consequently, the South did not develop a strong market economy, as did the North; many more Southerners made and grew most of their necessities for survival.

The wealthiest Southern citizens formed an aristocracy of plantation owners. As in the North, the wealthy made up a small minority, but in the South, this group dominated Southern society politically, socially, and economically. Less than one percent of the population owned more than 100 slaves. In fact, more than three-quarters of white Southerners owned no slaves. Of the rest, half owned five or fewer slaves. Only 10 percent of actual slaveholders—fewer than about 2 percent of the white population—held 20 or more slaves.

Plantation owners grew cotton throughout the Deep South and tobacco in the Middle Atlantic, alongside the crops they needed to support their families and slaves. Most convinced themselves that the slave system benefited all of its par-



ticipants, *including* the slaves. This attitude, called **Southern paternalism**, relied on the perception of blacks as childlike and unable to take care of themselves. Many slaves discovered that life became easier for them when they reinforced such paternalistic instincts, and adopted a submissive and grateful demeanor (which will be familiar to you if you've ever seen old Hollywood movies about this period). Slave owners almost always converted their slaves to Christianity, again convinced that they were serving the slaves' best interests. The slaves, in turn, adapted Christianity to their cultures and incorporated their own religions and traditions into their new faith.

Slaves lived in a state of subsistence poverty. They were usually housed in one-room cabins with their families, and often with another family. Conditions were overcrowded and unsanitary. Although work conditions varied from region to region and farm to farm, most worked extremely long hours at difficult and tedious labor, and conditions tended to be worse in the Deep South. (Any concern that slaveholders had for their slaves' welfare could arguably be attributed to the fact that importing African slaves was banned in 1808, making it essential to keep one's slaves alive and reproducing. In addition, the purchase price of a slave remained fairly high or even increased.) Moreover, most slaves lived in fear that their families would be broken up by the sale of one or more of them, or that they would be sold "down river." Many were subjected to the abuses of vicious overseers.

Most slaves survived the physical and psychological degradation of slavery by developing a unique culture that tended to blend aspects of their African roots with elements of Christianity. Likewise, although slave revolts were rarely successful, many slaves developed subtle methods of resistance that enabled them to maintain an aspect of their dignity. This might include violating a local slave code and sneaking out at night to meet a loved one or managing to learn to read and write despite codes forbidding them to do so.

The majority of Southerners farmed smaller tracts of land. Planters (those with 20 or more slaves) were in the minority—the remaining landholders were **yeomen**, who sometimes had a few slaves but often none at all, working their small tracts of land with their families. Most were of Scottish and Irish descent and farmed in the hills, which were unsuitable for plantation farming. They grew subsistence crops, raised livestock, and sometimes produced a few cash crops, though limited access to Northern markets hindered profit making. Less fortunate were **landless whites**, who either farmed as tenants or hired themselves out as manual laborers. Elevation from this social stratum to the level of yeoman proved very difficult.

The South was also home to more than 250,000 **free blacks**, the descendants of slaves freed by their owners or freed for having fought in the Revolutionary War. Black codes prevented them from owning guns, drinking liquor, and assembling in groups of more than three (except in church). Prejudice was a constant fact of life. Some owned land or worked at a trade, but most worked as tenant farmers or day laborers. Some were "mulattoes" (biracial individuals), some of whom led lives of relative luxury and refinement in the Deep South, particularly in and around New Orleans.



## The West and Frontier Living

During this period, the frontier's boundaries constantly changed. In 1800, the frontier lay east of the Mississippi River. By 1820, nearly all of this eastern territory had attained statehood, and the frontier region consisted of much of the Louisiana Purchase. Settlers also moved to Texas, then a part of Mexico, in the late 1820s and 1830s. By the early 1840s the frontier had expanded to include the Pacific Northwest. In 1849 the Gold Rush drew numerous settlers, **Forty-Niners**, to California.

The United States government actively encouraged settlers to move west. It gave away, or sold at reduced rates, large tracts of land to war veterans. The government also loaned money at reduced rates to civilians so that they too could move west. Some settlers, called **squatters**, ignored the requirement to buy land and simply moved onto and appropriated an unoccupied tract as their own.

