U.S. HISTORY



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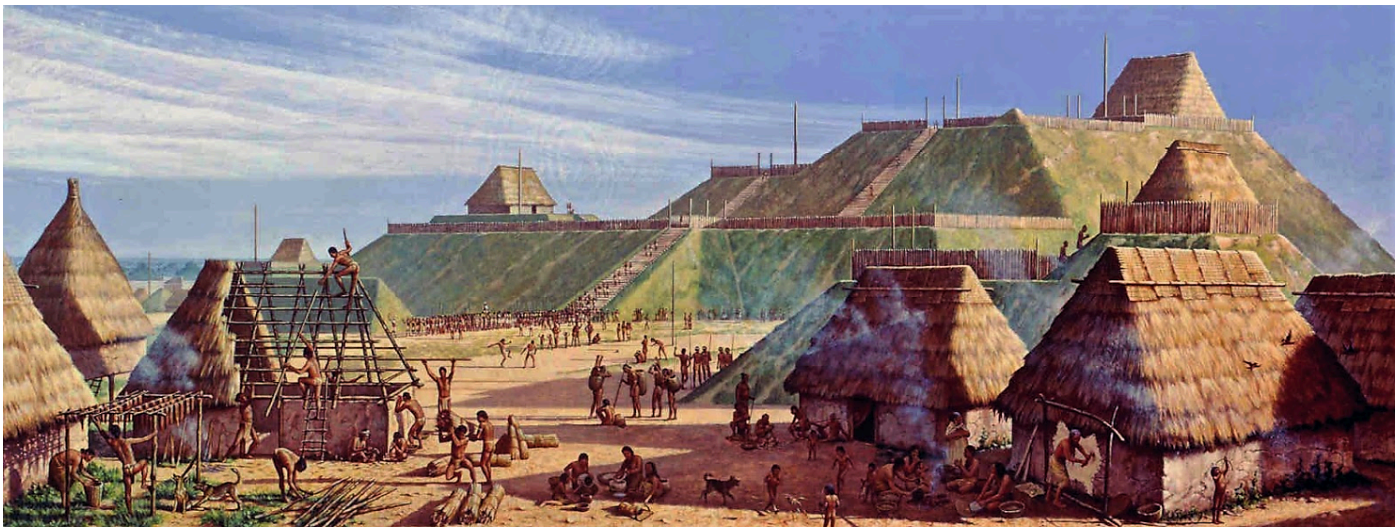
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1: THE NEW WORLD



Cahokia, as it may have appeared around 1150 CE. Painting by Michael Hampshire for the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site.

1.1: Introduction

1.2: The First Americans

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1.1: Introduction

Europeans called the Americas “the New World.” But for the millions of Native Americans they encountered, it was anything but. Humans have lived in the Americas for over ten thousand years. Dynamic and diverse, they spoke hundreds of languages and created thousands of distinct cultures. Native Americans built settled communities and followed seasonal migration patterns, maintained peace through alliances and warred with their neighbors, and developed self-sufficient economies and maintained vast trade networks. They cultivated distinct art forms and spiritual values. Kinship ties knit their communities together. But the arrival of Europeans and the resulting global exchange of people, animals, plants, and microbes—what scholars benignly call the Columbian Exchange—bridged more than ten thousand years of geographic separation, inaugurated centuries of violence, unleashed the greatest biological terror the world had ever seen, and revolutionized the history of the world. It began one of the most consequential developments in all of human history and the first chapter in the long American yawp.

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1.2: The First Americans

American history begins with the first Americans. But where do their stories start? Native Americans passed stories down through the millennia that tell of their creation and reveal the contours of indigenous belief. The Salinan people of present-day California, for example, tell of a bald eagle that formed the first man out of clay and the first woman out of a feather.[1] According to a Lenape tradition, the earth was made when Sky Woman fell into a watery world and, with the help of muskrat and beaver, landed safely on a turtle's back, thus creating Turtle Island, or North America. A Choctaw tradition locates southeastern peoples' beginnings inside the great Mother Mound earthwork, Nunih Waya, in the lower Mississippi Valley.[2] Nahua people trace their beginnings to the place of the Seven Caves, from which their ancestors emerged before they migrated to what is now central Mexico.[3] America's indigenous peoples have passed down many accounts of their origins, written and oral, which share creation and migration histories.

Archaeologists and anthropologists, meanwhile, focus on migration histories. Studying artifacts, bones, and genetic signatures, these scholars have pieced together a narrative that claims that the Americas were once a "new world" for Native Americans as well.

The last global ice age trapped much of the world's water in enormous continental glaciers. Twenty thousand years ago, ice sheets, some a mile thick, extended across North America as far south as modern-day Illinois. With so much of the world's water captured in these massive ice sheets, global sea levels were much lower, and a land bridge connected Asia and North America across the Bering Strait. Between twelve and twenty thousand years ago, Native ancestors crossed the ice, waters, and exposed lands between the continents of Asia and America. These mobile hunter-gatherers traveled in small bands, exploiting vegetable, animal, and marine resources into the Beringian tundra at the northwestern edge of North America. DNA evidence suggests that these ancestors paused—for perhaps fifteen thousand years—in the expansive region between Asia and America.[4] Other ancestors crossed the seas and voyaged along the Pacific coast, traveling along riverways and settling where local ecosystems permitted.[5] Glacial sheets receded around fourteen thousand years ago, opening a corridor to warmer climates and new resources. Some ancestral communities migrated southward and eastward. Evidence found at Monte Verde, a site in modern-day Chile, suggests that human activity began there at least 14,500 years ago. Similar evidence hints at human settlement in the Florida panhandle at the same time.[6] On many points, archaeological and traditional knowledge sources converge: the dental, archaeological, linguistic, oral, ecological, and genetic evidence illustrates a great deal of diversity, with numerous groups settling and migrating over thousands of years, potentially from many different points of origin.[7]Whether emerging from the earth, water, or sky; being made by a creator; or migrating to their homelands, modern Native American communities recount histories in America that date long before human memory.

In the Northwest, Native groups exploited the great salmon-filled rivers. On the plains and prairie lands, hunting communities followed bison herds and moved according to seasonal patterns. In mountains, prairies, deserts, and forests, the cultures and ways of life of paleo-era ancestors were as varied as the geography. These groups spoke hundreds of languages and adopted distinct cultural practices. Rich and diverse diets fueled massive population growth across the continent.

Agriculture arose sometime between nine thousand and five thousand years ago, almost simultaneously in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. Mesoamericans in modern-day Mexico and Central America relied on domesticated maize (corn) to develop the hemisphere's first settled population around 1200 BCE.[8] Corn was high in caloric content, easily dried and stored, and, in Mesoamerica's warm and fertile Gulf Coast, could sometimes be harvested twice in a year. Corn—as well as other Mesoamerican crops—spread across North America and continues to hold an important spiritual and cultural place in many Native communities.

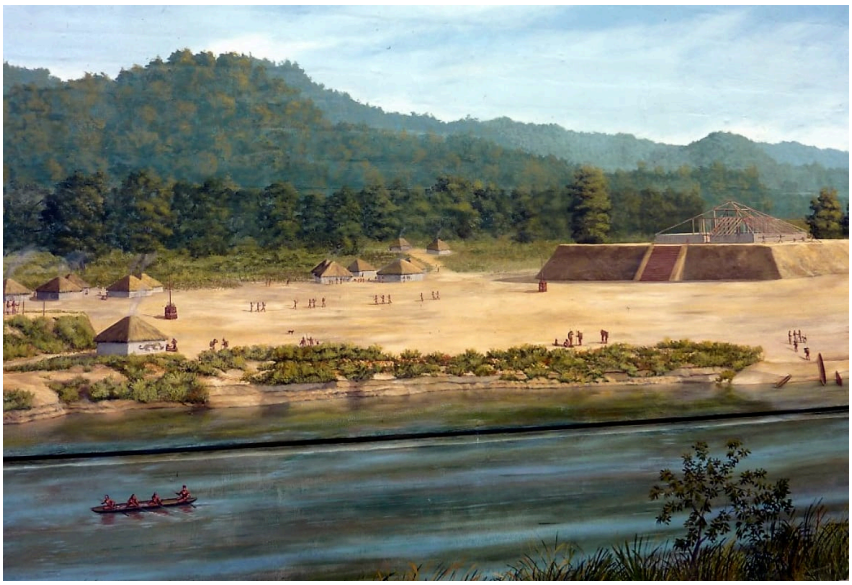


Figure 1.2.1: Prehistoric Settlement in Warren County, Mississippi. Mural by Robert Dafford, depicting the Kings Crossing archaeological site as it may have appeared in 1000 CE. *Vicksburg Riverfront Murals*

Agriculture flourished in the fertile river valleys between the Mississippi River and the Atlantic Ocean, an area known as the Eastern Woodlands. There, three crops in particular—corn, beans, and squash, known as the Three Sisters—provided nutritional needs necessary to sustain cities and civilizations. In Woodland areas from the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River to the Atlantic coast, Native communities managed their forest resources by burning underbrush to create vast parklike hunting grounds and to clear the ground for planting the Three Sisters. Many groups used shifting cultivation, in which farmers cut the forest, burned the undergrowth, and then planted seeds in the nutrient-rich ashes. When crop yields began to decline, farmers moved to another field and allowed the land to recover and the forest to regrow before again cutting the forest, burning the undergrowth, and restarting the cycle. This technique was particularly useful in areas with difficult soil. But in the fertile regions of the Eastern Woodlands, Native American farmers engaged in permanent, intensive agriculture, using hand tools rather than European-style plows. The rich soil and use of hand tools enabled effective and sustainable farming practices, producing high yields without overburdening the soil.[9] Typically in Woodland communities, women practiced agriculture while men hunted and fished.

Agriculture allowed for dramatic social change, but for some, it also may have accompanied a decline in health. Analysis of remains reveals that societies transitioning to agriculture often experienced weaker bones and teeth.[10] But despite these possible declines, agriculture brought important benefits. Farmers could produce more food than hunters, enabling some members of the community to pursue other skills. Religious leaders, skilled soldiers, and artists could devote their energy to activities other than food production.

North America's indigenous peoples shared some broad traits. Spiritual practices, understandings of property, and kinship networks differed markedly from European arrangements. Most Native Americans did not neatly distinguish between the natural and the supernatural. Spiritual power permeated their world and was both tangible and accessible. It could be appealed to and harnessed. Kinship bound most Native North American people together. Most peoples lived in small communities tied by kinship networks. Many Native cultures understood ancestry as matrilineal: family and clan identity proceeded along the female line, through mothers and daughters, rather than fathers and sons. Fathers, for instance, often joined mothers' extended families, and sometimes even a mother's brothers took a more direct role in child-raising than biological fathers. Therefore, mothers often wielded enormous influence at local levels, and men's identities and influence often depended on their relationships to women. Native American culture, meanwhile, generally afforded greater sexual and marital freedom than European cultures. Women, for instance, often chose their husbands, and divorce often was a relatively simple and straightforward process. Moreover, most Native peoples' notions of property rights differed markedly from those of Europeans. Native Americans generally felt a personal ownership of tools, weapons, or other items that were actively used, and this same rule applied to land and crops. Groups and individuals exploited particular pieces of land and used violence or negotiation to exclude others. But the right to the use of land did not imply the right to its permanent possession.

Native Americans had many ways of communicating, including graphic ones, and some of these artistic and communicative technologies are still used today. For example, Algonquian-speaking Ojibwes used birch-bark scrolls to record medical treatments, recipes, songs, stories, and more. Other Eastern Woodland peoples wove plant fibers, embroidered skins with

porcupine quills, and modeled the earth to make sites of complex ceremonial meaning. On the Plains, artisans wove buffalo hair and painted on buffalo skins; in the Pacific Northwest weavers wove goat hair into soft textiles with particular patterns. Maya, Zapotec, and Nahua ancestors in Mesoamerica painted their histories on plant-derived textiles and carved them into stone. In the Andes, Inca recorders noted information in the form of knotted strings, or *khipu*.[11]

Two thousand years ago, some of the largest culture groups in North America were the Puebloan groups, centered in the current-day Greater Southwest (the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico), the Mississippian groups located along the Great River and its tributaries, and the Mesoamerican groups of the areas now known as central Mexico and the Yucatán. Previous developments in agricultural technology enabled the explosive growth of the large early societies, such as that at Tenochtitlán in the Valley of Mexico, Cahokia along the Mississippi River, and in the desert oasis areas of the Greater Southwest.



Figure 1.2.2: Native peoples in the Southwest began constructing these highly defensible cliff dwellings in 1190 CE and continued expanding and refurbishing them until 1260 CE before abandoning them around 1300 CE. Andreas F. Borchert, Mesa Verde National Park Cliff Palace. *Wikimedia. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany.*

Chaco Canyon in northern New Mexico was home to ancestral Puebloan peoples between 900 and 1300 CE. As many as fifteen thousand individuals lived in the Chaco Canyon complex in present-day New Mexico.[12] Sophisticated agricultural practices, extensive trading networks, and even the domestication of animals like turkeys allowed the population to swell. Massive residential structures, built from sandstone blocks and lumber carried across great distances, housed hundreds of Puebloan people. One building, Pueblo Bonito, stretched over two acres and rose five stories. Its six hundred rooms were decorated with copper bells, turquoise decorations, and bright macaws.[13] Homes like those at Pueblo Bonito included a small dugout room, or *kiva*, which played an important role in a variety of ceremonies and served as an important center for Puebloan life and culture. Puebloan spirituality was tied both to the earth and the heavens, as generations carefully charted the stars and designed homes in line with the path of the sun and moon.[14]

The Puebloan people of Chaco Canyon faced several ecological challenges, including deforestation and overirrigation, which ultimately caused the community to collapse and its people to disperse to smaller settlements. An extreme fifty-year drought began in 1130. Shortly thereafter, Chaco Canyon was deserted. New groups, including the Apache and Navajo, entered the vacated territory and adopted several Puebloan customs. The same drought that plagued the Pueblo also likely affected the Mississippian peoples of the American Midwest and South. The Mississippians developed one of the largest civilizations north of modern-day Mexico. Roughly one thousand years ago, the largest Mississippian settlement, Cahokia, located just east of modern-day St. Louis, peaked at a population of between ten thousand and thirty thousand. It rivaled contemporary European cities in size. No American city, in fact, would match Cahokia's peak population levels until after the American Revolution. The city itself spanned two thousand acres and centered on Monks Mound, a large earthen hill that rose ten stories and was larger at its base than the pyramids of Egypt. As with many of the peoples who lived in the Woodlands, life and death in Cahokia were linked to the movement of the stars, sun, and moon, and their ceremonial earthwork structures reflect these important structuring forces.

Cahokia was politically organized around chiefdoms, a hierarchical, clan-based system that gave leaders both secular and sacred authority. The size of the city and the extent of its influence suggest that the city relied on a number of lesser chiefdoms under the authority of a paramount leader. Social stratification was partly preserved through frequent warfare. War captives were enslaved,

and these captives formed an important part of the economy in the North American Southeast. Native American slavery was not based on holding people as property. Instead, Native Americans understood slaves as people who lacked kinship networks. Slavery, then, was not always a permanent condition. Very often, a former slave could become a fully integrated member of the community. Adoption or marriage could enable a slave to enter a kinship network and join the community. Slavery and captive trading became an important way that many Native communities regrew and gained or maintained power.

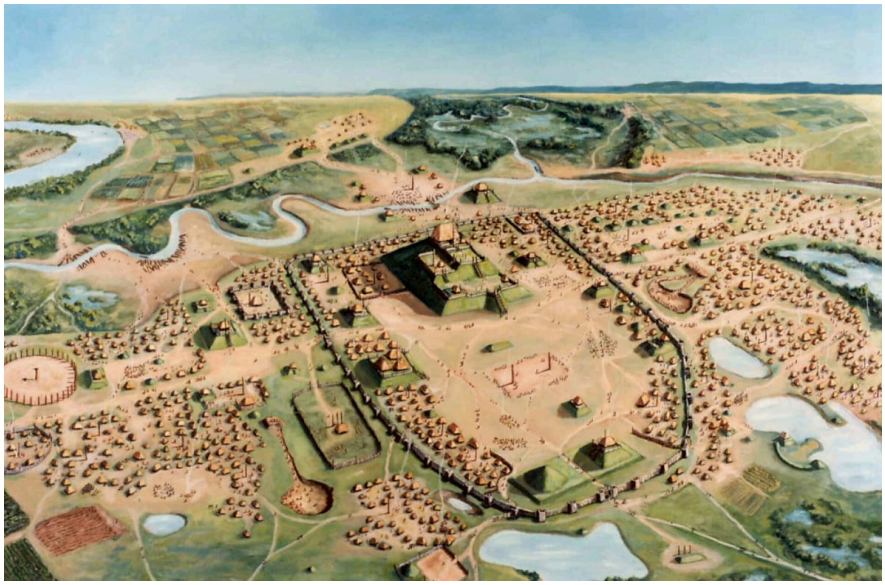


Figure 1.2.3: An artist's rendering of Cahokia as it may have appeared in 1150 CE. Prepared by Bill Isminger and Mark Esarey with artwork by Greg Harlin. From the *Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site*

Around 1050, Cahokia experienced what one archaeologist has called a "big bang," which included "a virtually instantaneous and pervasive shift in all things political, social, and ideological."[15] The population grew almost 500 percent in only one generation, and new people groups were absorbed into the city and its supporting communities. By 1300, the once-powerful city had undergone a series of strains that led to collapse. Scholars previously pointed to ecological disaster or slow depopulation through emigration, but new research instead emphasizes mounting warfare, or internal political tensions. Environmental explanations suggest that population growth placed too great a burden on the arable land. Others suggest that the demand for fuel and building materials led to deforestation, erosion, and perhaps an extended drought. Recent evidence, including defensive stockades, suggests that political turmoil among the ruling elite and threats from external enemies may explain the end of the once-great civilization.[16]

North American communities were connected by kin, politics, and culture and sustained by long-distance trading routes. The Mississippi River served as an important trade artery, but all of the continent's waterways were vital to transportation and communication. Cahokia became a key trading center partly because of its position near the Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers. These rivers created networks that stretched from the Great Lakes to the American Southeast. Archaeologists can identify materials, like seashells, that traveled over a thousand miles to reach the center of this civilization. At least 3,500 years ago, the community at what is now Poverty Point, Louisiana, had access to copper from present-day Canada and flint from modern-day Indiana. Sheets of mica found at the sacred Serpent Mound site near the Ohio River came from the Allegheny Mountains, and obsidian from nearby earthworks came from Mexico. Turquoise from the Greater Southwest was used at Teotihuacan 1200 years ago.

In the Eastern Woodlands, many Native American societies lived in smaller, dispersed communities to take advantage of rich soils and abundant rivers and streams. The Lenapes, also known as Delawares, farmed the bottomlands throughout the Hudson and Delaware River watersheds in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Their hundreds of settlements, stretching from southern Massachusetts through Delaware, were loosely bound together by political, social, and spiritual connections.

Dispersed and relatively independent, Lenape communities were bound together by oral histories, ceremonial traditions, consensus-based political organization, kinship networks, and a shared clan system. Kinship tied the various Lenape communities and clans together, and society was organized along matrilineal lines. Marriage occurred between clans, and a married man joined the clan of his wife. Lenape women wielded authority over marriages, households, and agricultural production and may even have played a significant part in determining the selection of leaders, called sachems. Dispersed authority, small settlements, and

kin-based organization contributed to the long-lasting stability and resilience of Lenape communities.[17] One or more sachems governed Lenape communities by the consent of their people. Lenape sachems acquired their authority by demonstrating wisdom and experience. This differed from the hierarchical organization of many Mississippian cultures. Large gatherings did exist, however, as dispersed communities and their leaders gathered for ceremonial purposes or to make big decisions. Sachems spoke for their people in larger councils that included men, women, and elders. The Lenapes experienced occasional tensions with other indigenous groups like the Iroquois to the north or the Susquehannock to the south, but the lack of defensive fortifications near Lenape communities convinced archaeologists that the Lenapes avoided large-scale warfare.

The continued longevity of Lenape societies, which began centuries before European contact, was also due to their skills as farmers and fishers. Along with the Three Sisters, Lenape women planted tobacco, sunflowers, and gourds. They harvested fruits and nuts from trees and cultivated numerous medicinal plants, which they used with great proficiency. The Lenapes organized their communities to take advantage of growing seasons and the migration patterns of animals and fowl that were a part of their diet. During planting and harvesting seasons, Lenapes gathered in larger groups to coordinate their labor and take advantage of local abundance. As proficient fishers, they organized seasonal fish camps to net shellfish and catch shad. Lenapes wove nets, baskets, mats, and a variety of household materials from the rushes found along the streams, rivers, and coasts. They made their homes in some of the most fertile and abundant lands in the Eastern Woodlands and used their skills to create a stable and prosperous civilization. The first Dutch and Swedish settlers who encountered the Lenapes in the seventeenth century recognized Lenape prosperity and quickly sought their friendship. Their lives came to depend on it.

In the Pacific Northwest, the Kwakwaka'wakw, Tlingits, Haidas, and hundreds of other peoples, speaking dozens of languages, thrived in a land with a moderate climate, lush forests, and many rivers. The peoples of this region depended on salmon for survival and valued it accordingly. Images of salmon decorated totem poles, baskets, canoes, oars, and other tools. The fish was treated with spiritual respect and its image represented prosperity, life, and renewal. Sustainable harvesting practices ensured the survival of salmon populations. The Coast Salish people and several others celebrated the First Salmon Ceremony when the first migrating salmon was spotted each season. Elders closely observed the size of the salmon run and delayed harvesting to ensure that a sufficient number survived to spawn and return in the future.[18] Men commonly used nets, hooks, and other small tools to capture salmon as they migrated upriver to spawn. Massive cedar canoes, as long as fifty feet and carrying as many as twenty men, also enabled extensive fishing expeditions in the Pacific Ocean, where skilled fishermen caught halibut, sturgeon, and other fish, sometimes hauling thousands of pounds in a single canoe.[19]

Food surpluses enabled significant population growth, and the Pacific Northwest became one of the most densely populated regions of North America. The combination of population density and surplus food created a unique social organization centered on elaborate feasts, called potlatches. These potlatches celebrated births and weddings and determined social status. The party lasted for days and hosts demonstrated their wealth and power by entertaining guests with food, artwork, and performances. The more the hosts gave away, the more prestige and power they had within the group. Some men saved for decades to host an extravagant potlatch that would in turn give him greater respect and power within the community.



Figure 1.2.4: Intricately carved masks, like the Crooked Beak of Heaven Mask, used natural elements such as animals to represent supernatural forces during ceremonial dances and festivals. Nineteenth-century brooked beak of heaven mask from the Kwakwaka'wakw. *Wikimedia*. *Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported*.

Many peoples of the Pacific Northwest built elaborate plank houses out of the region's abundant cedar trees. The five-hundred-foot-long Suquamish Oleman House (or Old Man House), for instance, rested on the banks of Puget Sound.[20] Giant cedar trees were also carved and painted in the shape of animals or other figures to tell stories and express identities. These totem poles became the most recognizable artistic form of the Pacific Northwest, but peoples also carved masks and other wooden items, such as hand drums and rattles, out of the region's great trees.

Despite commonalities, Native cultures varied greatly. The New World was marked by diversity and contrast. By the time Europeans were poised to cross the Atlantic, Native Americans spoke hundreds of languages and lived in keeping with the hemisphere's many climates. Some lived in cities, others in small bands. Some migrated seasonally; others settled permanently. All Native peoples had long histories and well-formed, unique cultures that developed over millennia. But the arrival of Europeans changed everything.

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1.3: European Expansion

Scandinavian seafarers reached the New World long before Columbus. At their peak they sailed as far east as Constantinople and raided settlements as far south as North Africa. They established limited colonies in Iceland and Greenland and, around the year 1000, Leif Erikson reached Newfoundland in present-day Canada. But the Norse colony failed. Culturally and geographically isolated, the Norse were driven back to the sea by some combination of limited resources, inhospitable weather, food shortages, and Native resistance.

Then, centuries before Columbus, the Crusades linked Europe with the wealth, power, and knowledge of Asia. Europeans rediscovered or adopted Greek, Roman, and Muslim knowledge. The hemispheric dissemination of goods and knowledge not only sparked the Renaissance but fueled long-term European expansion. Asian goods flooded European markets, creating a demand for new commodities. This trade created vast new wealth, and Europeans battled one another for trade supremacy.

European nation-states consolidated under the authority of powerful kings. A series of military conflicts between England and France—the Hundred Years' War—accelerated nationalism and cultivated the financial and military administration necessary to maintain nation-states. In Spain, the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile consolidated the two most powerful kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula. The Crusades had never ended in Iberia: the Spanish crown concluded centuries of intermittent warfare—the Reconquista—by expelling Muslim Moors and Iberian Jews from the Iberian peninsula in 1492, just as Christopher Columbus sailed west. With new power, these new nations—and their newly empowered monarchs—yearned to access the wealth of Asia.

Seafaring Italian traders commanded the Mediterranean and controlled trade with Asia. Spain and Portugal, at the edges of Europe, relied on middlemen and paid higher prices for Asian goods. They sought a more direct route. And so they looked to the Atlantic. Portugal invested heavily in exploration. From his estate on the Sagres Peninsula of Portugal, a rich sailing port, Prince Henry the Navigator (Infante Henry, Duke of Viseu) invested in research and technology and underwrote many technological breakthroughs. His investments bore fruit. In the fifteenth century, Portuguese sailors perfected the astrolabe, a tool to calculate latitude, and the caravel, a ship well suited for ocean exploration. Both were technological breakthroughs. The astrolabe allowed for precise navigation, and the caravel, unlike more common vessels designed for trading on the relatively placid Mediterranean, was a rugged ship with a deep draft capable of making lengthy voyages on the open ocean and, equally important, carrying large amounts of cargo while doing so.



Figure 1.3.1: Engraving of sixteenth century Lisbon from Civitatis Orbis Terrarum, "*The Cities of the World," ed. Georg Braun (Cologne: 1572).* *Wikimedia*.

Blending economic and religious motivations, the Portuguese established forts along the Atlantic coast of Africa during the fifteenth century, inaugurating centuries of European colonization there. Portuguese trading posts generated new profits that funded further trade and further colonization. Trading posts spread across the vast coastline of Africa, and by the end of the

fifteenth century, Vasco da Gama leapfrogged his way around the coasts of Africa to reach India and other lucrative Asian markets.

The vagaries of ocean currents and the limits of contemporary technology forced Iberian sailors to sail west into the open sea before cutting back east to Africa. So doing, the Spanish and Portuguese stumbled on several islands off the coast of Europe and Africa, including the Azores, the Canary Islands, and the Cape Verde Islands. They became training grounds for the later colonization of the Americas and saw the first large-scale cultivation of sugar by enslaved laborers.

Sugar was originally grown in Asia but became a popular, widely profitable luxury item consumed by the nobility of Europe. The Portuguese began growing sugarcane along the Mediterranean, but sugar was a difficult crop. It required tropical temperatures, daily rainfall, unique soil conditions, and a fourteen-month growing season. But on the Atlantic islands, the Portuguese had found new land to support sugar production. New patterns of human and ecological destruction followed. Isolated from the mainlands of Europe and Africa for millennia, island natives—known as the Guanches—were enslaved or perished soon after Europeans arrived. Portugal's would-be planters needed laborers to cultivate the difficult, labor-intensive crop. Portuguese merchants, who had recently established good relations with powerful African kingdoms such as Kongo, Ndongo, and Songhai, looked then to African slaves. Slavery had long existed among African societies. African leaders traded war captives—who by custom forfeited their freedom in battle—for Portuguese guns, iron, and manufactured goods. From bases along the Atlantic coast, the largest in modern-day Nigeria, the Portuguese began purchasing slaves for export to the Atlantic islands to work the sugar fields. Thus were born the first great Atlantic plantations.

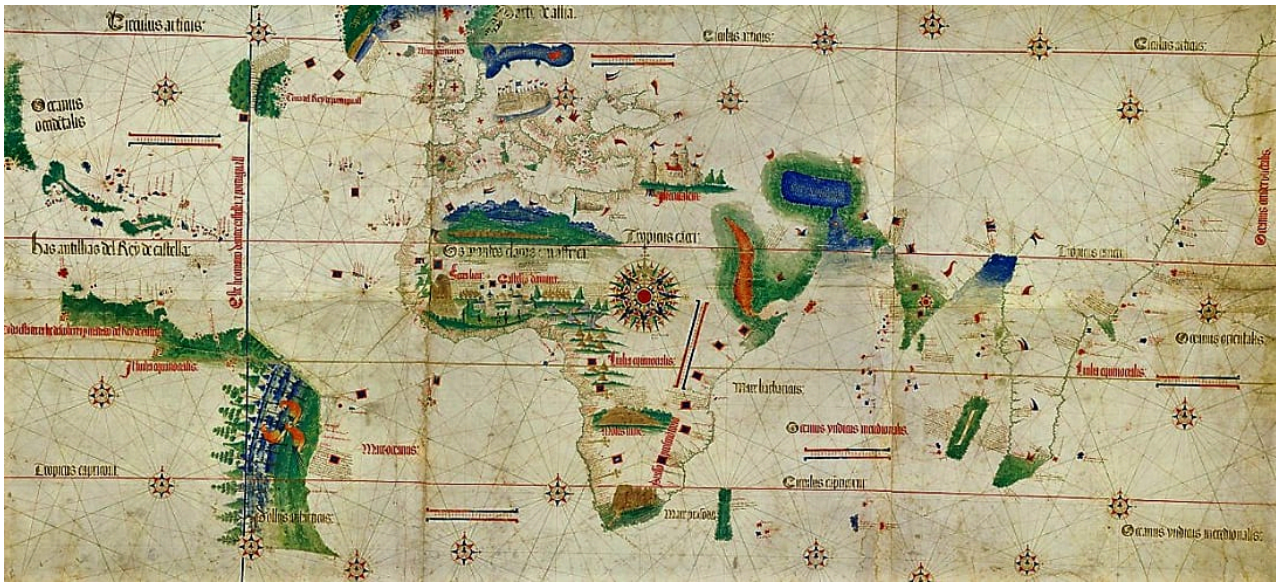


Figure 1.3.2: By the fifteenth century, the Portuguese had established forts and colonies on islands and along the rim of the Atlantic Ocean; other major Europeans countries soon followed in step. An anonymous cartographer created this map known as the Cantino Map, the earliest known map of European exploration in the New World, to depict these holdings and argue for the greatness of his native Portugal. Cantino planisphere (1502), Biblioteca Estense, Modena, Italy. Wikimedia.

Spain, too, stood on the cutting edge of maritime technology. Spanish sailors had become masters of the caravels. As Portugal consolidated control over African trading networks and the circuitous eastbound sea route to Asia, Spain yearned for its own path to empire. Christopher Columbus, a skilled Italian-born sailor who had studied under Portuguese navigators, promised just that opportunity.

Educated Asians and Europeans of the fifteenth century knew the world was round. They also knew that while it was therefore technically possible to reach Asia by sailing west from Europe—thereby avoiding Italian or Portuguese middlemen—the earth's vast size would doom even the greatest caravels to starvation and thirst long before they ever reached their destination. But Columbus underestimated the size of the globe by a full two thirds and therefore believed it was possible. After unsuccessfully shopping his proposed expedition in several European courts, he convinced Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain to provide him three small ships, which set sail in 1492. Columbus was both confoundingly wrong about the size of the earth and spectacularly lucky that two large continents lurked in his path. On October 12, 1492, after two months at sea, the the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa María* and their ninety men landed in the modern-day Bahamas.

The indigenous Arawaks, or Taíno, populated the Caribbean islands. They fished and grew corn, yams, and cassava. Columbus

described them as innocents. “They are very gentle and without knowledge of what is evil; nor the sins of murder or theft,” he reported to the Spanish crown. “Your highness may believe that in all the world there can be no better people. . . . They love their neighbors as themselves, and their speech is the sweetest and gentlest in the world, and always with a smile.” But Columbus had come for wealth and he could find little. The Arawaks, however, wore small gold ornaments. Columbus left thirty-nine Spaniards at a military fort on Hispaniola to find and secure the source of the gold while he returned to Spain, with a dozen captured and branded Arawaks. Columbus arrived to great acclaim and quickly worked to outfit a return voyage. Spain’s New World motives were clear from the beginning. If outfitted for a return voyage, Columbus promised the Spanish crown gold and slaves. Columbus reported, “With fifty men they can all be subjugated and made to do what is required of them.”[21]

Columbus was outfitted with seventeen ships and over one thousand men to return to the West Indies (Columbus made four voyages to the New World). Still believing he had landed in the East Indies, he promised to reward Isabella and Ferdinand’s investment. But when material wealth proved slow in coming, the Spanish embarked on a vicious campaign to extract every possible ounce of wealth from the Caribbean. The Spanish decimated the Arawaks. Bartolomé de Las Casas traveled to the New World in 1502 and later wrote, “I saw with these Eyes of mine the Spaniards for no other reason, but only to gratify their bloody mindedness, cut off the Hands, Noses, and Ears, both of Indians and Indianesses.”[22] When the enslaved Indians exhausted the islands’ meager gold reserves, the Spaniards forced them to labor on their huge new estates, the *encomiendas*. Las Casas described European barbarities in cruel detail. By presuming the natives had no humanity, the Spaniards utterly abandoned theirs. Casual violence and dehumanizing exploitation ravaged the Arawaks. The Indian population collapsed. Within a few generations the whole island of Hispaniola had been depopulated and a whole people exterminated. Historians’ estimates of the island’s pre-contact population range from fewer than one million to as many as eight million (Las Casas estimated it at three million). In a few short years, they were gone. “Who in future generations will believe this?” Las Casas wondered. “I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it.”

Despite the diversity of Native populations and the existence of several strong empires, Native Americans were wholly unprepared for the arrival of Europeans. Biology magnified European cruelties. Cut off from the Old World, its domesticated animals, and its immunological history, Native Americans lived free from the terrible diseases that ravaged populations in Asia, Europe and Africa. But their blessing now became a curse. Native Americans lacked the immunities that Europeans and Africans had developed over centuries of deadly epidemics, and so when Europeans arrived, carrying smallpox, typhus, influenza, diphtheria, measles, and hepatitis, plagues decimated Native communities.[23] Many died in war and slavery, but millions died in epidemics. All told, in fact, some scholars estimate that as much as 90 percent of the population of the Americas perished within the first century and a half of European contact.[24]

Though ravaged by disease and warfare, Native Americans forged middle grounds, resisted with violence, accommodated and adapted to the challenges of colonialism, and continued to shape the patterns of life throughout the New World for hundreds of years. But the Europeans kept coming.

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1.4: Spanish Exploration and Conquest

As news of the Spanish conquest spread, wealth-hungry Spaniards poured into the New World seeking land, gold, and titles. A New World empire spread from Spain's Caribbean foothold. Motives were plain: said one soldier, "we came here to serve God and the king, and also to get rich."[25]Mercenaries joined the conquest and raced to capture the human and material wealth of the New World.

The Spanish managed labor relations through a legal system known as the *encomienda*, an exploitive feudal arrangement in which Spain tied Indian laborers to vast estates. In the *encomienda*, the Spanish crown granted a person not only land but a specified number of natives as well. *Encomenderos* brutalized their laborers. After Bartolomé de Las Casas published his incendiary account of Spanish abuses (*The Destruction of the Indies*), Spanish authorities abolished the *encomienda* in 1542 and replaced it with the *repartimiento*. Intended as a milder system, the *repartimiento* nevertheless replicated many of the abuses of the older system, and the rapacious exploitation of the Native population continued as Spain spread its empire over the Americas.



Figure 1.4.1: El Castillo (pyramid of Kukulcán) in Chichén Itzá. Photograph by Daniel Schwen. *Wikimedia. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International.*

As Spain's New World empire expanded, Spanish conquerors met the massive empires of Central and South America, civilizations that dwarfed anything found in North America. In Central America the Maya built massive temples, sustained large populations, and constructed a complex and long-lasting civilization with a written language, advanced mathematics, and stunningly accurate calendars. But Maya civilization, although it had not disappeared, nevertheless collapsed before European arrival, likely because of droughts and unsustainable agricultural practices. But the eclipse of the Maya only heralded the later rise of the most powerful Native civilization ever seen in the Western Hemisphere: the Aztecs.

Militaristic migrants from northern Mexico, the Aztecs moved south into the Valley of Mexico, conquered their way to dominance, and built the largest empire in the New World. When the Spaniards arrived in Mexico they found a sprawling civilization centered around Tenochtitlán, an awe-inspiring city built on a series of natural and man-made islands in the middle of Lake Texcoco, located today within modern-day Mexico City. Tenochtitlán, founded in 1325, rivaled the world's largest cities in size and grandeur. Much of the city was built on large artificial islands called *chinampas*, which the Aztecs constructed by dredging mud and rich sediment from the bottom of the lake and depositing it over time to form new landscapes. A massive pyramid temple, the Templo Mayor, was located at the city center (its ruins can still be found in the center of Mexico City). When the Spaniards arrived, they could scarcely believe what they saw: 70,000 buildings, housing perhaps 200,000–250,000 people, all built on a lake and connected by causeways and canals. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a Spanish soldier, later recalled, "When we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry land, we were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments. . . . Some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream? . . . I do not know how to describe it, seeing things as we did that had never been heard of or seen before, not even dreamed about."[26]

From their island city the Aztecs dominated an enormous swath of central and southern Mesoamerica. They ruled their empire through a decentralized network of subject peoples that paid regular tribute—including everything from the most basic items, such as corn, beans, and other foodstuffs, to luxury goods such as jade, cacao, and gold—and provided troops for the empire. But unrest festered beneath the Aztecs' imperial power, and European conquerors lusted after its vast wealth.



Figure 1.4.2: This sixteenth-century map of Tenochtitlan shows the aesthetic beauty and advanced infrastructure of this great Aztec city. Map, c. 1524, *Wikimedia*.

Hernán Cortés, an ambitious, thirty-four-year-old Spaniard who had won riches in the conquest of Cuba, organized an invasion of Mexico in 1519. Sailing with six hundred men, horses, and cannon, he landed on the coast of Mexico. Relying on a Native translator, whom he called Doña Marina, and whom Mexican folklore denounces as La Malinche, Cortés gathered information and allies in preparation for conquest. Through intrigue, brutality, and the exploitation of endemic political divisions, he enlisted the aid of thousands of Native allies, defeated Spanish rivals, and marched on Tenochtitlán.

Aztec dominance rested on fragile foundations and many of the region's semi-independent city-states yearned to break from Aztec rule. Nearby kingdoms, including the Tarascans to the north and the remains of Maya city-states on the Yucatán peninsula, chafed at Aztec power.

Through persuasion, and maybe because some Aztecs thought Cortés was the god Quetzalcoatl, the Spaniards entered Tenochtitlán peacefully. Cortés then captured the emperor Montezuma and used him to gain control of the Aztecs' gold and silver reserves and their network of mines. Eventually, the Aztecs revolted. Montezuma was branded a traitor, and uprising ignited the city. Montezuma was killed along with a third of Cortés's men in *la noche triste*, the "night of sorrows." The Spanish fought through thousands of indigenous insurgents and across canals to flee the city, where they regrouped, enlisted more Native allies, captured Spanish reinforcements, and, in 1521, besieged the island city. The Spaniards' eighty-five-day siege cut off food and fresh water. Smallpox ravaged the city. One Spanish observer said it "spread over the people as great destruction. Some it covered on all parts—their faces, their heads, their breasts, and so on. There was great havoc. Very many died of it. . . . They could not move; they could not stir."[27] Cortés, the Spaniards, and their Native allies then sacked the city. The temples were plundered and fifteen thousand died. After two years of conflict, a million-person-strong empire was toppled by disease, dissension, and a thousand European conquerors.



Figure 1.4.3: The Spanish relied on indigenous allies to defeat the Aztecs. The Tlaxcala were among the most important Spanish allies in their conquest. This nineteenth-century recreation of a sixteenth century drawing depicts Tlaxcalan warriors fighting alongside Spanish soldiers against the Aztec. *Wikimedia*.

Farther south, along the Andes Mountains in South America, the Quechuas, or Incas, managed a vast mountain empire. From their capital of Cuzco in the Andean highlands, through conquest and negotiation, the Incas built an empire that stretched around the western half of the South American continent from present day Ecuador to central Chile and Argentina. They cut terraces into the sides of mountains to farm fertile soil, and by the 1400s they managed a thousand miles of Andean roads that tied together perhaps twelve million people. But like the Aztecs, unrest between the Incas and conquered groups created tensions and left the empire vulnerable to invaders. Smallpox spread in advance of Spanish conquerors and hit the Incan empire in 1525. Epidemics ravaged the population, cutting the empire's population in half and killing the Incan emperor Huayna Capac and many members of his family. A bloody war of succession ensued. Inspired by Cortés's conquest of Mexico, Francisco Pizarro moved south and found an empire torn by chaos. With 168 men, he deceived Incan rulers and took control of the empire and seized the capital city, Cuzco, in 1533. Disease, conquest, and slavery ravaged the remnants of the Incan empire.

After the conquests of Mexico and Peru, Spain settled into their new empire. A vast administrative hierarchy governed the new holdings: royal appointees oversaw an enormous territory of landed estates, and Indian laborers and administrators regulated the extraction of gold and silver and oversaw their transport across the Atlantic in Spanish galleons. Meanwhile Spanish migrants poured into the New World. During the sixteenth century alone, 225,000 migrated, and 750,000 came during the entire three centuries of Spanish colonial rule. Spaniards, often single, young, and male, emigrated for the various promises of land, wealth, and social advancement. Laborers, craftsmen, soldiers, clerks, and priests all crossed the Atlantic in large numbers. Indians, however, always outnumbered the Spanish, and the Spaniards, by both necessity and design, incorporated Native Americans into colonial life. This incorporation did not mean equality, however.

An elaborate racial hierarchy marked Spanish life in the New World. Regularized in the mid-1600s but rooted in medieval practices, the Sistema de Castas organized individuals into various racial groups based on their supposed "purity of blood." Elaborate classifications became almost prerequisites for social and political advancement in Spanish colonial society. *Peninsulares*—Iberian-born Spaniards, or *españoles*—occupied the highest levels of administration and acquired the greatest estates. Their descendants, New World-born Spaniards, or *criollos*, occupied the next rung and rivaled the *peninsulares* for wealth and opportunity. *Mestizos*—a term used to describe those of mixed Spanish and Indian heritage—followed.



Figure 1.4.4: Casta paintings illustrated the varying degrees of intermixture between colonial subjects, defining them for Spanish officials. Unknown artist, Las Castas, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlan, Mexico. *Wikimedia*.

Like the French later in North America, the Spanish tolerated and sometimes even supported interracial marriage. There were simply too few Spanish women in the New World to support the natural growth of a purely Spanish population. The Catholic Church endorsed interracial marriage as a moral bulwark against bastardy and rape. By 1600, mestizos made up a large portion of the colonial population.[28] By the early 1700s, more than one third of all marriages bridged the Spanish-Indian divide. Separated by wealth and influence from the *peninsulares* and *criollos*, mestizos typically occupied a middling social position in Spanish New World society. They were not quite *Indios*, or Indians, but their lack of *limpieza de sangre*, or "pure blood," removed them from the privileges of full-blooded Spaniards. Spanish fathers of sufficient wealth and influence might shield their mestizo children from racial prejudice, and a number of wealthy mestizos married *españoles* to "whiten" their family lines, but more often mestizos were confined to a middle station in the Spanish New World. Slaves and Indians occupied the lowest rungs of the social ladder.

Many manipulated the Sistema de Casas to gain advantages for themselves and their children. Mestizo mothers, for instance, might insist that their mestizo daughters were actually *castizas*, or quarter-Indians, who, if they married a Spaniard, could, in the eyes of the law, produce "pure" *criollo* children entitled to the full rights and opportunities of Spanish citizens. But "passing" was an option only for the few. Instead, the massive Native populations within Spain's New World Empire ensured a level of cultural and racial mixture—or *mestizaje*—unparalleled in British North America. Spanish North America wrought a hybrid culture that was neither fully Spanish nor fully Indian. The Spanish not only built Mexico City atop Tenochtitlán, but food, language, and families were also constructed on indigenous foundations. In 1531, a poor Indian named Juan Diego reported that he was visited by the Virgin Mary, who came as a dark-skinned Nahuatl-speaking Indian.[29] Reports of miracles spread across Mexico and the Virgen de Guadalupe became a national icon for a new mestizo society.



Figure 1.4.5: Our Lady of Guadalupe is perhaps the most culturally important and extensively reproduced Mexican-Catholic image. In the iconic depiction, Mary stands atop the tilma (peasant cloak) of Juan Diego, on which according to his story appeared the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Throughout Mexican history, the story and image of Our Lady of Guadalupe has been a unifying national symbol. Mexican retablo of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 19th century, in El Paso Museum of Art. *Wikimedia*.

From Mexico, Spain expanded northward. Lured by the promises of gold and another Tenochtitlán, Spanish expeditions scoured North America for another wealthy Indian empire. Huge expeditions, resembling vast moving communities, composed of hundreds of soldiers, settlers, priests, and slaves, with enormous numbers of livestock, moved across the continent. Juan Ponce de León, the conqueror of Puerto Rico, landed in Florida in 1513 in search of wealth and slaves. Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca joined the Narváez expedition to Florida a decade later but was shipwrecked and forced to embark on a remarkable multiyear odyssey across the Gulf of Mexico and Texas into Mexico. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565, and it remains the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in the present-day United States.

But without the rich gold and silver mines of Mexico, the plantation-friendly climate of the Caribbean, or the exploitive potential of large Indian empires, North America offered little incentive for Spanish officials. Still, Spanish expeditions combed North America. Francisco Vázquez de Coronado pillaged his way across the Southwest. Hernando de Soto tortured and raped and enslaved his way across the Southeast. Soon Spain had footholds—however tenuous—across much of the continent.

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1.5: Conclusion

The “discovery” of America unleashed horrors. Europeans embarked on a debauching path of death and destructive exploitation that unleashed murder and greed and slavery. But disease was deadlier than any weapon in the European arsenal. It unleashed death on a scale never before seen in human history. Estimates of the population of pre-Columbian America range wildly. Some argue for as much as 100 million, some as low as 2 million. In 1983, Henry Dobyns put the number at 18 million. Whatever the precise estimates, nearly all scholars tell of the utter devastation wrought by European disease. Dobyns estimated that in the first 130 years following European contact, 95 percent of Native Americans perished.[30] (At its worst, Europe’s Black Death peaked at death rates of 25 to 33 percent. Nothing else in history rivals the American demographic disaster.) A ten-thousand-year history of disease hit the New World in an instant. Smallpox, typhus, bubonic plague, influenza, mumps, measles: pandemics ravaged populations up and down the continents. Wave after wave of disease crashed relentlessly. Disease flung whole communities into chaos. Others it destroyed completely.

Disease was only the most terrible in a cross-hemispheric exchange of violence, culture, trade, and peoples—the so-called Columbian Exchange—that followed in Columbus’s wake. Global diets, for instance, were transformed. The Americas’ calorie-rich crops revolutionized Old World agriculture and spawned a worldwide population boom. Many modern associations between food and geography are but products of the Columbian Exchange: potatoes in Ireland, tomatoes in Italy, chocolate in Switzerland, peppers in Thailand, and oranges in Florida are all manifestations of the new global exchange. Europeans, for their part, introduced their domesticated animals to the New World. Pigs ran rampant through the Americas, transforming the landscape as they spread throughout both continents. Horses spread as well, transforming the Native American cultures who adapted to the newly introduced animal. Partly from trade, partly from the remnants of failed European expeditions, and partly from theft, Indians acquired horses and transformed Native American life in the vast North American plains.

The Europeans’ arrival bridged two worlds and ten thousand years of history largely separated from each other since the closing of the Bering Strait. Both sides of the world had been transformed. And neither would ever again be the same.

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1.6: Primary Sources

Native American creation stories

These two Native American creation stories are among thousands of accounts for the origins of the world. The Salinian and Cherokee, from what we now call California and the American southeast respectively, both exhibit the common Native American tendency to locate spiritual power in the natural world. For both Native Americans and Europeans, the collision of two continents challenged old ideas and created new ones as well.

Journal of Christopher Columbus, 1492

First encounters between Europeans and Native Americans were dramatic events. In this account we see the assumptions and intentions of Christopher Columbus, as he immediately began assessing the potential of these people to serve European economic interests. He also predicted easy success for missionaries seeking to convert these people to Christianity.

Bartolomé de las Casas describes the exploitation of indigenous people, 1542

Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Spanish Dominican priest, wrote directly to the King of Spain hoping for new laws to prevent the brutal exploitation of Native Americans. Las Casas's writings quickly spread around Europe and were used as humanitarian justification for other European nations to challenge Spain's colonial empire with their own schemes of conquest and colonization.

Thomas Morton reflects on Indians in New England, 1637

Thomas Morton both admired and condemned aspects of Native American culture. In his descriptions, we can find not only information about the people he is describing but also a window into the concerns of Englishmen like Morton who could use descriptions of Native Americans as a means of criticizing English culture.

Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca travels through North America, 1542

Spanish explorer, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, traveled across the Gulf South, from Florida to Mexico. As he traveled, Cabeza de Vaca developed a reputation as a faith healer. In his account he claimed several instances of performing miracles, illustrating his spiritual beliefs as well as offering a rare, if perhaps unreliable, glimpse at the life of Native Americans in the area.

Photograph of Cliff Palace

Native peoples in the Southwest began constructing these highly defensible cliff dwellings in 1190 CE and continued expanding and refurbishing them until 1260 CE before abandoning them around 1300 CE. Changing climatic conditions resulted in an increased competition for resources that led some groups to ally with their neighbors for both protection and subsistence. The circular rooms in the foreground were called kivas and had ceremonial and religious importance for the inhabitants. Cliff Palace had 23 kivas and 150 rooms housing a population of approximately 100 people; the number of rooms and large population has led scholars to believe that this complex may have been the center of a larger polity that included surrounding communities.

Casta painting

The elaborate Sistema de Castas revealed one of the less-discussed effects of Spanish conquest: sexual liaisons and their progeny. Casta paintings illustrated the varying degrees of intermixture between colonial subjects, defining them for Spanish officials. Race was less fixed in the Spanish colonies, as some individuals, through legal action or colonial service, "changed" their race in the colonial records. Though this particular image does not, some casta paintings attributed particular behaviors to different groups, demonstrating how class and race were intertwined.

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1.7: Reference Material

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2: COLLIDING CULTURES



Theodor de Bry, "Negotiating Peace With the Indians," 1634, Virginia Historical Society.

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2.1: Introduction

The Columbian Exchange transformed both sides of the Atlantic, but with dramatically disparate outcomes. New diseases wiped out entire civilizations in the Americas, while newly imported nutrient-rich foodstuffs enabled a European population boom. Spain benefited most immediately as the wealth of the Aztec and Incan Empires strengthened the Spanish monarchy. Spain used its new riches to gain an advantage over other European nations, but this advantage was soon contested.

Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and England all raced to the New World, eager to match the gains of the Spanish. Native peoples greeted the new visitors with responses ranging from welcoming cooperation to aggressive violence, but the ravages of disease and the possibility of new trading relationships enabled Europeans to create settlements all along the western rim of the Atlantic world. New empires would emerge from these tenuous beginnings, and by the end of the seventeenth century, Spain would lose its privileged position to its rivals. An age of colonization had begun and, with it, a great collision of cultures commenced.

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2.2: Spanish America

Spain extended its reach in the Americas after reaping the benefits of its colonies in Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America. Expeditions slowly began combing the continent and bringing Europeans into the modern-day United States in the hopes of establishing religious and economic dominance in a new territory.

Juan Ponce de León arrived in the area named La Florida in 1513. He found between 150,000 and 300,000 Native Americans. But then two and a half centuries of contact with European and African peoples—whether through war, slave raids, or, most dramatically, foreign disease—decimated Florida's indigenous population. European explorers, meanwhile, had hoped to find great wealth in Florida, but reality never aligned with their imaginations.

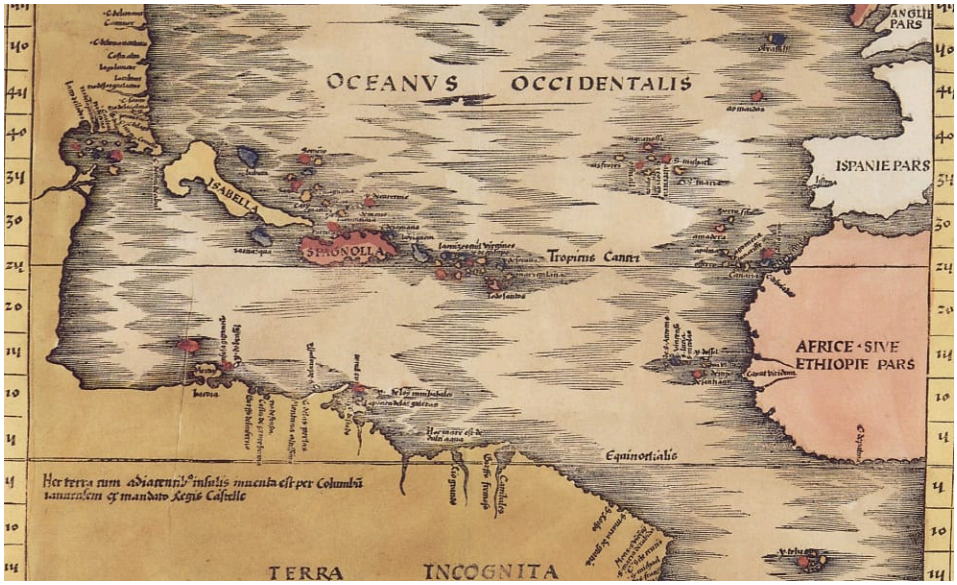


Figure 2.2.1: 1513 Atlantic map from cartographer Martin Waldseemuller. *Wikimedia*.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Spanish colonizers fought frequently with Florida's Native peoples as well as with other Europeans. In the 1560s Spain expelled French Protestants, called Huguenots, from the area near modern-day Jacksonville in northeast Florida. In 1586 English privateer Sir Francis Drake burned the wooden settlement of St. Augustine. At the dawn of the seventeenth century, Spain's reach in Florida extended from the mouth of the St. Johns River south to the environs of St. Augustine—an area of roughly 1,000 square miles. The Spaniards attempted to duplicate methods for establishing control used previously in Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Andes. The Crown granted missionaries the right to live among Timucua and Guale villagers in the late 1500s and early 1600s and encouraged settlement through the *encomienda* system (grants of Indian labor).[1]

In the 1630s, the mission system extended into the Apalachee district in the Florida panhandle. The Apalachee, one of the most powerful tribes in Florida at the time of contact, claimed the territory from the modern Florida-Georgia border to the Gulf of Mexico. Apalachee farmers grew an abundance of corn and other crops. Indian traders carried surplus products east along the Camino Real (the royal road) that connected the western anchor of the mission system with St. Augustine. Spanish settlers drove cattle eastward across the St. Johns River and established ranches as far west as Apalachee. Still, Spain held Florida tenuously.

Farther west, in 1598, Juan de Oñate led four hundred settlers, soldiers, and missionaries from Mexico into New Mexico. The Spanish Southwest had brutal beginnings. When Oñate sacked the Pueblo city of Acoma, the "sky city," the Spaniards slaughtered nearly half of its roughly 1,500 inhabitants, including women and children. Oñate ordered one foot cut off every surviving male over age fifteen, and he enslaved the remaining women and children.[2]

Santa Fe, the first permanent European settlement in the Southwest, was established in 1610. Few Spaniards relocated to the Southwest because of the distance from Mexico City and the dry and hostile environment. Thus, the Spanish never achieved a commanding presence in the region. By 1680, only about three thousand colonists called Spanish New Mexico home.[3] There, they traded with and exploited the local Puebloan peoples. The region's Puebloan population had plummeted from as many as sixty

thousand in 1600 to about seventeen thousand in 1680.[4]

Spain shifted strategies after the military expeditions wove their way through the southern and western half of North America. Missions became the engine of colonization in North America. Missionaries, most of whom were members of the Franciscan religious order, provided Spain with an advance guard in North America. Catholicism had always justified Spanish conquest, and colonization always carried religious imperatives. By the early seventeenth century, Spanish friars had established dozens of missions along the Rio Grande and in California.

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2.3: Spain's Rivals Emerge



Figure 2.3.1: The earliest plan of New Amsterdam (now Manhattan),1660. *Wikimedia*.

While Spain plundered the New World, unrest plagued Europe. The Reformation threw England and France, the two European powers capable of contesting Spain, into turmoil. Long and expensive conflicts drained time, resources, and lives. Millions died from religious violence in France alone. As the violence diminished in Europe, however, religious and political rivalries continued in the New World.

The Spanish exploitation of New Spain's riches inspired European monarchs to invest in exploration and conquest. Reports of Spanish atrocities spread throughout Europe and provided a humanitarian justification for European colonization. An English reprint of the writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas bore the sensational title "Popery Truly Display'd in its Bloody Colours: Or, a Faithful Narrative of the Horrid and Unexampled Massacres, Butcheries, and all manners of Cruelties that Hell and Malice could invent, committed by the Popish Spanish." An English writer explained that the Indians "were simple and plain men, and lived without great labour," but in their lust for gold the Spaniards "forced the people (that were not used to labour) to stand all the daie in the hot sun gathering gold in the sand of the rivers. By this means a great number of them (not used to such pains) died, and a great number of them (seeing themselves brought from so quiet a life to such misery and slavery) of desperation killed themselves. And many would not marry, because they would not have their children slaves to the Spaniards."[5] The Spanish accused their critics of fostering a "Black Legend." The Black Legend drew on religious differences and political rivalries. Spain had successful conquests in France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands and left many in those nations yearning to break free from Spanish influence. English writers argued that Spanish barbarities were foiling a tremendous opportunity for the expansion of Christianity across the globe and that a benevolent conquest of the New World by non-Spanish monarchies offered the surest salvation of the New World's pagan masses. With these religious justifications, and with obvious economic motives, Spain's rivals arrived in the New World.

The French

The French crown subsidized exploration in the early sixteenth century. Early French explorers sought a fabled Northwest Passage, a mythical waterway passing through the North American continent to Asia. Despite the wealth of the New World, Asia's riches still beckoned to Europeans. Canada's St. Lawrence River appeared to be such a passage, stretching deep into the continent and into the Great Lakes. French colonial possessions centered on these bodies of water (and, later, down the Mississippi River to the port of New Orleans).

French colonization developed through investment from private trading companies. Traders established Port Royal in Acadia (Nova Scotia) in 1603 and launched trading expeditions that stretched down the Atlantic coast as far as Cape Cod. The needs of the fur trade set the future pattern of French colonization. Founded in 1608 under the leadership of Samuel de Champlain, Quebec provided the foothold for what would become New France. French fur traders placed a higher value on cooperating with

the Indians than on establishing a successful French colonial footprint. Asserting dominance in the region could have been to their own detriment, as it might have compromised their access to skilled Indian trappers, and therefore wealth. Few Frenchmen traveled to the New World to settle permanently. In fact, few traveled at all. Many persecuted French Protestants (Huguenots) sought to emigrate after France criminalized Protestantism in 1685, but all non-Catholics were forbidden in New France.[6]



Figure 2.3.2: This depiction of New Orleans in 1726 when it was an eight-year-old French frontier settlement. Jean-Pierre Lassus, Veüe et Perspective de la Nouvelle Orleans, 1726, Centre des archives d'outre-mer, France. *Wikimedia*.

The French preference for trade over permanent settlement fostered more cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships with Native Americans than was typical among the Spanish and English. Perhaps eager to debunk the anti-Catholic elements of the Black Legend, the French worked to cultivate cooperation with Indians. Jesuit missionaries, for instance, adopted different conversion strategies than the Spanish Franciscans. Spanish missionaries brought Indians into enclosed missions, whereas Jesuits more often lived with or alongside Indian groups. Many French fur traders married Indian women.[7] The offspring of Indian women and French men were so common in New France that the French developed a word for these children, *Métis(sage)*. The Huron people developed a particularly close relationship with the French, and many converted to Christianity and engaged in the fur trade. But close relationships with the French would come at a high cost. The Huron were decimated by the ravages of European disease, and entanglements in French and Dutch conflicts proved disastrous.[8] Despite this, some Native peoples maintained alliances with the French.

Pressure from the powerful Iroquois in the East pushed many Algonquian-speaking peoples toward French territory in the midseventeenth century, and together they crafted what historians have called a "middle ground," a kind of cross-cultural space that allowed for native and European interaction, negotiation, and accommodation. French traders adopted—sometimes clumsily—the gift-giving and mediation strategies expected of Native leaders. Natives similarly engaged the impersonal European market and adapted—often haphazardly—to European laws. The Great Lakes "middle ground" experienced tumultuous success throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries until English colonial officials and American settlers swarmed the region. The pressures of European expansion strained even the closest bonds.[9]

The Dutch

The Netherlands, a small maritime nation with great wealth, achieved considerable colonial success. In 1581, the Netherlands had officially broken away from the Hapsburgs and won a reputation as the freest of the new European nations. Dutch women maintained separate legal identities from their husbands and could therefore hold property and inherit full estates.

Ravaged by the turmoil of the Reformation, the Dutch embraced greater religious tolerance and freedom of the press than other European nations.[10] Radical Protestants, Catholics, and Jews flocked to the Netherlands. The English Pilgrims, for instance, fled first to the Netherlands before sailing to the New World years later. The Netherlands built its colonial empire through the work of experienced merchants and skilled sailors. The Dutch were the most advanced capitalists in the modern world and marshaled extensive financial resources by creating innovative financial organizations such as the Amsterdam Stock Exchange and the East India Company. Although the Dutch offered liberties, they offered very little democracy—power remained in the hands of only a few. And Dutch liberties certainly had their limits. The Dutch advanced the slave trade and brought African slaves with them to the New World. Slavery was an essential part of Dutch capitalist triumphs.

Sharing the European hunger for access to Asia, in 1609 the Dutch commissioned the Englishman Henry Hudson to discover the fabled Northwest Passage through North America. He failed, of course, but nevertheless found the Hudson River and claimed

modern-day New York for the Dutch. There they established New Netherland, an essential part of the Dutch New World empire. The Netherlands chartered the Dutch West India Company in 1621 and established colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and North America. The island of Manhattan provided a launching pad to support its Caribbean colonies and attack Spanish trade.

Spiteful of the Spanish and mindful of the Black Legend, the Dutch were determined not to repeat Spanish atrocities. They fashioned guidelines for New Netherland that conformed to the ideas of Hugo Grotius, a legal philosopher who believed that Native peoples possessed the same natural rights as Europeans. Colony leaders insisted that land be purchased; in 1626 Peter Minuit therefore "bought" Manhattan from Munsee Indians.[11]Despite the seemingly honorable intentions, it is likely the Dutch paid the wrong Indians for the land (either intentionally or unintentionally) or that the Munsee and the Dutch understood the transaction in very different terms. Transactions like these illustrated both the Dutch attempt to find a more peaceful process of colonization and the inconsistency between European and Native American understandings of property.

Like the French, the Dutch sought to profit, not to conquer. Trade with Native peoples became New Netherland's central economic activity. Dutch traders carried wampum along Native trade routes and exchanged it for beaver pelts. Wampum consisted of shell beads fashioned by Algonquian Indians on the southern New England coast and was valued as a ceremonial and diplomatic commodity among the Iroquois. Wampum became a currency that could buy anything from a loaf of bread to a plot of land.[12]

In addition to developing these trading networks, the Dutch also established farms, settlements, and lumber camps. The West India Company directors implemented the patroon system to encourage colonization. The patroon system granted large estates to wealthy landlords, who subsequently paid passage for the tenants to work their land. Expanding Dutch settlements correlated with deteriorating relations with local Indians. In the interior of the continent, the Dutch retained valuable alliances with the Iroquois to maintain Beverwijck, modern-day Albany, as a hub for the fur trade.[13] In the places where the Dutch built permanent settlements, the ideals of peaceful colonization succumbed to the settlers' increasing demand for land. Armed conflicts erupted as colonial settlements encroached on Native villages and hunting lands. Profit and peace, it seemed, could not coexist.

Labor shortages, meanwhile, crippled Dutch colonization. The patroon system failed to bring enough tenants, and the colony could not attract a sufficient number of indentured servants to satisfy the colony's backers. In response, the colony imported eleven company-owned slaves in 1626, the same year that Minuit purchased Manhattan. Slaves were tasked with building New Amsterdam (modern-day New York City), including a defensive wall along the northern edge of the colony (the site of modern-day Wall Street). They created its roads and maintained its all-important port. Fears of racial mixing led the Dutch to import enslaved women, enabling the formation of African Dutch families. The colony's first African marriage occurred in 1641, and by 1650 there were at least five hundred African slaves in the colony. By 1660, New Amsterdam had the largest urban slave population on the continent.[14]

As was typical of the practice of African slavery in much of the early seventeenth century, Dutch slavery in New Amsterdam was less comprehensively exploitative than later systems of American slavery. Some enslaved Africans, for instance, successfully sued for back wages. When several company-owned slaves fought for the colony against the Munsee Indians, they petitioned for their freedom and won a kind of "half freedom" that allowed them to work their own land in return for paying a large tithe, or tax, to their masters. The children of these "half-free" laborers remained held in bondage by the West India Company, however. The Dutch, who so proudly touted their liberties, grappled with the reality of African slavery, and some New Netherlanders protested the enslavement of Christianized Africans. The economic goals of the colony slowly crowded out these cultural and religious objections, and the much-boasted liberties of the Dutch came to exist alongside increasingly brutal systems of slavery.

The Portuguese

The Portuguese had been leaders in Atlantic navigation well ahead of Columbus's voyage. But the incredible wealth flowing from New Spain piqued the rivalry between the two Iberian countries, and accelerated Portuguese colonization efforts. This rivalry created a crisis within the Catholic world as Spain and Portugal squared off in a battle for colonial supremacy. The pope intervened and divided the New World with the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. Land east of the Tordesillas Meridian, an imaginary line dividing South America, would be given to Portugal, whereas land west of the line was reserved for Spanish conquest. In return for the license to conquer, both Portugal and Spain were instructed to treat the natives with Christian compassion and to bring them under the protection of the Church.

Lucrative colonies in Africa and India initially preoccupied Portugal, but by 1530 the Portuguese turned their attention to the land that would become Brazil, driving out French traders and establishing permanent settlements. Gold and silver mines dotted the interior of the colony, but two industries powered early colonial Brazil: sugar and the slave trade. In fact, over the entire history of the Atlantic slave trade, more Africans were enslaved in Brazil than in any other colony in the Atlantic World. Gold mines emerged in greater numbers throughout the eighteenth century but still never rivaled the profitability of sugar or slave trading.

Jesuit missionaries brought Christianity to Brazil, but strong elements of African and Native spirituality mixed with orthodox Catholicism to create a unique religious culture. This culture resulted from the demographics of Brazilian slavery. High mortality rates on sugar plantations required a steady influx of new slaves, thus perpetuating the cultural connection between Brazil and Africa. The reliance on new imports of slaves increased the likelihood of resistance, however, and escaped slaves managed to create several free settlements, called *quilombos*. These settlements drew from both African and Native slaves, and despite frequent attacks, several endured throughout the long history of Brazilian slavery.[15]

Despite the arrival of these new Europeans, Spain continued to dominate the New World. The wealth flowing from the exploitation of the Aztec and Incan Empires greatly eclipsed the profits of other European nations. But this dominance would not last long. By the end of the sixteenth century, the powerful Spanish Armada would be destroyed, and the English would begin to rule the waves.

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2.4: English Colonization



Figure 2.4.1: Nicholas Hilliard, The Battle of Gravelines, 1588. *Wikimedia*

Spain had a one-hundred-year head start on New World colonization, and a jealous England eyed the enormous wealth that Spain gleaned. The Protestant Reformation had shaken England, but Elizabeth I assumed the English crown in 1558. Elizabeth oversaw England's so-called golden age, which included both the expansion of trade and exploration and the literary achievements of Shakespeare and Marlowe. English mercantilism, a state-assisted manufacturing and trading system, created and maintained markets. The markets provided a steady supply of consumers and laborers, stimulated economic expansion, and increased English wealth.

However, wrenching social and economic changes unsettled the English population. The island's population increased from fewer than three million in 1500 to over five million by the middle of the seventeenth century.[16] The skyrocketing cost of land coincided with plummeting farming income. Rents and prices rose but wages stagnated. Moreover, movements to enclose public land—sparked by the transition of English landholders from agriculture to livestock raising—evicted tenants from the land and created hordes of landless, jobless peasants that haunted the cities and countryside. One quarter to one half of the population lived in extreme poverty.[17]

New World colonization won support in England amid a time of rising English fortunes among the wealthy, a tense Spanish rivalry, and mounting internal social unrest. But supporters of English colonization always touted more than economic gains and mere national self-interest. They claimed to be doing God's work. Many claimed that colonization would glorify God, England, and Protestantism by Christianizing the New World's pagan peoples. Advocates such as Richard Hakluyt the Younger and John Dee, for instance, drew upon *The History of the Kings of Britain*, written by the twelfth-century monk Geoffrey of Monmouth, and its mythical account of King Arthur's conquest and Christianization of pagan lands to justify American conquest.[18] Moreover, promoters promised that the conversion of New World Indians would satisfy God and glorify England's "Virgin Queen," Elizabeth I, who was seen as nearly divine by some in England. The English—and other European Protestant colonizers—imagined themselves superior to the Spanish, who still bore the Black Legend of inhuman cruelty. English colonization, supporters argued, would prove that superiority.

In his 1584 "Discourse on Western Planting," Richard Hakluyt amassed the supposed religious, moral, and exceptional economic benefits of colonization. He repeated the Black Legend of Spanish New World terrorism and attacked the sins of Catholic Spain. He promised that English colonization could strike a blow against Spanish heresy and bring Protestant religion to the New World. English interference, Hakluyt suggested, might provide the only salvation from Catholic rule in the New World. The New World, too, he said, offered obvious economic advantages. Trade and resource extraction would enrich the English treasury. England, for instance, could find plentiful materials to outfit a world-class navy. Moreover, he said, the New World could provide an escape for England's vast armies of landless "vagabonds." Expanded trade, he argued, would not only bring profit but also provide work for

England's jobless poor. A Christian enterprise, a blow against Spain, an economic stimulus, and a social safety valve all beckoned the English toward a commitment to colonization.[19]

This noble rhetoric veiled the coarse economic motives that brought England to the New World. New economic structures and a new merchant class paved the way for colonization. England's merchants lacked estates, but they had new plans to build wealth. By collaborating with new government-sponsored trading monopolies and employing financial innovations such as joint-stock companies, England's merchants sought to improve on the Dutch economic system. Spain was extracting enormous material wealth from the New World; why shouldn't England? Joint-stock companies, the ancestors of modern corporations, became the initial instruments of colonization. With government monopolies, shared profits, and managed risks, these money-making ventures could attract and manage the vast capital needed for colonization. In 1606 James I approved the formation of the Virginia Company (named after Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen).

Rather than formal colonization, however, the most successful early English ventures in the New World were a form of state-sponsored piracy known as privateering. Queen Elizabeth sponsored sailors, or "Sea Dogges," such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake, to plunder Spanish ships and towns in the Americas. Privateers earned a substantial profit both for themselves and for the English crown. England practiced piracy on a scale, one historian wrote, "that transforms crime into politics."[20] Francis Drake harried Spanish ships throughout the Western Hemisphere and raided Spanish caravans as far away as the coast of Peru on the Pacific Ocean. In 1580 Elizabeth rewarded her skilled pirate with knighthood. But Elizabeth walked a fine line. With Protestant-Catholic tensions already running high, English privateering provoked Spain. Tensions worsened after the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, a Catholic. In 1588, King Philip II of Spain unleashed the fabled Armada. With 130 ships, 8,000 sailors, and 18,000 soldiers, Spain launched the largest invasion in history to destroy the British navy and depose Elizabeth.

An island nation, England depended on a robust navy for trade and territorial expansion. England had fewer ships than Spain, but they were smaller and swifter. They successfully harassed the armada, forcing it to retreat to the Netherlands for reinforcements. But then a fluke storm, celebrated in England as the "divine wind," annihilated the remainder of the fleet.[21] The destruction of the armada changed the course of world history. It not only saved England and secured English Protestantism, but it also opened the seas to English expansion and paved the way for England's colonial future. By 1600, England stood ready to embark on its dominance over North America.

English colonization would look very different from Spanish or French colonization. England had long been trying to conquer Catholic Ireland. Rather than integrating with the Irish and trying to convert them to Protestantism, England more often simply seized land through violence and pushed out the former inhabitants, leaving them to move elsewhere or to die. These same tactics would later be deployed in North American invasions.

English colonization, however, began haltingly. Sir Humphrey Gilbert labored throughout the late sixteenth century to establish a colony in Newfoundland but failed. In 1587, with a predominantly male cohort of 150 English colonizers, John White reestablished an abandoned settlement on North Carolina's Roanoke Island. Supply shortages prompted White to return to England for additional support, but the Spanish Armada and the mobilization of British naval efforts stranded him in Britain for several years. When he finally returned to Roanoke, he found the colony abandoned. What befell the failed colony? White found the word *Croatan* carved into a tree or a post in the abandoned colony. Historians presume the colonists, short of food, may have fled for a nearby island of that name and encountered its settled native population. Others offer violence as an explanation. Regardless, the English colonists were never heard from again. When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, no Englishmen had yet established a permanent North American colony.

After King James made peace with Spain in 1604, privateering no longer held out the promise of cheap wealth. Colonization assumed a new urgency. The Virginia Company, established in 1606, drew inspiration from Cortés and the Spanish conquests. It hoped to find gold and silver as well as other valuable trading commodities in the New World: glass, iron, furs, pitch, tar, and anything else the country could supply. The company planned to identify a navigable river with a deep harbor, away from the eyes of the Spanish. There they would find an Indian trading network and extract a fortune from the New World.

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2.5: Jamestown



Figure 2.5.1: Incolarum Virginiae piscandi ratio (The Method of Fishing of the Inhabitants of Virginia), c. 1590. *The Encyclopedia Virginia*.

In April 1607 Englishmen aboard three ships—the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed*, and the *Discovery*—sailed forty miles up the James River (named for the English king) in present-day Virginia (named for Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen) and settled on just such a place. The uninhabited peninsula they selected was upriver and out of sight of Spanish patrols. It offered easy defense against ground assaults and was both uninhabited and located close to many Indian villages and their potentially lucrative trade networks. But the location was a disaster. Indians had ignored the peninsula for two reasons: terrible soil hampered agriculture, and brackish tidal water led to debilitating disease. Despite these setbacks, the English built Jamestown, the first permanent English colony in the present-day United States.

The English had not entered a wilderness but had arrived amid a people they called the Powhatan Confederacy. Powhatan, or Wahunsenacawh, as he called himself, led nearly ten thousand Algonquian-speaking Indians in the Chesapeake. They burned vast acreage to clear brush and create sprawling artificial parklike grasslands so they could easily hunt deer, elk, and bison. The Powhatan raised corn, beans, squash, and possibly sunflowers, rotating acreage throughout the Chesapeake. Without plows, manure, or draft animals, the Powhatan produced a remarkable number of calories cheaply and efficiently.

Jamestown was a profit-seeking venture backed by investors. The colonists were mostly gentlemen and proved entirely unprepared for the challenges ahead. They hoped for easy riches but found none. As John Smith later complained, they “would rather starve than work.”[22] And so they did. Disease and starvation ravaged the colonists, thanks in part to the peninsula’s unhealthy location and the fact that supplies from England arrived sporadically or spoiled. Fewer than half of the original colonists survived the first nine months.

John Smith, a yeoman’s son and capable leader, took command of the crippled colony and promised, “He that will not work shall not eat.” He navigated Indian diplomacy, claiming that he was captured and sentenced to death but Powhatan’s daughter, Pocahontas, intervened to save his life. She would later marry another colonist, John Rolfe, and die in England.

Powhatan kept the English alive that first winter. The Powhatan had welcomed the English and placed a high value on metal ax-heads, kettles, tools, and guns and eagerly traded furs and other abundant goods for them. With ten thousand confederated natives and with food in abundance, the Indians had little to fear and much to gain from the isolated outpost of sick and dying Englishmen.

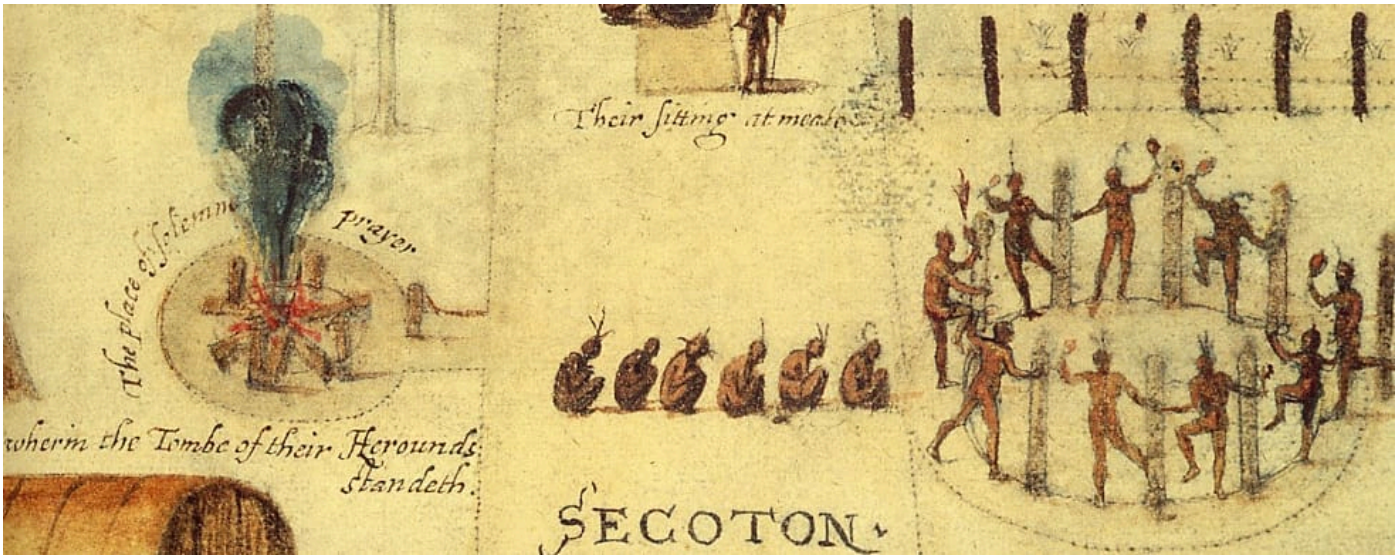


Figure 2.5.2: John White, "Village of the Secotan, 1585. *Wikimedia*.

Despite reinforcements, the English continued to die. Four hundred settlers arrived in 1609, but the overwhelmed colony entered a desperate "starving time" in the winter of 1609–1610. Supplies were lost at sea. Relations with the Indians deteriorated and the colonists fought a kind of slow-burning guerrilla war with the Powhatan. Disaster loomed for the colony. The settlers ate everything they could, roaming the woods for nuts and berries. They boiled leather. They dug up graves to eat the corpses of their former neighbors. One man was executed for killing and eating his wife. Some years later, George Percy recalled the colonists' desperation during these years, when he served as the colony's president: "Having fed upon our horses and other beasts as long as they lasted, we were glad to make shift with vermin as dogs, cats, rats and mice . . . as to eat boots shoes or any other leather. . . . And now famine beginning to look ghastly and pale in every face, that nothing was spared to maintain life and to doe those things which seam incredible, as to dig up dead corpses out of graves and to eat them."[23] Archaeological excavations in 2012 exhumed the bones of a fourteen-year-old girl that exhibited signs of cannibalism.[24] All but sixty settlers would die by the summer of 1610.

Little improved over the next several years. By 1616, 80 percent of all English immigrants who had arrived in Jamestown had perished. England's first American colony was a catastrophe. The colony was reorganized, and in 1614 the marriage of Pocahontas to John Rolfe eased relations with the Powhatan, though the colony still limped along as a starving, commercially disastrous tragedy. The colonists were unable to find any profitable commodities and remained dependent on the Indians and sporadic shipments from England for food. But then tobacco saved Jamestown.

By the time King James I described tobacco as a "noxious weed, . . . loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, and dangerous to the lungs," it had already taken Europe by storm. In 1616 John Rolfe crossed tobacco strains from Trinidad and Guiana and planted Virginia's first tobacco crop. In 1617 the colony sent its first cargo of tobacco back to England. The "noxious weed," a native of the New World, fetched a high price in Europe and the tobacco boom began in Virginia and then later spread to Maryland. Within fifteen years American colonists were exporting over five hundred thousand pounds of tobacco per year. Within forty years, they were exporting fifteen million.[25]

Tobacco changed everything. It saved Virginia from ruin, incentivized further colonization, and laid the groundwork for what would become the United States. With a new market open, Virginia drew not only merchants and traders but also settlers. Colonists came in droves. They were mostly young, mostly male, and mostly indentured servants who signed contracts called indentures that bonded them to employers for a period of years in return for passage across the ocean. But even the rough terms of servitude were no match for the promise of land and potential profits that beckoned English farmers. But still there were not enough of them. Tobacco was a labor-intensive crop and ambitious planters, with seemingly limitless land before them, lacked only laborers to escalate their wealth and status. The colony's great labor vacuum inspired the creation of the "headright policy" in 1618: any person who migrated to Virginia would automatically receive fifty acres of land and any immigrant whose passage they paid would entitle them to fifty acres more.

In 1619, the Virginia Company established the House of Burgesses, a limited representative body composed of white landowners that first met in Jamestown. That same year, a Dutch slave ship sold twenty Africans to the Virginia colonists. Southern slavery was born.

Soon the tobacco-growing colonists expanded beyond the bounds of Jamestown's deadly peninsula. When it became clear that the English were not merely intent on maintaining a small trading post but sought a permanent ever-expanding colony, conflict with the Powhatan Confederacy became almost inevitable. Powhatan died in 1622 and was succeeded by his brother, Opechancanough, who promised to drive the land-hungry colonists back into the sea. He launched a surprise attack and in a single day (March 22, 1622) killed over 350 colonists, or one third of all the colonists in Virginia.[26] The colonists retaliated and revisited the massacres on Indian settlements many times over. The massacre freed the colonists to drive the Indians off their land. The governor of Virginia declared it colonial policy to achieve the "expulsion of the savages to gain the free range of the country."[27] War and disease destroyed the remnants of the Chesapeake Indians and tilted the balance of power decisively toward the English colonizers.

English colonists brought to the New World particular visions of racial, cultural, and religious supremacy. Despite starving in the shadow of the Powhatan Confederacy, English colonists nevertheless judged themselves physically, spiritually, and technologically superior to Native peoples in North America. Christianity, metallurgy, intensive agriculture, transatlantic navigation, and even wheat all magnified the English sense of superiority. This sense of superiority, when coupled with outbreaks of violence, left the English feeling entitled to indigenous lands and resources.

Spanish conquerors established the framework for the Atlantic slave trade over a century before the first chained Africans arrived at Jamestown. Even Bartolomé de Las Casas, celebrated for his pleas to save Native Americans from colonial butchery, for a time recommended that indigenous labor be replaced by importing Africans. Early English settlers from the Caribbean and Atlantic coast of North America mostly imitated European ideas of African inferiority. "Race" followed the expansion of slavery across the Atlantic world. Skin color and race suddenly seemed fixed. Englishmen equated Africans with categorical blackness and blackness with Sin, "the handmaid and symbol of baseness."[28] An English essayist in 1695 wrote that "a negro will always be a negro, carry him to Greenland, feed him chalk, feed and manage him never so many ways."[29] More and more Europeans embraced the notions that Europeans and Africans were of distinct races. Others now preached that the Old Testament God cursed Ham, the son of Noah, and doomed black people to perpetual enslavement.

And yet in the early years of American slavery, ideas about race were not yet fixed and the practice of slavery was not yet codified. The first generations of Africans in English North America faced miserable conditions, but, in contrast to later American history, their initial servitude was not necessarily permanent, heritable, or even particularly disgraceful. Africans were definitively set apart as fundamentally different from their white counterparts and faced longer terms of service and harsher punishments, but, like the indentured white servants whisked away from English slums, these first Africans in North America could also work for only a set number of years before becoming free landowners themselves. The Angolan Anthony Johnson, for instance, was sold into servitude but fulfilled his indenture and became a prosperous tobacco planter himself.[30]

In 1622, at the dawn of the tobacco boom, Jamestown had still seemed a failure. But the rise of tobacco and the destruction of the Powhatan turned the tide. Colonists escaped the deadly peninsula and immigrants poured into the colony to grow tobacco and turn a profit for the Crown.