Settlers in the Ohio Valley and points west soon found that the area was hospitable to grain production and dairy farming. As previously discussed, much of the area was flat and could easily be farmed by new farm implements such as mechanical plows and reapers. Transportation advances made shipping produce easier and more profitable, and soon the Midwest came to be known as “the nation’s breadbasket.”

**Fur trading** was another common commercial enterprise on the frontiers. Fur traders were also called “over-mountain men.” They were often the first pioneers in a region, and constantly moved west, one step ahead of farming families. When they reached Oregon, they ran out of places to go. Furthermore, they had hunted beaver to near extinction. A group of former trappers formed the first American government in the Oregon Territory and began lobbying for statehood. The western frontier was also home to **cattle ranchers** and **miners**.

Frontier life was rugged, to say the least. To survive, settlers constantly struggled against the climate, elements, and Native Americans who were not anxious for the whites to settle, having heard about their treatment of Eastern tribes. Still, the frontier offered pioneers opportunities for wealth, freedom, and social advancement—opportunities that were less common in the heavily populated, competitive East and the aristocratic South. Those women who could handle the difficulties of frontier life found their services in great demand, and many made a good living at domestic work and, later, running boardinghouses and hotels. Because of the possibilities for advancement and for “getting a new start in life,” the West came to symbolize freedom and equality to many Americans.

## Religious and Social Movements

The nineteenth century saw the beginnings of true social reform in the United States, and much of the impulse to improve the lives of others came from citizens’ religious convictions. In fact, early social reform movements grew out of the **Second Great Awakening**, which, like the first, was a period of religious revival, mainly among Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. The Second



Great Awakening began in the “**burned-over district**” of western New York and then spread throughout the country, sparking an intense period of evangelicalism in the South and West. The burned-over district was a place so heavily evangelized, so burned over by the metaphorical fires of religious revival, that there were no more people left to convert. Numerous churches formed in places where previously there had been only occasional religious meetings (called **revivals**, or camp meetings). A few reform societies sprang up in the South and West, but in the Northeast, the Second Great Awakening gave birth to numerous societies dedicated to the task of saving humanity from its own worst impulses. Much of the language of reform had a religious tone. For example, drinking and poverty were considered social evils.

Usually, the most active members of reform groups were women, particularly those of the middle and upper classes. **Temperance societies**, some of which tried to encourage people to sign the pledge not to drink and some of which sought outright prohibition of liquor, formed and remained powerful until the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919 provided for nationwide prohibition. (Not coincidentally, prohibition finally succeeded at the same time it became evident to politicians that women would soon gain the right to vote.) These groups battled other vices as well, particularly **gambling**. By 1860 every state in the Union had outlawed **lotteries**, and many had prohibited other forms of gambling. Many Northern states also prohibited the manufacture or purchase of alcoholic beverages during this period. A group called “The Female Moral Reform Society” led the battle against **prostitution** in the cities, focusing not only on eliminating the profession but also on rehabilitating those women involved in it.

Reform societies also helped bring about **penitentiaries**, **asylums**, and **orphanages** by popularizing the notion that society is responsible for the welfare of its least fortunate. Asylums, orphanages, and houses of refuge for the poor were built to care for those who would previously have been imprisoned or run out of town. With leadership from Dorothea Dix, penitentiaries sought to rehabilitate criminals (rather than simply isolate them from society, as prisons do) by teaching them morality and a “work ethic.”

Before we discuss the abolition movement, we need to mention a few other important movements of the period. **The Shakers**, a utopian group that splintered from the Quakers, believed that they and all other churches had grown too interested in this world and too neglectful of their afterlives. Shakers, followers of Mother Ann Lee, isolated themselves in communes where they shared work and its rewards; they also granted near-equal rights to women, even allowing them to attain priesthood. Believing the end of the world was at hand and that sex was an instrument of evil, the Shakers practiced celibacy; their numbers, not surprisingly, diminished. The Shaker revival ended during the 1840s and 1850s. Other Utopian groups included the Oneida community in New York and the New Harmony community in Indiana.

### Connections

Where was the burned-over district? Western New York. What else happened in western New York during the same period? The Erie Canal was built. Remember that the First Great Awakening was a reaction against the Enlightenment; some historians contend that, similarly, the Second Great Awakening was a reaction against the rise of market capitalism, and no region was being transformed by market capitalism like western New York. We have put economic history and religious history in separate sections for thematic consistency, but they were intimately interconnected—and these sorts of connections are more the rule than the exception in history.



Perhaps the most well known of these experimental communities was Brook Farm, established near Roxbury, Massachusetts in 1841. Brook Farm was home to the Transcendentalists, a group of nonconformist Unitarian writers and philosophers who drew their inspiration from European romanticism. Transcendentalists believed that humans contained elements of the divine, and thus they had faith in man's, and ultimately society's, perfectibility. The most famous of these writers were Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of *The Scarlet Letter*; Ralph Waldo Emerson; and Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau is most noted for his publication of *Walden*, an account of the two years he spent living alone in a cabin on Walden Pond outside Concord, Massachusetts. Perhaps not as well known, but equally significant, was Thoreau's demonstration of civil disobedience. Thoreau refused to pay taxes to a government that waged war against Mexico and subsequently enacted a Fugitive Slave Act as part of the **Compromise of 1850** (see separate section on this in the next chapter).

Another important group involved in this American Renaissance was the Hudson River School painters, the first distinct school of American art. Their goal was to create a specific vision for American art, and they mostly painted landscapes that seemed to portray an awe for the wilderness and beauty of wild America. Like Thoreau and Emerson, the painters were influenced by European romanticism.

The **Mormons**, on the other hand, continue to thrive today. Joseph Smith formed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in 1830. Smith's preaching, particularly his acceptance of polygamy, drew strong opposition in the East and Midwest, culminating in his death by a mob while imprisoned in Illinois. The Mormons, realizing that they would never be allowed to practice their faith in the East, made the long, difficult trek to the Salt Lake Valley, led by Brigham Young. There, they settled and transformed the area from desert into farmland through extensive irrigation. The Mormons' success was largely attributable to the settlers' strong sense of community. Through their united efforts, they came to dominate the Utah territory.

The Second Great Awakening was only one source of the antebellum reform movements. By the 1820s and '30s, most of the Founding Fathers were dead, but they left a legacy of freedom and equality, expressed in part in the Declaration of Independence as well as the Preamble to the Constitution. In the 1830s, "We, the People" still meant white males. Many women were active in the abolitionist movement, and it was their exclusion from participation at a worldwide anti-slavery convention held in London in 1840 that convinced women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott to hold the first women's rights convention in 1848 in Seneca Falls in upstate New York (in the same Burned over District from the Second Great Awakening). Stanton and Mott, along with other reformers, published the *Declaration of Rights and Sentiments of Women*, which they modeled after the American Declaration of Independence. The Declaration began, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men *and women* are created equal..." Four years later, Stanton would team up with Susan B. Anthony, with whom she founded the **National Woman Suffrage Association** in 1869.

Finally, **Horace Mann** was instrumental in pushing for public education and education reform in general. He lengthened the school year, established the first "normal school" for teacher training, and used the first standardized books in educa-



tion (*McGuffey's Reader* was used by 80 percent of public schools). Mann is noted for his belief that "Education is the great equalizer."

## The Abolition Movement

Before the 1830s, few whites fought aggressively for the liberation of the slaves. The Quakers believed slavery to be morally wrong and argued for its end. Most other antislavery whites, though, sought gradual abolition, coupled with colonization, a movement to return blacks to Africa. The religious and moral fervor that accompanied the Second Great Awakening, however, persuaded more and more whites, particularly Northerners, that slavery was a great evil. As in other reform movements, women played a prominent role.

White abolitionists divided into two groups. Moderates wanted emancipation to take place slowly and with the cooperation of slave owners. **Immediatists**, as their name implies, wanted emancipation at once. Most prominent among white immediatists was **William Lloyd Garrison**, who began publishing a popular abolitionist newspaper called the *Liberator* in 1831 and helped found the **American Anti-slavery Society** in 1833. His early subscribers were mostly free blacks, but as time passed, his paper caught on with white abolitionists as well.