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2.6: New England



Figure 2.6.1: Seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. *The History Project (UC Davis).*

The English colonies in New England established from 1620 onward were founded with loftier goals than those in Virginia. Although migrants to New England expected economic profit, religious motives directed the rhetoric and much of the reality of these colonies. Not every English person who moved to New England during the seventeenth century was a Puritan, but Puritans dominated the politics, religion, and culture of New England. Even after 1700, the region's Puritan inheritance shaped many aspects of its history.

The term *Puritan* began as an insult, and its recipients usually referred to each other as "the godly" if they used a specific term at all. Puritans believed that the Church of England did not distance itself far enough from Catholicism after Henry VIII broke with Rome in the 1530s. They largely agreed with European Calvinists—followers of theologian Jean Calvin—on matters of religious doctrine. Calvinists (and Puritans) believed that humankind was redeemed by God's grace alone, and that the fate of an individual's immortal soul was predestined. The happy minority that God had already chosen to save were known among English Puritans as the Elect. Calvinists also argued that the decoration of churches, reliance on ornate ceremony, and corrupt priesthood obscured God's message. They believed that reading the Bible was the best way to understand God.

Puritans were stereotyped by their enemies as dour killjoys, and the exaggeration has endured. It is certainly true that the Puritans' disdain for excess and opposition to many holidays popular in Europe (including Christmas, which, as Puritans never tired of reminding everyone, the Bible never told anyone to celebrate) lent themselves to caricature. But Puritans understood themselves as advocating a reasonable middle path in a corrupt world. It would never occur to a Puritan, for example, to abstain from alcohol or sex.

During the first century after the English Reformation (c. 1530–1630) Puritans sought to "purify" the Church of England of all practices that smacked of Catholicism, advocating a simpler worship service, the abolition of ornate churches, and other reforms. They had some success in pushing the Church of England in a more Calvinist direction, but with the coronation of King Charles I (r. 1625–1649), the Puritans gained an implacable foe that cast English Puritans as excessive and dangerous. Facing growing persecution, the Puritans began the Great Migration, during which about twenty thousand people traveled to New England between 1630 and 1640. The Puritans (unlike the small band of separatist "Pilgrims" who founded Plymouth Colony in 1620) remained committed to reforming the Church of England but temporarily decamped to North America to accomplish this task. Leaders like John Winthrop insisted they were not separating from, or abandoning, England but were rather forming a godly community in America that would be a "City on a Hill" and an example for reformers back home.[31] The Puritans did not seek to create a haven of religious toleration, a notion that they—along with nearly all European Christians—regarded as ridiculous at best and dangerous at worst.

While the Puritans did not succeed in building a godly utopia in New England, a combination of Puritan traits with several

external factors created colonies wildly different from any other region settled by English people. Unlike those heading to Virginia, colonists in New England (Plymouth [1620], Massachusetts Bay [1630], Connecticut [1636], and Rhode Island [1636]) generally arrived in family groups. Most New England immigrants were small landholders in England, a class contemporary English called the "middling sort." When they arrived in New England they tended to replicate their home environments, founding towns composed of independent landholders. The New England climate and soil made large-scale plantation agriculture impractical, so the system of large landholders using masses of slaves or indentured servants to grow labor-intensive crops never took hold.

There is no evidence that the New England Puritans would have opposed such a system were it possible; other Puritans made their fortunes on the Caribbean sugar islands, and New England merchants profited as suppliers of provisions and slaves to those colonies. By accident of geography as much as by design, New England society was much less stratified than any of Britain's other seventeenth-century colonies.

Although New England colonies could boast wealthy landholding elites, the disparity of wealth in the region remained narrow compared to the Chesapeake, Carolina, or the Caribbean. Instead, seventeenth-century New England was characterized by a broadly shared modest prosperity based on a mixed economy dependent on small farms, shops, fishing, lumber, shipbuilding, and trade with the Atlantic World.

A combination of environmental factors and the Puritan social ethos produced a region of remarkable health and stability during the seventeenth century. New England immigrants avoided most of the deadly outbreaks of tropical disease that turned the Chesapeake colonies into graveyards. Disease, in fact, only aided English settlement and relations to Native Americans. In contrast to other English colonists who had to contend with powerful Native American neighbors, the Puritans confronted the stunned survivors of a biological catastrophe. A lethal pandemic of smallpox during the 1610s swept away as much as 90 percent of the region's Native American population. Many survivors welcomed the English as potential allies against rival tribes who had escaped the catastrophe. The relatively healthy environment coupled with political stability and the predominance of family groups among early immigrants allowed the New England population to grow to 91,000 people by 1700 from only 21,000 immigrants. In contrast, 120,000 English went to the Chesapeake, and only 85,000 white colonists remained in 1700.[32]

The New England Puritans set out to build their utopia by creating communities of the godly. Groups of men, often from the same region of England, applied to the colony's General Court for land grants.[33] They generally divided part of the land for immediate use while keeping much of the rest as "commons" or undivided land for future generations. The town's inhabitants collectively decided the size of each settler's home lot based on their current wealth and status. Besides oversight of property, the town restricted membership, and new arrivals needed to apply for admission. Those who gained admittance could participate in town governments that, while not democratic by modern standards, nevertheless had broad popular involvement. All male property holders could vote in town meetings and choose the selectmen, assessors, constables, and other officials from among themselves to conduct the daily affairs of government. Upon their founding, towns wrote covenants, reflecting the Puritan belief in God's covenant with his people. Towns sought to arbitrate disputes and contain strife, as did the Church. Wayward or divergent individuals were persuaded, corrected, or coerced. Popular conceptions of Puritans as hardened authoritarians are exaggerated, but if persuasion and arbitration failed, people who did not conform to community norms were punished or removed. Massachusetts banished Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams, and other religious dissenters like the Quakers.

Although by many measures colonization in New England succeeded, its Puritan leaders failed in their own mission to create a utopian community that would inspire their fellows back in England. They tended to focus their disappointment on the younger generation. "But alas!" Increase Mather lamented, "That so many of the younger Generation have so early corrupted their [the founders'] doings!"[34] The jeremiad, a sermon lamenting the fallen state of New England due to its straying from its early virtuous path, became a staple of late-seventeenth-century Puritan literature.

Yet the jeremiad could not stop the effects of prosperity. The population spread and grew more diverse. Many, if not most, New Englanders retained strong ties to their Calvinist roots into the eighteenth century, but the Puritans (who became Congregationalists) struggled against a rising tide of religious pluralism. On December 25, 1727, Judge Samuel Sewell noted in his diary that a new Anglican minister "keeps the day in his new Church at Braintrey: people flock thither."[35] Previously forbidden holidays like Christmas were celebrated publicly in church and privately in homes. Puritan divine Cotton Mather discovered on Christmas 1711 that "a number of young people of both sexes, belonging, many of them, to my flock, had . . . a Frolick, a reveling Feast, and a Ball, which discovers their Corruption."[36]

Despite the lamentations of the Mathers and other Puritan leaders of their failure, they left an enduring mark on New England culture and society that endured long after the region's residents ceased to be called "Puritan."

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2.7: Conclusion

The fledgling settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts paled in importance when compared to the sugar colonies of the Caribbean. Valued more as marginal investments and social safety valves where the poor could be released, these colonies nonetheless created a foothold for Britain on a vast North American continent. And although the seventeenth century would be fraught for Britain—religious, social, and political upheavals would behead one king and force another to flee his throne—settlers in Massachusetts and Virginia were nonetheless tied together by the emerging Atlantic economy. While commodities such as tobacco and sugar fueled new markets in Europe, the economy grew increasingly dependent on slave labor. Enslaved Africans transported across the Atlantic would further complicate the collision of cultures in the Americas. The creation and maintenance of a slave system would spark new understandings of human difference and new modes of social control. The economic exchanges of the new Atlantic economy would not only generate great wealth and exploitation, they would also lead to new cultural systems and new identities for the inhabitants of at least four continents.

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2.8: Primary Sources

Richard Hakluyt makes the case for English colonization, 1584

Richard Hakluyt used this document to persuade Queen Elizabeth I to devote more money and energy into encouraging English colonization. In twenty-one chapters, summarized here, Hakluyt emphasized the many benefits that England would receive by creating colonies in the Americas.

John Winthrop dreams of a city on a hill, 1630

John Winthrop delivered the following sermon before he and his fellow settlers reached New England. The sermon is famous largely for its use of the phrase "a city on a hill," used to describe the expectation that the Massachusetts Bay colony would shine like an example to the world. But Winthrop's sermon also reveals how he expected Massachusetts to differ from the rest of the world.

John Lawson encounters North American Indians, 1709

John Lawson took detailed notes on the various peoples he encountered during his exploration of the Carolinas. Lawson recorded many aspects of Native American life and even noticed the progress of disease as it swept through native communities.

A Gaspesian Indian defends his way of life, 1641

Chrestien Le Clercq traveled to New France as a missionary, but found that many Native Americans were not interested in adopting European cultural practices. In this document, LeClercq records the words of a Gaspesian Indian who explained why he believed that his way of life was superior to Le Clercq's.

The Legend of Moshup, 1830

Most Native American peoples shared information solely through the spoken word. These oral cultures present unique challenges to historians, and force us to look beyond traditional written sources. Folk tales offer a valuable window into the ways that Native Americans understood themselves and the wider world. The Wampanoag legend of Moshup describes an ancient giant who lived on Martha's Vineyard Island and offered stories about the history of the region.

Painting of New Orleans, 1726

During the contact period, the frontier was constantly shifting and places that are now considered old were once tenuous settlements. This watercolor painting depicts New Orleans in 1726 when it was an 8-year-old French frontier settlement, nearly forty years prior to the Spanish acquisition of the Louisiana territory. In the foreground, enslaved Africans fell trees on land belonging to the Company of the Indies, and another enslaved man spears a massive alligator. Land has been cleared only just beyond the town limits and a wooden palisade provides meager protection from competing European empires.

Sketch of Algonquin village, 1585

Native settlements were usually organized around political, economic, or religious activity. John White shows this Algonquin community engaged in some kind of celebration across from the fire he identified as "The place of solemne prayer," indicating that ceremonial activity could be both solemn and raucous. In the center of the image, a communal meal has been laid alongside crops that are in varying stages of growth, suggesting the use of planting techniques like crop rotation. He also shows the interior of several longhouses, made of bent saplings and covered with bark and woven maps. Among the Powhatan, similar structures were called yehakins. In putting the longhouses and the settlement in a series of rows, White's English perspective comes through: archaeological evidence shows that these houses were usually situated around communal gathering places or moved next to fields under cultivation not ordered in European-style rows.

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2.9: Reference Materials

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3: BRITISH NORTH AMERICA



Unidentified artist, The Old Plantation, c. 1790–1800, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum. Wikimedia.

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3.1: Introduction

Whether they came as servants, slaves, free farmers, religious refugees, or powerful planters, the men and women of the American colonies created new worlds. Native Americans saw fledgling settlements grow into unstoppable beachheads of vast new populations that increasingly monopolized resources and remade the land into something else entirely. Meanwhile, as colonial societies developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, fluid labor arrangements and racial categories solidified into the race-based, chattel slavery that increasingly defined the economy of the British Empire. The North American mainland originally occupied a small and marginal place in that broad empire, as even the output of its most prosperous colonies paled before the tremendous wealth of Caribbean sugar islands. And yet the colonial backwaters on the North American mainland, ignored by many imperial officials, were nevertheless deeply tied into these larger Atlantic networks. A new and increasingly complex Atlantic World connected the continents of Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

Events across the ocean continued to influence the lives of American colonists. Civil war, religious conflict, and nation building transformed seventeenth-century Britain and remade societies on both sides of the ocean. At the same time, colonial settlements grew and matured, developing into powerful societies capable of warring against Native Americans and subduing internal upheaval. Patterns and systems established during the colonial era would continue to shape American society for centuries. And none, perhaps, would be as brutal and destructive as the institution of slavery.

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3.2: Slavery and the Making of Race

After his arrival as a missionary in Charles Town, Carolina, in 1706, Reverend Francis Le Jau quickly grew disillusioned by the horrors of American slavery. He met enslaved Africans ravaged by the Middle Passage, Indians traveling south to enslave enemy villages, and colonists terrified of invasions from French Louisiana and Spanish Florida. Slavery and death surrounded him.

Le Jau's strongest complaints were reserved for his own countrymen, the English. English traders encouraged wars with Indians in order to purchase and enslave captives, and planters justified the use of an enslaved workforce by claiming white servants were "good for nothing at all." Although the minister thought otherwise and baptized and educated a substantial number of slaves, he was unable to overcome masters' fear that Christian baptism would lead to slave emancipation.[1]

The 1660s marked a turning point for black men and women in English colonies like Virginia in North America and Barbados in the West Indies. New laws gave legal sanction to the enslavement of people of African descent for life. The permanent deprivation of freedom and the separate legal status of enslaved Africans facilitated the maintenance of strict racial barriers. Skin color became more than a superficial difference; it became the marker of a transcendent, all-encompassing division between two distinct peoples, two races, white and black.[2]

All seventeenth-century racial thought did not point directly toward modern classifications of racial hierarchy. Captain Thomas Phillips, master of a slave ship in 1694, did not justify his work with any such creed: "I can't think there is any intrinsic value in one color more than another, nor that white is better than black, only we think it so because we are so."[3] For Phillips, the profitability of slavery was the only justification he needed.

Wars offered the most common means for colonists to acquire Native American slaves. Seventeenth-century European legal thought held that enslaving prisoners of war was not only legal but more merciful than killing the captives outright. After the Pequot War (1636–1637), Massachusetts Bay colonists sold hundreds of North American Indians into slavery in the West Indies. A few years later, Dutch colonists in New Netherland (New York and New Jersey) enslaved Algonquian Indians during both Governor Kieft's War (1641–1645) and the two Esopus Wars (1659–1663). The Dutch sent these war captives to English-settled Bermuda as well as Curaçao, a Dutch plantation colony in the southern Caribbean. An even larger number of Indian slaves were captured during King Philip's War (1675–1676), a pan-Indian uprising against the encroachments of the New England colonies. Hundreds of Indians were bound and shipped into slavery. The New England colonists also tried to send Indian slaves to Barbados, but the Barbados Assembly refused to import the New England Indians for fear they would encourage rebellion.

In the eighteenth century, wars in Florida, South Carolina, and the Mississippi Valley produced even more Indian slaves. Some wars emerged from contests between Indians and colonists for land, while others were manufactured as pretenses for acquiring captives. Some were not wars at all but merely illegal raids performed by slave traders. Historians estimate that between 24,000 and 51,000 Native Americans were forced into slavery throughout the southern colonies between 1670 and 1715. ((Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South 1670–1717* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 299.)) While some of the enslaved Indians remained in the region, many were exported through Charles Town, South Carolina, to other ports in the British Atlantic—most likely to Barbados, Jamaica, and Bermuda. Many of the English colonists who wished to claim land in frontier territories were threatened by the violence inherent in the Indian slave trade. By the eighteenth century, colonial governments often discouraged the practice, although it never ceased entirely as long as slavery was, in general, a legal institution.

Native American slaves died quickly, mostly from disease, but others were murdered or died from starvation. The demands of growing plantation economies required a more reliable labor force, and the transatlantic slave trade provided such a workforce. European slavers transported millions of Africans across the ocean in a terrifying journey known as the Middle Passage. Writing at the end of the eighteenth century, Olaudah Equiano recalled the fearsomeness of the crew, the filth and gloom of the hold, the inadequate provisions allotted for the captives, and the desperation that drove some slaves to suicide. (Equiano claimed to have been born in Igboland in modern-day Nigeria, but he may have been born in colonial South Carolina, where he collected memories of the Middle Passage from African-born slaves.) In the same time period, Alexander Falconbridge, a slave ship surgeon, described the sufferings of slaves from shipboard infections and close quarters in the hold. Dysentery, known as "the bloody flux," left captives lying in pools of excrement. Chained in small spaces in the hold, slaves could lose so much skin and flesh from chafing against metal and timber that their bones protruded. Other sources detailed rapes, whippings, and diseases like smallpox and conjunctivitis aboard slave ships.[4]

"Middle" had various meanings in the Atlantic slave trade. For the captains and crews of slave ships, the Middle Passage was one leg in the maritime trade in sugar and other semifinished American goods, manufactured European commodities, and African slaves. For the enslaved Africans, the Middle Passage was the middle leg of three distinct journeys from Africa to the Americas. First was an overland journey in Africa to a coastal slave-trading factory, often a trek of hundreds of miles. Second—and middle—was an oceanic trip lasting from one to six months in a slaver. Third was acculturation (known as "seasoning") and transportation to the American mine, plantation, or other location where new slaves were forced to labor.

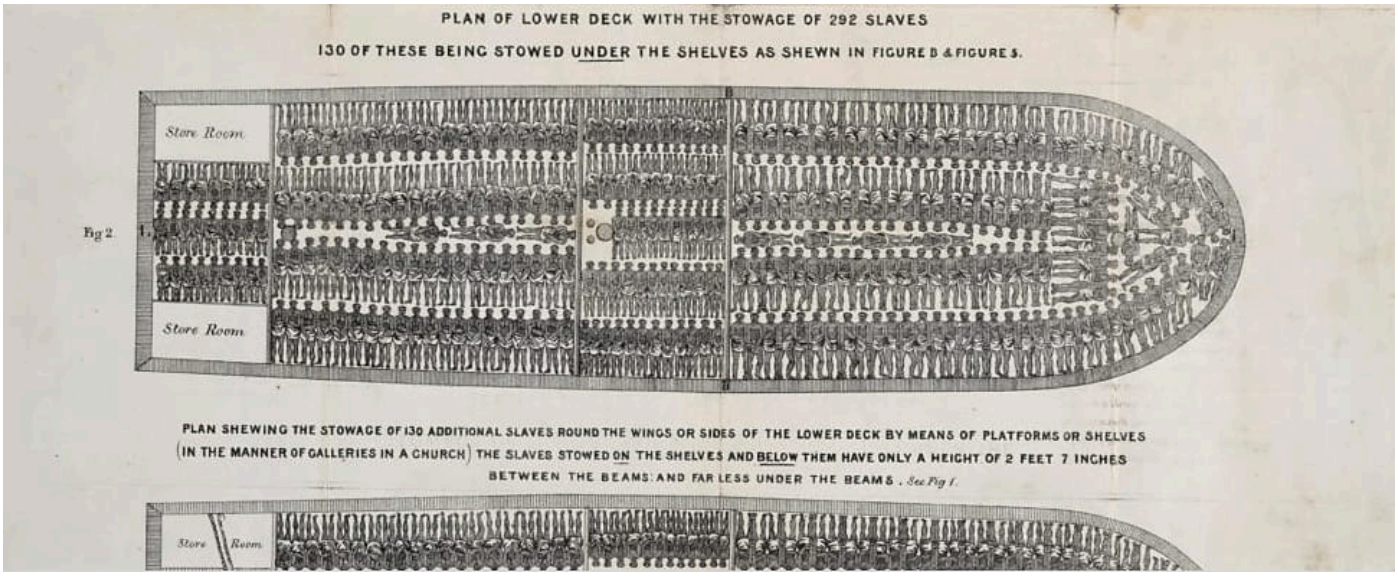


Figure 3.2.1: *Slave ships transported 11–12 million Africans to destinations in North and South America, but it was not until the end of the 18th century that any regulation was introduced. The Brookes print dates to after the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788, but still shows enslaved Africans chained in rows using iron leg shackles. The slave ship Brookes was allowed to carry up to 454 slaves, allotting 6 feet (1.8 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each man; 5 feet 10 inches (1.78 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each woman, and 5 feet (1.5 m) by 1 foot 2 inches (0.36 m) to each child, but one slave trader alleged that before 1788, the ship carried as many as 609 slaves. Stowage of the British slave ship Brookes under the regulated slave trade act of 1788, 1789. Wikimedia.*

The impact of the Middle Passage on the cultures of the Americas remains evident today. Many foods associated with Africans, such as cassava, were originally imported to West Africa as part of the slave trade and were then adopted by African cooks before being brought to the Americas, where they are still consumed. West African rhythms and melodies live in new forms today in music as varied as religious spirituals and synthesized drumbeats. African influences appear in the basket making and language of the Gullah people on the Carolina coastal islands.

Recent estimates count between eleven and twelve million Africans forced across the Atlantic between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, with about two million deaths at sea as well as an additional several million dying in the trade's overland African leg or during seasoning.[5] Conditions in all three legs of the slave trade were horrible, but the first abolitionists focused especially on the abuses of the Middle Passage.

Southern European trading empires like the Catalans and Aragonese were brought into contact with a Levantine commerce in sugar and slaves in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Europeans made the first steps toward an Atlantic slave trade in the 1440s when Portuguese sailors landed in West Africa in search of gold, spices, and allies against the Muslims who dominated Mediterranean trade. Beginning in the 1440s, ship captains carried African slaves to Portugal. These Africans were valued primarily as domestic servants, as peasants provided the primary agricultural labor force in Western Europe.[6] European expansion into the Americas introduced both settlers and European authorities to a new situation—an abundance of land and a scarcity of labor. Portuguese, Dutch, and English ships became the conduits for Africans forced to America. The western coast of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea, and the west-central coast were the sources of African captives. Wars of expansion and raiding parties produced captives who could be sold in coastal factories. African slave traders bartered for European finished goods such as beads, cloth, rum, firearms, and metal wares.



Figure 3.2.2: The first trading post built on the Gulf of Guinea and the oldest European building southern of the Sahara, Elmina Castle was established as a trade settlement by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. The fort became one of the largest and most important markets for African slaves along the Atlantic slave trade. "View of the castle of Elmina on the north-west side, seen from the river. Located on the gold coast in Guinea," in Atlas Blaeu van der Hem, c. 1665–1668. *Wikimedia*.

Slavers often landed in the British West Indies, where slaves were seasoned in places like Barbados. Charleston, South Carolina, became the leading entry point for the slave trade on the mainland. The founding of Charleston ("Charles Town" until the 1780s) in 1670 was viewed as a serious threat by the Spanish in neighboring Florida, who began construction of Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine as a response. In 1693 the Spanish king issued the Decree of Sanctuary, which granted freedom to slaves fleeing the English colonies if they converted to Catholicism and swore an oath of loyalty to Spain.[7] The presence of Africans who bore arms and served in the Spanish militia testifies to the different conceptions of race among the English and Spanish in America.

About 450,000 Africans landed in British North America, a relatively small portion of the eleven to twelve million victims of the trade.[8] As a proportion of the enslaved population, there were more enslaved women in North America than in other colonial slave populations. Enslaved African women also bore more children than their counterparts in the Caribbean or South America, facilitating the natural reproduction of slaves on the North American continent.[9] A 1662 Virginia law stated that an enslaved woman's children inherited the "condition" of their mother; other colonies soon passed similar statutes.[10] This economic strategy on the part of planters created a legal system in which all children born to slave women would be slaves for life, whether the father was white or black, enslaved or free.

Most fundamentally, the emergence of modern notions of race was closely related to the colonization of the Americas and the slave trade. African slave traders lacked a firm category of race that might have led them to think that they were selling their own people, in much the same way that Native Americans did not view other Indian groups as part of the same "race." Similarly, most English citizens felt no racial identification with the Irish or the even the Welsh. The modern idea of race as an inherited physical difference (most often skin color) that is used to support systems of oppression was new in the early modern Atlantic world.

In the early years of slavery, especially in the South, the distinction between indentured servants and slaves was initially unclear. In 1643, however, a law was passed in Virginia that made African women "tithable."[11] This, in effect, associated African women's work with difficult agricultural labor. There was no similar tax levied on white women; the law was an attempt to distinguish white women from African women. The English ideal was to have enough hired hands and servants working on a farm so that wives and daughters did not have to partake in manual labor. Instead, white women were expected to labor in dairy sheds, small gardens, and kitchens. Of course, because of the labor shortage in early America, white women did participate in field labor. But this idealized gendered division of labor contributed to the English conceiving of themselves as better than other groups who did not divide labor in this fashion, including the West Africans arriving in slave ships to the colonies. For many white colonists, the association of a gendered division of labor with Englishness provided a further justification for the enslavement and subordination of Africans.

Ideas about the rule of the household were informed by legal and customary understandings of marriage and the home in England. A man was expected to hold "paternal dominion" over his household, which included his wife, children, servants, and slaves. In

contrast, slaves were not legally masters of a household and were therefore subject to the authority of the white master. Slave marriages were not recognized in colonial law. Some enslaved men and women married “abroad”; that is, they married individuals who were not owned by the same master and did not live on the same plantation. These husbands and wives had to travel miles at a time, typically only once a week on Sundays, to visit their spouses. Legal or religious authority did not protect these marriages, and masters could refuse to let their slaves visit a spouse, or even sell a slave to a new master hundreds of miles away from their spouse and children. Within the patriarchal and exploitative colonial environment, enslaved men and women struggled to establish families and communities.

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3.3: Turmoil in Britain

Religious conflict plagued sixteenth-century England. While Spain plundered the New World and built an empire, Catholic and Protestant English monarchs vied for supremacy and attacked their opponents as heretics. Queen Elizabeth cemented Protestantism as the official religion of the realm, but questions endured as to what kind of Protestantism would hold sway. Many radical Protestants (often called “Puritans” by their critics) looked to the New World as an opportunity to create a beacon of Calvinist Christianity, while others continued the struggle in England. By the 1640s, political and economic conflicts between Parliament and the Crown merged with long-simmering religious tensions, made worse by a king who seemed sympathetic to Catholicism. The result was a bloody civil war. Colonists reacted in a variety of ways as England waged war on itself, but all were affected by these decades of turmoil.

Between 1629 and 1640 the absolute rule of Charles I caused considerable friction between the English Parliament and the king. Conflict erupted in 1640 when a Parliament called by Charles refused to grant him subsidies to suppress a rebellion in Scotland. The Irish rebelled the following year, and by 1642 strained relations between Charles and Parliament led to civil war in England. In 1649 Parliament won, Charles I was executed, and England became a republic and protectorate under Oliver Cromwell. These changes redefined England’s relationship with its American colonies, as the new government under Cromwell attempted to consolidate its hold over its overseas territories.

In 1642, no permanent British North American colony was more than thirty-five years old. The Crown and various proprietors controlled most of the colonies, but settlers from Barbados to Maine enjoyed a great deal of independence. This was especially true in Massachusetts Bay, where Puritan settlers governed themselves according to the colony’s 1629 charter. Trade in tobacco and naval stores tied the colonies to England economically, as did religion and political culture, but in general the English government left the colonies to their own devices.

The English Revolution of the 1640s forced settlers in America to reconsider their place within the empire. Older colonies like Virginia and proprietary colonies like Maryland sympathized with the Crown. Newer colonies like Massachusetts Bay, populated by religious dissenters taking part in the Great Migration of the 1630s, tended to favor Parliament. Yet during the war the colonies remained neutral, fearing that support for either side could involve them in war. Even Massachusetts Bay, which nurtured ties to radical Protestants in Parliament, remained neutral.



Figure 3.3.1: King Charles I, pictured with the blue sash of the Order of the Garter, listens to his commanders detail the strategy for what would be the first pitched battle of the First English Civil War. As all previous constitutional compromises between King Charles and Parliament had broken down, both sides raised large armies in the hopes of forcing the other side to concede their position. The Battle of Edgehill ended with no clear winner, leading to a prolonged war of over four years and an even longer series of wars (known generally as the English Civil War) that eventually established the Commonwealth of England in 1649. Charles Landseer, The Eve of the Battle of Edge Hill,1642, 1845. *Wikimedia*.

Charles’s execution in 1649 challenged American neutrality. Six colonies, including Virginia and Barbados, declared allegiance

to the dead monarch's son, Charles II. Parliament responded with an act in 1650 that leveled an economic embargo on the rebelling colonies, forcing them to accept Parliament's authority. Parliament argued that America had been "planted at the Cost, and settled" by the English nation, and that it, as the embodiment of that commonwealth, possessed ultimate jurisdiction over the colonies.[12] It followed up the embargo with the Navigation Act of 1651, which compelled merchants in every colony to ship goods directly to England in English ships. Parliament sought to bind the colonies more closely to England and prevent other European nations, especially the Dutch, from interfering with its American possessions.



Figure 3.3.2: England found itself in crisis after the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, leading in time to the reestablishment of the monarchy. On his thirtieth birthday (May 29, 1660), Charles II sailed from the Netherlands to his restoration after nine years in exile. He was received in London to great acclaim, as depicted in this contemporary painting. Lieve Verschuler, The Arrival of King Charles II of England in Rotterdam, 24 May 1660. c. 1660–1665. Wikimedia.

The monarchy was restored with Charles II, but popular suspicions of the Crown's Catholic and French sympathies lingered. Charles II's suppression of the religious and press freedoms that flourished during the civil war years demonstrated the Crown's desire to reimpose order and royal rule. But it was the openly Catholic and pro-French policies of his successor, James II, that once again led to the overthrow of the monarchy in 1688. In that year a group of bishops and Parliamentarians offered the English throne to the Dutch Prince William of Holland and his English bride, Mary, the daughter of James II. This relatively peaceful coup was called the Glorious Revolution.

In the decades before the Glorious Revolution, English colonists experienced religious and political conflict that reflected transformations in Europe as well as distinctly colonial conditions. In the 1670s and early 1680s, King Charles II tightened English control over North America and the West Indies through the creation of new colonies, the imposition of new Navigation Acts, and the establishment of a new executive council called the Lords of Trade and Plantations.[13] As imperial officials attempted to curb colonists' autonomy, threats from Native Americans and New France on the continent led many colonists to believe that Indians and Catholics sought to destroy English America. In New England an uprising beginning in 1675 led by the Wampanoag leader Metacom, or King Philip as the English called him, seemed to confirm these fears. Indian conflicts helped trigger the revolt against royal authorities known as Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia the following year.

James II worked to place the colonies on firmer administrative and defensive footing by creating the Dominion of New England in 1686. The Dominion consolidated the New England colonies, New York, and New Jersey into one administrative unit to counter French Canada, but colonists strongly resented the loss of their individual provinces. The Dominion's governor, Sir Edmund Andros, did little to assuage fears of arbitrary power when he forced colonists into military service for a campaign against the Maine Indians in early 1687. Impressment into military service was a long-standing grievance among English commoners that was transplanted to the colonies.

In England, James's push for religious toleration of Catholics and dissenters brought him into conflict with Parliament and the Anglican establishment in England. After the 1688 invasion by the Protestant William of Orange, James fled to France. When colonists learned imperial officials in Boston and New York City attempted to keep news of the Glorious Revolution secret, simmering hostilities toward provincial leaders burst into the open. In Massachusetts, New York, and Maryland, colonists overthrew colonial governments as local social antagonisms fused with popular animosity toward imperial rule. Colonists in

America quickly declared allegiance to the new monarchs. They did so in part to maintain order in their respective colonies. As one Virginia official explained, if there was “no King in England, there was no Government here.”[14] A declaration of allegiance was therefore a means toward stability.

More importantly, colonists declared for William and Mary because they believed that their ascension marked the rejection of absolutism and confirmed the centrality of Protestantism and liberty in English life. Settlers joined in the revolution by overthrowing the Dominion government, restoring the provinces to their previous status, and forcing out the Catholic-dominated Maryland government. They launched several assaults against French Canada as part of King William’s War and rejoiced in Parliament’s 1689 passage of a Bill of Rights, which curtailed the power of the monarchy and cemented Protestantism in England. For English colonists, it was indeed a “glorious” revolution as it united them in a Protestant empire that stood counter to Catholic tyranny, absolutism, and French power.

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3.4: New Colonies

Despite the turmoil in Britain, colonial settlement grew considerably throughout the seventeenth century, and several new settlements joined the two original colonies of Virginia and Massachusetts.

In 1632, Charles I set a tract of about 12 million acres of land at the northern tip of the Chesapeake Bay aside for a second colony in America. Named for the new monarch's queen, Maryland was granted to Charles's friend and political ally, Cecilius Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore. Calvert hoped to gain additional wealth from the colony, as well as to create a haven for fellow Catholics. In England, many of that faith found themselves harassed by the Protestant majority and more than a few considered migrating to America. Charles I, a Catholic sympathizer, was in favor of Lord Baltimore's plan to create a colony that would demonstrate that Catholics and Protestants could live together peacefully.

In late 1633, both Protestant and Catholic settlers left England for the Chesapeake, arriving in Maryland in March 1634. Men of middling means found greater opportunities in Maryland, which prospered as a tobacco colony without the growing pains suffered by Virginia.

Unfortunately, Lord Baltimore's hopes of a diverse Christian colony were thwarted. Most colonists were Protestants relocating from Virginia. Many of these Protestants were radical Quakers and Puritans who were frustrated with Virginia's efforts to force adherence to the Anglican Church, also known as the Church of England. In 1650, Puritans revolted, setting up a new government that prohibited both Catholicism and Anglicanism. Governor William Stone attempted to put down the revolt in 1655 but was not successful until 1658. Two years after the Glorious Revolution (1688–1689), the Calverts lost control of Maryland and the province became a royal colony.

Religion was a motivating factor in the creation of several other colonies as well, including the New England colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island. The settlements that would eventually compose Connecticut grew out of settlements in Saybrook and New Haven. Thomas Hooker and his congregation left Massachusetts for Connecticut because the area around Boston was becoming increasingly crowded. The Connecticut River Valley was large enough for more cattle and agriculture. In June 1636, Hooker led one hundred people and a variety of livestock in settling an area they called Newtown (later Hartford).

New Haven Colony had a more directly religious origin, as the founders attempted a new experiment in Puritanism. In 1638, John Davenport, Theophilus Eaton, and other supporters of the Puritan faith settled in the Quinnipiac (New Haven) area of the Connecticut River Valley. In 1643 New Haven Colony was officially organized, with Eaton named governor. In the early 1660s, three men who had signed the death warrant for Charles I were concealed in New Haven. This did not win the colony any favors, and it became increasingly poorer and weaker. In 1665, New Haven was absorbed into Connecticut, but its singular religious tradition endured with the creation of Yale College.

Religious radicals similarly founded Rhode Island. After his exile from Massachusetts, Roger Williams created a settlement called Providence in 1636. He negotiated for the land with the local Narragansett sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi. Williams and his fellow settlers agreed on an egalitarian constitution and established religious and political freedom in the colony. The following year, another Massachusetts exile, Anne Hutchinson, and her followers settled near Providence. Others soon arrived, and the colony was granted a charter by Parliament in 1644. Persistently independent and with republican sympathies, the settlers refused a governor and instead elected a president and council. These separate communities passed laws abolishing witchcraft trials, imprisonment for debt and, in 1652, chattel slavery. Because of the colony's policy of toleration, it became a haven for Quakers, Jews, and other persecuted religious groups. In 1663, Charles II granted the colony a royal charter establishing the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

Until the middle of the seventeenth century, the English neglected the area between Virginia and New England despite obvious environmental advantages. The climate was healthier than the Chesapeake and more temperate than New England. The mid-Atlantic had three highly navigable rivers: the Susquehanna, the Delaware, and the Hudson. The Swedes and Dutch established their own colonies in the region: New Sweden in the Delaware Valley and New Netherland in the Hudson Valley.

Compared to other Dutch colonies around the globe, the settlements on the Hudson River were relatively minor. The Dutch West India Company realized that in order to secure its fur trade in the area, it needed to establish a greater presence in New Netherland. Toward this end, the company formed New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island in 1625.

Although the Dutch extended religious tolerance to those who settled in New Netherland, the population remained small. This left

the colony vulnerable to English attack during the 1650s and 1660s, resulting in the handover of New Netherland to England in 1664. The new colony of New York was named for the proprietor, James, the Duke of York, brother to Charles II and funder of the expedition against the Dutch in 1664. New York was briefly reconquered by the Netherlands in 1667, and class and ethnic conflicts in New York City contributed to the rebellion against English authorities during the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689. Colonists of Dutch ancestry resisted assimilation into English culture well into the eighteenth century, prompting New York Anglicans to note that the colony was "rather like a conquered foreign province."[15]

After the acquisition of New Netherland, Charles II and the Duke of York wished to strengthen English control over the Atlantic seaboard. In theory, this was to better tax the colonies; in practice, the awarding of the new proprietary colonies of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the Carolinas was a payoff of debts and political favors.

In 1664, the Duke of York granted the area between the Hudson and Delaware rivers to two English noblemen. These lands were split into two distinct colonies, East Jersey and West Jersey. One of West Jersey's proprietors included William Penn. The ambitious Penn wanted his own, larger colony, the lands for which would be granted by both Charles II and the Duke of York. Pennsylvania consisted of about forty-five thousand square miles west of the Delaware River and the former New Sweden. Penn was a member of the Society of Friends, otherwise known as Quakers, and he intended his colony to be a "colony of Heaven for the children of Light."[16] Like New England's aspirations to be a City Upon a Hill, Pennsylvania was to be an example of godliness. But Penn's dream was to create not a colony of unity but rather a colony of harmony. He noted in 1685 that "the people are a collection of diverse nations in Europe, as French, Dutch, Germans, Swedes, Danes, Finns, Scotch, and English; and of the last equal to all the rest."[17] Because Quakers in Pennsylvania extended to others in America the same rights they had demanded for themselves in England, the colony attracted a diverse collection of migrants. Slavery was particularly troublesome for some pacifist Quakers of Pennsylvania on the grounds that it required violence. In 1688, members of the Society of Friends in Germantown, outside Philadelphia, signed a petition protesting the institution of slavery among fellow Quakers.

The Pennsylvania soil did not lend itself to the slave-based agriculture of the Chesapeake, but other colonies depended heavily on slavery from their very foundations. The creation of the colony of Carolina, later divided into North and South Carolina and Georgia, was part of Charles II's scheme to strengthen the English hold on the Eastern Seaboard and pay off political and cash debts. The Lords Proprietor of Carolina—eight powerful favorites of the king—used the model of the colonization of Barbados to settle the area. In 1670, three ships of colonists from Barbados arrived at the mouth of the Ashley River, where they founded Charles Town. This defiance of Spanish claims to the area signified England's growing confidence as a colonial power.

To attract colonists, the Lords Proprietor offered alluring incentives: religious tolerance, political representation by assembly, exemption from fees, and large land grants. These incentives worked, and Carolina grew quickly, attracting not only middling farmers and artisans but also wealthy planters. Colonists who could pay their own way to Carolina were granted 150 acres per family member. The Lords Proprietor allowed for slaves to be counted as members of the family. This encouraged the creation of large rice and indigo plantations along the coast of Carolina; these were more stable commodities than deerskins and Indian slaves. Because of the size of Carolina, the authority of the Lords Proprietor was especially weak in the northern reaches on Albemarle Sound. This region had been settled by Virginians in the 1650s and was increasingly resistant to Carolina authority. As a result, the Lords Proprietor founded the separate province of North Carolina in 1691.[18]



Figure 3.4.1: Henry Popple, A map of the British Empire in America with the French and Spanish settlements adjacent thereto, 1733. *Library of Congress*.

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3.5: Riot, Rebellion, and Revolt

The seventeenth century saw the establishment and solidification of the British North American colonies, but this process did not occur peacefully. English settlements on the continent were rocked by explosions of violence, including the Pequot War, the Mystic massacre, King Philip's War, the Susquehannock War, Bacon's Rebellion, and the Pueblo Revolt.

In May 1637, an armed contingent of English Puritans from Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, and Connecticut colonies trekked into Indian country in territory claimed by New England. Referring to themselves as the "Sword of the Lord," this military force intended to attack "that insolent and barbarous Nation, called the Pequots." In the resulting violence, Puritans put the Mystic community to the torch, beginning with the north and south ends of the town. As Pequot men, women, and children tried to escape the blaze, other soldiers waited with swords and guns. One commander estimated that of the "four hundred souls in this Fort . . . not above five of them escaped out of our hands," although another counted near "six or seven hundred" dead. In a span of less than two months, the English Puritans boasted that the Pequot "were drove out of their country, and slain by the sword, to the number of fifteen hundred."[19]

The foundations of the war lay within the rivalry between the Pequot, the Narragansett, and the Mohegan, who battled for control of the fur and wampum trades in the northeast. This rivalry eventually forced the English and Dutch to choose sides. The war remained a conflict of Native interests and initiative, especially as the Mohegan hedged their bets on the English and reaped the rewards that came with displacing the Pequot.

Victory over the Pequot not only provided security and stability for the English colonies but also propelled the Mohegan to new heights of political and economic influence as the primary power in New England. Ironically, history seemingly repeated itself later in the century as the Mohegan, desperate for a remedy to their diminishing strength, joined the Wampanoag war against the Puritans. This produced a more violent conflict in 1675 known as King Philip's War, bringing a decisive end to Indian power in New England.

In the winter of 1675, the body of John Sassamon, a Christian, Harvard-educated Wampanoag, was found under the ice of a nearby pond. A fellow Christian Indian informed English authorities that three warriors under the local sachem named Metacom, known to the English as King Philip, had killed Sassamon, who had previously accused Metacom of planning an offensive against the English. The three alleged killers appeared before the Plymouth court in June 1675. They were found guilty of murder and executed. Several weeks later, a group of Wampanoags killed nine English colonists in the town of Swansea.

Metacom—like most other New England sachems—had entered into covenants of "submission" to various colonies, viewing the arrangements as relationships of protection and reciprocity rather than subjugation. Indians and English lived, traded, worshipped, and arbitrated disputes in close proximity before 1675, but the execution of three of Metacom's men at the hands of Plymouth Colony epitomized what many Indians viewed as the growing inequality of that relationship. The Wampanoags who attacked Swansea may have sought to restore balance, or to retaliate for the recent executions. Neither they nor anyone else sought to engulf all of New England in war, but that is precisely what happened. Authorities in Plymouth sprang into action, enlisting help from the neighboring colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Metacom and his followers eluded colonial forces in the summer of 1675, striking more Plymouth towns as they moved northwest. Some groups joined his forces, while others remained neutral or supported the English. The war badly divided some Indian communities. Metacom himself had little control over events as panic and violence spread throughout New England in the autumn of 1675. English mistrust of neutral Indians, sometimes accompanied by demands that they surrender their weapons, pushed many into open war. By the end of 1675, most of the Indians of present-day western and central Massachusetts had entered the war, laying waste to nearby English towns like Deerfield, Hadley, and Brookfield. Hapless colonial forces, spurning the military assistance of Indian allies such as the Mohegans, proved unable to locate more mobile Native communities or intercept Indian attacks.