Garrison fought against slavery and against moderates as well, decrying their plans for black resettlement in Africa as racist and immoral. Garrison's persistence and powerful writing style helped force the slavery issue to the forefront. His message, as you may imagine, did not go over well everywhere; some Southern states banned the newspaper, and others prohibited *anyone* from discussing emancipation. When congressional debate over slavery became too heated, Congress adopted a **gag rule** that automatically suppressed discussion of the issue. It also prevented Congress from enacting any new legislation pertaining to slavery. The rule, which lasted from 1836 to 1844, along with Southern restrictions on free speech, outraged many Northerners and convinced them to join the abolition movement.

The abolition movement existed prior to 1830, but it had been primarily supported by free blacks. Abolition associations formed in every large black community to assist fugitive slaves and publicize the struggle against slavery; these groups met at a national convention every year after 1830 to coordinate strategies. In the 1840s, **Frederick Douglass** began publishing his influential newspaper *The North Star*. Douglass, an escaped slave, gained fame as a gifted writer and eloquent advocate of freedom and equality; his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is one of the great American autobiographies. Other prominent black abolitionists included **Harriet Tubman**, who escaped slavery and then returned south repeatedly to help more than 300 slaves escape via the **underground railroad** (a network of hiding places and "safe" trails); and **Sojourner Truth**, a charismatic speaker who campaigned for emancipation and women's rights.

Abolitionists' determination and the South's inflexibility pushed the issue of slavery into the political spotlight. Westward expansion, and the question of whether slavery would be allowed in the new territories, forced the issue further. Together, they set in motion the events that led up to the Civil War.

## The AP and retrospect

Abolitionism is an important topic on every AP U.S. History test. But it is worth noting that, right up to the Civil War, abolitionists were widely considered extremists. Far and away the leading reform movement of the time was the temperance movement. Nearly all abolitionists believed in temperance; few supporters of temperance were abolitionists. But as the abolition movement succeeded (slavery is now illegal) while the success of the temperance movement was short-lived (Prohibition only lasted from 1920 to 1933), you'll find a lot more questions about the former than about the latter.

*"We can see nothing, touch nothing, have no measures proposed, without having this pestilence thrust before us. Here it is, this black question, forever on the table, on the nuptial couch, everywhere!"*  
—Sen. Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri



# Chapter 8 Drill

See Chapter 13 for answers and explanations.

1. Andrew Jackson accused Henry Clay of using his influence to broker the "corrupt bargain" of 1824 (which cost Andrew Jackson the election) because Clay
  - (A) was promised a cabinet position if John Quincy Adams was elected president
  - (B) was promised the vice presidency if Jackson was defeated
  - (C) knew Jackson did not support his "American System"
  - (D) feared Jackson's pro-slavery stance on states' rights
  - (E) knew Jackson would veto the Second National Bank when its charter came up for renewal
2. The controversy over the tariff during the late 1820s and early 1830s demonstrated that
  - (A) New Englanders were more radical than Southerners, as they had been since the days of the American Revolution
  - (B) Andrew Jackson favored states' rights over federal supremacy
  - (C) the system of checks and balances was flawed
  - (D) economic sectionalism was a serious threat to national unity
  - (E) the Southern states were gaining political and economic power
3. Andrew Jackson's positions on the Second National Bank and the American System typified his
  - (A) distrust of large national government programs
  - (B) abhorrence of the spoils system
  - (C) tendency to favor the interests of the Northeast
  - (D) commitment to developing a national economy
  - (E) belief that the executive branch should be the weakest of the government's three branches
4. The Cherokee of Georgia were forced off their land because
  - (A) they refused to assimilate to the "American" way of life
  - (B) gold was discovered in their territory and Georgians demanded that the Indian Removal Act be enforced
  - (C) the Supreme Court refused to hear their cases
  - (D) the Seminole tribe, their traditional enemy, conquered their territory
  - (E) Georgia refused to obey President Jackson's request that they allow the Cherokee to keep their land
5. Brook Farm in Massachusetts, the Oneida Community in upstate New York, and New Harmony in Indiana were similar in that they
  - (A) were religious communities inspired by the Second Great Awakening
  - (B) demonstrated the attraction of communism to many Americans
  - (C) failed because they practiced political and social equality within their own communities
  - (D) were stops along the Underground Railroad that aided fugitive slaves
  - (E) were utopian communities designed to ameliorate the effects of a growing commercial society