The English compounded their problems by attacking the powerful and neutral Narragansett of Rhode Island in December 1675. In an action called the Great Swamp Fight, 1,000 Englishmen put the main Narragansett village to the torch, gunning down as many as 1,000 Narragansett men, women, and children as they fled the maelstrom. The surviving Narragansett joined the Indians already fighting the English. Between February and April 1676, Native forces devastated a succession of English towns closer and closer to Boston.

In the spring of 1676, the tide turned. The New England colonies took the advice of men like Benjamin Church, who urged the

greater use of Native allies, including Pequot and Mohegan, to find and fight the mobile warriors. As the Indians were unable to plant crops and forced to live off the land, their will to continue the struggle waned as companies of English and Native allies pursued them. Growing numbers of fighters fled the region, switched sides, or surrendered in the spring and summer. The English sold many of the latter group into slavery. Colonial forces finally caught up with Metacom in August 1676, and the sachem was slain by a Christian Indian fighting with the English.

The war permanently altered the political and demographic landscape of New England. Between eight hundred and one thousand English and at least three thousand Indians perished in the fourteen-month conflict. Thousands of other Indians fled the region or were sold into slavery. In 1670, Native Americans comprised roughly 25 percent of New England's population; a decade later, they made up perhaps 10 percent.[20] The war's brutality also encouraged a growing hatred of all Indians among many New England colonists. Though the fighting ceased in 1676, the bitter legacy of King Philip's War lived on.

Sixteen years later, New England faced a new fear: the supernatural. Beginning in early 1692 and culminating in 1693, Salem Town, Salem Village, Ipswich, and Andover all tried women and men as witches. Paranoia swept through the region, and fourteen women and six men were executed. Five other individuals died in prison. The causes of the trials are numerous and include local rivalries, political turmoil, enduring trauma of war, faulty legal procedure where accusing others became a method of self-defense, or perhaps even low-level environmental contamination. Enduring tensions with Indians framed the events, however, and an Indian or African woman named Tituba enslaved by the local minister was at the center of the tragedy.[21]

Native American communities in Virginia had already been decimated by wars in 1622 and 1644. But a new clash arose in Virginia the same year that New Englanders crushed Metacom's forces. This conflict, known as Bacon's Rebellion, grew out of tensions between Native Americans and English settlers as well as tensions between wealthy English landowners and the poor settlers who continually pushed west into Indian territory.

Bacon's Rebellion began, appropriately enough, with an argument over a pig. In the summer of 1675, a group of Doeg Indians visited Thomas Mathew on his plantation in northern Virginia to collect a debt that he owed them. When Mathew refused to pay, they took some of his pigs to settle the debt. This "theft" sparked a series of raids and counterraids. The Susquehannock Indians were caught in the crossfire when the militia mistook them for Doegs, leaving fourteen dead. A similar pattern of escalating violence then repeated: the Susquehannocks retaliated by killing colonists in Virginia and Maryland, and the English marshaled their forces and laid siege to the Susquehannock. The conflict became uglier after the militia executed a delegation of Susquehannock ambassadors under a flag of truce. A few parties of warriors intent on revenge launched raids along the frontier and killed dozens of English colonists.

The sudden and unpredictable violence of the Susquehannock War triggered a political crisis in Virginia. Panicked colonists fled en masse from the vulnerable frontiers, flooding into coastal communities and begging the government for help. But the cautious governor, Sir William Berkeley, did not send an army after the Susquehannock. He worried that a full-scale war would inevitably drag other Indians into the conflict, turning allies into deadly enemies. Berkeley therefore insisted on a defensive strategy centered on a string of new fortifications to protect the frontier and strict instructions not to antagonize friendly Indians. It was a sound military policy but a public relations disaster. Terrified colonists condemned Berkeley. Building contracts for the forts went to Berkeley's wealthy friends, who conveniently decided that their own plantations were the most strategically vital. Colonists denounced the government as a corrupt band of oligarchs more interested in lining their pockets than protecting the people.

By the spring of 1676, a small group of frontier colonists took matters into their own hands. Naming the charismatic young Nathaniel Bacon as their leader, these self-styled "volunteers" proclaimed that they took up arms in defense of their homes and families. They took pains to assure Berkeley that they intended no disloyalty, but Berkeley feared a coup and branded the volunteers as traitors. Berkeley finally mobilized an army—not to pursue Susquehannock, but to crush the colonists' rebellion. His drastic response catapulted a small band of anti-Indian vigilantes into full-fledged rebels whose survival necessitated bringing down the colonial government.

Bacon and the rebels stalked the Susquehannock as well as friendly Indians like the Pamunkeys and the Occaneechi. The rebels became convinced that there was a massive Indian conspiracy to destroy the English. Berkeley's stubborn persistence in defending friendly Indians and destroying the Indian-fighting rebels led Bacon to accuse the governor of conspiring with a "powerful cabal" of elite planters and with "the protected and darling Indians" to slaughter his English enemies.[22]

In the early summer of 1676, Bacon's neighbors elected him their burgess and sent him to Jamestown to confront Berkeley. Though the House of Burgesses enacted pro-rebel reforms like prohibiting the sale of arms to Indians and restoring suffrage rights to landless freemen, Bacon's supporters remained unsatisfied. Berkeley soon had Bacon arrested and forced the rebel

leader into the humiliating position of publicly begging forgiveness for his treason. Bacon swallowed this indignity but turned the tables by gathering an army of followers and surrounding the State House, demanding that Berkeley name him the general of Virginia and bless his universal war against Indians. Instead, the seventy-year-old governor stepped onto the field in front of the crowd of angry men, unafraid, and called Bacon a traitor to his face. Then he tore open his shirt and dared Bacon to shoot him in the heart, if he was so intent on overthrowing his government. “Here!” he shouted before the crowd, “shoot me, before God, it is a fair mark. Shoot!” When Bacon hesitated, Berkeley drew his sword and challenged the young man to a duel, knowing that Bacon could neither back down from a challenge without looking like a coward nor kill him without making himself into a villain. Instead, Bacon resorted to bluster and blasphemy. Threatening to slaughter the entire assembly if necessary, he cursed, “God damn my blood, I came for a commission, and a commission I will have before I go.”[23] Berkeley stood defiant, but the cowed burgesses finally prevailed upon him to grant Bacon’s request. Virginia had its general, and Bacon had his war.

After this dramatic showdown in Jamestown, Bacon’s Rebellion quickly spiraled out of control. Berkeley slowly rebuilt his loyalist army, forcing Bacon to divert his attention to the coasts and away from the Indians. But most rebels were more interested in defending their homes and families than in fighting other Englishmen, and they deserted in droves at every rumor of Indian activity. In many places, the “rebellion” was less an organized military campaign than a collection of local grievances and personal rivalries. Both rebels and loyalists smelled the opportunities for plunder, seizing their rivals’ estates and confiscating their property.

For a small but vocal minority of rebels, however, the rebellion became an ideological revolution: Sarah Drummond, wife of rebel leader William Drummond, advocated independence from England and the formation of a Virginian Republic, declaring “I fear the power of England no more than a broken straw.” Others struggled for a different kind of independence: white servants and black slaves fought side by side in both armies after promises of freedom for military service. Everyone accused everyone else of treason, rebels and loyalists switched sides depending on which side was winning, and the whole Chesapeake disintegrated into a confused melee of secret plots and grandiose crusades, sordid vendettas and desperate gambits, with Indians and English alike struggling for supremacy and survival. One Virginian summed up the rebellion as “our time of anarchy.”[24]

The rebels steadily lost ground and ultimately suffered a crushing defeat. Bacon died of typhus in the autumn of 1676, and his successors surrendered to Berkeley in January 1677. Berkeley summarily tried and executed the rebel leadership in a succession of kangaroo courts-martial. Before long, however, the royal fleet arrived, bearing over one thousand red-coated troops and a royal commission of investigation charged with restoring order to the colony. The commissioners replaced the governor and dispatched Berkeley to London, where he died in disgrace.

But the conclusion of Bacon’s Rebellion was uncertain, and the maintenance of order remained precarious for years afterward. The garrison of royal troops discouraged both incursion by hostile Indians and insurrection by discontented colonists, allowing the king to continue profiting from tobacco revenues. The end of armed resistance did not mean a resolution to the underlying tensions destabilizing colonial society. Indians inside Virginia remained an embattled minority, and Indians outside Virginia remained a terrifying threat. Elite planters continued to grow rich by exploiting their indentured servants and marginalizing small farmers. Most Virginians continued to resent their exploitation with a simmering fury. Virginia legislators did recognize the extent of popular hostility toward colonial rule, however, and improved the social and political conditions of poor white Virginians in the years after the rebellion. During the same period, the increasing availability of enslaved workers through the Atlantic slave trade contributed to planters’ large-scale adoption of slave labor in the Chesapeake.

Just a few years after Bacon’s Rebellion, the Spanish experienced their own tumult in the area of contemporary New Mexico. The Spanish had been maintaining control partly by suppressing Native American beliefs. Friars aggressively enforced Catholic practice, burning native idols and masks and other sacred objects and banishing traditional spiritual practices. In 1680, the Puebloan religious leader Popé, who had been arrested and whipped for “sorcery” five years earlier, led various Puebloan groups in rebellion. Several thousand Puebloan warriors razed the Spanish countryside and besieged Santa Fe. They killed four hundred, including twenty-one Franciscan priests, and allowed two thousand other Spaniards and Christian Puebloans to flee. It was perhaps the greatest act of Indian resistance in North American history.



Figure 3.5.1: Built sometime between 1000 and 1450 AD, the Taos Pueblo located near modern-day Taos, New Mexico, functioned as a base for the leader Popé during the Pueblo Revolt. Luca Galuzzi (photographer), Taos Pueblo, 2007. *Wikimedia. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic*

In New Mexico, the Puebloans eradicated all traces of Spanish rule. They destroyed churches and threw themselves into rivers to wash away their Christian baptisms. “The God of the Christians is dead,” Popé proclaimed, and the Puebloans resumed traditional spiritual practices.[25] The Spanish were exiled for twelve years. They returned in 1692, weakened, to reconquer New Mexico.

The late seventeenth century was a time of great violence and turmoil. Bacon’s Rebellion turned white Virginians against one another, King Philip’s War shattered Indian resistance in New England, and the Pueblo Revolt struck a major blow to Spanish power. It would take several more decades before similar patterns erupted in Carolina and Pennsylvania, but the constant advance of European settlements provoked conflict in these areas as well.

In 1715, the Yamasee, Carolina’s closest allies and most lucrative trading partners, turned against the colony and nearly destroyed it entirely. Writing from Carolina to London, the settler George Rodd believed the Yamasee wanted nothing less than “the whole continent and to kill us or chase us all out.”[26] The Yamasee would eventually advance within miles of Charles Town.

The Yamasee War’s first victims were traders. The governor had dispatched two of the colony’s most prominent men to visit and pacify a Yamasee council following rumors of native unrest. The Yamasee quickly proved the fears well founded by killing the emissaries and every English trader they could corral.

The Yamasee, like many other Indians, had come to depend on English courts as much as the flintlock rifles and ammunition that traders offered them for slaves and animal skins. Feuds between English agents in Indian country had crippled the court of trade and shut down all diplomacy, provoking the violent Yamasee reprisal. Most Indian villages in the southeast sent at least a few warriors to join what quickly became a pan-Indian cause against the colony.

Yet Charles Town ultimately survived the onslaught by preserving one crucial alliance with the Cherokee. By 1717, the conflict had largely dried up, and the only remaining menace was roaming Yamasee bands operating from Spanish Florida. Most Indian villages returned to terms with Carolina and resumed trading. The lucrative trade in Indian slaves, however, which had consumed fifty thousand souls in five decades, largely dwindled after the war. The danger was too high for traders, and the colonies discovered even greater profits by importing Africans to work new rice plantations. Herein lies the birth of the Old South, that expanse of plantations that created untold wealth and misery. Indians retained the strongest militaries in the region, but they never again threatened the survival of English colonies.

If a colony existed where peace with Indians might continue, it would be Pennsylvania. At the colony’s founding, William Penn created a Quaker religious imperative for the peaceful treatment of Indians. While Penn never doubted that the English would appropriate Native lands, he demanded that his colonists obtain Indian territories through purchase rather than violence. Though Pennsylvanians maintained relatively peaceful relations with Native Americans, increased immigration and booming land speculation increased the demand for land. Coercive and fraudulent methods of negotiation became increasingly prominent. The Walking Purchase of 1737 was emblematic of both colonists’ desire for cheap land and the changing relationship between

Pennsylvanians and their Native neighbors.

Through treaty negotiation in 1737, Native Delaware leaders agreed to sell Pennsylvania all of the land that a man could walk in a day and a half, a common measurement used by Delawares in evaluating distances. John and Thomas Penn, joined by the land speculator and longtime friend of the Penns James Logan, hired a team of skilled runners to complete the "walk" on a prepared trail. The runners traveled from Wrightstown to the present-day town of Jim Thorpe, and proprietary officials then drew the new boundary line perpendicular to the runners' route, extending northeast to the Delaware River. The colonial government thus measured out a tract much larger than the Delaware had originally intended to sell, roughly 1,200 square miles. As a result, Delaware-proprietary relations suffered. Many Delaware left the lands in question and migrated westward to join Shawnee and other Delaware already living in the Ohio Valley. There they established diplomatic and trade relationships with the French. Memories of the suspect purchase endured into the 1750s and became a chief point of contention between the Pennsylvanian government and the Delaware during the upcoming Seven Years' War.[2]

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3.6: Conclusion

The seventeenth century saw the creation and maturation of Britain's North American colonies. Colonists endured a century of struggle against unforgiving climates, hostile natives, and imperial intrigue. They did so largely through ruthless expressions of power. Colonists conquered Native Americans, attacked European rivals, and joined a highly lucrative transatlantic economy rooted in slavery. After surviving a century of desperation and war, British North American colonists fashioned increasingly complex societies with unique religious cultures, economic ties, and political traditions. These societies would come to shape not only North America but soon the entirety of the Atlantic World.

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3.7: Primary Sources

Olaudah Equiano Describes the Middle Passage, 1789

In this harrowing description of the Middle Passage, Olaudah Equiano described the terror of the transatlantic slave trade. Equiano eventually purchased his freedom and lived in London where he advocated for abolition.

Recruiting Settlers to Carolina, 1666

Robert Horne's wanted to entice English settlers to join the new colony of Carolina. According to Horne, natural bounty, economic opportunity, and religious liberty awaited anyone willing to make the journey. Horne wanted to recruit settlers of every social class, from those "of Genteel blood" to those who would have to sign a contract of indentured servitude.

Letter from Carolina, 1682

Thomas Newe's account of his experience in Carolina offers an interesting counter to Robert Horne's prediction of what would await settlers. Newe describes deadly disease, war with Indians, and unprepared colonists. Newe longs for news from home but also appears committed to making a new life for himself in Carolina.

Francis Daniel Pastorius Describes His Ocean Voyage, 1684

The journey across the Atlantic was difficult at best and deadly at worst. Francis Pastorius left his home in Germany to create a new life in Pennsylvania. This account shows the discomforts and dangers of oceanic travel in the seventeenth century.

Song about Life in Virginia

Some English men and women understood the New World to be a place of opportunity, where they could create new lives. More common, however, was the belief that the New World was a place of great danger and suffering. This song was written from the perspective of a young girl who was sent to Virginia against her will, where she faced a life of hunger and never-ending work.

Print of the Slave Ship Brookes, 1789

Slave ships transported 11-12 million Africans to destinations in North and South America, but it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that any kind of regulation was introduced. The Brookes print dates to after the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788, but still shows enslaved Africans chained in rows using bilboes, which were iron leg shackles used to chain pairs of slaves together during the Middle Passage throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The slave ship Brookes was allowed to carry up to 454 slaves, allotting 6 feet (1.8 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each man; 5 feet 10 inches (1.78 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each women, and 5 feet (1.5 m) by 1 foot 2 inches (0.36 m) to each child, but one slave trader alleged that before 1788, the ship carried as many as 609 slaves.

Map of British North America, 1733

British colonists in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries occupied a constantly contested frontier. The British Empire competed with French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and even Scottish explorers to claim land in North America and the Caribbean – much of it already settled by Native Americans. This diverse territory would continue to be contested throughout the eighteenth century. Eventually, the British Empire included twenty-six colonies in North America, producing everything from grain and timber to luxury goods like tobacco and sugar.

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3.8: Reference Material

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4: COLONIAL AMERICA



Charles Willson Peale, The Peale Family, c. 1771–1773. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, object #1867.298.

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4.1: Introduction

Eighteenth-century American culture moved in competing directions. Commercial, military, and cultural ties between Great Britain and the North American colonies tightened while a new distinctly American culture began to form and bind together colonists from New Hampshire to Georgia. Immigrants from other European nations meanwhile combined with Native Americans and enslaved Africans to create an increasingly diverse colonial population. All—men and women, European, Native American, and African—led distinct lives and wrought new distinct societies. While life in the thirteen colonies was shaped in part by English practices and participation in the larger Atlantic World, emerging cultural patterns increasingly transformed North America into something wholly different.

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4.2: Consumption and Trade in the British Atlantic

Transatlantic trade greatly enriched Britain, but it also created high standards of living for many North American colonists. This two-way relationship reinforced the colonial feeling of commonality with British culture. It was not until trade relations, disturbed by political changes and the demands of warfare, became strained in the 1760s that colonists began to question these ties.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, improvements in manufacturing, transportation, and the availability of credit increased the opportunity for colonists to purchase consumer goods. Instead of making their own tools, clothes, and utensils, colonists increasingly purchased luxury items made by specialized artisans and manufacturers. As the incomes of Americans rose and the prices of these commodities fell, these items shifted from luxuries to common goods. The average person's ability to spend money on consumer goods became a sign of their respectability. Historians have called this process the "consumer revolution."



Figure 4.2.1: Joseph Highmore, The Harlowe Family, from Samuel Richardson's "Clarissa," 1745–1747. *Wikimedia*.

Britain relied on the colonies as a source of raw materials, such as lumber and tobacco. Americans engaged with new forms of trade and financing that increased their ability to buy British-made goods. But the ways in which colonists paid for these goods varied sharply from those in Britain. When settlers first arrived in North America, they typically carried very little hard or metallic British money with them. Discovering no precious metals (and lacking the Crown's authority to mint coins), colonists relied on barter and nontraditional forms of exchange, including everything from nails to the wampum used by Native American groups in the Northeast. To deal with the lack of currency, many colonies resorted to "commodity money," which varied from place to place. In Virginia, for example, the colonial legislature stipulated a rate of exchange for tobacco, standardizing it as a form of money in the colony. Commodities could be cumbersome and difficult to transport, so a system of notes developed. These notes allowed individuals to deposit a certain amount of tobacco in a warehouse and receive a note bearing the value of the deposit that could be traded as money. In 1690, colonial Massachusetts became the first place in the Western world to issue paper bills to be used as money.[2] These notes, called bills of credit, were issued for finite periods of time on the colony's credit and varied in denomination.

While these notes provided colonists with a much-needed medium for exchange, it was not without its problems. Currency that worked in Virginia might be worthless in Pennsylvania. Colonists and officials in Britain debated whether it was right or desirable to use mere paper, as opposed to gold or silver, as a medium of exchange. Paper money tended to lose value quicker than coins and was often counterfeited. These problems, as well as British merchants' reluctance to accept depreciated paper notes, caused the Board of Trade to restrict the uses of paper money in the Currency Acts of 1751 and 1763. Paper money was not the only medium of exchange, however. Colonists also used metal coins. Barter and the extension of credit—which could take the form of bills of exchange, akin to modern-day personal checks—remained important forces throughout the colonial period. Still, trade between colonies was greatly hampered by the lack of standardized money.

Businesses on both sides of the Atlantic advertised both their goods and promises of obtaining credit. The consistent availability of credit allowed families of modest means to buy consumer items previously available only to elites. Cheap consumption allowed middle-class Americans to match many of the trends in clothing, food, and household décor that traditionally marked the wealthiest, aristocratic classes. Provincial Americans, often seen by their London peers as less cultivated or "backwater," could present themselves as lords and ladies of their own communities by purchasing and displaying British-made goods. Visiting the home of a successful businessman in Boston, John Adams described "the Furniture, which alone cost a thousand Pounds sterling. A seat it is for a noble Man, a Prince. The Turkey Carpets, the painted Hangings, the Marble Table, the rich Beds with crimson Damask Curtains and Counterpins, the beautiful Chimney Clock, the Spacious Garden, are the most magnificent of any thing I have seen."[3] But many Americans worried about the consequences of rising consumerism. A writer for the *Boston Evening Post* remarked on this new practice of purchasing status: "For 'tis well known how Credit is a mighty inducement with many People to purchase this and the other Thing which they may well enough do without."[4] Americans became more likely to find themselves in debt, whether to their local shopkeeper or a prominent London merchant, creating new feelings of dependence.

Of course, the thirteen continental colonies were not the only British colonies in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, they were considerably less important to the Crown than the sugar-producing islands of the Caribbean, including Jamaica, Barbados, the Leeward Islands, Grenada, St. Vincent, and Dominica. These British colonies were also inextricably connected to the continental colonies. Caribbean plantations dedicated nearly all of their land to the wildly profitable crop of sugarcane, so North American colonies sold surplus food and raw materials to these wealthy island colonies. Lumber was in high demand, especially in Barbados, where planters nearly deforested the island to make room for sugar plantations. To compensate for a lack of lumber, Barbadian colonists ordered house frames from New England. These prefabricated frames were sent via ships from which planters transported them to their plantations. Caribbean colonists also relied on the continental colonies for livestock, purchasing cattle and horses. The most lucrative exchange was the slave trade.

Connections between the Caribbean and North America benefited both sides. Those living on the continent relied on the Caribbean colonists to satisfy their craving for sugar and other goods like mahogany. British colonists in the Caribbean began cultivating sugar in the 1640s, and sugar took the Atlantic World by storm. In fact, by 1680, sugar exports from the tiny island of Barbados valued more than the total exports of all the continental colonies.[5] Jamaica, acquired by the Crown in 1655, surpassed Barbados in sugar production toward the end of the seventeenth century. North American colonists, like Britons around the world, craved sugar to sweeten their tea and food. Colonial elites also sought to decorate their parlors and dining rooms with the silky, polished surfaces of rare mahogany as opposed to local wood. While the bulk of this in-demand material went to Britain and Europe, New England merchants imported the wood from the Caribbean, where it was then transformed into exquisite furniture for those who could afford it.

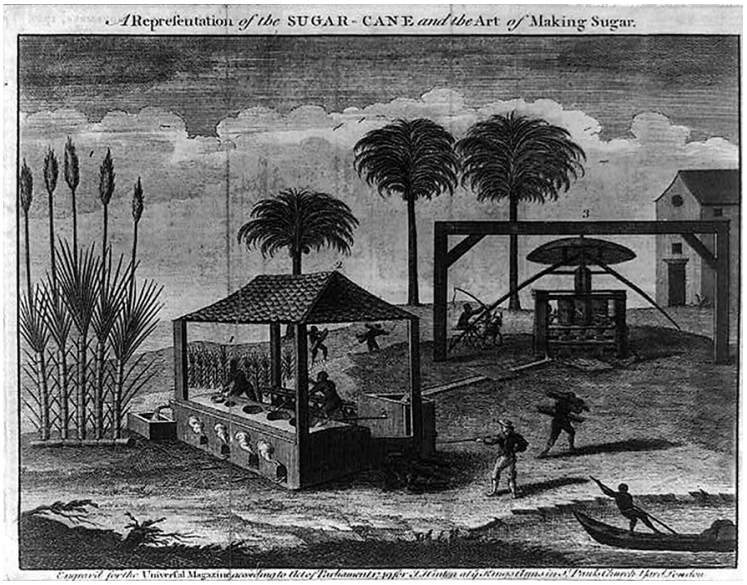


Figure 4.2.2: John Hinton, "A representation of the sugar-cane and the art of making sugar," 1749. *Library of Congress*.

These systems of trade all existed with the purpose of enriching Great Britain. To ensure that profits ended up in Britain, Parliament issued taxes on trade under the Navigation Acts. These taxes intertwined consumption with politics. Prior to 1763, Britain found that enforcing the regulatory laws they passed was difficult and often cost them more than the duty revenue they would bring in. As a result, colonists found it relatively easy to violate the law and trade with foreign nations, pirates, or smugglers.

Customs officials were easily bribed and it was not uncommon to see Dutch, French, or West Indies ships laden with prohibited goods in American ports. When smugglers were caught, their American peers often acquitted them. British officials estimated that nearly £700,000 worth of illicit goods was brought into the American colonies annually.[6] Pirates also helped to perpetuate the illegal trading activities by providing a buffer between merchants and foreign ships.

Beginning with the Sugar Act in 1764, and continuing with the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts, Parliament levied taxes on sugar, paper, lead, glass, and tea, all products that contributed to colonists' sense of gentility. In response, patriots organized nonimportation agreements and reverted to domestic products. Homespun cloth became a political statement. A writer in the *Essex Gazette* in 1769 proclaimed, "I presume there never was a Time when, or a Place where, the Spinning Wheel could more influence the Affairs of Men, than at present."[7]

The consumer revolution fueled the growth of colonial cities. Cities in colonial America were crossroads for the movement of people and goods. One in twenty colonists lived in cities by 1775.[8] Some cities grew organically over time, while others were planned from the start. New York's and Boston's seventeenth-century street plans reflected the haphazard arrangement of medieval cities in Europe. In other cities like Philadelphia and Charleston, civic leaders laid out urban plans according to calculated systems of regular blocks and squares. Planners in Annapolis and Williamsburg also imposed regularity and order over their city streets through the placement of government, civic, and educational buildings.

By 1775, Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston were the five largest cities in British North America. Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Charleston had populations of approximately 40,000, 25,000, 16,000, and 12,000 people, respectively.[9] Urban society was highly stratified. At the base of the social ladder were the laboring classes, which included both enslaved and free people ranging from apprentices to master craftsmen. Next came the middling sort: shopkeepers, artisans, and skilled mariners. Above them stood the merchant elites, who tended to be actively involved in the city's social and political affairs, as well as in the buying, selling, and trading of goods. Enslaved men and women had a visible presence in both northern and southern cities.

The bulk of the enslaved population lived in rural areas and performed agricultural labor. In port cities, slaves often worked as domestic servants and in skilled trades: distilleries, shipyards, lumberyards, and ropewalks. Between 1725 and 1775, slavery became increasingly significant in the northern colonies as urban residents sought greater participation in the maritime economy. Massachusetts was the first slave-holding colony in New England. New York traced its connections to slavery and the slave trade back to the Dutch settlers of New Netherland in the seventeenth century. Philadelphia also became an active site of the Atlantic slave trade, and slaves accounted for nearly 8 percent of the city's population in 1770.[10] In southern cities, including Charleston, urban slavery played an important role in the market economy. Slaves, both rural and urban, made up the majority of the laboring population on the eve of the American Revolution.

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4.3: Slavery, Anti-Slavery, and Atlantic Exchange

Slavery was a transatlantic institution, but it developed distinct characteristics in British North America. By 1750, slavery was legal in every North American colony, but local economic imperatives, demographic trends, and cultural practices all contributed to distinct colonial variants of slavery.

Virginia, the oldest of the English mainland colonies, imported its first slaves in 1619. Virginia planters built larger and larger estates and guaranteed that these estates would remain intact through the use of primogeniture (in which a family's estate would descend to the eldest male heir) and the entail (a legal procedure that prevented the breakup and sale of estates). This distribution of property, which kept wealth and property consolidated, guaranteed that the great planters would dominate social and economic life in the Chesapeake. This system also fostered an economy dominated by tobacco. By 1750, there were approximately one hundred thousand African slaves in Virginia, at least 40 percent of the colony's total population.[11] Most of these slaves worked on large estates under the gang system of labor, working from dawn to dusk in groups with close supervision by a white overseer or enslaved "driver" who could use physical force to compel labor.

Virginians used the law to protect the interests of slaveholders. In 1705 the House of Burgesses passed its first comprehensive slave code. Earlier laws had already guaranteed that the children of enslaved women would be born slaves, conversion to Christianity would not lead to freedom, and owners could not free their slaves unless they transported them out of the colony. Slave owners could not be convicted of murder for killing a slave; conversely, any black Virginian who struck a white colonist would be severely whipped. Virginia planters used the law to maximize the profitability of their slaves and closely regulate every aspect of their daily lives.

In South Carolina and Georgia, slavery was also central to colonial life, but specific local conditions created a very different system. Georgia was founded by the philanthropist James Oglethorpe, who originally banned slavery from the colony. But by 1750, slavery was legal throughout the region. South Carolina had been a slave colony from its founding and, by 1750, was the only mainland colony with a majority enslaved African population. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, coauthored by the philosopher John Locke in 1669, explicitly legalized slavery from the very beginning. Many early settlers in Carolina were slaveholders from British Caribbean sugar islands, and they brought their brutal slave codes with them. Defiant slaves could legally be beaten, branded, mutilated, even castrated. In 1740 a new law stated that killing a rebellious slave was not a crime and even the murder of a slave was treated as a minor misdemeanor. South Carolina also banned the freeing of slaves unless the freed slave left the colony.[12]

Despite this brutal regime, a number of factors combined to give South Carolina slaves more independence in their daily lives. Rice, the staple crop underpinning the early Carolina economy, was widely cultivated in West Africa, and planters commonly requested that merchants sell them slaves skilled in the complex process of rice cultivation. Slaves from Senegambia were particularly prized.[13] The expertise of these slaves contributed to one of the most lucrative economies in the colonies. The swampy conditions of rice plantations, however, fostered dangerous diseases. Malaria and other tropical diseases spread and caused many owners to live away from their plantations. These elites, who commonly owned a number of plantations, typically lived in Charleston town houses to avoid the diseases of the rice fields. West Africans, however, were far more likely to have a level of immunity to malaria (due to a genetic trait that also contributes to higher levels of sickle cell anemia), reinforcing planters' racial belief that Africans were particularly suited to labor in tropical environments.

With plantation owners often far from home, Carolina slaves had less direct oversight than those in the Chesapeake. Furthermore, many Carolina rice plantations used the task system to organize slave labor. Under this system, slaves were given a number of specific tasks to complete in a day. Once those tasks were complete, slaves often had time to grow their own crops on garden plots allotted by plantation owners. Thriving underground markets allowed slaves here a degree of economic autonomy. Carolina slaves also had an unparalleled degree of cultural autonomy. This autonomy coupled with the frequent arrival of new Africans enabled a slave culture that retained many African practices.[14] Syncretic languages like Gullah and Geechee contained many borrowed African terms, and traditional African basket weaving (often combined with Native American techniques) survives in the region to this day.

This unique Lowcountry slave culture contributed to the Stono Rebellion in September 1739. On a Sunday morning while planters attended church, a group of about eighty slaves set out for Spanish Florida under a banner that read "Liberty!," burning plantations and killing at least twenty white settlers as they marched. They were headed for Fort Mose, a free black settlement on the Georgia-Florida border, emboldened by the Spanish Empire's offer of freedom to any English slaves. The local militia defeated the rebels

in battle, captured and executed many of the slaves, and sold others to the sugar plantations of the West Indies. Though the rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful, it was a violent reminder that slaves would fight for freedom.

Slavery was also an important institution in the mid-Atlantic colonies. While New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania never developed plantation economies, slaves were often employed on larger farms growing cereal grains. Enslaved Africans worked alongside European tenant farmers on New York's Hudson Valley "patroonships," huge tracts of land granted to a few early Dutch families. As previously mentioned, slaves were also a common sight in Philadelphia, New York City, and other ports where they worked in the maritime trades and domestic service. New York City's economy was so reliant on slavery that over 40 percent of its population was enslaved by 1700, while 15 to 20 percent of Pennsylvania's colonial population was enslaved by 1750.[15] In New York, the high density of slaves and a particularly diverse European population increased the threat of rebellion. A 1712 slave rebellion in New York City resulted in the deaths of nine white colonists. In retribution, twenty-one slaves were executed and six others committed suicide before they could be burned alive. In 1741, authorities uncovered another planned rebellion by African slaves, free blacks, and poor whites. Panic unleashed a witch hunt that only stopped after thirty-two slaves and free blacks and five poor whites were executed. Another seventy slaves were deported, likely to the sugarcane fields of the West Indies.[16]

Increasingly uneasy about the growth of slavery in the region, Quakers were the first group to turn against slavery. Quaker beliefs in radical nonviolence and the fundamental equality of all human souls made slavery hard to justify. Most commentators argued that slavery originated in war, where captives were enslaved rather than executed. To pacifist Quakers, then, the very foundation of slavery was illegitimate. Furthermore, Quaker belief in the equality of souls challenged the racial basis of slavery. By 1758, Quakers in Pennsylvania disowned members who engaged in the slave trade, and by 1772 slave-owning Quakers could be expelled from their meetings. These local activities in Pennsylvania had broad implications as the decision to ban slavery and slave trading was debated in Quaker meetings throughout the English-speaking world. The free black population in Philadelphia and other northern cities also continually agitated against slavery.

Slavery as a system of labor never took off in Massachusetts, Connecticut, or New Hampshire, though it was legal throughout the region. The absence of cash crops like tobacco or rice minimized the economic use of slavery. In Massachusetts, only about 2 percent of the population was enslaved as late as the 1760s. The few slaves in the colony were concentrated in Boston along with a sizable free black community that made up about 10 percent of the city's population.[17] While slavery itself never really took root in New England, the slave trade was a central element of the region's economy. Every major port in the region participated to some extent in the transatlantic trade—Newport, Rhode Island, alone had at least 150 ships active in the trade by 1740—and New England also provided foodstuffs and manufactured goods to West Indian plantations.[18]

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4.4: Persuing Political, Religious, and Individual Freedom

Consumption, trade, and slavery drew the colonies closer to Great Britain, but politics and government split them further apart. Democracy in Europe more closely resembled oligarchies rather than republics, with only elite members of society eligible to serve in elected positions. Most European states did not hold regular elections, with Britain and the Dutch Republic being the two major exceptions. However, even in these countries, only a tiny portion of males could vote. In the North American colonies, by contrast, white male suffrage was far more widespread. In addition to having greater popular involvement, colonial government also had more power in a variety of areas. Assemblies and legislatures regulated businesses, imposed new taxes, cared for the poor in their communities, built roads and bridges, and made most decisions concerning education. Colonial Americans sued often, which in turn led to more power for local judges and more prestige in jury service. Thus, lawyers became extremely important in American society and in turn played a greater role in American politics.

American society was less tightly controlled than European society. This led to the rise of various interest groups, each at odds with the other. These various interest groups arose based on commonalities in various areas. Some commonalities arose over class-based distinctions, while others were due to ethnic or religious ties. One of the major differences between modern politics and colonial political culture was the lack of distinct, stable political parties. The most common disagreement in colonial politics was between the elected assemblies and the royal governor. Generally, the various colonial legislatures were divided into factions who either supported or opposed the current governor's political ideology.

Political structures in the colonies fell under one of three main categories: provincial (New Hampshire, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia), proprietary (Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland), and charter (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut). Provincial colonies were the most tightly controlled by the Crown. The British king appointed all provincial governors and these Crown governors could veto any decision made by their colony's legislative assemblies. Proprietary colonies had a similar structure, with one important difference: governors were appointed by a lord proprietor, an individual who had purchased or received the rights to the colony from the Crown. Proprietary colonies therefore often had more freedoms and liberties than other North American colonies. Charter colonies had the most complex system of government: they were formed by political corporations or interest groups that drew up a charter clearly delineating powers between the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of government. Rather than having appointed governors, charter colonies elected their own from among property-owning men in the colony.

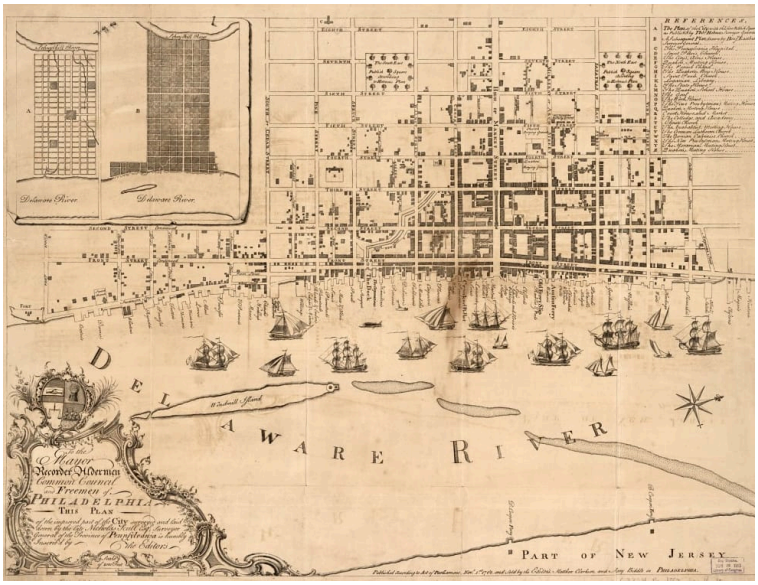


Figure 4.4.1: Nicholas Scull, "To the mayor, recorder, aldermen, common council, and freemen of Philadelphia this plan of the improved part of the city surveyed and laid down by the late Nicholas Scull," Philadelphia, 1762. *Library of Congress.*

After the governor, colonial government was broken down into two main divisions: the council and the assembly. The council was essentially the governor's cabinet, often composed of prominent individuals within the colony, such as the head of the militia or the attorney general. The governor appointed these men, although the appointments were often subject to approval from Parliament. The assembly was composed of elected, property-owning men whose official goal was to ensure that colonial

law conformed to English law. The colonial assemblies approved new taxes and the colonial budgets. However, many of these assemblies saw it as their duty to check the power of the governor and ensure that he did not take too much power within colonial government. Unlike Parliament, most of the men who were elected to an assembly came from local districts, with their constituency able to hold their elected officials accountable to promises made.

An elected assembly was an offshoot of the idea of civic duty, the notion that men had a responsibility to support and uphold the government through voting, paying taxes, and service in the militia. Americans firmly accepted the idea of a social contract, the idea that government was put in place by the people. Philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke pioneered this idea, and there is evidence to suggest that these writers influenced the colonists. While in practice elites controlled colonial politics, in theory many colonists believed in the notion of equality before the law and opposed special treatment for any members of colonial society.

Whether African Americans, Native Americans, and women would be included in this notion of equality before the law was far less clear. Women's role in the family became particularly complicated. Many historians view this period as a significant time of transition.[19] Anglo-American families during the colonial period differed from their European counterparts. Widely available land and plentiful natural resources allowed for greater fertility and thus encouraged more people to marry earlier in life. Yet while young marriages and large families were common throughout the colonial period, family sizes started to shrink by the end of the 1700s as wives asserted more control over their own bodies.

New ideas governing romantic love helped change the nature of husband-wife relationships. Deriving from sentimentalism, a contemporary literary movement, many Americans began to view marriage as an emotionally fulfilling relationship rather than a strictly economic partnership. Referring to one another as "Beloved of my Soul" or "My More Than Friend," newspaper editor John Fenno and his wife Mary Curtis Fenno illustrate what some historians refer to as the "companionate ideal."[20] While away from his wife, John felt a "vacuum in my existence," a sentiment returned by Mary's "Doting Heart."[21] Indeed, after independence, wives began to not only provide emotional sustenance to their husbands but inculcate the principles of republican citizenship as "republican wives."[22]

Marriage opened up new emotional realms for some but remained oppressive for others. For the millions of Americans bound in chattel slavery, marriage remained an informal arrangement rather than a codified legal relationship. For white women, the legal practice of coverture meant that women lost all their political and economic rights to their husband. Divorce rates rose throughout the 1790s, as did less formal cases of abandonment. Newspapers published advertisements by deserted men and women denouncing their partners. Known as "elopement notices," they cataloged the misbehaviors of deviant spouses, such as wives' "indecent manner," a way of implying sexual impropriety. As violence and inequality continued in many American marriages, wives in return highlighted their husbands' "drunken fits" and violent rages. One woman noted that her partner "presented his gun at my breast . . . and swore he would kill me."[23]

That couples would turn to newspapers as a source of expression illustrates the importance of what historians call print culture.[24] Print culture includes the wide range of factors contributing to how books and other printed objects are made, including the relationship between the author and the publisher, the technical constraints of the printer, and the tastes of readers. In colonial America, regional differences in daily life impacted the way colonists made and used printed matter. However, all the colonies dealt with threats of censorship and control from imperial supervision. In particular, political content stirred the most controversy.

From the establishment of Virginia in 1607, printing was either regarded as unnecessary given such harsh living conditions or actively discouraged. The governor of Virginia, Sir William Berkeley, summed up the attitude of the ruling class in 1671: "I thank God there are no free schools nor printing . . . for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy . . . and printing has divulged them."[25] Ironically, the circulation of handwritten tracts contributed to Berkeley's undoing. The popularity of Nathaniel Bacon's uprising was in part due to widely circulated tracts questioning Berkeley's competence. Berkeley's harsh repression of Bacon's Rebellion was equally well documented. It was only after Berkeley's death in 1677 that the idea of printing in the southern colonies was revived. William Nuthead, an experienced English printer, set up shop in 1682, although the next governor of the colony, Thomas Culpeper, forbade Nuthead from completing a single project. It wasn't until William Parks set up his printing shop in Annapolis in 1726 that the Chesapeake had a stable local trade in printing and books.

Print culture was very different in New England. Puritans had a respect for print from the beginning. Unfortunately, New England's authors were content to publish in London, making the foundations of Stephen Daye's first print shop in 1639 very shaky. Typically, printers made their money from printing sheets, not books to be bound. The case was similar in Massachusetts, where the first printed work was a *Freeman's Oath*.[26] The first book was not issued until 1640, the *Bay Psalm Book*, of which eleven known copies survive. Daye's contemporaries recognized the significance of his printing, and he was awarded 140 acres of land. The next large

project, the first Bible to be printed in America, was undertaken by Samuel Green and Marmaduke Johnson and published in 1660. That same year, the Eliot Bible, named for its translator John Eliot, was printed in the Natick dialect of the local Algonquin tribes.

Massachusetts remained the center of colonial printing for a hundred years, until Philadelphia overtook Boston in 1770. Philadelphia's rise as the printing capital of the colonies began with two important features: first, the arrival of Benjamin Franklin, a scholar and businessman, in 1723, and second, waves of German immigrants who created a demand for a German-language press. From the mid-1730s, Christopher Sauer, and later his son, met the demand for German-language newspapers and religious texts. Nevertheless, Franklin was a one-man culture of print, revolutionizing the book trade in addition to creating public learning initiatives such as the Library Company and the Academy of Philadelphia. His *Autobiography* offers one of the most detailed glimpses of life in a eighteenth-century print shop. Franklin's Philadelphia enjoyed a flurry of newspapers, pamphlets, and books for sale. The flurry would only grow in 1776, when the Philadelphia printer Robert Bell issued hundreds of thousands of copies of Thomas Paine's revolutionary *Common Sense*.

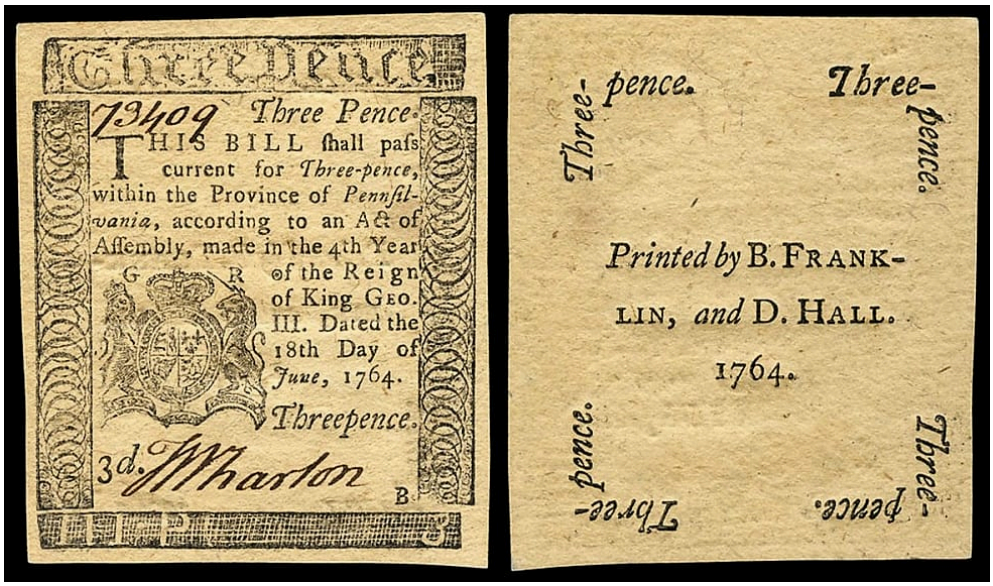


Figure 4.4.2: Benjamin Franklin and David Hall, printers, Pennsylvania Currency, 1764. *Wikimedia.*

Debates on religious expression continued throughout the eighteenth century. In 1711, a group of New England ministers published a collection of sermons titled *Early Piety*. The most famous minister, Increase Mather, wrote the preface. In it he asked the question, "What did our forefathers come into this wilderness for?"[27] His answer was simple: to test their faith against the challenges of America and win. The grandchildren of the first settlers had been born into the comfort of well-established colonies and worried that their faith had suffered. This sense of inferiority sent colonists looking for a reinvigorated religious experience. The result came to be known as the Great Awakening.

Only with hindsight does the Great Awakening look like a unified movement. The first revivals began unexpectedly in the Congregational churches of New England in the 1730s and then spread through the 1740s and 1750s to Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists in the rest of the thirteen colonies. Different places at different times experienced revivals of different intensities. Yet in all of these communities, colonists discussed the same need to strip their lives of worldly concerns and return to a more pious lifestyle. The form it took was something of a contradiction. Preachers became key figures in encouraging individuals to find a personal relationship with God.

The first signs of religious revival appeared in Jonathan Edwards' congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards was a theologian who shared the faith of the early Puritan settlers. In particular, he believed in the idea of predestination, in which God had long ago decided who was damned and who was saved. However, Edwards worried that his congregation had stopped searching their souls and were merely doing good works to prove they were saved. With a missionary zeal, Edwards preached against worldly sins and called for his congregation to look inward for signs of God's saving grace. His most famous sermon was "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Suddenly, in the winter of 1734, these sermons sent his congregation into violent convulsions. The spasms first appeared among known sinners in the community. Over the next six months the physical symptoms spread to half of the six hundred-person congregation. Edwards shared the work of his revival in a widely circulated pamphlet.

Over the next decade itinerant preachers were more successful in spreading the spirit of revival around America. These preachers

had the same spiritual goal as Edwards but brought with them a new religious experience. They abandoned traditional sermons in favor of outside meetings where they could whip the congregation into an emotional frenzy to reveal evidence of saving grace. Many religious leaders were suspicious of the enthusiasm and message of these revivals, but colonists flocked to the spectacle.



Figure 4.4.3: George Whitefield is shown supported by two women, "Hypocrisy" and "Defeat". The image also includes other visual indications of the engraver's disapproval of Whitefield, including a monkey and jester's staff in the right-hand corner. C. Corbett, publisher, "Enthusiasm display'd: or, the Moor Fields congregation," 1739. *Library of Congress.*

The most famous itinerant preacher was George Whitefield. According to Whitefield, the only type of faith that pleased God was heartfelt. The established churches too often only encouraged apathy. "The Christian World is dead asleep," Whitefield explained. "Nothing but a loud voice can awaken them out of it."[28] He would be that voice. Whitefield was a former actor with a dramatic style of preaching and a simple message. Thundering against sin and for Jesus Christ, Whitefield invited everyone to be born again. It worked. Through the 1730s he traveled from New York to South Carolina converting ordinary men, women, and children. "I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang on his words with breathless silence," wrote a socialite in Philadelphia, "broken only by an occasional half suppressed sob."[29] A farmer recorded the powerful impact this rhetoric could have: "And my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound; by God's blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me."[30] The number of people trying to hear Whitefield's message was so large that he preached in the meadows at the edges of cities. Contemporaries regularly testified to crowds of thousands and in one case over twenty thousand in Philadelphia. Whitefield and the other itinerant preachers had achieved what Edwards could not: making the revivals popular.

Ultimately the religious revivals became a victim of the preachers' success. As itinerant preachers became more experimental, they alienated as many people as they converted. In 1742, one preacher from Connecticut, James Davenport, persuaded his congregation that he had special knowledge from God. To be saved they had to dance naked in circles at night while screaming and laughing. Or they could burn the books he disapproved of. Either way, such extremism demonstrated for many that revivalism had gone wrong.[31] A divide appeared by the 1740s and 1750s between "New Lights," who still believed in a revived faith, and "Old Lights," who thought it was deluded nonsense.

By the 1760s, the religious revivals had petered out; however, they left a profound impact on America. Leaders like Edwards and Whitefield encouraged individuals to question the world around them. This idea reformed religion in America and created a language of individualism that promised to change everything else. If you challenged the Church, what other authority figures might you question? The Great Awakening provided a language of individualism, reinforced in print culture, which reappeared in the call for independence. While prerevolutionary America had profoundly oligarchical qualities, the groundwork was laid for a more republican society. However, society did not transform easily overnight. It would take intense, often physical, conflict to change colonial life.



Figure 4.4.4: Christ Church, Virginia. *Library of Congress*.

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4.5: Seven Years War

Of the eighty-seven years between the Glorious Revolution (1688) and the American Revolution (1775), Britain was at war with France and French-allied Native Americans for thirty-seven of them. These were not wars in which European soldiers fought other European soldiers. American militiamen fought for the British against French Catholics and their Indian allies in all of these engagements. Warfare took a physical and spiritual toll on British colonists. British towns located on the border between New England and New France experienced intermittent raiding by French-allied Native Americans. Raiding parties destroyed houses and burned crops, but they also took captives. They brought these captives to French Quebec, where some were ransomed back to their families in New England and others converted to Catholicism and remained in New France. In this sense, Catholicism threatened to capture Protestant lands and souls.

France and Britain feuded over the boundaries of their respective North American empires. The feud turned bloody in 1754 when a force of British colonists and Native American allies, led by young George Washington, killed a French diplomat. This incident led to a war, which would become known as the Seven Years' War or the French and Indian War. In North America, the French achieved victory in the early portion of this war. They attacked and burned multiple British outposts, such as Fort William Henry in 1757. In addition, the French seemed to easily defeat British attacks, such as General Braddock's attack on Fort Duquesne, and General Abercrombie's attack on Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga) in 1758. These victories were often the result of alliances with Native Americans.

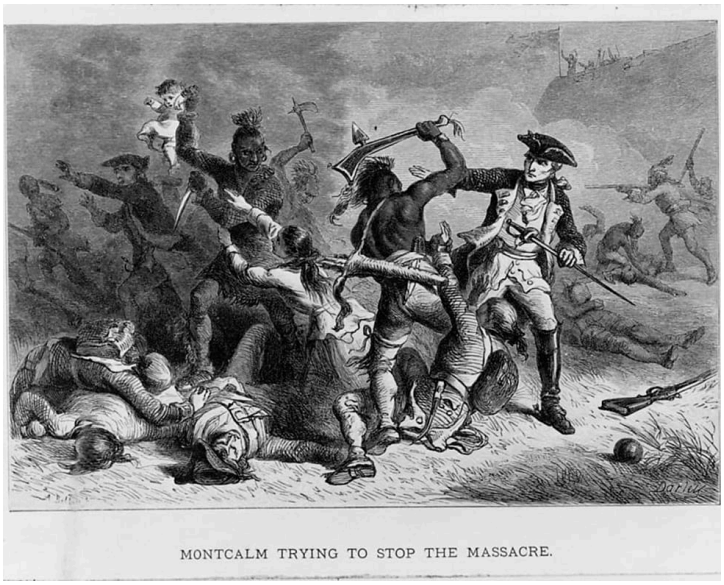


Figure 4.5.1: Albert Bobbett, engraver, "Montcalm trying to stop the massacre," c. 1870-1880. *Library of Congress.*

In Europe, the war did not fully begin until 1756, when British-allied Frederick II of Prussia invaded the neutral state of Saxony. As a result of this invasion, a massive coalition of France, Austria, Russia, and Sweden attacked Prussia and the few German states allied with Prussia. The ruler of Austria, Maria Theresa, hoped to conquer the province of Silesia, which had been lost to Prussia in a previous war. In the European war, the British monetarily supported the Prussians, as well as the minor western German states of Hesse-Kassel and Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. These subsidy payments enabled the smaller German states to fight France and allowed the excellent Prussian army to fight against the large enemy alliance.

However, as in North America, the early part of the war went against the British. The French defeated Britain's German allies and forced them to surrender after the Battle of Hastenbeck in 1757. That same year, the Austrians defeated the Prussians in the Battle of Kolín and Frederick of Prussia defeated the French at the Battle of Rossbach. The latter battle allowed the British to rejoin the war in Europe. Just a month later, in December 1757, Frederick's army defeated the Austrians at the Battle of Leuthen, reclaiming the vital province of Silesia. In India and throughout the world's oceans, the British and their fleet consistently defeated the French. In June, for instance, Robert Clive and his Indian allies had defeated the French at the Battle of Plassey. With the sea firmly in their control, the British could send additional troops to North America.

These newly arrived soldiers allowed the British to launch new offensives. The large French port and fortress of Louisbourg, in

present-day Nova Scotia, fell to the British in 1758. In 1759, British general James Wolfe defeated French general Louis-Joseph de Montcalm in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, outside Quebec City. In Europe, 1759 saw the British defeat the French at the Battle of Minden and destroy large portions of the French fleet. The British referred to 1759 as the *annus mirabilis* or the year of miracles. These victories brought about the fall of French Canada, and war in North America ended in 1760 with the British capture of Montreal. The British continued to fight against the Spanish, who entered the war in 1762. In this war, the Spanish successfully defended Nicaragua against British attacks but were unable to prevent the conquest of Cuba and the Philippines.

The Seven Years' War ended with the peace treaties of Paris and Hubertusburg in 1763. The British received much of Canada and North America from the French, while the Prussians retained the important province of Silesia. This gave the British a larger empire than they could control, which contributed to tensions that would lead to revolution. In particular, it exposed divisions within the newly expanded empire, including language, national affiliation, and religious views. When the British captured Quebec in 1760, a newspaper distributed in the colonies to celebrate the event boasted: "The time will come, when Pope and Friar/Shall both be roasted in the fire/When the proud Antichristian whore/will sink, and never rise more."[32]

American colonists rejoiced over the defeat of Catholic France and felt secure that the Catholics in Quebec could no longer threaten them. Of course, some American colonies had been a haven for religious minorities since the seventeenth century. Catholic Maryland, for example, evidenced early religious pluralism. But practical toleration of Catholics existed alongside virulent anti-Catholicism in public and political arenas. It was a powerful and enduring rhetorical tool borne out of warfare and competition between Britain and France.

In part because of constant conflict with Catholic France, Britons on either side of the Atlantic rallied around Protestantism. British ministers in England called for a coalition to fight French and Catholic empires. Missionary organizations such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel were founded at the turn of the eighteenth century to evangelize Native Americans and limit Jesuit conversions. The Protestant revivals of the so-called Great Awakening crisscrossed the Atlantic and founded a participatory religious movement during the 1730s and 1740s that united British Protestant churches. Preachers and merchants alike urged greater Atlantic trade to bind the Anglophone Protestant Atlantic through commerce and religion.

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4.6: Pontiac's War

Relationships between colonists and Native Americans were complex and often violent. In 1761, Neolin, a prophet, received a vision from his religion's main deity, known as the Master of Life. The Master of Life told Neolin that the only way to enter heaven would be to cast off the corrupting influence of Europeans by expelling the British from Indian country: "This land where ye dwell I have made for you and not for others. Whence comes it that ye permit the Whites upon your lands. . . . Drive them out, make war upon them."[33] Neolin preached the avoidance of alcohol, a return to traditional rituals, and pan-Indian unity to his disciples, including Pontiac, an Ottawa leader.

Pontiac took Neolin's words to heart and sparked the beginning of what would become known as Pontiac's War. At its height, the pan-Indian uprising included Native peoples from the territory between the Great Lakes, the Appalachians, and the Mississippi River. Though Pontiac did not command all of the Indians participating in the war, his actions were influential in its development. Pontiac and three hundred Indian warriors sought to take Fort Detroit by surprise in May 1763, but the plan was foiled, resulting in a six-month siege of the British fort. News of the siege quickly spread throughout Indian country and inspired more attacks on British forts and settlers. In May, Native Americans captured Forts Sandusky, St. Joseph, and Miami. In June, a coalition of Ottawas and Ojibwes captured Fort Michilimackinac by staging a game of stickball (lacrosse) outside the fort. They chased the ball into the fort, gathered arms that had been smuggled in by a group of Native American women, and killed almost half of the fort's British soldiers.

Though these Indians were indeed responding to Neolin's religious message, there were many other practical reasons for waging war on the British. After the Seven Years' War, Britain gained control of formerly French territory as a result of the Treaty of Paris. Whereas the French had maintained a peaceful and relatively equal relationship with their Indian allies through trade, the British hoped to profit from and impose "order." For example, the French often engaged in the Indian practice of diplomatic gift giving. However, British general Jeffrey Amherst discouraged this practice and regulated the trade or sale of firearms and ammunition to Indians. Most Native Americans, including Pontiac, saw this not as frugal imperial policy but preparation for war.

Pontiac's War lasted until 1766. Native American warriors attacked British forts and frontier settlements, killing as many as four hundred soldiers and two thousand settlers.[34] Disease and a shortage of supplies ultimately undermined the Indian war effort, and in July 1766 Pontiac met with British official and diplomat William Johnson at Fort Ontario and settled for peace. Though the western Indians did not win Pontiac's War, they succeeded in fundamentally altering the British government's Indian policy. The war made British officials recognize that peace in the West would require royal protection of Indian lands and heavy-handed regulation of Anglo-American trade activity in Indian country. During the war, the British Crown issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which created the proclamation line marking the Appalachian Mountains as the boundary between Indian country and the British colonies.

The effects of Pontiac's War were substantial and widespread. The war proved that coercion was not an effective strategy for imperial control, though the British government would continue to employ this strategy to consolidate their power in North America, most notably through the various acts imposed on their colonies. Additionally, the prohibition of Anglo-American settlement in Indian country, especially the Ohio River Valley, sparked discontent. The French immigrant Michel-Guillaume-Saint-Jean de Crèvecoeur articulated this discontent most clearly in his 1782 *Letters from an American Farmer* when he asked, "What then is the American, this new man?" In other words, why did colonists start thinking of themselves as Americans, not Britons? Crèvecoeur suggested that America was a melting pot of self-reliant individual landholders, fiercely independent in pursuit of their own interests, and free from the burdens of European class systems. It was an answer many wanted to hear and fit with self-conceptions of the new nation, albeit one that imagined itself as white, male, and generally Protestant.[35] The Seven Years' War pushed the thirteen American colonies closer together politically and culturally than ever before. In 1754, at the Albany Congress, Benjamin Franklin suggested a plan of union to coordinate defenses across the continent. Tens of thousands of colonials fought during the war. At the French surrender in 1760, 11,000 British soldiers joined 6,500 militia members drawn from every colony north of Pennsylvania.[36] At home, many heard or read sermons that portrayed the war as a struggle between civilizations with liberty-loving Britons arrayed against tyrannical Frenchmen and savage Indians. American colonists rejoiced in their collective victory as a moment of newfound peace and prosperity. After nearly seven decades of warfare they looked to the newly acquired lands west of the Appalachian Mountains as their reward.

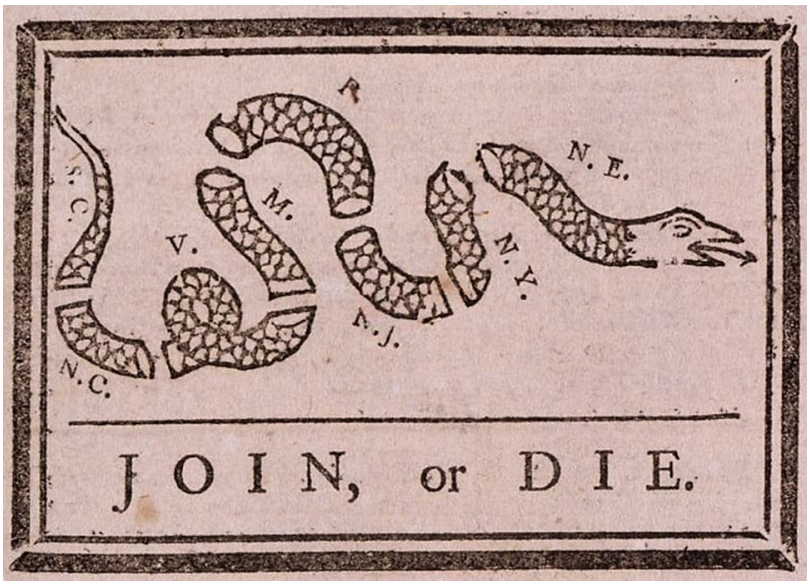


Figure 4.6.1: Benjamin Franklin, *Join or Die, May 9, 1754. Library of Congress.*

The Seven Years' War was tremendously expensive and precipitated imperial reforms on taxation, commerce, and politics. Britain spent over £140 million, an astronomical figure for the day, and the expenses kept coming as new territory required new security obligations. Britain wanted to recoup some of its expenses and looked to the colonies to share the costs of their own security. To do this, Parliament started legislating over all the colonies in a way rarely done before. As a result, the colonies began seeing themselves as a collective group, rather than just distinct entities. Different taxation schemes implemented across the colonies between 1763 and 1774 placed duties on items like tea, paper, molasses, and stamps for almost every kind of document. Consumption and trade, an important bond between Britain and the colonies, was being threatened. To enforce these unpopular measures, Britain implemented increasingly restrictive policies that eroded civil liberties like protection from unlawful searches and jury trials. The rise of an antislavery movement made many colonists worry that slavery would soon be attacked. The moratorium on new settlements in the West after Pontiac's War was yet another disappointment.

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4.7: Conclusion

By 1763, Americans had never been more united. They fought and they celebrated together. But they also recognized that they were not considered full British citizens, that they were considered something else. Americans across the colonies viewed imperial reforms as threats to the British liberties they saw as their birthright. The Stamp Act Congress of 1765 brought colonial leaders together in an unprecedented show of cooperation against taxes imposed by Parliament, and popular boycotts of British goods created a common narrative of sacrifice, resistance, and shared political identity. A rebellion loomed.

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4.8: Primary Sources

Jonathan Edwards Revives Northampton, Massachusetts, 1741

Jonathan Edwards catalyzed the revivals known as the Great Awakening. While Edwards was not the most prolific revivalist of the era—that honor belonged to George Whitefield—he did deliver the most famous sermon of the eighteenth century. This excerpt is drawn from the final portion of the sermon, known as the application, where hearers were called to take action.

Eliza Lucas Letters, 1740-1741

Eliza Lucas was born into a moderately wealthy family in South Carolina. Throughout her life she shrewdly managed her money and greatly added to her family's wealth. These two letters from an unusually intelligent financial manager offer a glimpse into the commercial revolution and social worlds of the early eighteenth century.

Extracts from Gibson Clough's War Journal, 1759

Gibson Clough enlisted in the militia during the Seven Years War. His diary shows the experience of soldiers in the conflict, but also reveals the brutal discipline of the British regular army. Soldiers like Clough ended their term of service with pride in their role defending the glory of Britain but also suspicion of the rigid British military.

Pontiac Calls for War, 1763

Pontiac, an Ottawa war chief, drew on the teachings of the prophet Neolin to rally resistance to European powers. This passage includes Neolin's call that Native Americans abandon ways of life adapted after contact with Europeans.

Alibamo Mingo, Choctaw leader, Reflects on the British and French, 1765

The end of the Seven Years War brought shockwaves throughout Native American communities. With the French removed from North America, their former Indian allies were forced to adapt quickly. In this document, a Choctaw leader expresses his concern over the new political reality.

Blueprint and Photograph of Christ Church

Religion played an important role in each of the British colonies – for different reasons. In Virginia, the Anglican church was the official religion of the colonial government and colonists had to attend or be fined, so churches like Christ Church became important sites for political, economic, and social activity that reinforced the dominance of the planter elite. Robert "King" Carter built this church on the site of an earlier one built by his father. The Carter tombs belong to Robert Carter and his first and second wives. The colonial road that stopped at the door of the church went directly to the Carter family estate. Pews corresponded with social status: the highest ranking member of the gentry sat in the pew before the altar, across from the pulpit. Poor whites sat at the back, and enslaved men and women who came to church would have stood or taken the seats closest to the door – cold in winter, hot in summer, and farthest from the preacher. Many churches eventually built separate gallery seating for the enslaved who attended services. These churches were criticized during the Great Awakening, particularly by Baptists, who preached the equality of souls and felt the Anglican church was lacking in religiosity.

Royall Family, 1741

Colonial elites used clothing, houses, portraits, furniture, and manners to participate in a culture of gentility that they believed placed them on an equal footing with elites in England. Robert Feke's 1741 portrait of the Royall family portrays Isaac Royall Jr. at age 22, just two years after he inherited his father's estate, including the family mansion outside Boston, a sugar plantation on Antigua, and eighteen enslaved African Americans, which helped him become one of the wealthiest men in the colony of Massachusetts. He married Elizabeth McIntosh (wearing blue), aged fifteen at the time of her marriage in 1738, confirming his position among the colonial elite. Their eight-month-old daughter, Elizabeth, holds a coral teething stick with a gold and ivory handle (coral was traditionally believed to ward off evil spirits). Also pictured is Penelope Royall Vassall, Isaac's sister who married a Jamaican planter, and his sister-in-law, Mary McIntosh Palmer. Mary Palmer's pointed finger and Isaac Royall's hand on his hip were poses drawn from other major artistic works and were intended to convey their ease and refinement, while their silken clothes communicated wealth.

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5: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



Paul Revere, Landing of the Troops, c. 1770. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society. (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

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5.1: Introduction

In the 1760s, Benjamin Rush, a native of Philadelphia, recounted a visit to Parliament. Upon seeing the king's throne in the House of Lords, Rush said he "felt as if he walked on sacred ground" with "emotions that I cannot describe."[1] Throughout the eighteenth century, colonists had developed significant emotional ties with both the British monarchy and the British constitution. The British North American colonists had just helped to win a world war and most, like Rush, had never been more proud to be British. And yet, in a little over a decade, those same colonists would declare their independence and break away from the British Empire. Seen from 1763, nothing would have seemed as improbable as the American Revolution.

The Revolution built institutions and codified the language and ideas that still define Americans' image of themselves. Moreover, revolutionaries justified their new nation with radical new ideals that changed the course of history and sparked a global "age of revolution." But the Revolution was as paradoxical as it was unpredictable. A revolution fought in the name of liberty allowed slavery to persist. Resistance to centralized authority tied disparate colonies ever closer together under new governments. The revolution created politicians eager to foster republican selflessness and protect the public good but also encouraged individual self-interest and personal gain. The "founding fathers" instigated and fought a revolution to secure independence from Britain, but they did not fight that revolution to create a "democracy." To successfully rebel against Britain, however, required more than a few dozen "founding fathers." Common colonists joined the fight, unleashing popular forces that shaped the Revolution itself, often in ways not welcomed by elite leaders. But once unleashed, these popular forces continued to shape the new nation and indeed the rest of American history.

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5.2: The Origins of the American Revolution

The American Revolution had both long-term origins and short-term causes. In this section, we will look broadly at some of the long-term political, intellectual, cultural, and economic developments in the eighteenth century that set the context for the crisis of the 1760s and 1770s.

Between the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the middle of the eighteenth century, Britain had largely failed to define the colonies' relationship to the empire and institute a coherent program of imperial reform. Two factors contributed to these failures. First, Britain was at war from the War of the Spanish Succession at the start of the century through the Seven Years' War in 1763. Constant war was politically consuming and economically expensive. Second, competing visions of empire divided British officials. Old Whigs and their Tory supporters envisioned an authoritarian empire, based on conquering territory and extracting resources. They sought to eliminate Britain's growing national debt by raising taxes and cutting spending on the colonies. The radical (or patriot) Whigs based their imperial vision on trade and manufacturing instead of land and resources. They argued that economic growth, not raising taxes, would solve the national debt. Instead of an authoritarian empire, "patriot Whigs" argued that the colonies should have equal status with the mother country. There were occasional attempts to reform the administration of the colonies, but debate between the two sides prevented coherent reform.[2]

Colonists developed their own understanding of how they fit into the empire. They saw themselves as British subjects "entitled to all the natural, essential, inherent, and inseparable rights of our fellow subjects in Great-Britain." The eighteenth century brought significant economic and demographic growth in the colonies. This success, they believed, resulted partly from Britain's hands-off approach to the colonies. By midcentury, colonists believed that they held a special place in the empire, which justified Britain's hands-off policy. In 1764, James Otis Jr. wrote, "The colonists are entitled to as *ample* rights, liberties, and privileges as the subjects of the mother country are, and in some respects *to more*."[3]

In this same period, the colonies developed their own local political institutions. Samuel Adams, in the *Boston Gazette*, described the colonies as each being a "separate body politic" from Britain. Almost immediately upon each colony's settlement, they created a colonial assembly. These assemblies assumed many of the same duties as the Commons exercised in Britain, including taxing residents, managing the spending of the colonies' revenue, and granting salaries to royal officials. In the early 1700s, colonial leaders unsuccessfully lobbied the British government to define their assemblies' legal prerogatives, but Britain was too occupied with European wars. In the first half of the eighteenth century, royal governors tasked by the Board of Trade attempted to limit the power of the assemblies, but the assemblies' power only grew. Many colonists came to see their assemblies as having the same jurisdiction over them that Parliament exercised over those in England. They interpreted British inaction as justifying their tradition of local governance. The Crown and Parliament, however, disagreed.[4]

Colonial political culture in the colonies also developed differently than that of the mother country. In both Britain and the colonies, land was the key to political participation, but because land was more easily obtained in the colonies, a higher proportion of male colonists participated in politics. Colonial political culture drew inspiration from the "country" party in Britain. These ideas—generally referred to as the ideology of republicanism—stressed the corrupting nature of power and the need for those involved in self-governing to be virtuous (i.e., putting the "public good" over their own self-interest). Patriots would need to be ever vigilant against the rise of conspiracies, centralized control, and tyranny. Only a small fringe in Britain held these ideas, but in the colonies, they were widely accepted.[5]

In the 1740s, two seemingly conflicting bodies of thought—the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening—began to combine in the colonies and challenge older ideas about authority. Perhaps no single philosopher had a greater impact on colonial thinking than John Locke. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke argued that the mind was originally a *tabula rasa* (or blank slate) and that individuals were formed primarily by their environment. The aristocracy then were wealthy or successful because they had greater access to wealth, education, and patronage and not because they were innately superior. Locke followed this essay with *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which introduced radical new ideas about the importance of education. Education would produce rational human beings capable of thinking for themselves and questioning authority rather than tacitly accepting tradition. These ideas slowly came to have far-reaching effects in the colonies and, later, the new nation.

At the same time that Locke's ideas about knowledge and education spread in North America, the colonies also experienced an unprecedented wave of evangelical Protestant revivalism. Between 1739 and 1740, the Rev. George Whitefield, an enigmatic, itinerant preacher, traveled the colonies preaching Calvinist sermons to huge crowds. Unlike the rationalism of Locke, his sermons were designed to appeal to his listeners' emotions. Whitefield told his listeners that salvation could only be found by taking

personal responsibility for one's own unmediated relationship with God, a process that came to be known as a "conversion" experience. He also argued that the current Church hierarchies populated by "unconverted" ministers only stood as a barrier between the individual and God. In his wake, new traveling preachers picked up his message and many congregations split. Both Locke and Whitefield had empowered individuals to question authority and to take their lives into their own hands.

In other ways, eighteenth-century colonists were becoming more culturally similar to Britons, a process often referred to as Anglicization. As colonial economies grew, they quickly became an important market for British manufacturing exports. Colonists with disposable income and access to British markets attempted to mimic British culture. By the middle of the eighteenth century, middling-class colonists could also afford items previously thought of as luxuries like British fashions, dining wares, and more. The desire to purchase British goods meshed with the desire to enjoy British liberties.[6] These political, intellectual, cultural, and economic developments built tensions that rose to the surface when, after the Seven Years' War, Britain finally began to implement a program of imperial reform that conflicted with colonists' understanding of the empire and their place in it.

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5.3: The Causes of the American Revolution

Most immediately, the American Revolution resulted directly from attempts to reform the British Empire after the Seven Years' War. The Seven Years' War culminated nearly a half century of war between Europe's imperial powers. It was truly a world war, fought between multiple empires on multiple continents. At its conclusion, the British Empire had never been larger. Britain now controlled the North American continent east of the Mississippi River, including French Canada. It had also consolidated its control over India. But the realities and responsibilities of the postwar empire were daunting. War (let alone victory) on such a scale was costly. Britain doubled the national debt to 13.5 times its annual revenue. Britain faced significant new costs required to secure and defend its far-flung empire, especially the western frontiers of the North American colonies. These factors led Britain in the 1760s to attempt to consolidate control over its North American colonies, which, in turn, led to resistance.

King George III took the crown in 1760 and brought Tories into his government after three decades of Whig rule. They represented an authoritarian vision of empire in which colonies would be subordinate. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was Britain's first major postwar imperial action targeting North America. The king forbade settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains in an attempt to limit costly wars with Native Americans. Colonists, however, protested and demanded access to the territory for which they had fought alongside the British.

In 1764, Parliament passed two more reforms. The Sugar Act sought to combat widespread smuggling of molasses in New England by cutting the duty in half but increasing enforcement. Also, smugglers would be tried by vice-admiralty courts and not juries. Parliament also passed the Currency Act, which restricted colonies from producing paper money. Hard money, such as gold and silver coins, was scarce in the colonies. The lack of currency impeded the colonies' increasingly sophisticated transatlantic economies, but it was especially damaging in 1764 because a postwar recession had already begun. Between the restrictions of the Proclamation of 1763, the Currency Act, and the Sugar Act's canceling of trials-by-jury for smugglers, some colonists began to fear a pattern of increased taxation and restricted liberties.

In March 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act. The act required that many documents be printed on paper that had been stamped to show the duty had been paid, including newspapers, pamphlets, diplomas, legal documents, and even playing cards. The Sugar Act of 1764 was an attempt to get merchants to pay an already existing duty, but the Stamp Act created a new, direct (or "internal") tax. Parliament had never before directly taxed the colonists. Instead, colonies contributed to the empire through the payment of indirect, "external" taxes, such as customs duties. In 1765, Daniel Dulany of Maryland wrote, "A right to impose an internal tax on the colonies, without their consent for the single purpose of revenue, is denied, a right to regulate their trade without their consent is, admitted."[7] Also, unlike the Sugar Act, which primarily affected merchants, the Stamp Act directly affected numerous groups throughout colonial society, including printers, lawyers, college graduates, and even sailors who played cards. This led, in part, to broader, more popular resistance.

Resistance to the Stamp Act took three forms, distinguished largely by class: legislative resistance by elites, economic resistance by merchants, and popular protest by common colonists. Colonial elites responded by passing resolutions in their assemblies. The most famous of the anti-Stamp Act resolutions were the Virginia Resolves, passed by the House of Burgesses on May 30, 1765, which declared that the colonists were entitled to "all the liberties, privileges, franchises, and immunities . . . possessed by the people of Great Britain." When the Virginia Resolves were printed throughout the colonies, however, they often included a few extra, far more radical resolutions not passed by the Virginia House of Burgesses, the last of which asserted that only "the general assembly of this colony have any right or power to impose or lay any taxation" and that anyone who argued differently "shall be deemed an enemy to this his majesty's colony."[8] These additional items spread throughout the colonies and helped radicalize subsequent responses in other colonial assemblies. These responses eventually led to the calling of the Stamp Act Congress in New York City in October 1765. Nine colonies sent delegates, who included Benjamin Franklin, John Dickinson, Thomas Hutchinson, Philip Livingston, and James Otis.[9]



Figure 5.3.1: Men and women politicized the domestic sphere by buying and displaying items that conspicuously revealed their position for or against parliamentary actions. This witty teapot, which celebrates the end of taxation on goods like tea itself, makes clear the owner's perspective on the egregious taxation. Teapot, Stamp Act Repeal'd, 1786, in Peabody Essex Museum. *Salem State University*.

The Stamp Act Congress issued a "Declaration of Rights and Grievances," which, like the Virginia Resolves, declared allegiance to the king and "all due subordination" to Parliament but also reasserted the idea that colonists were entitled to the same rights as Britons. Those rights included trial by jury, which had been abridged by the Sugar Act, and the right to be taxed only by their own elected representatives. As Daniel Dulany wrote in 1765, "It is an essential principle of the English constitution, that the subject shall not be taxed without his consent."[10] Benjamin Franklin called it the "prime Maxim of all free Government."[11] Because the colonies did not elect members to Parliament, they believed that they were not represented and could not be taxed by that body. In response, Parliament and the Crown argued that the colonists were "virtually represented," just like the residents of those boroughs or counties in England that did not elect members to Parliament. However, the colonists rejected the notion of virtual representation, with one pamphleteer calling it a "monstrous idea."[12]

The second type of resistance to the Stamp Act was economic. While the Stamp Act Congress deliberated, merchants in major port cities were preparing nonimportation agreements, hoping that their refusal to import British goods would lead British merchants to lobby for the repeal of the Stamp Act. In New York City, "upwards of two hundred principal merchants" agreed not to import, sell, or buy "any goods, wares, or merchandises" from Great Britain.[13] In Philadelphia, merchants gathered at "a general meeting" to agree that "they would not Import any Goods from Great-Britain until the Stamp-Act was Repealed."[14] The plan worked. By January 1766, London merchants sent a letter to Parliament arguing that they had been "reduced to the necessity of pending ruin" by the Stamp Act and the subsequent boycotts.[15]

The third, and perhaps, most crucial type of resistance was popular protest. Riots broke out in Boston. Crowds burned the appointed stamp distributor for Massachusetts, Andrew Oliver, in effigy and pulled a building he owned "down to the Ground in five minutes."[16] Oliver resigned the position the next day. The following week, a crowd also set upon the home of his brother-in-law, Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, who had publicly argued for submission to the stamp tax. Before the evening was over, much of Hutchinson's home and belongings had been destroyed.[17]

Popular violence and intimidation spread quickly throughout the colonies. In New York City, posted notices read:

> *PRO PATRIA,*
>
> *The first Man that either*
>
> *distributes or makes use of Stampt*
>
> *Paper, let him take care of*
>
> *his House, Person, & Effects.*

Vox Populi;

We dare."[18]

By November 16, all of the original twelve stamp distributors had resigned, and by 1766, groups calling themselves the Sons of Liberty were formed in most colonies to direct and organize further resistance. These tactics had the dual effect of sending a message to Parliament and discouraging colonists from accepting appointments as stamp collectors. With no one to distribute the stamps, the act became unenforceable.



Figure 5.3.2: Violent protest by groups like the Sons of Liberty created quite a stir both in the colonies and in England itself. While extreme acts like the tarring and feathering of Boston's Commissioner of Customs in 1774 propagated more protest against symbols of Parliament's tyranny throughout the colonies, violent demonstrations were regarded as acts of terrorism by British officials. This print of the 1774 event was from the British perspective, picturing the Sons as brutal instigators with almost demonic smiles on their faces as they enacted this excruciating punishment on the Custom Commissioner. Philip Dawe (attributed), "The Bostonians Paying the Excise-man, or Tarring and Feathering," *Wikimedia*.

Pressure on Parliament grew until, in February 1766, it repealed the Stamp Act. But to save face and to try to avoid this kind of problem in the future, Parliament also passed the Declaratory Act, asserting that Parliament had the "full power and authority to make laws . . . to bind the colonies and people of America . . . in all cases whatsoever." However, colonists were too busy celebrating the repeal of the Stamp Act to take much notice of the Declaratory Act. In New York City, the inhabitants raised a huge lead statue of King George III in honor of the Stamp Act's repeal. It could be argued that there was no moment at which colonists felt more proud to be members of the free British Empire than 1766. But Britain still needed revenue from the colonies.[19]

The colonies had resisted the implementation of direct taxes, but the Declaratory Act reserved Parliament's right to impose them. And, in the colonists' dispatches to Parliament and in numerous pamphlets, they had explicitly acknowledged the right of Parliament to regulate colonial trade. So Britain's next attempt to draw revenues from the colonies, the Townshend Acts, were passed in June 1767, creating new customs duties on common items, like lead, glass, paint, and tea, instead of direct taxes. The acts also created and strengthened formal mechanisms to enforce compliance, including a new American Board of Customs Commissioners and more vice-admiralty courts to try smugglers. Revenues from customs seizures would be used to pay customs officers and other royal officials, including the governors, thereby incentivizing them to convict offenders. These acts increased the presence of the British government in the colonies and circumscribed the authority of the colonial assemblies, since paying the governor's salary had long given the assemblies significant power over them. Unsurprisingly, colonists, once again, resisted.

Even though these were duties, many colonial resistance authors still referred to them as "taxes," because they were designed primarily to extract revenues from the colonies not to regulate trade. John Dickinson, in his "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania," wrote, "That we may legally be bound to pay any general duties on these commodities, relative to the regulation of trade, is granted; but we being obliged by her laws to take them from Great Britain, any special duties imposed on their exportation to us only, with intention to raise a revenue from us only, are as much taxes upon us, as those imposed by the Stamp Act." Hence, many authors asked: once the colonists assented to a tax *in any form*, what would stop the British from imposing ever more and greater taxes on the colonists?[20]

New forms of resistance emerged in which elite, middling, and working-class colonists participated together. Merchants reinstituted nonimportation agreements, and common colonists agreed not to consume these same products. Lists were circulated with signatories promising not to buy any British goods. These lists were often published in newspapers, bestowing recognition on those who had signed and led to pressure on those who had not.

Women, too, became involved to an unprecedented degree in resistance to the Townshend Acts. They circulated subscription lists and gathered signatures. The first political commentaries in newspapers written by women appeared.[21] Also, without new imports of British clothes, colonists took to wearing simple, homespun clothing. Spinning clubs were formed, in which local women would gather at one of their homes and spin cloth for homespun clothing for their families and even for the community.[22]

Homespun clothing quickly became a marker of one's virtue and patriotism, and women were an important part of this cultural shift. At the same time, British goods and luxuries previously desired now became symbols of tyranny. Nonimportation and, especially, nonconsumption agreements changed colonists' cultural relationship with the mother country. Committees of Inspection monitored merchants and residents to make sure that no one broke the agreements. Offenders could expect to be shamed by having their names and offenses published in the newspaper and in broadsides.

Nonimportation and nonconsumption helped forge colonial unity. Colonies formed Committees of Correspondence to keep each other informed of the resistance efforts throughout the colonies. Newspapers reprinted exploits of resistance, giving colonists a sense that they were part of a broader political community. The best example of this new "continental conversation" came in the wake of the Boston Massacre. Britain sent regiments to Boston in 1768 to help enforce the new acts and quell the resistance. On the evening of March 5, 1770, a crowd gathered outside the Custom House and began hurling insults, snowballs, and perhaps more at the young sentry. When a small number of soldiers came to the sentry's aid, the crowd grew increasingly hostile until the soldiers fired. After the smoke cleared, five Bostonians were dead, including one of the ringleaders, Crispus Attucks, a former slave turned free dockworker. The soldiers were tried in Boston and won acquittal, thanks, in part, to their defense attorney, John Adams. News of the Boston Massacre spread quickly through the new resistance communication networks, aided by a famous engraving initially circulated by Paul Revere, which depicted bloodthirsty British soldiers with grins on their faces firing into a peaceful crowd. The engraving was quickly circulated and reprinted throughout the colonies, generating sympathy for Boston and anger with Britain.



Figure 5.3.3: This iconic image of the Boston Massacre by Paul Revere sparked fury in both Americans and the British by portraying the redcoats as brutal slaughterers and the onlookers as helpless victims. The events of March 5, 1770 did not actually play out as Revere pictured them, yet his intention was not simply to recount the affair. Revere created an effective propaganda piece that lent credence to those demanding that the British authoritarian rule be stopped. Paul Revere (engraver), "The bloody massacre perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Regt.," 1770. Library of Congress.

Resistance again led to repeal. In March 1770, Parliament repealed all of the new duties except the one on tea, which, like the Declaratory Act, was left, in part, to save face and assert that Parliament still retained the right to tax the colonies. The character of colonial resistance had changed between 1765 and 1770. During the Stamp Act resistance, elites wrote resolves and held congresses while violent, popular mobs burned effigies and tore down houses, with minimal coordination between colonies. But methods of resistance against the Townshend Acts became more inclusive and more coordinated. Colonists previously excluded

from meaningful political participation now gathered signatures, and colonists of all ranks participated in the resistance by not buying British goods and monitoring and enforcing the boycotts.

Britain's failed attempts at imperial reform in the 1760s created an increasingly vigilant and resistant colonial population and, most importantly, an enlarged political sphere—both on the colonial and continental levels—far beyond anything anyone could have imagined a few years earlier. A new sense of shared grievances began to join the colonists in a shared American political identity.

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5.4: Independence

Tensions between the colonies and England eased for a time after the Boston Massacre. The colonial economy improved as the postwar recession receded. The Sons of Liberty in some colonies sought to continue nonimportation even after the repeal of the Townshend Acts. But in New York, a door-to-door poll of the population revealed that the majority wanted to end nonimportation.[23] Yet Britain's desire and need to reform imperial administration remained.

In April 1773, Parliament passed two acts to aid the failing East India Company, which had fallen behind in the annual payments it owed Britain. But the company was not only drowning in debt; it was also drowning in tea, with almost fifteen million pounds of it in stored in warehouses from India to England. In 1773, Parliament passed the Regulating Act, which effectively put the troubled company under government control. It then passed the Tea Act, which would allow the company to sell its tea in the colonies directly and without the usual import duties. This would greatly lower the cost of tea for colonists, but, again, they resisted.

Merchants resisted the Tea Act because they resented the East India Company's monopoly. But like the Sugar Act, the Tea Act affected only a small, specific group of people. The widespread support for resisting the Tea Act had more to do with principles. By buying tea, even though it was cheaper, colonists would be paying the duty and thereby implicitly acknowledging Parliament's right to tax them. According to the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Prime Minister Lord North was a "great schemer" who sought "to out wit us, and to effectually establish that Act, which will forever after be pleaded as a precedent for every imposition the Parliament of Great-Britain shall think proper to saddle us with."[24]

The Tea Act stipulated that the duty had to be paid when the ship unloaded. Newspaper essays and letters throughout the summer of 1773 in the major port cities debated what to do upon the ships' arrival. In November, the Boston Sons of Liberty, led by Samuel Adams and John Hancock, resolved to "prevent the landing and sale of the [tea], and the payment of any duty thereon" and to do so "at the risk of their lives and property."[25]The meeting appointed men to guard the wharfs and make sure the tea remained on the ships until they returned to London. This worked and the tea did not reach the shore, but by December 16, the ships were still there. Hence, another town meeting was held at the Old South Meeting House, at the end of which dozens of men disguised as Mohawk Indians made their way to the wharf. The *Boston Gazette* reported what happened next:

> *But, behold what followed! A number of brave & resolute men, determined to do all in their power to save their country from the ruin which their enemies had plotted, in less than four hours, emptied every chest of tea on board the three ships . . . amounting to 342 chests, into the sea ! ! without the least damage done to the ships or any other property.*[26]

As word spread throughout the colonies, patriots were emboldened to do the same to the tea sitting in their harbors. Tea was either dumped or seized in Charleston, Philadelphia, and New York, with numerous other smaller "tea parties" taking place throughout 1774.

Popular protest spread across the continent and down through all levels of colonial society. Fifty-one women in Edenton, North Carolina, for example, signed an agreement—published in numerous newspapers—in which they promised "to do every Thing as far as lies in our Power" to support the boycotts.[27] The ladies of Edenton were not alone in their desire to support the war effort by what means they could. Women across the thirteen colonies could most readily express their political sentiments as consumers and producers. Because women often made decisions regarding household purchases, their participation in consumer boycotts held particular weight.[28] Some women also took to the streets as part of more unruly mob actions, participating in grain riots, raids on the offices of royal officials, and demonstrations against the impressment of men into naval service. The agitation of so many helped elicit responses from both Britain and the colonial elites.

Britain's response was swift. The following spring, Parliament passed four acts known collectively, by the British, as the Coercive Acts. Colonists, however, referred to them as the Intolerable Acts. First, the Boston Port Act shut down the harbor and cut off all trade to and from the city. The Massachusetts Government Act put the colonial government entirely under British control, dissolving the assembly and restricting town meetings. The Administration of Justice Act allowed any royal official accused of a crime to be tried in Britain rather than by Massachusetts courts and juries. Finally, the Quartering Act, passed for all colonies, allowed the British army to quarter newly arrived soldiers in colonists' homes. Boston had been deemed in open rebellion, and the king, his advisors, and Parliament acted decisively to end the rebellion.

The Crown, however, did not anticipate the other colonies coming to the aid of Massachusetts. Colonists collected food to send to Boston. Virginia's House of Burgesses called for a day of prayer and fasting to show their support. Rather than isolating

Massachusetts, the Coercive Acts fostered the sense of shared identity created over the previous decade. After all, if the Crown and Parliament could dissolve Massachusetts's government, nothing could stop them from doing the same to any of her sister colonies. In Massachusetts, patriots created the Provincial Congress, and, throughout 1774, they seized control of local and county governments and courts.[29] In New York, citizens elected committees to direct the colonies' response to the Coercive Acts, including a Mechanics' Committee of middling colonists. By early 1774, Committees of Correspondence and/or extralegal assemblies were established in all of the colonies except Georgia. And throughout the year, they followed Massachusetts's example by seizing the powers of the royal governments.

Committees of Correspondence agreed to send delegates to a Continental Congress to coordinate an intercolonial response. The First Continental Congress convened on September 5, 1774. Over the next six weeks, elite delegates from every colony but Georgia issued a number of documents, including a "Declaration of Rights and Grievances." This document repeated the arguments that colonists had been making since 1765: colonists retained all the rights of native Britons, including the right to be taxed only by their own elected representatives as well as the right to a trial by jury.

Most importantly, the Congress issued a document known as the "Continental Association." The Association declared that "the present unhappy situation of our affairs is occasioned by a ruinous system of colony administration adopted by the British Ministry about the year 1763, evidently calculated for enslaving these Colonies, and, with them, the British Empire." The Association recommended "that a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town . . . whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons touching this association." These Committees of Inspection would consist largely of common colonists. They were effectively deputized to police their communities and instructed to publish the names of anyone who violated the Association so they "may be publicly known, and universally condemned as the enemies of American liberty." The delegates also agreed to a continental nonimportation, nonconsumption, and nonexportation agreement and to "wholly discontinue the slave trade." In all, the Continental Association was perhaps the most radical document of the period. It sought to unite and direct twelve revolutionary governments, establish economic and moral policies, and empower common colonists by giving them an important and unprecedented degree of on-the-ground political power.[30]

But not all colonists were patriots. Indeed, many remained faithful to the king and Parliament, while a good number took a neutral stance. As the situation intensified throughout 1774 and early 1775, factions emerged within the resistance movements in many colonies. Elite merchants who traded primarily with Britain, Anglican clergy, and colonists holding royal offices depended on and received privileges directly from their relationship with Britain. Initially, they sought to exert a moderating influence on the resistance committees, but, following the Association, a number of these colonists began to worry that the resistance was too radical and aimed at independence. They, like most colonists in this period, still expected a peaceful conciliation with Britain and grew increasingly suspicious of the resistance movement.

However, by the time the Continental Congress met again in May 1775, war had already broken out in Massachusetts. On April 19, 1775, British regiments set out to seize local militias' arms and powder stores in Lexington and Concord. The town militia met them at the Lexington Green. The British ordered the militia to disperse when someone fired, setting off a volley from the British. The battle continued all the way to the next town, Concord. News of the events at Lexington spread rapidly throughout the countryside. Militia members, known as minutemen, responded quickly and inflicted significant casualties on the British regiments as they chased them back to Boston. Approximately twenty thousand colonial militiamen laid siege to Boston, effectively trapping the British. In June, the militia set up fortifications on Breed's Hill overlooking the city. In the misnamed "Battle of Bunker Hill," the British attempted to dislodge them from the position with a frontal assault, and, despite eventually taking the hill, they suffered severe casualties at the hands of the colonists.



Figure 5.4.1: "The Battle of Lexington," Published by John H. Daniels & Son, c1903. *Library of Congress*.

While men in Boston fought and died, the Continental Congress struggled to organize a response. The radical Massachusetts delegates—including John Adams, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock—implored the Congress to support the Massachusetts militia, who without supplies were laying siege to Boston. Meanwhile, many delegates from the Middle Colonies—including New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia—took a more moderate position, calling for renewed attempts at reconciliation. In the South, the Virginia delegation contained radicals such as Richard Henry Lee and Thomas Jefferson, while South Carolina's delegation included moderates like John and Edward Rutledge. The moderates worried that supporting the Massachusetts militia would be akin to declaring war.

The Congress struck a compromise, agreeing to adopt the Massachusetts militia and form a Continental Army, naming Virginia delegate George Washington commander in chief. They also issued a "Declaration of the Causes of Necessity of Taking Up Arms" to justify the decision. At the same time, the moderates drafted an "Olive Branch Petition," which assured the king that the colonists "most ardently desire[d] the former Harmony between [the mother country] and these Colonies." Many understood that the opportunities for reconciliation were running out. After Congress had approved the document, Benjamin Franklin wrote to a friend saying, "The Congress will send one more Petition to the King which I suppose will be treated as the former was, and therefore will probably be the last."[31] Congress was in the strange position of attempting reconciliation while publicly raising an army.

The petition arrived in England on August 13, 1775, but before it was delivered, the king issued his own "Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition." He believed his subjects in North America were being "misled by dangerous and ill-designing men," who were "traitorously preparing, ordering, and levying war against us." In an October speech to Parliament, he dismissed the colonists' petition. The king had no doubt that the resistance was "manifestly carried on for the purpose of establishing an independent empire."[32] By the start of 1776, talk of independence was growing while the prospect of reconciliation dimmed.

In the opening months of 1776, independence, for the first time, became part of the popular debate. Town meetings throughout the colonies approved resolutions in support of independence. Yet, with moderates still hanging on, it would take another seven months before the Continental Congress officially passed the independence resolution. A small forty-six-page pamphlet published in Philadelphia and written by a recent immigrant from England captured the American conversation. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* argued for independence by denouncing monarchy and challenging the logic behind the British Empire, saying, "There is something absurd, in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island."[33] His combination of easy language, biblical references, and fiery rhetoric proved potent, and the pamphlet was quickly published throughout the colonies. Arguments over political philosophy and rumors of battlefield developments filled taverns throughout the colonies.

George Washington had taken control of the army and after laying siege to Boston forced the British to retreat to Halifax. In Virginia, the royal governor, Lord Dunmore, issued a proclamation declaring martial law and offering freedom to "all indentured servants, Negros, and others" if they would leave their masters and join the British. Though only about five hundred to a thousand slaves joined Lord Dunmore's "Ethiopian regiment," thousands more flocked to the British later in the war, risking capture and

punishment for a chance at freedom. Former slaves occasionally fought, but primarily served in companies called Black Pioneers as laborers, skilled workers, and spies. British motives for offering freedom were practical rather than humanitarian, but the proclamation was the first mass emancipation of enslaved people in American history. Slaves could now choose to run and risk their lives for possible freedom with the British army or hope that the United States would live up to its ideals of liberty. ((*Pennsylvania Evening Post*, September 21, 1776.))

Dunmore's proclamation unnerved white southerners already suspicious of rising antislavery sentiments in the mother country. Four years earlier, English courts dealt a serious blow to slavery in the empire. In *Somerset v Stewart*, James Somerset sued for his freedom, and the court not only granted it but also undercut the very legality of slavery on the British mainland. Somerset and now Dunmore began to convince some slave owners that a new independent nation might offer a surer protection for slavery. Indeed, the proclamation laid the groundwork for the very unrest that loyal southerners had hoped to avoid. Consequently, slaveholders often used violence to prevent their slaves from joining the British or rising against them. Virginia enacted regulations to prevent slave defection, threatening to ship rebellious slaves to the West Indies or execute them. Many masters transported their enslaved people inland, away from the coastal temptation to join the British armies, sometimes separating families in the process.

On May 10, 1776, nearly two months before the Declaration of Independence, the Congress voted on a resolution calling on all colonies that had not already established revolutionary governments to do so and to wrest control from royal officials.[34] The Congress also recommended that the colonies should begin preparing new written constitutions. In many ways, this was the Congress's first declaration of independence. A few weeks later, on June 7, Richard Henry Lee offered the following resolution:

> *Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, Free and Independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connexion between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.*[35]

Delegates went scurrying back to their assemblies for new instructions and nearly a month later, on July 2, the resolution finally came to a vote. It passed 12–0, with New York, under imminent threat of British invasion, abstaining.

The passage of Lee's resolution was the official legal declaration of independence, but, between the proposal and vote, a committee had been named to draft a public declaration in case the resolution passed. Virginian Thomas Jefferson drafted the document, with edits being made by his fellow committee members John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, and then again by the Congress as a whole. The famous preamble went beyond the arguments about the rights of British subjects under the British Constitution, instead referring to "natural law":

> *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.*[36]

The majority of the document outlined a list of specific grievances that the colonists had with British attempts to reform imperial administration during the 1760s and 1770s. An early draft blamed the British for the transatlantic slave trade and even for discouraging attempts by the colonists to promote abolition. Delegates from South Carolina and Georgia as well as those from northern states who profited from the trade all opposed this language, and it was removed.[37]

Neither the grievances nor the rhetoric of the preamble were new. Instead, they were the culmination of both a decade of popular resistance to imperial reform and decades more of long-term developments that saw both sides develop incompatible understandings of the British Empire and the colonies' place within it. The Congress approved the document on July 4, 1776. However, it was one thing to declare independence; it was quite another to win it on the battlefield.

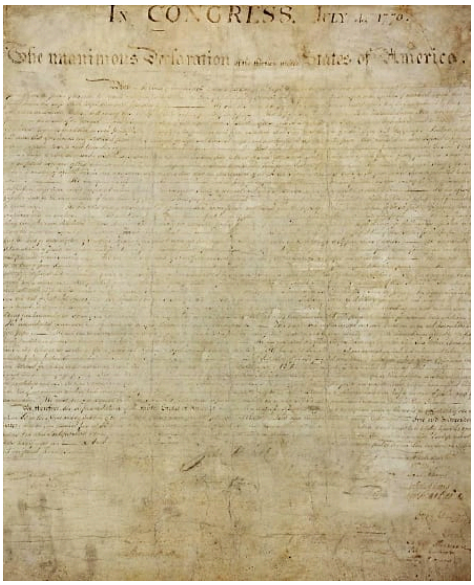


Figure 5.4.2: The Declaration of Independence, *National Archives and Records Administration*.

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5.5: The War for Independence

The war began at Lexington and Concord, more than a year before Congress declared independence. In 1775, the British believed that the mere threat of war and a few minor incursions to seize supplies would be enough to cow the colonial rebellion. Those minor incursions, however, turned into a full-out military conflict. Despite an early American victory at Boston, the new states faced the daunting task of taking on the world's largest military.

In the summer of 1776, the British forces that had abandoned Boston arrived at New York. The largest expeditionary force in British history, including tens of thousands of German mercenaries known as Hessians, followed soon after. New York was the perfect location to launch expeditions aimed at seizing control of the Hudson River and isolating New England from the rest of the continent. Also, New York contained many loyalists, particularly among its merchant and Anglican communities. In October, the British finally launched an attack on Brooklyn and Manhattan. The Continental Army took severe losses before retreating through New Jersey.[38] With the onset of winter, Washington needed something to lift morale and encourage reenlistment. Therefore, he launched a successful surprise attack on the Hessian camp at Trenton on Christmas Day by ferrying the few thousand men he had left across the Delaware River under the cover of night. The victory won the Continental Army much-needed supplies and a morale boost following the disaster at New York.[39]

An even greater success followed in upstate New York. In 1777, British general John Burgoyne led an army from Canada to secure the Hudson River. In upstate New York, he was to meet up with a detachment of General William Howe's forces marching north from Manhattan. However, Howe abandoned the plan without telling Burgoyne and instead sailed to Philadelphia to capture the new nation's capital. The Continental Army defeated Burgoyne's men at Saratoga, New York.[40] This victory proved a major turning point in the war. Benjamin Franklin had been in Paris trying to secure a treaty of alliance with the French. However, the French were reluctant to back what seemed like an unlikely cause. News of the victory at Saratoga convinced the French that the cause might not have been as unlikely as they had thought. A Treaty of Amity and Commerce was signed on February 6, 1778. The treaty effectively turned a colonial rebellion into a global war as fighting between the British and French soon broke out in Europe and India.[41]

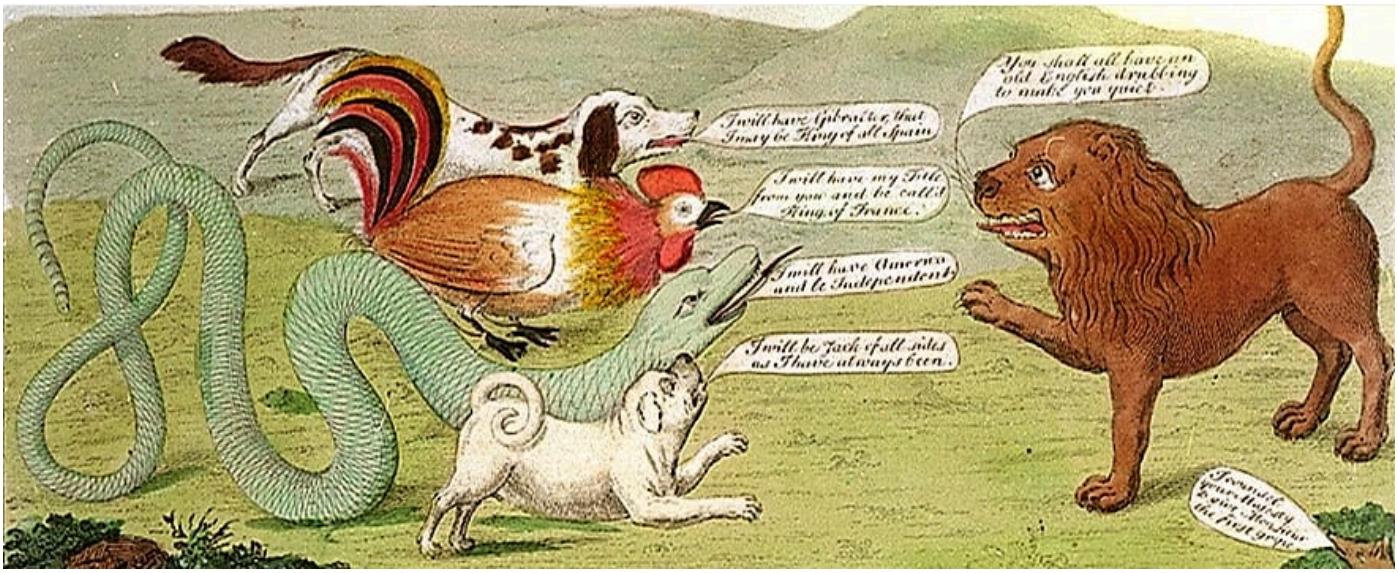


Figure 5.5.1: In this 1782 cartoon, the British lion faces a spaniel (Spain), a rooster (France), a rattlesnake (America), and a pug dog (Netherlands). Though the caption predicts Britain's success, it illustrates that Britain faced challenges—and therefore drains on their military and treasury—from more than just the American rebels. J. Barrow, The British Lion Engaging Four Powers, 1782. *National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.*

Howe had taken Philadelphia in 1777 but returned to New York once winter ended. He slowly realized that European military tactics would not work in North America. In Europe, armies fought head-on battles in attempt to seize major cities. However, in 1777, the British had held Philadelphia and New York and yet still weakened their position. Meanwhile, Washington realized after New York that the largely untrained Continental Army could not win head-on battles with the professional British army. So he developed his own logic of warfare that involved smaller, more frequent skirmishes and avoided major engagements that would risk his entire

army. As long as he kept the army intact, the war would continue, no matter how many cities the British captured.

In 1778, the British shifted their attentions to the South, where they believed they enjoyed more popular support. Campaigns from Virginia to South Carolina and Georgia captured major cities, but the British simply did not have the manpower to retain military control. And upon their departures, severe fighting ensued between local patriots and loyalists, often pitting family members against one another. The War in the South was truly a civil war.[42]

By 1781, the British were also fighting France, Spain, and Holland. The British public's support for the costly war in North America was quickly waning. The Americans took advantage of the British southern strategy with significant aid from the French army and navy. In October, Washington marched his troops from New York to Virginia in an effort to trap the British southern army under the command of General Charles Cornwallis. Cornwallis had dug his men in at Yorktown awaiting supplies and reinforcements from New York. However, the Continental and French armies arrived first, quickly followed by a French navy contingent, encircling Cornwallis's forces and, after laying siege to the city, forcing his surrender. The capture of another army left the British without a new strategy and without public support to continue the war. Peace negotiations took place in France, and the war came to an official end on September 3, 1783.[43]



Figure 5.5.2: Lord Cornwallis's surrender signaled the victory of the American revolutionaries over what they considered to be the despotic rule of Britain. This moment would live on in American memory as a pivotal one in the nation's origin story, prompting the United States government to commission artist John Trumbull to create this painting of the event in 1817. John Trumbull, Surrender of Lord Cornwallis, 1820. *Wikimedia*

Americans celebrated their victory, but it came at great cost. Soldiers suffered through brutal winters with inadequate resources. During the single winter at Valley Forge in 1777–1778, over 2,500 Americans died from disease and exposure. Life was not easy on the home front either. Women on both sides of the conflict were frequently left alone to care for their households. In addition to their existing duties, women took on roles usually assigned to men on farms and in shops and taverns. Abigail Adams addressed the difficulties she encountered while "minding family affairs" on their farm in Braintree, Massachusetts. Abigail managed the planting and harvesting of crops, in the midst of severe labor shortages and inflation, while dealing with several tenants on the Adams property, raising her children, and making clothing and other household goods. In order to support the family economically during John's frequent absences and the uncertainties of war, Abigail also invested in several speculative schemes and sold imported goods.[44]

While Abigail remained safely out of the fray, other women were not so fortunate. The Revolution was not only fought on distant battlefields. It was fought on women's very doorsteps, in the fields next to their homes. There was no way for women to avoid the conflict or the disruptions and devastations it caused. As the leader of the state militia during the Revolution, Mary Silliman's husband, Gold, was absent from their home for much of the conflict. On the morning of July 7, 1779, when a British fleet attacked nearby Fairfield, Connecticut, it was Mary who calmly evacuated her household, including her children and servants, to North Stratford. When Gold was captured by loyalists and held prisoner, Mary, six months pregnant with their second child, wrote letters to try to secure his release. When such appeals were ineffectual, Mary spearheaded an effort, along with Connecticut Governor, John Trumbull, to capture a prominent Tory leader to exchange for her husband's freedom.[45]



Figure 5.5.3: American soldiers came from a variety of backgrounds and had numerous reasons for fighting with the American army. Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger, a French sublieutenant at the Battle of Yorktown, painted this watercolor soon after that battle and chose to depict four men in men military dress: an African American soldier from the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, a man in the homespun of the militia, another wearing the common "hunting shirt" of the frontier, and the French soldier on the end. Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger, "American soldiers at the siege of Yorktown," 1781. Wikimedia.

Slaves and free black Americans also impacted (and were impacted by) the Revolution. The British were the first to recruit black (or "Ethiopian") regiments, as early as Dunmore's Proclamation of 1775 in Virginia, which promised freedom to any slaves who would escape their masters and join the British cause. At first, Washington, a slaveholder himself, resisted allowing black men to join the Continental Army, but he eventually relented. In 1775, Peter Salem's master freed him to fight with the militia. Salem faced British Regulars in the battles at Lexington and Bunker Hill, where he fought valiantly with around three dozen other black Americans. Salem not only contributed to the cause, he earned the ability to determine his own life after his enlistment ended. Salem was not alone, but many more slaves seized on the tumult of war to run away and secure their own freedom directly. Historians estimate that between thirty thousand and one hundred thousand slaves deserted their masters during the war.[46]

Men and women together struggled through years of war and hardship. For patriots (and those who remained neutral), victory brought new political, social, and economic opportunities, but it also brought new uncertainties. The war decimated entire communities, particularly in the South. Thousands of women throughout the nation had been widowed. The American economy, weighed down by war debt and depreciated currencies, would have to be rebuilt following the war. State constitutions had created governments, but now men would have to figure out how to govern. The opportunities created by the Revolution had come at great cost, in both lives and fortune, and it was left to the survivors to seize those opportunities and help forge and define the new nation-state.



Figure 5.5.4: Another John Trumbull piece commissioned for the Capitol in 1817, this painting depicts what would be remembered as the moment the new United States became a republic. On December 23, 1783, George Washington, widely considered the hero of the Revolution, resigned his position as the most powerful man in the former thirteen colonies. Giving up his role as Commander-in-Chief of the Army insured that civilian rule would define the new nation, and that a republic would be set in place rather than a dictatorship. John Trumbull, General George Washington Resigning His Commission, c. 1817-1824. From the Architect of the Capitol.

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5.6: The Consequences of the American Revolution

Like the earlier distinction between “origins” and “causes,” the Revolution also had short- and long-term consequences. Perhaps the most important immediate consequence of declaring independence was the creation of state constitutions in 1776 and 1777. The Revolution also unleashed powerful political, social, and economic forces that would transform the new nation’s politics and society, including increased participation in politics and governance, the legal institutionalization of religious toleration, and the growth and diffusion of the population, particularly westward. The Revolution affected Native Americans by opening up western settlement and creating governments hostile to their territorial claims. Even more broadly, the Revolution ended the mercantilist economy, opening new opportunities in trade and manufacturing.

The new states drafted written constitutions, which, at the time, was an important innovation from the traditionally unwritten British Constitution. These new state constitutions were based on the idea of “popular sovereignty,” that is, that the power and authority of the government derived from the people.[47] Most created weak governors and strong legislatures with more regular elections and moderately increased the size of the electorate. A number of states followed the example of Virginia and included a declaration or “bill” of rights in their constitution designed to protect the rights of individuals and circumscribe the prerogative of the government. Pennsylvania’s first state constitution was the most radical and democratic. They created a unicameral legislature and an Executive Council but no genuine executive. All free men could vote, including those who did not own property. Massachusetts’s constitution, passed in 1780, was less democratic in structure but underwent a more popular process of ratification. In the fall of 1779, each town sent delegates—312 in all—to a constitutional convention in Cambridge. Town meetings debated the constitution draft and offered suggestions. Anticipating the later federal constitution, Massachusetts established a three-branch government based on checks and balances between the branches. Independence came in 1776, and so did an unprecedented period of constitution making and state building.

The Continental Congress ratified the Articles of Confederation in 1781. The articles allowed each state one vote in the Continental Congress. But the articles are perhaps most notable for what they did not allow. Congress was given no power to levy or collect taxes, regulate foreign or interstate commerce, or establish a federal judiciary. These shortcomings rendered the postwar Congress weak and largely ineffectual.

Political and social life changed drastically after independence. Political participation grew as more people gained the right to vote, leading to greater importance being placed on representation within government.[48] In addition, more common citizens (or “new men”) played increasingly important roles in local and state governance. Hierarchy within the states underwent significant changes. Society became less deferential and more egalitarian, less aristocratic and more meritocratic.

The Revolution’s most important long-term economic consequence was the end of mercantilism. The British Empire had imposed various restrictions on the colonial economies including limiting trade, settlement, and manufacturing. The Revolution opened new markets and new trade relationships. The Americans’ victory also opened the western territories for invasion and settlement, which created new domestic markets. Americans began to create their own manufactures, no longer content to rely on those in Britain.

Despite these important changes, the American Revolution had its limits. Following their unprecedented expansion into political affairs during the imperial resistance, women also served the patriot cause during the war. However, the Revolution did not result in civic equality for women. Instead, during the immediate postwar period, women became incorporated into the polity to some degree as “republican mothers.” Republican societies required virtuous citizens, and it became mothers’ responsibility to raise and educate future citizens. This opened opportunity for women regarding education, but they still remained largely on the peripheries of the new American polity.



Figure 5.6.1: In the thirteen colonies, boycotting women were seen as patriots. In British prints such as this, they were mocked as as immoral harlots sticking their noses in the business of men. Philip Dawe, A Society of Patriotic Ladies at Edenton in North Carolina, March 1775. *Metropolitan Museum of Art*.

Approximately sixty thousand loyalists ended up leaving America because of the Revolution. Loyalists came from all ranks of American society, and many lived the rest of their lives in exile from their homeland. A clause in the Treaty of Paris was supposed to protect their property and require the Americans to compensate Loyalists who had lost property during the war because of their allegiance. The Americans, however, reneged on this promise and, throughout the 1780s, states continued seizing property held by Loyalists. Some colonists went to England, where they were strangers and outsiders in what they had thought of as their mother country. Many more, however, settled on the peripheries of the British Empire throughout the world, especially Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec. The Loyalists had come out on the losing side of a Revolution, and many lost everything they had and were forced to create new lives far from the land of their birth.[49]

In 1783, thousands of Loyalist former slaves fled with the British army. They hoped that the British government would uphold the promise of freedom and help them establish new homes elsewhere in the Empire. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, demanded that British troops leave runaway slaves behind, but the British military commanders upheld earlier promises and evacuated thousands of freedmen, transporting them to Canada, the Caribbean, or Great Britain. They would eventually play a role in settling Nova Scotia, and through the subsequent efforts of David George, a black loyalist and Baptist preacher, some settled in Sierra Leone in Africa. Black loyalists, however, continued to face social and economic marginalization, including restrictions on land ownership within the British Empire.[50]

The fight for liberty led some Americans to manumit their slaves, and most of the new northern states soon passed gradual emancipation laws. Some manumissions also occurred in the Upper South, but in the Lower South, some masters revoked their offers of freedom for service, and other freedmen were forced back into bondage. The Revolution's rhetoric of equality created a "revolutionary generation" of slaves and free black Americans that would eventually encourage the antislavery movement. Slave revolts began to incorporate claims for freedom based on revolutionary ideals. In the long term, the Revolution failed to reconcile slavery with these new egalitarian republican societies, a tension that eventually boiled over in the 1830s and 1840s and effectively tore the nation in two in the 1850s and 1860s.[51]

Native Americans, too, participated in and were affected by the Revolution. Many Native American groups, such as the Shawnee, Creek, Cherokee, and Iroquois, had sided with the British. They had hoped for a British victory that would continue to restrain the land-hungry colonial settlers from moving west beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Unfortunately, the Americans' victory and Native Americans' support for the British created a pretense for justifying rapid and often brutal expansion into the western territories. Native American peoples would continue to be displaced and pushed farther west throughout the nineteenth century. Ultimately, American independence marked the beginning of the end of what had remained of Native American independence.

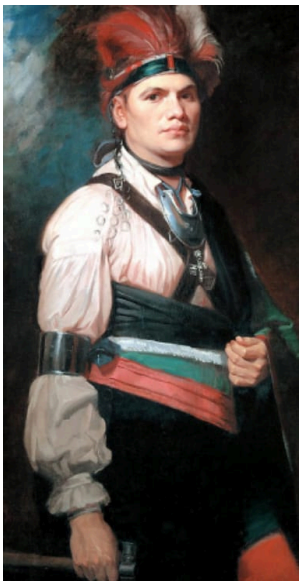


Figure 5.6.2: Joseph Brandt as painted by George Romney. Brandt was a Mohawk leader who led Mohawk and British forces in western New York. *Wikimedia*.

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5.7: Conclusion

The American Revolution freed colonists from British rule and offered the first blow in what historians have called “the age of democratic revolutions.” The American Revolution was a global event.[52] Revolutions followed in France, then Haiti, and then South America. The American Revolution meanwhile wrought significant changes to the British Empire. Many British historians even use the Revolution as a dividing point between a “first British Empire” and a “second British Empire.” At home, however, the Revolution created a new nation-state, the United States of America. By September 1783, independence had been won. What the new nation would look like, however, was still very much up for grabs. In the 1780s, Americans would shape and then reshape that nation-state, first with the Articles of Confederation, ratified in 1781, and then with the Constitution in 1787 and 1788.

Historians have long argued over the causes and character of the American Revolution. Was the Revolution caused by British imperial policy or by internal tensions within the colonies? Were colonists primarily motivated by constitutional principles, ideals of equality, or economic self-interest? Was the Revolution radical or conservative? But such questions are hardly limited to historians. From Abraham Lincoln’s use of the Declaration of Independence in the Gettysburg Address to twenty-first-century Tea Party members wearing knee breeches, the Revolution has remained at the center of American political culture. Indeed, how one understands the Revolution often dictates how one defines what it means to be American.

The Revolution was not won by a few founding fathers. Men and women of all ranks contributed to the colonies’ most improbable victory, from the commoners who protested the Stamp Act to the women who helped organize boycotts against the Townshend duties; from the men, black and white, who fought in the army to the women who contributed to its support. The Revolution, however, did not aim to end all social and civic inequalities in the new nation, and, in the case of Native Americans, it created new inequalities. But over time, the Revolution’s rhetoric of equality, as encapsulated in the Declaration of Independence, helped highlight some of those inequalities and became a shared aspiration for future social and political movements, including, among others, the abolitionist and women’s rights movements of the nineteenth century, the suffragist and civil rights movements of the twentieth century, and the gay rights movement of the twenty-first century.

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5.8: Primary Sources

George R. T. Hewes, A Retrospect of the Boston Tea-party, 1834

George R.T. Hewes wrote the following reminiscence of the Boston Tea Party almost 61 years after it occurred. It is likely that his memories included more than a few stories he picked up well after 1773. Nonetheless Hews provides a highly detailed account of this important event.

Thomas Paine Calls for American independence, 1776

Britons had long understood themselves as the freest people on earth, blessed with a limited monarchy and an enlightened parliament. Paine's pamphlet offered a very different portrayal of the British government. His criticisms swept across the North American continent and generated widespread support for American independence.

Declaration of Independence, 1776

It is hard to overstate the significance of the Declaration of Independence. Designed as a measured justification for the severing of ties with Britain, the document has also functioned as a transformative piece of political philosophy. Most of the conflicts of American history from this point forward emerged from attempts to understand and implement what it means to believe "all men are created equal."

Women in South Carolina Experience Occupation, 1780

The British faced the difficult task of fighting a war without pushing more colonists into the hands of the revolutionaries. As a result, the Revolutionary War included little direct attacks on civilians, but that does not mean that civilians did not suffer. The following account from Eliza Wilkinson describes the stress faced by non-combatants who had to face the British army.

Abigail and John Adams Converse on Women's Rights, 1776

The American Revolution invited a reconsideration of all social inequalities. Abigail Adams, in this letter to her husband John Adams, asked her husband to "remember the ladies" in any new laws he may create. In his reply, John Adams treated this sentiment as a joke, demonstrating the limits of revolutionary liberty.

American Revolution Cartoon, 1782

Political cartoons provide insight into public opinion and the decisions made by politicians. These cartoons became an important medium for voicing criticism and dissent during the American Revolution. In this 1782 cartoon, the British lion faces a spaniel (Spain), a rooster (France), a rattlesnake (America), and a pug dog (Netherlands). Though the caption predicts Britain's success, it illustrates that Britain faced challenges –and therefore drains on their military and treasury—from more than just the American rebels.

Drawings of the Uniforms of the American Revolution, 1781

American soldiers came from a variety of backgrounds and had numerous reasons for fighting with the American army. Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger, a French sublieutenant at the Battle of Yorktown, painted this watercolor soon after that battle and chose to depict four men in men military dress: an African American soldier from the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, a man in the homespun of the militia, another wearing the common "hunting shirt" of the frontier, and the French soldier on the end.

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5.9: Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Michael Hattem, with content contributions by James Ambuske, Alexander Burns, Joshua Beatty, Christina Carrick, Christopher Consolino, Michael Hattem, Timothy C. Hemmis, Joseph Moore, Emily Romeo, and Christopher Sparshott.

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Recommended Reading

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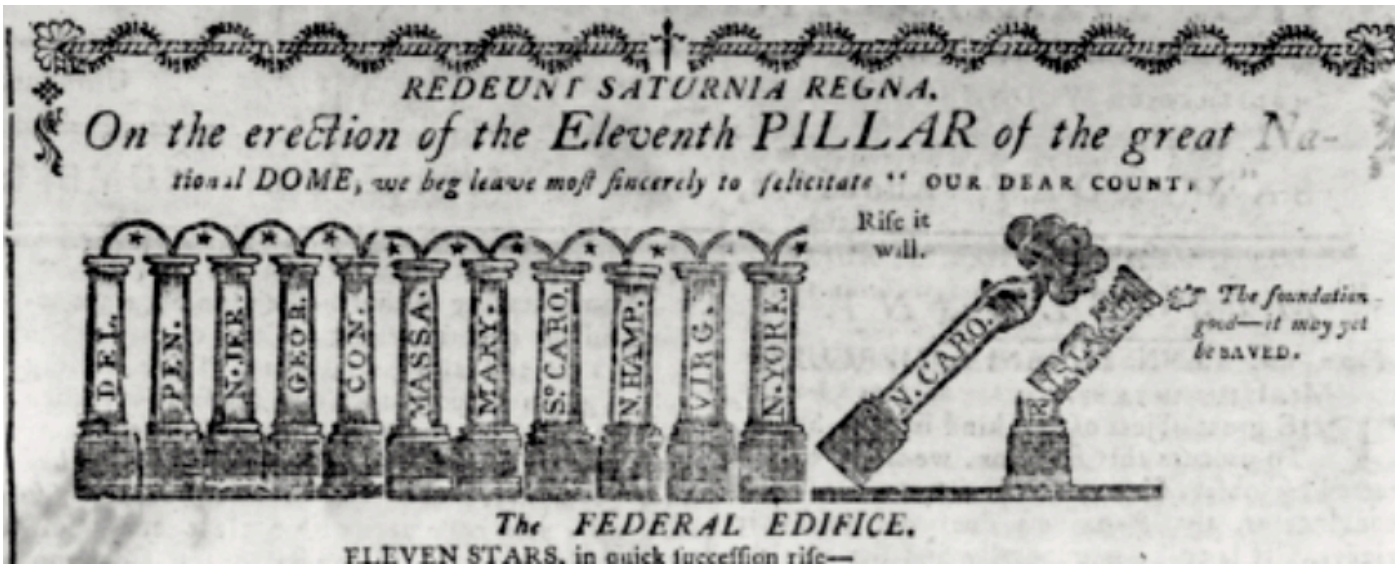
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6: A NEW NATION



"The Federal Pillars," from The Massachusetts Centinel, August 2, 1789. Library of Congress.

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6.1: Introduction

On July 4, 1788, Philadelphians turned out for a “grand federal procession” in honor of the new national constitution. Workers in various trades and professions demonstrated. Blacksmiths carted around a working forge, on which they symbolically beat swords into farm tools. Potters proudly carried a sign paraphrasing from the Bible, “The potter hath power over his clay,” linking God’s power with an artisan’s work and a citizen’s control over the country. Christian clergymen meanwhile marched arm-in-arm with Jewish rabbis. The grand procession represented what many Americans hoped the United States would become: a diverse but cohesive, prosperous nation.[1]

Over the next few years, Americans would celebrate more of these patriotic holidays. In April 1789, for example, thousands gathered in New York to see George Washington take the presidential oath of office. That November, Washington called his fellow citizens to celebrate with a day of thanksgiving, particularly for “the peaceable and rational manner” in which the government had been established.[2]

But the new nation was never as cohesive as its champions had hoped. Although the officials of the new federal government—and the people who supported it—placed great emphasis on unity and cooperation, the country was often anything but unified. The Constitution itself had been a controversial document adopted to strengthen the government so that it could withstand internal conflicts. Whatever the later celebrations, the new nation had looked to the future with uncertainty. Less than two years before the national celebrations of 1788 and 1789, the United States had faced the threat of collapse.

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6.2: Shay's Rebellion



Figure 6.2.1: Daniel Shays became a divisive figure, to some a violent rebel seeking to upend the new American government, to others an upholder of the true revolutionary virtues Shays and others fought for. This contemporary depiction of Shays and his accomplice Job Shattuck portrays them in the latter light as rising "illustrious from the Jail." Unidentified artist, Daniel Shays and Job Shattuck, 1787. *Wikimedia*.

In 1786 and 1787, a few years after the Revolution ended, thousands of farmers in western Massachusetts were struggling under a heavy burden of debt. Their problems were made worse by weak local and national economies. Many political leaders saw both the debt and the struggling economy as a consequence of the Articles of Confederation, which provided the federal government with no way to raise revenue and did little to create a cohesive nation out of the various states. The farmers wanted the Massachusetts government to protect them from their creditors, but the state supported the lenders instead. As creditors threatened to foreclose on their property, many of these farmers, including Revolutionary War veterans, took up arms.

Led by a fellow veteran named Daniel Shays, these armed men, the "Shaysites," resorted to tactics like the patriots had used before the Revolution, forming blockades around courthouses to keep judges from issuing foreclosure orders. These protesters saw their cause and their methods as an extension of the "Spirit of 1776"; they were protecting their rights and demanding redress for the people's grievances.

Governor James Bowdoin, however, saw the Shaysites as rebels who wanted to rule the government through mob violence. He called up thousands of militiamen to disperse them. A former Revolutionary general, Benjamin Lincoln, led the state force, insisting that Massachusetts must prevent "a state of anarchy, confusion and slavery."[3] In January 1787, Lincoln's militia arrested more than one thousand Shaysites and reopened the courts.

Daniel Shays and other leaders were indicted for treason, and several were sentenced to death, but eventually Shays and most of his followers received pardons. Their protest, which became known as Shays' Rebellion, generated intense national debate. While some Americans, like Thomas Jefferson, thought "a little rebellion now and then" helped keep the country free, others feared the nation was sliding toward anarchy and complained that the states could not maintain control. For nationalists like James Madison of Virginia, Shays' Rebellion was a prime example of why the country needed a strong central government. "Liberty," Madison warned, "may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as the abuses of power."[4]

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6.3: The Constitutional Convention

The uprising in Massachusetts convinced leaders around the country to act. After years of goading by James Madison and other nationalists, delegates from twelve of the thirteen states met at the Pennsylvania state house in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. Only Rhode Island declined to send a representative. The delegates arrived at the convention with instructions to revise the Articles of Confederation.

The biggest problem the convention needed to solve was the federal government's inability to levy taxes. That weakness meant that the burden of paying back debt from the Revolutionary War fell on the states. The states, in turn, found themselves beholden to the lenders who had bought up their war bonds. That was part of why Massachusetts had chosen to side with its wealthy bondholders over poor western farmers.[5]

James Madison, however, had no intention of simply revising the Articles of Confederation. He intended to produce a completely new national constitution. In the preceding year, he had completed two extensive research projects—one on the history of government in the United States, the other on the history of republics around the world. He used this research as the basis for a proposal he brought with him to Philadelphia. It came to be called the Virginia Plan, named after Madison's home state.[6]



Figure 6.3.1: ames Madison was a central figure in the reconfiguration of the national government. Madison's Virginia Plan was a guiding document in the formation of a new government under the Constitution. John Vanderlyn, Portrait of James Madison, 1816. *Wikimedia*.

The Virginia Plan was daring. Classical learning said that a republican form of government required a small and homogenous state: the Roman republic, or a small country like Denmark, for example. Citizens who were too far apart or too different could not govern themselves successfully. Conventional wisdom said the United States needed to have a very weak central government, which should simply represent the states on certain matters they had in common. Otherwise, power should stay at the state or local level. But Madison's research had led him in a different direction. He believed it was possible to create "an extended republic" encompassing a diversity of people, climates, and customs.

The Virginia Plan, therefore, proposed that the United States should have a strong federal government. It was to have three branches—legislative, executive, and judicial—with power to act on any issues of national concern. The legislature, or Congress, would have two houses, in which every state would be represented according to its population size or tax base. The national legislature would have veto power over state laws.[7]

Other delegates to the convention generally agreed with Madison that the Articles of Confederation had failed. But they did not agree on what kind of government should replace them. In particular, they disagreed about the best method of representation in the new Congress. Representation was an important issue that influenced a host of other decisions, including deciding how the national executive branch should work, what specific powers the federal government should have, and even what to do about the

divisive issue of slavery.

For more than a decade, each state had enjoyed a single vote in the Continental Congress. Small states like New Jersey and Delaware wanted to keep things that way. The Connecticut delegate Roger Sherman, furthermore, argued that members of Congress should be appointed by the state legislatures. Ordinary voters, Sherman said, lacked information, were "constantly liable to be misled" and "should have as little to do as may be" about most national decisions.[8] Large states, however, preferred the Virginia Plan, which would give their citizens far more power over the legislative branch. James Wilson of Pennsylvania argued that since the Virginia Plan would vastly increase the powers of the national government, representation should be drawn as directly as possible from the public. No government, he warned, "could long subsist without the confidence of the people."[9])

Ultimately, Roger Sherman suggested a compromise. Congress would have a lower house, the House of Representatives, in which members were assigned according to each state's population, and an upper house, which became the Senate, in which each state would have one vote. This proposal, after months of debate, was adopted in a slightly altered form as the Great Compromise: each state would have two senators, who could vote independently. In addition to establishing both types of representation, this compromise also counted a slave as three fifths of a person for representation and tax purposes.

The delegates took even longer to decide on the form of the national executive branch. Should executive power be in the hands of a committee or a single person? How should its officeholders be chosen? On June 1, James Wilson moved that the national executive power reside in a single person. Coming only four years after the American Revolution, that proposal was extremely contentious; it conjured up images of an elected monarchy.[10]The delegates also worried about how to protect the executive branch from corruption or undue control. They endlessly debated these questions, and not until early September did they decide the president would be elected by a special electoral college.

In the end, the Constitutional Convention proposed a government unlike any other, combining elements copied from ancient republics and English political tradition but making some limited democratic innovations—all while trying to maintain a delicate balance between national and state sovereignty. It was a complicated and highly controversial scheme.

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6.4: Ratifying the Constitution

The convention voted to send its proposed Constitution to Congress, which was then sitting in New York, with a cover letter from George Washington. The plan for adopting the new Constitution, however, required approval from special state ratification conventions, not just Congress. During the ratification process, critics of the Constitution organized to persuade voters in the different states to oppose it.



Figure 6.4.1: Delegates to the Constitutional Convention assembled, argued, and finally agreed in this room, styled in the same manner as during the Convention. Photograph of the Assembly Room, Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *Wikimedia*. *Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported.*

Importantly, the Constitutional Convention had voted down a proposal from Virginia's George Mason, the author of Virginia's state Declaration of Rights, for a national bill of rights. This omission became a rallying point for opponents of the document. Many of these Anti-Federalists argued that without such a guarantee of specific rights, American citizens risked losing their personal liberty to the powerful federal government. The pro-ratification Federalists, on the other hand, argued that including a bill of rights was not only redundant but dangerous; it could limit future citizens from adding new rights.[11]

Citizens debated the merits of the Constitution in newspaper articles, letters, sermons, and coffeehouse quarrels across America. Some of the most famous, and most important, arguments came from Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison in the *Federalist Papers*, which were published in various New York newspapers in 1787 and 1788.[12] The first crucial vote came at the beginning of 1788 in Massachusetts. At first, the Anti-Federalists at the Massachusetts ratifying convention probably had the upper hand, but after weeks of debate, enough delegates changed their votes to narrowly approve the Constitution. But they also approved a number of proposed amendments, which were to be submitted to the first Congress. This pattern—ratifying the Constitution but attaching proposed amendments—was followed by other state conventions.

The most high-profile convention was held in Richmond, Virginia, in June 1788, when Federalists like James Madison, Edmund Randolph, and John Marshall squared off against equally influential Anti-Federalists like Patrick Henry and George Mason. Virginia was America's most populous state, it had produced some of the country's highest-profile leaders, and the success of the new government rested upon its cooperation. After nearly a month of debate, Virginia voted 89 to 79 in favor of ratification.[13]

On July 2, 1788, Congress announced that a majority of states had ratified the Constitution and that the document was now in effect. Yet this did not mean the debates were over. North Carolina, New York, and Rhode Island had not completed their ratification conventions, and Anti-Federalists still argued that the Constitution would lead to tyranny. The New York convention would ratify the Constitution by just three votes, and finally Rhode Island would ratify it by two votes—a full year after George Washington was inaugurated as president.

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6.5: Rights and Compromises

Although debates continued, Washington's election as president cemented the Constitution's authority. By 1793, the term *Anti-Federalist* would be essentially meaningless. Yet the debates produced a piece of the Constitution that seems irreplaceable today. Ten amendments were added in 1791. Together, they constitute the Bill of Rights. James Madison, against his original wishes, supported these amendments as an act of political compromise and necessity. He had won election to the House of Representatives only by promising his Virginia constituents such a list of rights.

There was much the Bill of Rights did not cover. Women found no special protections or guarantee of a voice in government. Many states continued to restrict voting only to men who owned significant amounts of property. And slavery not only continued to exist; it was condoned and protected by the Constitution.

Of all the compromises that formed the Constitution, perhaps none would be more important than the compromise over the slave trade. Americans generally perceived the transatlantic slave trade as more violent and immoral than slavery itself. Many northerners opposed it on moral grounds. But they also understood that letting southern states import more Africans would increase their political power. The Constitution counted each black individual as three fifths of a person for purposes of representation, so in districts with many slaves, the white voters had extra influence. On the other hand, the states of the Upper South also welcomed a ban on the Atlantic trade because they already had a surplus of slaves. Banning importation meant slave owners in Virginia and Maryland could get higher prices when they sold their slaves to states like South Carolina and Georgia that were dependent on a continued slave trade.

New England and the Deep South agreed to what was called a "dirty compromise" at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. New Englanders agreed to include a constitutional provision that protected the foreign slave trade for twenty years; in exchange, South Carolina and Georgia delegates had agreed to support a constitutional clause that made it easier for Congress to pass commercial legislation. As a result, the Atlantic slave trade resumed until 1808 when it was outlawed for three reasons. First, Britain was also in the process of outlawing the slave trade in 1807, and the United States did not want to concede any moral high ground to its rival. Second, the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), a successful slave revolt against French colonial rule in the West Indies, had changed the stakes in the debate. The image of thousands of armed black revolutionaries terrified white Americans. Third, the Haitian Revolution had ended France's plans to expand its presence in the Americas, so in 1803, the United States had purchased the Louisiana Territory from the French at a fire-sale price. This massive new territory, which had doubled the size of the United States, had put the question of slavery's expansion at the top of the national agenda. Many white Americans, including President Thomas Jefferson, thought that ending the external slave trade and dispersing the domestic slave population would keep the United States a white man's republic and perhaps even lead to the disappearance of slavery.

The ban on the slave trade, however, lacked effective enforcement measures and funding. Moreover, instead of freeing illegally imported Africans, the act left their fate to the individual states, and many of those states simply sold intercepted slaves at auction. Thus, the ban preserved the logic of property ownership in human beings. The new federal government protected slavery as much as it expanded democratic rights and privileges for white men.[14]

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6.6: Hamilton's Financial System

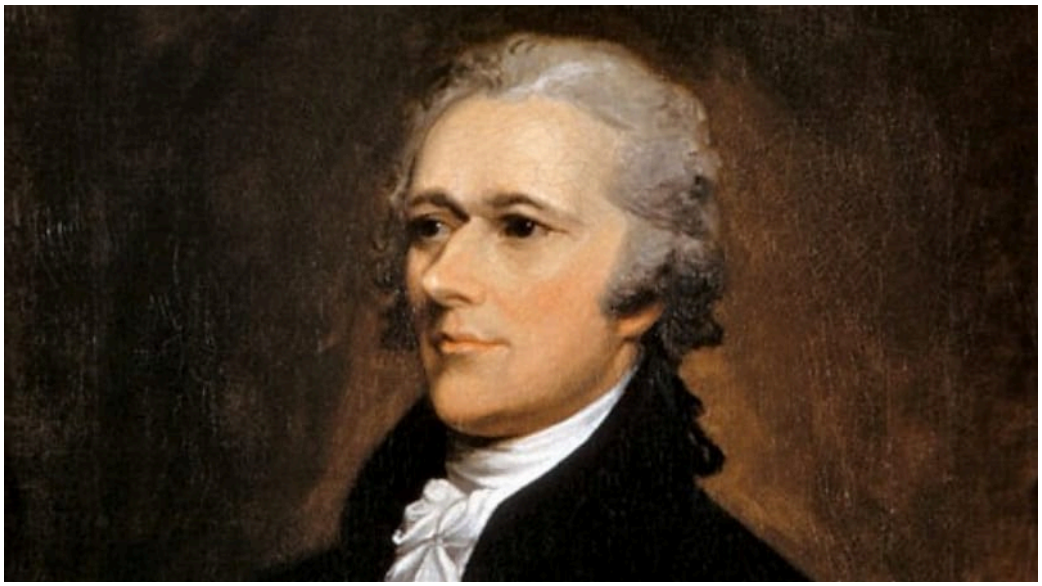


Figure 6.6.1: Alexander Hamilton saw America's future as a metropolitan, commercial, industrial society, in contrast to Thomas Jefferson's nation of small farmers. While both men had the ear of President Washington, Hamilton's vision proved most appealing and enduring. John Trumbull, Portrait of Alexander Hamilton, 1806. *Wikimedia*.

President George Washington's cabinet choices reflected continuing political tensions over the size and power of the federal government. The vice president was John Adams, and Washington chose Alexander Hamilton to be his secretary of the treasury. Both men wanted an active government that would promote prosperity by supporting American industry. However, Washington chose Thomas Jefferson to be his secretary of state, and Jefferson was committed to restricting federal power and preserving an economy based on agriculture. Almost from the beginning, Washington struggled to reconcile the Federalist and Republican (or Democratic-Republican) factions within his own administration.[15]

Alexander Hamilton believed that self-interest was the "most powerful incentive of human actions." Self-interest drove humans to accumulate property, and that effort created commerce and industry. According to Hamilton, government had important roles to play in this process. First, the state should protect private property from theft. Second, according to Hamilton, the state should use human "passions" and "make them subservient to the public good."[16] In other words, a wise government would harness its citizens' desire for property so that both private individuals and the state would benefit.

Hamilton, like many of his contemporary statesmen, did not believe the state should ensure an equal distribution of property. Inequality was understood as "the great & fundamental distinction in Society," and Hamilton saw no reason why this should change. Instead, Hamilton wanted to tie the economic interests of wealthy Americans, or "monied men," to the federal government's financial health. If the rich needed the government, then they would direct their energies to making sure it remained solvent.[17]

Hamilton, therefore, believed that the federal government must be "a Repository of the Rights of the wealthy."[18] As the nation's first secretary of the treasury, he proposed an ambitious financial plan to achieve just that.

The first part of Hamilton's plan involved federal "assumption" of state debts, which were mostly left over from the Revolutionary War. The federal government would assume responsibility for the states' unpaid debts, which totaled about $25 million. Second, Hamilton wanted Congress to create a bank—a Bank of the United States.

The goal of these proposals was to link federal power and the country's economic vitality. Under the assumption proposal, the states' creditors (people who owned state bonds or promissory notes) would turn their old notes in to the treasury and receive new federal notes of the same face value. Hamilton foresaw that these bonds would circulate like money, acting as "an engine of business, and instrument of industry and commerce."[19] This part of his plan, however, was controversial for two reasons.

First, many taxpayers objected to paying the full face value on old notes, which had fallen in market value. Often the current holders had purchased them from the original creditors for pennies on the dollar. To pay them at full face value, therefore, would mean rewarding speculators at taxpayer expense. Hamilton countered that government debts must be honored in full, or else citizens would lose all trust in the government. Second, many southerners objected that they had already paid their outstanding state debts, so federal assumption would mean forcing them to pay again for the debts of New Englanders. Nevertheless, President Washington and Congress both accepted Hamilton's argument. By the end of 1794, 98 percent of the country's domestic debt had been converted into new federal bonds.[20]

Hamilton's plan for a Bank of the United States, similarly, won congressional approval despite strong opposition. Thomas Jefferson and other Republicans argued that the plan was unconstitutional; the Constitution did not authorize Congress to create a bank. Hamilton, however, argued that the bank was not only constitutional but also important for the country's prosperity. The Bank of the United States would fulfill several needs. It would act as a convenient depository for federal funds. It would print paper banknotes backed by specie (gold or silver). Its agents would also help control inflation by periodically taking state bank notes to their banks of origin and demanding specie in exchange, limiting the amount of notes the state banks printed. Furthermore, it would give wealthy people a vested interest in the federal government's finances. The government would control just 20 percent of the bank's stock; the other eighty percent would be owned by private investors. Thus, an "intimate connexion" between the government and wealthy men would benefit both, and this connection would promote American commerce.

In 1791, therefore, Congress approved a twenty-year charter for the Bank of the United States. The bank's stocks, together with federal bonds, created over $70 million in new financial instruments. These spurred the formation of securities markets, which allowed the federal government to borrow more money and underwrote the rapid spread of state-charted banks and other private business corporations in the 1790s. For Federalists, this was one of the major purposes of the federal government. For opponents who wanted a more limited role for industry, however, or who lived on the frontier and lacked access to capital, Hamilton's system seemed to reinforce class boundaries and give the rich inordinate power over the federal government.

Hamilton's plan, furthermore, had another highly controversial element. In order to pay what it owed on the new bonds, the federal government needed reliable sources of tax revenue. In 1791, Hamilton proposed a federal excise tax on the production, sale, and consumption of a number of goods, including whiskey.

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6.7: The Whiskey Rebellion and Jay's Treaty

Grain was the most valuable cash crop for many American farmers. In the West, selling grain to a local distillery for alcohol production was typically more profitable than shipping it over the Appalachians to eastern markets. Hamilton's whiskey tax thus placed a special burden on western farmers. It seemed to divide the young republic in half—geographically between the East and West, economically between merchants and farmers, and culturally between cities and the countryside.

In the fall of 1791, sixteen men in western Pennsylvania, disguised in women's clothes, assaulted a tax collector named Robert Johnson. They tarred and feathered him, and the local deputy marshals seeking justice met similar fates. They were robbed and beaten, whipped and flogged, tarred and feathered, and tied up and left for dead. The rebel farmers also adopted other protest methods from the Revolution and Shays' Rebellion, writing local petitions and erecting liberty poles. For the next two years, tax collections in the region dwindled.

Then, in July 1794, groups of armed farmers attacked federal marshals and tax collectors, burning down at least two tax collectors' homes. At the end of the month, an armed force of about seven thousand, led by the radical attorney David Bradford, robbed the U.S. mail and gathered about eight miles east of Pittsburgh. President Washington responded quickly.

First, Washington dispatched a committee of three distinguished Pennsylvanians to meet with the rebels and try to bring about a peaceful resolution. Meanwhile, he gathered an army of thirteen thousand militiamen in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. On September 19, Washington became the only sitting president to lead troops in the field, though he quickly turned over the army to the command of Henry Lee, a Revolutionary hero and the current governor of Virginia.

As the federal army moved westward, the farmers scattered. Hoping to make a dramatic display of federal authority, Alexander Hamilton oversaw the arrest and trial of a number of rebels. Many were released because of a lack of evidence, and most of those who remained, including two men sentenced to death for treason, were soon pardoned by the president. The Whiskey Rebellion had shown that the federal government was capable of quelling internal unrest. But it also demonstrated that some citizens, especially poor westerners, viewed it as their enemy.[21]

Around the same time, another national issue also aroused fierce protest. Along with his vision of a strong financial system, Hamilton also had a vision of a nation busily engaged in foreign trade. In his mind, that meant pursuing a friendly relationship with one nation in particular: Great Britain.

America's relationship with Britain since the end of the Revolution had been tense, partly because of warfare between the British and French. Their naval war threatened American shipping, and the impressment of men into Britain's navy terrorized American sailors. American trade could be risky and expensive, and impressment threatened seafaring families. Nevertheless, President Washington was conscious of American weakness and was determined not to take sides. In April 1793, he officially declared that the United States would remain neutral.[22] With his blessing, Hamilton's political ally John Jay, who was currently serving as chief justice of the Supreme Court, sailed to London to negotiate a treaty that would satisfy both Britain and the United States.

Jefferson and Madison strongly opposed these negotiations. They mistrusted Britain and saw the treaty as the American state favoring Britain over France. The French had recently overthrown their own monarchy, and Republicans thought the United States should be glad to have the friendship of a new revolutionary state. They also suspected that a treaty with Britain would favor northern merchants and manufacturers over the agricultural South.

In November 1794, despite their misgivings, John Jay signed a "treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation" with the British. Jay's Treaty, as it was commonly called, required Britain to abandon its military positions in the Northwest Territory (especially Fort Detroit, Fort Mackinac, and Fort Niagara) by 1796. Britain also agreed to compensate American merchants for their losses. The United States, in return, agreed to treat Britain as its most prized trade partner, which meant tacitly supporting Britain in its current conflict with France. Unfortunately, Jay had failed to secure an end to impressment.[23]

For Federalists, this treaty was a significant accomplishment. Jay's Treaty gave the United States, a relatively weak power, the ability to stay officially neutral in European wars, and it preserved American prosperity by protecting trade. For Jefferson's Republicans, however, the treaty was proof of Federalist treachery. The Federalists had sided with a monarchy against a republic, and they had submitted to British influence in American affairs without even ending impressment. In Congress, debate over the treaty transformed the Federalists and Republicans from temporary factions into two distinct (though still loosely organized) political parties.

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6.8: The French Revolution and the Limits of Liberty



Figure 6.8.1: The mounting body count of the French Revolution included that of the queen and king, who were beheaded in a public ceremony in early 1793, as depicted in the engraving. While Americans disdained the concept of monarchy, the execution of King Louis XVI was regarded by many Americans as an abomination, an indication of the chaos and savagery reigning in France at the time. Charles Monnet (artist), Antoine-Jean Duclos and Isidore-Stanislas Helman (engravers), Day of 21 January 1793 the death of Louis Capet on the Place de la Révolution, 1794. *Wikimedia*.

In part, the Federalists were turning toward Britain because they feared the most radical forms of democratic thought. In the wake of Shays' Rebellion, the Whiskey Rebellion, and other internal protests, Federalists sought to preserve social stability. The course of the French Revolution seemed to justify their concerns.

In 1789, news had arrived in America that the French had revolted against their king. Most Americans imagined that liberty was spreading from America to Europe, carried there by the returning French heroes who had taken part in the American Revolution.

Initially, nearly all Americans had praised the French Revolution. Towns all over the country hosted speeches and parades on July 14 to commemorate the day it began. Women had worn neoclassical dress to honor republican principles, and men had pinned revolutionary cockades to their hats. John Randolph, a Virginia planter, named two of his favorite horses Jacobin and Sans-Culotte after French revolutionary factions.[24]

In April 1793, a new French ambassador, "Citizen" Edmond-Charles Genêt, arrived in the United States. During his tour of several cities, Americans greeted him with wild enthusiasm. Citizen Genêt encouraged Americans to act against Spain, a British ally, by attacking its colonies of Florida and Louisiana. When President Washington refused, Genêt threatened to appeal to the American people directly. In response, Washington demanded that France recall its diplomat. In the meantime, however, Genêt's faction had fallen from power in France. Knowing that a return home might cost him his head, he decided to remain in America.

Genêt's intuition was correct. A radical coalition of revolutionaries had seized power in France. They initiated a bloody purge of their enemies, the Reign of Terror. As Americans learned about Genêt's impropriety and the mounting body count in France, many began to have second thoughts about the French Revolution.

Americans who feared that the French Revolution was spiraling out of control tended to become Federalists. Those who remained hopeful about the revolution tended to become Republicans. Not deterred by the violence, Thomas Jefferson declared that he would rather see "half the earth desolated" than see the French Revolution fail. "Were there but an Adam and an Eve left in every country, and left free," he wrote, "it would be better than as it now is."[25] Meanwhile, the Federalists sought closer ties with Britain.

Despite the political rancor, in late 1796 there came one sign of hope: the United States peacefully elected a new president. For now, as Washington stepped down and executive power changed hands, the country did not descend into the anarchy that many

leaders feared.

The new president was John Adams, Washington's vice president. Adams was less beloved than the old general, and he governed a deeply divided nation. The foreign crisis also presented him with a major test.

In response to Jay's Treaty, the French government authorized its vessels to attack American shipping. To resolve this, President Adams sent envoys to France in 1797. The French insulted these diplomats. Some officials, whom the Americans code-named X, Y, and Z in their correspondence, hinted that negotiations could begin only after the Americans offered a bribe. When the story became public, this XYZ Affair infuriated American citizens. Dozens of towns wrote addresses to President Adams, pledging him their support against France. Many people seemed eager for war. "Millions for defense," toasted South Carolina representative Robert Goodloe Harper, "but not one cent for tribute."[26]

By 1798, the people of Charleston watched the ocean's horizon apprehensively because they feared the arrival of the French navy at any moment. Many people now worried that the same ships that had aided Americans during the Revolutionary War might discharge an invasion force on their shores. Some southerners were sure that this force would consist of black troops from France's Caribbean colonies, who would attack the southern states and cause their slaves to revolt. Many Americans also worried that France had covert agents in the country. In the streets of Charleston, armed bands of young men searched for French disorganizers. Even the little children prepared for the looming conflict by fighting with sticks.[27]

Meanwhile, during the crisis, New Englanders were some of the most outspoken opponents of France. In 1798, they found a new reason for Francophobia. An influential Massachusetts minister, Jedidiah Morse, announced to his congregation that the French Revolution had been hatched in a conspiracy led by a mysterious anti-Christian organization called the Illuminati. The story was a hoax, but rumors of Illuminati infiltration spread throughout New England like wildfire, adding a new dimension to the foreign threat.[28]

Against this backdrop of fear, the French Quasi-War, as it would come to be known, was fought on the Atlantic, mostly between French naval vessels and American merchant ships. During this crisis, however, anxiety about foreign agents ran high, and members of Congress took action to prevent internal subversion. The most controversial of these steps were the Alien and Sedition Acts. These two laws, passed in 1798, were intended to prevent French agents and sympathizers from compromising America's resistance, but they also attacked Americans who criticized the president and the Federalist Party.

The Alien Act allowed the federal government to deport foreign nationals, or "aliens," who seemed to pose a national security threat. Even more dramatically, the Sedition Act allowed the government to prosecute anyone found to be speaking or publishing "false, scandalous, and malicious writing" against the government.[29]

These laws were not simply brought on by war hysteria. They reflected common assumptions about the nature of the American Revolution and the limits of liberty. In fact, most of the advocates for the Constitution and the First Amendment accepted that free speech simply meant a lack of prior censorship or restraint, not a guarantee against punishment. According to this logic, "licentious" or unruly speech made society less free, not more. James Wilson, one of the principal architects of the Constitution, argued that "every author is responsible when he attacks the security or welfare of the government."[30]

In 1798, most Federalists were inclined to agree. Under the terms of the Sedition Act, they indicted and prosecuted several Republican printers—and even a Republican congressman who had criticized President Adams. Meanwhile, although the Adams administration never enforced the Alien Act, its passage was enough to convince some foreign nationals to leave the country. For the president and most other Federalists, the Alien and Sedition Acts represented a continuation of a conservative rather than radical American Revolution.

However, the Alien and Sedition Acts caused a backlash in two ways. First, shocked opponents articulated a new and expansive vision for liberty. The New York lawyer Tunis Wortman, for example, demanded an "absolute independence" of the press.[31] Likewise, the Virginia judge George Hay called for "any publication whatever criminal" to be exempt from legal punishment.[32] Many Americans began to argue that free speech meant the ability to say virtually anything without fear of prosecution.

Second, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson helped organize opposition from state governments. Ironically, both of them had expressed support for the principle behind the Sedition Act in previous years. Jefferson, for example, had written to Madison in 1789 that the nation should punish citizens for speaking "false facts" that injured the country.[33] Nevertheless, both men now opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts on constitutional grounds. In 1798, Jefferson made this point in a resolution adopted by the Kentucky state legislature. A short time later, the Virginia legislature adopted a similar document written by Madison.

The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions argued that the national government's authority was limited to the powers expressly granted by the U.S. Constitution. More importantly, they asserted that the states could declare federal laws unconstitutional. For the time being, these resolutions were simply gestures of defiance. Their bold claim, however, would have important effects in later decades.

In just a few years, many Americans' feelings toward France had changed dramatically. Far from rejoicing in the "light of freedom," many Americans now feared the "contagion" of French-style liberty. Debates over the French Revolution in the 1790s gave Americans some of their earliest opportunities to articulate what it meant to be American. Did American national character rest on a radical and universal vision of human liberty? Or was America supposed to be essentially pious and traditional, an outgrowth of Great Britain? They couldn't agree. It was on this cracked foundation that many conflicts of the nineteenth century would rest.

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6.9: Religious Freedom

One reason the debates over the French Revolution became so heated was that Americans were unsure about their own religious future. The Illuminati scare of 1798 was just one manifestation of this fear. Across the United States, a slow but profound shift in attitudes toward religion and government began.

In 1776, none of the American state governments observed the separation of church and state. On the contrary, all thirteen states either had established, official, and tax-supported state churches, or at least required their officeholders to profess a certain faith. Most officials believed this was necessary to protect morality and social order. Over the next six decades, however, that changed. In 1833, the final state, Massachusetts, stopped supporting an official religious denomination. Historians call that gradual process *disestablishment*.

In many states, the process of disestablishment had started before the creation of the Constitution. South Carolina, for example, had been nominally Anglican before the Revolution, but it had dropped denominational restrictions in its 1778 constitution. Instead, it now allowed any church consisting of at least fifteen adult males to become "incorporated," or recognized for tax purposes as a state-supported church. Churches needed only to agree to a set of basic Christian theological tenets, which were vague enough that most denominations could support them.[34]

South Carolina tried to balance religious freedom with the religious practice that was supposed to be necessary for social order. Officeholders were still expected to be Christians; their oaths were witnessed by God, they were compelled by their religious beliefs to tell the truth, and they were called to live according to the Bible. This list of minimal requirements came to define acceptable Christianity in many states. As new Christian denominations proliferated between 1780 and 1840, however, more and more Christians fell outside this definition.

South Carolina continued its general establishment law until 1790, when a constitutional revision removed the establishment clause and religious restrictions on officeholders. Many other states, though, continued to support an established church well into the nineteenth century. The federal Constitution did not prevent this. The religious freedom clause in the Bill of Rights, during these decades, limited the federal government but not state governments. It was not until 1833 that a state supreme court decision ended Massachusetts's support for the Congregational Church.

Many political leaders, including Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, favored disestablishment because they saw the relationship between church and state as a tool of oppression. Jefferson proposed a Statute for Religious Freedom in the Virginia state assembly in 1779, but his bill failed in the overwhelmingly Anglican legislature. Madison proposed it again in 1785, and it defeated a rival bill that would have given equal revenue to all Protestant churches. Instead Virginia would not use public money to support religion. "The Religion then of every man," Jefferson wrote, "must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate."[35]

At the federal level, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 easily agreed that the national government should not have an official religion. This principle was upheld in 1791 when the First Amendment was ratified, with its guarantee of religious liberty. The limits of federal disestablishment, however, required discussion. The federal government, for example, supported Native American missionaries and congressional chaplains. Well into the nineteenth century, debate raged over whether the postal service should operate on Sundays, and whether non-Christians could act as witnesses in federal courts. Americans continued to struggle to understand what it meant for Congress not to "establish" a religion.

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6.10: The Election of 1800



Figure 6.10.1: The year 1800 brought about a host of changes in government, in particular the first successful and peaceful transfer of power from one political party to another. But the year was important for another reason: the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. (pictured here in 1800) was finally opened to be occupied by Congress, the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, and the courts of the District of Columbia. William Russell Birch, A view of the Capitol of Washington before it was burnt down by the British, c. 1800. *Wikimedia*.

Meanwhile, the Sedition and Alien Acts expired in 1800 and 1801. They had been relatively ineffective at suppressing dissent. On the contrary, they were much more important for the loud reactions they had inspired. They had helped many Americans decide what they *didn't* want from their national government.

By 1800, therefore, President Adams had lost the confidence of many Americans. They had let him know it. In 1798, for instance, he had issued a national thanksgiving proclamation. Instead of enjoying a day of celebration and thankfulness, Adams and his family had been forced by rioters to flee the capital city of Philadelphia until the day was over. Conversely, his prickly independence had also put him at odds with Alexander Hamilton, the leader of his own party, who offered him little support. After four years in office, Adams found himself widely reviled.

In the election of 1800, therefore, the Republicans defeated Adams in a bitter and complicated presidential race. During the election, one Federalist newspaper article predicted that a Republican victory would fill America with "murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest."[36] A Republican newspaper, on the other hand, flung sexual slurs against President Adams, saying he had "neither the force and firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman." Both sides predicted disaster and possibly war if the other should win.[37]

In the end, the contest came down to a tie between two Republicans, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia and Aaron Burr of New York, who each had seventy-three electoral votes. (Adams had sixty-five.) Burr was supposed to be a candidate for vice president, not president, but under the Constitution's original rules, a tie-breaking vote had to take place in the House of Representatives. It was controlled by Federalists bitter at Jefferson. House members voted dozens of times without breaking the tie. On the thirty-sixth ballot, Thomas Jefferson emerged victorious.

Republicans believed they had saved the United States from grave danger. An assembly of Republicans in New York City called the election a "bloodless revolution." They thought of their victory as a revolution in part because the Constitution (and eighteenth-century political theory) made no provision for political parties. The Republicans thought they were fighting to rescue the country from an aristocratic takeover, not just taking part in a normal constitutional process.



Figure 6.10.2: This image attacks Jefferson's support of the French Revolution and religious freedom. The letter, "To Mazzei," refers to a 1796 correspondence that criticized the Federalists and, by association, President Washington. Providential Detection, 1797. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society. *Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

In his first inaugural address, however, Thomas Jefferson offered an olive branch to the Federalists. He pledged to follow the will of the American majority, whom he believed were Republicans, but to respect the rights of the Federalist minority. His election set an important precedent. Adams accepted his electoral defeat and left the White House peacefully. "The revolution of 1800," Jefferson wrote years later, did for American principles what the Revolution of 1776 had done for its structure. But this time, the revolution was accomplished not "by the sword" but "by the rational and peaceable instrument of reform, the suffrage of the people."[38] Four years later, when the Twelfth Amendment changed the rules for presidential elections to prevent future deadlocks, it was designed to accommodate the way political parties worked.

Despite Adams's and Jefferson's attempts to tame party politics, though, the tension between federal power and the liberties of states and individuals would exist long into the nineteenth century. And while Jefferson's administration attempted to decrease federal influence, Chief Justice John Marshall, an Adams appointee, worked to increase the authority of the Supreme Court. These competing agendas clashed most famously in the 1803 case of *Marbury v. Madison*, which Marshall used to establish a major precedent.

The *Marbury* case seemed insignificant at first. The night before leaving office in early 1801, Adams had appointed several men to serve as justices of the peace in Washington, D.C. By making these "midnight appointments," Adams had sought to put Federalists into vacant positions at the last minute. On taking office, however, Jefferson and his secretary of state, James Madison, had refused to deliver the federal commissions to the men Adams had appointed. Several of the appointees, including William Marbury, sued the government, and the case was argued before the Supreme Court.

Marshall used Marbury's case to make a clever ruling. On the issue of the commissions, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Jefferson administration. But Chief Justice Marshall went further in his decision, ruling that the Supreme Court reserved the right to decide whether an act of Congress violated the Constitution. In other words, the court assumed the power of judicial review. This was a major (and lasting) blow to the Republican agenda, especially after 1810, when the Supreme Court extended judicial review to state laws. Jefferson was particularly frustrated by the decision, arguing that the power of judicial review "would make the Judiciary a despotic branch."[39]

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6.11: Conclusion

A grand debate over political power engulfed the young United States. The Constitution ensured that there would be a strong federal government capable of taxing, waging war, and making law, but it could never resolve the young nation's many conflicting constituencies. The Whiskey Rebellion proved that the nation could stifle internal dissent but exposed a new threat to liberty. Hamilton's banking system provided the nation with credit but also constrained frontier farmers. The Constitution's guarantee of religious liberty conflicted with many popular prerogatives. Dissension only deepened, and as the 1790s progressed, Americans became bitterly divided over political parties and foreign war.

During the ratification debates, Alexander Hamilton had written of the wonders of the Constitution. "A nation, without a national government," he wrote, would be "an awful spectacle." But, he added, "the establishment of a Constitution, in time of profound peace, by the voluntary consent of a whole people, is a prodigy," a miracle that should be witnessed "with trembling anxiety."[40] Anti-Federalists had grave concerns about the Constitution, but even they could celebrate the idea of national unity. By 1795, even the staunchest critics would have grudgingly agreed with Hamilton's convictions about the Constitution. Yet these same individuals could also take the cautions in Washington's 1796 farewell address to heart. "There is an opinion," Washington wrote, "that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty." This, he conceded, was probably true, but in a republic, he said, the danger was not too little partisanship, but too much. "A fire not to be quenched," Washington warned, "it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume."[41]

For every parade, thanksgiving proclamation, or grand procession honoring the unity of the nation, there was also some political controversy reminding American citizens of how fragile their union was. And as party differences and regional quarrels tested the federal government, the new nation increasingly explored the limits of its democracy.

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6.12: Primary Sources

Hector St. Jean de Crèvecœur Describes the American People, 1782

Hector St. John de Crèvecœur was born in France, but relocated to the colony of New York and married a local woman named Mehitable Tippet. For a period of several years de Crèvecœur wrote about the people he encountered in North America. The resulting work was widely successful in Europe. In this passage, Crèvecœur attempts to reflect on the difference between life in Europe and life in North America.

Susannah Rowson, *Charlotte Temple,* 1794

In Charlotte Temple*, the first novel written in America, Susannah Rowson offered a cautionary tale of a woman deceived and then abandoned by a roguish man. Americans throughout the new nation read the book with rapt attention and many even traveled to New York City to visit the supposed grave of this fictional character.*

Venture Smith, A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, 1798

Venture Smith's autobiography is one of the earliest slave narratives to circulate in the Atlantic World. Slave narratives grew into the most important genre of antislavery literature and bore testimony to the injustices of the slave system. Smith was unusually lucky in that he was able to purchase his freedom, but his story nonetheless reveals the hardships faced by even the most fortunate enslaved men and women.

George Washington, "Farewell Address," 1796

George Washington used his final public address as president to warn against what he understood as the two greatest dangers to American prosperity: political parties and foreign wars. Washington urged the American people to avoid political partisanship and entanglements with European wars.

James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, 1785

Before the American Revolution, Virginia supported local Anglican churches through taxes. After the American Revolution, Virginia had to decide what to do with this policy. Some founding fathers, including Patrick Henry, wanted to equally distribute tax dollars to all churches. In this document, James Madison explains why he did not want any government money to support religious causes in Virginia.

Constitutional Ratification Cartoon, 1789

The Massachusetts Centinel *ran a series of cartoons depicting the ratification of the Constitution. Each vertical pillar represents a state that has ratified the new government. In this cartoon, North Carolina's pillar is being guided into place (it would vote for ratification in November 1789). Rhode Island's pillar, however, is crumbling and shows the uncertainty of the vote there.*

Anti-Thomas Jefferson Cartoon, 1797

This image attacks Jefferson's support of the French Revolution and religious freedom. The Altar to "Gallic Despotism" mocks Jefferson's allegiance to the French. The letter, "To Mazzei," refers to a 1796 correspondence that criticized the Federalists and, by association, President Washington.

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6.13: Reference Material

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7: THE EARLY REPUBLIC



"America guided by wisdom An allegorical representation of the United States depicting their independence and prosperity," 1815. Library of Congress.

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7.1: Introduction

Thomas Jefferson's electoral victory over John Adams—and the larger victory of the Republicans over the Federalists—was but one of many changes in the early republic. Some, like Jefferson's victory, were accomplished peacefully, and others violently. The wealthy and the powerful, middling and poor whites, Native Americans, free and enslaved African Americans, influential and poor women: all demanded a voice in the new nation that Thomas Paine called an "asylum" for liberty.[1] All would, in their own way, lay claim to the freedom and equality promised, if not fully realized, by the Revolution.

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7.2: Free and Enslaved Black Americans and the Challenge to Slavery

Led by the slave Gabriel, close to one thousand enslaved men planned to end slavery in Virginia by attacking Richmond in late August 1800. Some of the conspirators would set diversionary fires in the city's warehouse district. Others would attack Richmond's white residents, seize weapons, and capture Virginia governor James Monroe. On August 30, two enslaved men revealed the plot to their master, who notified authorities. Faced with bad weather, Gabriel and other leaders postponed the attack until the next night, giving Governor Monroe and the militia time to capture the conspirators. After briefly escaping, Gabriel was seized, tried, and hanged along with twenty-five others. Their executions sent the message that others would be punished if they challenged slavery. Subsequently, the Virginia government increased restrictions on free people of color.

Gabriel's Rebellion, as the plot came to be known, taught Virginia's white residents several lessons. First, it suggested that enslaved blacks were capable of preparing and carrying out a sophisticated and violent revolution—undermining white supremacist assumptions about the inherent intellectual inferiority of blacks. Furthermore, it demonstrated that white efforts to suppress news of other slave revolts—especially the 1791 slave rebellion in Haiti—had failed. Not only did some literate slaves read accounts of the successful attack in Virginia's newspapers, others heard about the rebellion firsthand when slaveholding refugees from Haiti arrived in Virginia with their slaves after July 1793.

The Haitian Revolution (1791–1804) inspired free and enslaved black Americans, and terrified white Americans. Port cities in the United States were flooded with news and refugees. Free people of color embraced the revolution, understanding it as a call for full abolition and the rights of citizenship denied in the United States. Over the next several decades, black Americans continually looked to Haiti as an inspiration in their struggle for freedom. For example, in 1829 David Walker, a black abolitionist in Boston, wrote an *Appeal* that called for resistance to slavery and racism. Walker called Haiti the "glory of the blacks and terror of the tyrants" and said that Haitians, "according to their word, are bound to protect and comfort us." Haiti also proved that, given equal opportunities, people of color could achieve as much as whites.[2] In 1826 the third college graduate of color in the United States, John Russwurm, gave a commencement address at Bowdoin College, noting that, "Haytiens have adopted the republican form of government . . . [and] in no country are the rights and privileges of citizens and foreigners more respected, and crimes less frequent."[3] In 1838 the *Colored American*, an early black newspaper, professed that "no one who reads, with an unprejudiced mind, the history of Hayti . . . can doubt the capacity of colored men, nor the propriety of removing all their disabilities."[4] Haiti, and the activism it inspired, sent the message that enslaved and free blacks could not be omitted from conversations about the meaning of liberty and equality. Their words and actions—on plantations, streets, and the printed page—left an indelible mark on early national political culture.

The black activism inspired by Haiti's revolution was so powerful that anxious white leaders scrambled to use the violence of the Haitian revolt to reinforce white supremacy and pro-slavery views by limiting the social and political lives of people of color. White publications mocked black Americans as buffoons, ridiculing calls for abolition and equal rights. The most (in)famous of these, the "Bobalition" broadsides, published in Boston in the 1810s, crudely caricatured African Americans. Widely distributed materials like these became the basis for racist ideas that thrived in the nineteenth century. But such ridicule also implied that black Americans' presence in the political conversation was significant enough to require it. The need to reinforce such an obvious difference between whiteness and blackness implied that the differences might not be so obvious after all.



Figure 7.2.1: The idea and image of black Haitian revolutionaries sent shock waves throughout white America. That black slaves and freed people might turn violent against whites, so obvious in this image where a black soldier holds up the head of a white soldier, remained a serious fear in the hearts and minds of white Southerners throughout the antebellum period. January Suchodolski, Battle at San Domingo, 1845. *Wikimedia*.

Henry Moss, a slave in Virginia, became arguably the most famous black man of the day when white spots appeared on his body in 1792, turning him visibly white within three years. As his skin changed, Moss marketed himself as "a great curiosity" in Philadelphia and soon earned enough money to buy his freedom. He met the great scientists of the era—including Samuel Stanhope Smith and Dr. Benjamin Rush—who joyously deemed Moss to be living proof of their theory that "the Black Color (as it is called) of the Negroes is derived from the leprosy."[5] Something, somehow, was "curing" Moss of his blackness. In the whitening body of slave-turned-patriot-turned-curiosity, many Americans fostered ideas of race that would cause major problems in the years ahead.

The first decades of the new American republic coincided with a radical shift in understandings of race. Politically and culturally, Enlightenment thinking fostered beliefs in common humanity, the possibility of societal progress, the remaking of oneself, and the importance of one's social and ecological environment—a four-pronged revolt against the hierarchies of the Old World. Yet a tension arose due to Enlightenment thinkers' desire to classify and order the natural world. Carolus Linnaeus, Comte de Buffon, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, and others created connections between race and place as they divided the racial "types" of the world according to skin color, cranial measurements, and hair. They claimed that years under the hot sun and tropical climate of Africa darkened the skin and reconfigured the skulls of the African race, whereas the cold northern latitudes of Europe molded and sustained the "Caucasian" race. The environments endowed both races with respective characteristics, which accounted for differences in humankind tracing back to a common ancestry. A universal human nature, therefore, housed not fundamental differences but rather the "civilized" and the "primitive"—two poles on a scale of social progress.

Informed by European anthropology and republican optimism, Americans confronted their own uniquely problematic racial landscape. In 1787, Samuel Stanhope Smith published his treatise *Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species*, which further articulated the theory of racial change and suggested that improving the social environment would tap into the innate equality of humankind and dramatically uplift nonwhite races. The proper society, he and others believed, could gradually "whiten" men the way nature spontaneously chose to whiten Henry Moss. Thomas Jefferson disagreed. While Jefferson thought Native Americans could improve and become "civilized," he declared in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784) that black people were incapable of mental improvement and that they might even have a separate ancestry—a theory known as polygenesis, or multiple creations. His belief in polygenesis was less to justify slavery—slaveholders universally rejected the theory as antibiblical and thus a threat to their primary instrument of justification, the Bible—and more to justify schemes for a white America, such as the plan to gradually send freed slaves to Africa. Many Americans believed nature had made the white and black races too different to peacefully coexist, and they viewed African colonization as the solution to America's racial problem.

Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* sparked considerable backlash from antislavery and black communities. The celebrated black surveyor Benjamin Banneker, for example, immediately wrote to Jefferson and demanded he "eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas" and instead embrace the belief that we are "all of one flesh" and with "all the same sensations and endowed . .

. with the same faculties."[6] Many years later, in his *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829), David Walker channeled decades of black protest, simultaneously denouncing the moral rot of slavery and racism while praising the inner strength of the race.

Jefferson had his defenders. White men such as Charles Caldwell and Samuel George Morton hardened Jefferson's skepticism with the "biological" case for blacks and whites not only having separate creations but actually being different species, a position increasingly articulated throughout the antebellum period. Few Americans subscribed wholesale to such theories, but many shared beliefs in white supremacy. As the decades passed, white Americans were forced to acknowledge that if the black population was indeed whitening, it resulted from interracial sex and not the environment. The sense of inspiration and wonder that followed Henry Moss in the 1790s would have been impossible just a generation later.

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7.3: Jeffersonian Republicanism

Free and enslaved black Americans were not alone in pushing against political hierarchies. Jefferson's election to the presidency in 1800 represented a victory for non-elite white Americans in their bid to assume more direct control over the government. Elites had made no secret of their hostility toward the direct control of government by the people. In both private correspondence and published works, many of the nation's founders argued that pure democracy would lead to anarchy. Massachusetts Federalist Fisher Ames spoke for many of his colleagues when he lamented the dangers that democracy posed because it depended on public opinion, which "shifts with every current of caprice." Jefferson's election, for Federalists like Ames, heralded a slide "down into the mire of a democracy."[7]

Indeed, many political leaders and non-elite citizens believed Jefferson embraced the politics of the masses. "In a government like ours it is the duty of the Chief-magistrate . . . to unite in himself the confidence of the whole people," Jefferson wrote in 1810.[8] Nine years later, looking back on his monumental election, Jefferson again linked his triumph to the political engagement of ordinary citizens: "The revolution of 1800 . . . was as real a revolution in the principles of our government as that of 76 was in it's form," he wrote, "not effected indeed by the sword . . . but by the rational and peaceable instrument of reform, the suffrage [voting] of the people."[9] Jefferson desired to convince Americans, and the world, that a government that answered directly to the people would lead to lasting national union, not anarchic division. He wanted to prove that free people could govern themselves democratically.

Jefferson set out to differentiate his administration from the Federalists. He defined American union by the voluntary bonds of fellow citizens toward one another and toward the government. In contrast, the Federalists supposedly imagined a union defined by expansive state power and public submission to the rule of aristocratic elites. For Jefferson, the American nation drew its "energy" and its strength from the "confidence" of a "reasonable" and "rational" people.

Republican celebrations often credited Jefferson with saving the nation's republican principles. In a move that enraged Federalists, they used the image of George Washington, who had passed away in 1799, linking the republican virtue Washington epitomized to the democratic liberty Jefferson championed. Leaving behind the military pomp of power-obsessed Federalists, Republicans had peacefully elected the scribe of national independence, the philosopher-patriot who had battled tyranny with his pen, not with a sword or a gun.

The celebrations of Jefferson's presidency and the defeat of the Federalists expressed many citizens' willingness to assert greater direct control over the government as citizens. The definition of citizenship was changing. Early American national identity was coded masculine, just as it was coded white and wealthy; yet, since the Revolution, women had repeatedly called for a place in the conversation. Mercy Otis Warren was one of the most noteworthy female contributors to the public ratification debate over the Constitution of 1787 and 1788, but women all over the country were urged to participate in the discussion over the Constitution. "It is the duty of the American ladies, in a particular manner, to interest themselves in the success of the measures that are now pursuing by the Federal Convention for the happiness of America," a Philadelphia essayist announced. "They can retain their rank as rational beings only in a free government. In a monarchy . . . they will be considered as valuable members of a society, only in proportion as they are capable of being mothers for soldiers, who are the pillars of crowned heads."[10] American women were more than mothers to soldiers; they were mothers to liberty.



Figure 7.3.1: The artist James Pealse painted this portrait of his wife Mary and five of their eventual six children. Peale and others represented women as responsibl for the health of the republic through their roles as wives as mothers. Historians call this view of of women Republican Motherhood. *Wikimedia*.

Historians have used the term *Republican Motherhood* to describe the early American belief that women were essential in nurturing the principles of liberty in the citizenry. Women would pass along important values of independence and virtue to their children, ensuring that each generation cherished the same values of the American Revolution. Because of these ideas, women's actions became politicized. Republican partisans even described women's choice of sexual partner as crucial to the health and well-being of both the party and the nation. "The fair Daughters of America" should "never disgrace themselves by giving their hands in marriage to any but real republicans," a group of New Jersey Republicans asserted. A Philadelphia paper toasted "The fair Daughters of Columbia. May their smiles be the reward of Republicans only."[11] Though unmistakably steeped in the gendered assumptions about female sexuality and domesticity that denied women an equal share of the political rights men enjoyed, these statements also conceded the pivotal role women played as active participants in partisan politics.[12]

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7.4: Jefferson as President



Figure 7.4.1: Thomas Jefferson's victory over John Adams in the election of 1800 was celebrated through everyday Americans' material culture, including this victory banner. Smithsonian Institute, National Museum of American History.

Buttressed by robust public support, Jefferson sought to implement policies that reflected his own political ideology. He worked to reduce taxes and cut the government's budget, believing that this would expand the economic opportunities of free Americans. His cuts included national defense, and Jefferson restricted the regular army to three thousand men. England may have needed taxes and debt to support its military empire, but Jefferson was determined to live in peace—and that belief led him to reduce America's national debt while getting rid of all internal taxes during his first term. In a move that became the crowning achievement of his presidency, Jefferson authorized the acquisition of Louisiana from France in 1803 in what is considered the largest real estate deal in American history. France had ceded Louisiana to Spain in exchange for West Florida after the Seven Years' War decades earlier. Jefferson was concerned about American access to New Orleans, which served as an important port for western farmers. His worries multiplied when the French secretly reacquired Louisiana in 1800. Spain remained in Louisiana for two more years while the U.S. minister to France, Robert R. Livingston, tried to strike a compromise. Fortunately for the United States, the pressures of war in Europe and the slave insurrection in Haiti forced Napoleon to rethink his vast North American holdings. Rebellious slaves coupled with a yellow fever outbreak in Haiti defeated French forces, stripping Napoleon of his ability to control Haiti (the home of profitable sugar plantations). Deciding to cut his losses, Napoleon offered to sell the entire Louisiana Territory for $15 million—roughly equivalent to $250 million today. Negotiations between Livingston and Napoleon's foreign minister, Talleyrand, succeeded more spectacularly than either Jefferson or Livingston could have imagined.

Jefferson made an inquiry to his cabinet regarding the constitutionality of the Louisiana Purchase, but he believed he was obliged to operate outside the strict limitations of the Constitution if the good of the nation was at stake, as his ultimate responsibility was to the American people. Jefferson felt he should be able to "throw himself on the justice of his country" when he facilitated the interests of the very people he served.[13]

Jefferson's foreign policy, particularly the Embargo Act of 1807, elicited the most outrage from his Federalist critics. As Napoleon Bonaparte's armies moved across Europe, Jefferson wrote to a European friend that he was glad that God had "divided the dry lands of your hemisphere from the dry lands of ours, and said 'here, at least, be there peace.'"[14] Unfortunately, the Atlantic Ocean soon became the site of Jefferson's greatest foreign policy test, as England, France, and Spain refused to respect American ships' neutrality. The greatest offenses came from the British, who resumed the policy of impressment, seizing thousands of American sailors and forcing them to fight for the British navy.

Many Americans called for war when the British attacked the USS *Chesapeake* in 1807. The president, however, decided on a policy of "peaceable coercion" and Congress agreed. Under the Embargo Act of 1807, American ports were closed to all foreign trade in hopes of avoiding war. Jefferson hoped that an embargo would force European nations to respect American neutrality. Historians disagree over the wisdom of peaceable coercion. At first, withholding commerce rather than declaring war appeared to

be the ultimate means of nonviolent conflict resolution. In practice, the embargo hurt the U.S. economy. Even Jefferson's personal finances suffered. When Americans resorted to smuggling their goods out of the country, Jefferson expanded governmental powers to try to enforce their compliance, leading some to label him a "tyrant."

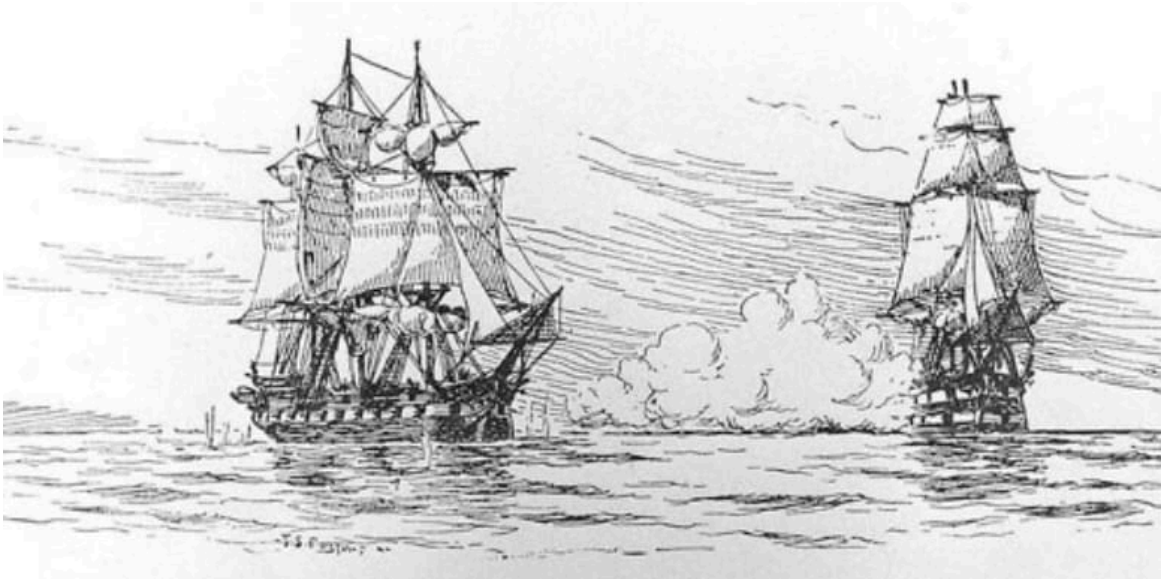


Figure 7.4.1: The attack of the Chesapeake caused such furor in the hearts of Americans that even eighty years after the incident, an artist sketched this drawing of the event. Fred S. Cozzens, The incident between HMS "Leopard" and USS "Chesapeake" that sparked the Chesapeake-Leopard Affair, 1897. *Wikimedia.*

Criticism of Jefferson's policies reflected the same rhetoric his supporters had used earlier against Adams and the Federalists. Federalists attacked the American Philosophical Society and the study of natural history, believing both to be too saturated with Democratic Republicans. Some Federalists lamented the alleged decline of educational standards for children. Moreover, James Callender published accusations (that were later proven credible by DNA evidence) that Jefferson was involved in a sexual relationship with Sally Hemings, one of his slaves.[15] Callender referred to Jefferson as "our little mulatto president," suggesting that sex with a slave had somehow compromised Jefferson's racial integrity.[16] Callender's accusation joined previous Federalist attacks on Jefferson's racial politics, including a scathing pamphlet written by South Carolinian William Loughton Smith in 1796 that described the principles of Jeffersonian democracy as the beginning of a slippery slope to dangerous racial equality.[17]

Arguments lamenting the democratization of America were far less effective than those that borrowed from democratic language and alleged that Jefferson's actions undermined the sovereignty of the people. When Federalists attacked Jefferson, they often accused him of acting against the interests of the very public he claimed to serve. This tactic represented a pivotal development. As the Federalists scrambled to stay politically relevant, it became apparent that their ideology—rooted in eighteenth-century notions of virtue, paternalistic rule by wealthy elite, and the deference of ordinary citizens to an aristocracy of merit—was no longer tenable. The Federalists' adoption of republican political rhetoric signaled a new political landscape in which both parties embraced the direct involvement of the citizenry. The Republican Party rose to power on the promise to expand voting and promote a more direct link between political leaders and the electorate. The American populace continued to demand more direct access to political power. Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe sought to expand voting through policies that made it easier for Americans to purchase land. Under their leadership, seven new states entered the Union. By 1824, only three states still had rules about how much property someone had to own before he could vote. Never again would the Federalists regain dominance over either Congress or the presidency; the last Federalist to run for president, Rufus King, lost to Monroe in 1816.

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7.5: Native American Power and the United States

The Jeffersonian rhetoric of equality contrasted harshly with the reality of a nation stratified along the lines of gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Diplomatic relations between Native Americans and local, state, and national governments offer a dramatic example of the dangers of those inequalities. Prior to the Revolution, many Indian nations had balanced a delicate diplomacy between European empires, which scholars have called the Play-off System.[18] Moreover, in many parts of North America, indigenous peoples dominated social relations.

Americans pushed for more land in all their interactions with Native diplomats and leaders. But boundaries were only one source of tension. Trade, criminal jurisdiction, roads, the sale of liquor, and alliances were also key negotiating points. Despite their role in fighting on both sides, Native American negotiators were not included in the diplomatic negotiations that ended the Revolutionary War. Unsurprisingly, the final document omitted concessions for Native allies. Even as Native peoples proved vital trading partners, scouts, and allies against hostile nations, they were often condemned by white settlers and government officials as "savages." White ridicule of indigenous practices and disregard for indigenous nations' property rights and sovereignty prompted some indigenous peoples to turn away from white practices.

In the wake of the American Revolution, Native American diplomats developed relationships with the United States, maintained or ceased relations with the British Empire (or with Spain in the South), and negotiated their relationship with other Native nations. Formal diplomatic negotiations included Native rituals to reestablish relationships and open communication. Treaty conferences took place in Native towns, at neutral sites in Indian-American borderlands, and in state and federal capitals. While chiefs were politically important, skilled orators, such as Red Jacket, as well as intermediaries, and interpreters also played key roles in negotiations. Native American orators were known for metaphorical language, command of an audience, and compelling voice and gestures.

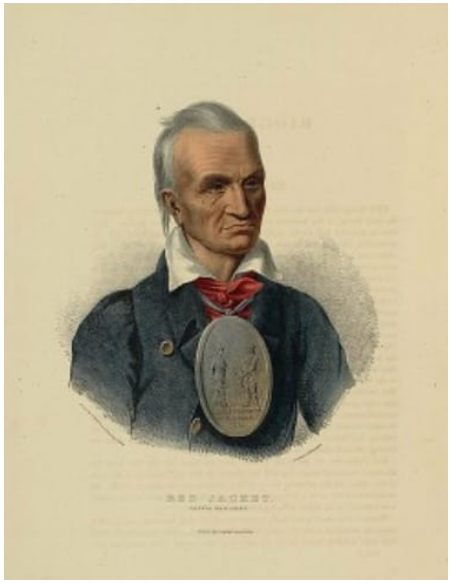


Figure 7.5.1: Shown in this portrait as a refined gentleman, Red Jacket proved to be one of the most effective middlemen between Native Americans and U.S. officials. The medal worn around his neck, apparently given to him by George Washington, reflects his position as an intermediary. Campbell & Burns, Red Jacket. Seneca war chief, Philadelphia: C. Hullmandel, 1838. *Library of Congress*.

Throughout the early republic, diplomacy was preferred to war. Violence and warfare carried enormous costs for all parties—in lives, money, trade disruptions, and reputation. Diplomacy allowed parties to air their grievances, negotiate their relationships, and minimize violence. Violent conflicts arose when diplomacy failed.

Native diplomacy testified to the complexity of indigenous cultures and their role in shaping the politics and policy of American communities, states, and the federal government. Yet white attitudes, words, and policies frequently relegated Native peoples to the literal and figurative margins as "ignorant savages." Poor treatment like this inspired hostility and calls for pan-Indian alliances from leaders of distinct Native nations, including the Shawnee leader Tecumseh.

Tecumseh and his brother, Tenskwatawa, the Prophet, helped envision an alliance of North America's indigenous populations to halt the encroachments of the United States. They created pan-Indian towns in present-day Indiana, first at Greenville, then at Prophetstown, in defiance of the Treaty of Greenville (1795). Tecumseh traveled to many diverse Indian nations from Canada to Georgia, calling for unification, resistance, and the restoration of sacred power.

Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa's pan-Indian confederacy was the culmination of many movements that swept through indigenous North America during the eighteenth century. An earlier coalition fought in Pontiac's War. Neolin, the Delaware prophet, influenced Pontiac, an Ottawa (Odawa) war chief, with his vision of Native independence, cultural renewal, and religious revitalization. Through Neolin, the Master of Life—the Great Spirit—urged Native peoples to shrug off their dependency on European goods and technologies, reassert their faith in Native spirituality and rituals, and cooperate with one another against the "White people's ways and nature."[19] Additionally, Neolin advocated violence against British encroachments on Indian lands, which escalated after the Seven Years' War. His message was particularly effective in the Ohio and Upper Susquehanna Valleys, where polyglot communities of indigenous refugees and migrants from across eastern North America lived together. When combined with the militant leadership of Pontiac, who took up Neolin's message, the many Native peoples of the region united in attacks against British forts and people. From 1763 until 1765, the Great Lakes, Ohio Valley, and Upper Susquehanna Valley areas were embroiled in a war between Pontiac's confederacy and the British Empire, a war that ultimately forced the English to restructure how they managed Native-British relations and trade.

In the interim between 1765 and 1811, other Native prophets kept Neolin's message alive while encouraging indigenous peoples to resist Euro-American encroachments. These individuals included the Ottawa leader "the Trout," also called Maya-Ga-Wy; Joseph Brant of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee); the Creek headman Mad Dog; Painted Pole of the Shawnee; a Mohawk woman named Coocoochee; Main Poc of the Potawatomi; and the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake. Once again, the epicenter of this pan-Indian resistance and revitalization originated in the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes regions, where from 1791 to 1795 a joint force of Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, Iroquois, Ojibwe, Ottawa, Huron, Potawatomi, Mingo, Chickamauga, and other indigenous peoples waged war against the American republic. Although this "Western Confederacy" ultimately suffered defeat at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, this Native coalition achieved a number of military victories against the republic, including the destruction of two American armies, forcing President Washington to reformulate federal Indian policy. Tecumseh's experiences as a warrior against the American military in this conflict probably influenced his later efforts to generate solidarity among North American indigenous communities.

Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa articulated ideas and beliefs similar to their eighteenth-century predecessors. In particular,

Tenskwatawa pronounced that the Master of Life entrusted him and Tecumseh with the responsibility for returning Native peoples to the one true path and to rid Native communities of the dangerous and corrupting influences of Euro-American trade and culture. Tenskwatawa stressed the need for cultural and religious renewal, which coincided with his blending of the tenets, traditions, and rituals of indigenous religions and Christianity. In particular, Tenskwatawa emphasized apocalyptic visions that he and his followers would usher in a new world and restore Native power to the continent. For Native peoples who gravitated to the Shawnee brothers, this emphasis on cultural and religious revitalization was empowering and spiritually liberating, especially given the continuous American assaults on Native land and power in the early nineteenth century.



Figure 7.5.2: Tenskwatawa as painted by George Catlin, in 1831. Caitlin acknowledged the prophet's spiritual power and painted him with a medicine stick. *Wikimedia*.

Tecumseh's confederacy drew heavily from indigenous communities in the Old Northwest and the festering hatred for land-hungry Americans. Tecumseh attracted a wealth of allies in his adamant refusal to concede any more land. Tecumseh proclaimed that the Master of Life tasked him with the responsibility of returning Native lands to their rightful owners. In his efforts to promote unity among Native peoples, Tecumseh also offered these communities a distinctly "Indian identity" that brought disparate Native peoples together under the banner of a common spirituality, together resisting an oppressive force. In short, spirituality tied together the resistance movement. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa were not above using this pan-Indian rhetoric to legitimate their own authority within indigenous communities at the expense of other Native leaders. This manifested most visibly during Tenskwatawa's witch hunts of the 1800s. Those who opposed Tenskwatawa or sought to accommodate Americans were labeled witches.

While Tecumseh attracted Native peoples from around the Northwest and some from the Southeast, the Red Stick Creeks brought these ideas to the Southeast. Led by the Creek prophet Hillis Hadjo, who accompanied Tecumseh when he toured throughout the Southeast in 1811, the Red Sticks integrated certain religious tenets from the north and invented new religious practices specific to the Creeks, all the while communicating and coordinating with Tecumseh after he left Creek Country. In doing so, the Red Sticks joined Tecumseh in his resistance movement while seeking to purge Creek society of its Euro-American dependencies. Creek leaders who maintained relationships with the United States, in contrast, believed that accommodation and diplomacy might stave off American encroachments better than violence.

Additionally, the Red Sticks discovered that most southeastern indigenous leaders cared little for Tecumseh's confederacy. This lack of allies hindered the spread of a pan-Indian movement in the southeast, and the Red Sticks soon found themselves in a civil war against other Creeks. Tecumseh thus found little support in the Southeast beyond the Red Sticks, who by 1813 were cut off from the North by Andrew Jackson. Shortly thereafter, Jackson's forces were joined by Lower Creek and Cherokee forces that helped defeat the Red Sticks, culminating in Jackson's victory at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Following their defeat, the Red Sticks were forced to cede an unprecedented fourteen million acres of land in the Treaty of Fort Jackson. As historian Adam Rothman argues, the defeat of the Red Sticks allowed the United States to expand west of the Mississippi, guaranteeing the continued existence and profitability of slavery.[20]

Many Native leaders refused to join Tecumseh and instead maintained their loyalties to the American republic. After the failures of pan-Indian unity and loss at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, Tecumseh's confederation floundered. The War of 1812 between the United States and Britain offered new opportunities for Tecumseh and his followers.[21] With the United States distracted, Tecumseh and his confederated army seized several American forts on their own initiative. Eventually Tecumseh solicited British aid after sustaining heavy losses from American fighters at Fort Wayne and Fort Harrison. Even then, the confederacy faced an uphill battle, particularly after American naval forces secured control of the Great Lakes in September 1813, forcing British ships and reinforcements to retreat. Yet Tecumseh and his Native allies fought on despite being surrounded by American forces. Tecumseh told the British commander Henry Proctor, "Our lives are in the hands of the Great Spirit. We are determined to defend our lands, and if it is his will, we wish to leave our bones upon them."[22] Not soon thereafter, Tecumseh fell on the battlefields of

Moraviantown, Ontario, in October 1813. His death dealt a severe blow to pan-Indian resistance against the United States. Men like Tecumseh and Pontiac, however, left behind a legacy of pan-Indian unity that was not soon forgotten.

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7.6: The War of 1812

Soon after Jefferson retired from the presidency in 1808, Congress ended the embargo and the British relaxed their policies toward American ships. Despite the embargo's unpopularity, Jefferson still believed that more time would have proven that peaceable coercion worked. Yet war with Britain loomed—a war that would galvanize the young American nation.

The War of 1812 stemmed from American entanglement in two distinct sets of international issues. The first had to do with the nation's desire to maintain its position as a neutral trading nation during the series of Anglo-French wars, which began in the aftermath of the French Revolution in 1793. The second had older roots in the colonial and Revolutionary era. In both cases, American interests conflicted with those of the British Empire. British leaders showed little interest in accommodating the Americans.

Impressments, the practice of forcing American sailors to join the British Navy, was among the most important sources of conflict between the two nations. Driven in part by trade with Europe, the American economy grew quickly during the first decade of the nineteenth century, creating a labor shortage in the American shipping industry. In response, pay rates for sailors increased and American captains recruited heavily from the ranks of British sailors. As a result, around 30 percent of sailors employed on American merchant ships were British. As a republic, the Americans advanced the notion that people could become citizens by renouncing their allegiance to their home nation. To the British, a person born in the British Empire was a subject of that empire for life, a status they could not change. The British Navy was embroiled in a difficult war and was unwilling to lose any of its labor force. In order to regain lost crewmen, the British often boarded American ships to reclaim their sailors. Of course, many American sailors found themselves caught up in these sweeps and "impressed" into the service of the British Navy. Between 1803 and 1812, some six thousand Americans suffered this fate. The British would release Americans who could prove their identity, but this process could take years while the sailor endured harsh conditions and the dangers of the Royal Navy.

In 1806, responding to a French declaration of a complete naval blockade of Great Britain, the British demanded that neutral ships first carry their goods to Britain to pay a transit duty before they could proceed to France. Despite loopholes in these policies between 1807 and 1812, Britain, France, and their allies seized about nine hundred American ships, prompting a swift and angry American response. Jefferson's embargo sent the nation into a deep depression and drove exports down from $108 million in 1807 to $22 million in 1808, all while having little effect on Europeans.[23] Within fifteen months Congress repealed the Embargo Act, replacing it with smaller restrictions on trade with Britain and France. Although efforts to stand against Great Britain had failed, resentment of British trade policy remained widespread.

Far from the Atlantic Ocean on the American frontier, Americans were also at odds with the British Empire. From their position in Canada, the British maintained relations with Native Americans in the Old Northwest, supplying them with goods and weapons in attempts to maintain ties in case of another war with the United States. The threat of a Native uprising increased after 1805 when Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh built their alliance. The territorial governor of Illinois, William Henry Harrison, eventually convinced the Madison administration to allow for military action against the Native Americans in the Ohio Valley. The resulting Battle of Tippecanoe drove the followers of the Prophet from their gathering place but did little to change the dynamics of the region. British efforts to arm and supply Native Americans, however, angered Americans and strengthened anti-British sentiments.

Republicans began to talk of war as a solution to these problems, arguing that it was necessary to complete the War for Independence by preventing British efforts to keep America subjugated at sea and on land. The war would also represent another battle against the Loyalists, some thirty-eight thousand of whom had populated Upper Canada after the Revolution and sought to establish a counter to the radical experiment of the United States.[24]

In 1812, the Republicans held 75 percent of the seats in the House and 82 percent of the Senate, giving them a free hand to set national policy. Among them were the "War Hawks," whom one historian describes as "too young to remember the horrors of the American Revolution" and thus "willing to risk another British war to vindicate the nation's rights and independence."[25] This group included men who would remain influential long after the War of 1812, such as Henry Clay of Kentucky and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina.

Convinced by the War Hawks in his party, Madison drafted a statement of the nation's disputes with the British and asked Congress for a war declaration on June 1, 1812. The Republicans hoped that an invasion of Canada might remove the British from their backyard and force the empire to change their naval policies. After much negotiation in Congress over the details of the bill, Madison signed a declaration of war on June 18, 1812. For the second time, the United States was at war with Great Britain.

While the War of 1812 contained two key players—the United States and Great Britain—it also drew in other groups, such as Tecumseh and the Indian Confederacy. The war can be organized into three stages or theaters. The first, the Atlantic Theater, lasted until the spring of 1813. During this time, Great Britain was chiefly occupied in Europe against Napoleon, and the United States invaded Canada and sent their fledgling navy against British ships. During the second stage, from early 1813 to 1814, the United States launched their second offensive against Canada and the Great Lakes. In this period, the Americans won their first successes. The third stage, the Southern Theater, concluded with Andrew Jackson's January 1815 victory outside New Orleans, Louisiana.

During the war, the Americans were greatly interested in Canada and the Great Lakes borderlands. In July 1812, the United States launched their first offensive against Canada. By August, however, the British and their allies rebuffed the Americans, costing the United States control over Detroit and parts of the Michigan Territory. By the close of 1813, the Americans recaptured Detroit, shattered the Indian Confederacy, killed Tecumseh, and eliminated the British threat in that theater. Despite these accomplishments, the American land forces proved outmatched by their adversaries.



Figure 7.6.1: As pictured in this 1812 political cartoon published in Philadelphia, Americans lambasted the British and their native allies for what they considered "savage" offenses during war, though Americans too were engaging in such heinous acts. William Charles, A scene on the frontiers as practiced by the "humane" British and their "worthy" allies, Philadelphia, 1812. Library of Congress.

After the land campaign of 1812 failed to secure America's war aims, Americans turned to the infant navy in 1813. Privateers and the U.S. Navy rallied behind the slogan "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights!" Although the British possessed the most powerful navy in the world, surprisingly the young American navy extracted early victories with larger, more heavily armed ships. By 1814, however, the major naval battles had been fought with little effect on the war's outcome.

With Britain's main naval fleet fighting in the Napoleonic Wars, smaller ships and armaments stationed in North America were generally no match for their American counterparts. Early on, Americans humiliated the British in single ship battles. In retaliation, Captain Philip Broke of the HMS *Shannon* attacked the USS *Chesapeake*, captained by James Lawrence, on June 1, 1813. Within six minutes, the *Chesapeake* was destroyed and Lawrence mortally wounded. Yet the Americans did not give up as Lawrence commanded them, "Tell the men to fire faster! Don't give up the ship!"[26] Lawrence died of his wounds three days later, and although the *Shannon* defeated the *Chesapeake*, Lawrence's words became a rallying cry for the Americans.

Two and a half months later the USS *Constitution* squared off with the HMS *Guerriere*. As the *Guerriere* tried to outmaneuver the Americans, the *Constitution* pulled along broadside and began hammering the British frigate. The *Guerriere* returned fire, but as one sailor observed, the cannonballs simply bounced off the *Constitution*'s thick hull. "Huzzah! Her sides are made of iron!" shouted the sailor, and henceforth, the *Constitution* became known as "Old Ironsides." In less than thirty-five minutes, the *Guerriere* was so badly damaged that it was set aflame rather than taken as a prize.

In 1814, Americans gained naval victories on Lake Champlain near Plattsburgh, preventing a British land invasion of the United States and on the Chesapeake Bay at Fort McHenry in Baltimore. Fort McHenry repelled the nineteen-ship British fleet, enduring twenty-seven hours of bombardment virtually unscathed. Watching from aboard a British ship, American poet Francis Scott Key penned the verses of what would become the national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner."

Impressive though these accomplishments were, they belied what was actually a poorly executed military campaign against the British. The U.S. Navy won their most significant victories in the Atlantic Ocean in 1813. Napoleon's defeat in early 1814, however, allowed the British to focus on North America and blockade American ports. Thanks to the blockade, the British were able to burn Washington, D.C., on August 24, 1814 and open a new theater of operations in the South. The British sailed for New Orleans, where they achieved a naval victory at Lake Borgne before losing the land invasion to Major General Andrew Jackson's troops in January 1815. This American victory actually came after the United States and the United Kingdom signed the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814, but the Battle of New Orleans proved to be a psychological victory that boosted American morale and affected how the war has been remembered.



Figure 7.6.2: The artist shows Washington D.C. engulfed in flames as the British troops set fire to the city in 1813. "Capture of the City of Washington," August 1814. *Wikimedia*.

But not all Americans supported the war. In 1814, New England Federalists met in Hartford, Connecticut, to try to end the war and curb the power of the Republican Party. They produced a document that proposed abolishing the three-fifths rule that afforded southern slaveholders disproportionate representation in Congress, limiting the president to a single term in office, and most importantly, demanding a two-thirds congressional majority, rather than a simple majority, for legislation that declared war, admitted new states into the Union, or regulated commerce. With the two-thirds majority, New England's Federalist politicians believed they could limit the power of their political foes.



Figure 7.6.3: Contemplating the possibility of secession over the War of 1812 (fueled in large part by the economic interests of New England merchants), the Hartford Convention posed the possibility of disaster for the still-young United States. England, represented by the figure John Bull on the right side, is shown in this political cartoon with arms open to accept New England back into its empire. William Charles Jr., The Hartford Convention or Leap No Leap. *Wikimedia*.

Madison administration. With little evidence, newspapers accused the Hartford Convention's delegates of plotting secession. The episode demonstrated the waning power of Federalism and the need for the region's politicians to shed their aristocratic and Anglophile image. The next New England politician to assume the presidency, John Quincy Adams, would, in 1824, emerge not from within the Federalist fold but having served as secretary of state under President James Monroe, the leader of the Virginia Republicans.

The Treaty of Ghent essentially returned relations between the United States and Britain to their prewar status. The war, however, mattered politically and strengthened American nationalism. During the war, Americans read patriotic newspaper stories, sang patriotic songs, and bought consumer goods decorated with national emblems. They also heard stories about how the British and their Native allies threatened to bring violence into American homes. For examples, rumors spread that British officers promised rewards of "beauty and booty" for their soldiers when they attacked New Orleans.[27] In the Great Lakes borderlands, wartime propaganda fueled Americans' fear of Britain's Native American allies, whom they believed would slaughter men, women, and children indiscriminately. Terror and love worked together to make American citizens feel a stronger bond with their country. Because the war mostly cut off America's trade with Europe, it also encouraged Americans to see themselves as different and separate; it fostered a sense that the country had been reborn.

Former treasury secretary Albert Gallatin claimed that the War of 1812 revived "national feelings" that had dwindled after the Revolution. "The people," he wrote, were now "more American; they feel and act more like a nation."[28] Politicians proposed measures to reinforce the fragile Union through capitalism and built on these sentiments of nationalism. The United States continued to expand into Indian territories with westward settlement in far-flung new states like Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi, and Illinois. Between 1810 and 1830, the country added more than six thousand new post offices.

In 1817, South Carolina congressman John C. Calhoun called for building projects to "bind the republic together with a perfect system of roads and canals."[29] He joined with other politicians, such as Kentucky's powerful Henry Clay, to promote what came to be called an American System. They aimed to make America economically independent and encouraged commerce between the states over trade with Europe and the West Indies. The American System would include a new Bank of the United States to provide capital; a high protective tariff, which would raise the prices of imported goods and help American-made products compete; and a network of "internal improvements," roads and canals to let people take American goods to market.

These projects were controversial. Many people believed that they were unconstitutional or would increase the federal government's power at the expense of the states. Even Calhoun later changed his mind and joined the opposition. The War of 1812, however, had reinforced Americans' sense of the nation's importance in their political and economic life. Even when the federal government did not act, states created banks, roads, and canals of their own.

What may have been the boldest declaration of America's postwar pride came in 1823. President James Monroe issued an ultimatum to the empires of Europe in order to support several wars of independence in Latin America. The Monroe Doctrine declared that the United States considered its entire hemisphere, both North and South America, off-limits to new European colonization. Although Monroe was a Jeffersonian, some of his principles echoed Federalist policies. Whereas Jefferson cut the size of the military and ended all internal taxes in his first term, Monroe advocated the need for a strong military and an aggressive foreign policy. Since Americans were spreading out over the continent, Monroe authorized the federal government to invest in canals and roads, which he said would "shorten distances and, by making each part more accessible to and dependent on the other . . . shall bind the Union more closely together."[30] As Federalists had attempted two decades earlier, Republican leaders after the War of 1812 advocated strengthening the government to strengthen the nation.

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7.7: Conclusion

Monroe's election after the conclusion of the War of 1812 signaled the death knell of the Federalists. Some predicted an "era of good feelings" and an end to party divisions. The War had cultivated a profound sense of union among a diverse and divided people. Yet that "era of good feelings" would never really come. Political division continued. Though the dying Federalists would fade from political relevance, a schism within the Republican Party would give rise to Jacksonian Democrats. Political limits continued along class, gender, and racial and ethnic lines. At the same time, industrialization and the development of American capitalism required new justifications of inequality. Social change and increased immigration prompted nativist reactions that would divide "true" Americans from dangerous or undeserving "others." Still, a cacophony of voices clamored to be heard and struggled to realize a social order compatible with the ideals of equality and individual liberty. As always, the meaning of democracy was in flux.

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7.8: Primary Sources

Letter of Cato and Petition by "the negroes who obtained freedom by the late act," in *Postscript to the Freeman's Journal*, September 21, 1781

The elimination of slavery in northern states like Pennsylvania was slow and hard-fought. A bill passed in 1780 began the slow process of eroding slavery in the state, but a proposal just one year later would have erased that bill and furthered the distance between slavery and freedom. The action of black Philadelphians and others succeeded in defeating this measure. In this letter to the black newspaper, Philadelphia Freedom's Journal*, a formerly enslaved man uses the rhetoric of the American Revolution to attack American slavery.*

Thomas Jefferson's Racism, 1788

American racism spread during the first decades after the American Revolution. Racial prejudice existed for centuries, but the belief that African-descended peoples were inherently and permanently inferior to Anglo-descended peoples developed sometime around the late eighteenth century. Writings such as this piece from Thomas Jefferson fostered faulty scientific reasoning to justify laws that protected slavery and white supremacy.

Tecumseh Calls for Pan-Indian Resistance, 1810

Like Pontiac before him, Tecumseh articulated a spiritual message of pan-Indian unity and resistance. In this document, he acknowledges his Shawnee heritage, but appeals to a larger community of "red men," who he describes as "once a happy race, since made miserable by the white people." This document reveals not only Tecumseh's message of pan-Indian resistance, but it also shows that Anglo-American understandings of race had spread to Indians as well.

Congress Debates Going to War, 1811

Americans were not united in their support for the War of 1812. In these two documents we hear from members of congress as they debate whether or not America should go to war against Great Britain.

Abigail Bailey Escapes an Abusive Relationship, 1815

Women in early America suffered from a lack of rights or means of defending themselves against domestic abuse. The case of Abigail Bailey is remarkable because she was able to successfully free herself and her children from an abusive husband and father.

Genius of the Ladies Magazine Illustration, 1792

Despite the restrictions imposed on their American citizenship, white women worked to expand their rights to education in the new nation using literature and the arts. The first journal for women in the United States, The Lady's Magazine, and repository of entertaining knowledge*, introduced their initial volume with an engraving celebrating the transatlantic exchange between women's rights advocates. In the engraving, English writer Mary Wollstonecraft presents her work, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," to Liberty who has the tools of the arts at her feet.*

America Guided by Wisdom Engraving, 1815

This engraving reflects the sense of triumph many white Americans felt following the War of 1812. Drawing from the visual language of Jeffersonian Republicans, we see America—represented as a woman in classical dress—surrounded by gods of wisdom, commerce, and agriculture on one side and a statue of George Washington emblazoned with the recent war's victories on the other. The romantic sense of the United States as the heir to the ancient Roman republic, pride in military victory, and the glorification of domestic production contributed to the idea the young nation was about to enter an "era of good feelings."

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8: THE MARKET REVOLUTION



William James Bennett, View of South Street, from Maiden Lane, New York City, c. 1827, via Metropolitan Museum of New York

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8.1: Introduction

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Americans' endless commercial ambition—what one Baltimore paper in 1815 called an "almost *universal ambition to get forward*"—remade the nation.[1] Between the Revolution and the Civil War, an old subsistence world died and a new more-commercial nation was born. Americans integrated the technologies of the Industrial Revolution into a new commercial economy. Steam power, the technology that moved steamboats and railroads, fueled the rise of American industry by powering mills and sparking new national transportation networks. A "market revolution" remade the nation.

The revolution reverberated across the country. More and more farmers grew crops for profit, not self-sufficiency. Vast factories and cities arose in the North. Enormous fortunes materialized. A new middle class ballooned. And as more men and women worked in the cash economy, they were freed from the bound dependence of servitude. But there were costs to this revolution. As northern textile factories boomed, the demand for southern cotton swelled, and American slavery accelerated. Northern subsistence farmers became laborers bound to the whims of markets and bosses. The market revolution sparked explosive economic growth and new personal wealth, but it also created a growing lower class of property-less workers and a series of devastating depressions, called "panics." Many Americans labored for low wages and became trapped in endless cycles of poverty. Some workers, often immigrant women, worked thirteen hours a day, six days a week. Others labored in slavery. Massive northern textile mills turned southern cotton into cheap cloth. And although northern states washed their hands of slavery, their factories fueled the demand for slave-grown southern cotton and their banks provided the financing that ensured the profitability and continued existence of the American slave system. And so, as the economy advanced, the market revolution wrenched the United States in new directions as it became a nation of free labor and slavery, of wealth and inequality, and of endless promise and untold perils.

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8.2: Early Republic Economic Development

The growth of the American economy reshaped American life in the decades before the Civil War. Americans increasingly produced goods for sale, not for consumption. Improved transportation enabled a larger exchange network. Labor-saving technology improved efficiency and enabled the separation of the public and domestic spheres. The market revolution fulfilled the revolutionary generation's expectations of progress but introduced troubling new trends. Class conflict, child labor, accelerated immigration, and the expansion of slavery followed. These strains required new family arrangements and transformed American cities.

American commerce had proceeded haltingly during the eighteenth century. American farmers increasingly exported foodstuffs to Europe as the French Revolutionary Wars devastated the continent between 1793 and 1815. America's exports rose in value from $20.2 million in 1790 to $108.3 million by 1807.[2] But while exports rose, exorbitant internal transportation costs hindered substantial economic development within the United States. In 1816, for instance, $9 could move one ton of goods across the Atlantic Ocean, but only thirty miles across land. An 1816 Senate Committee Report lamented that "the price of land carriage is too great" to allow the profitable production of American manufactures. But in the wake of the War of 1812, Americans rushed to build a new national infrastructure, new networks of roads, canals, and railroads. In his 1815 annual message to Congress, President James Madison stressed "the great importance of establishing throughout our country the roads and canals which can best be executed under national authority."[3] State governments continued to sponsor the greatest improvements in American transportation, but the federal government's annual expenditures on internal improvements climbed to a yearly average of $1,323,000 by Andrew Jackson's presidency.[4].

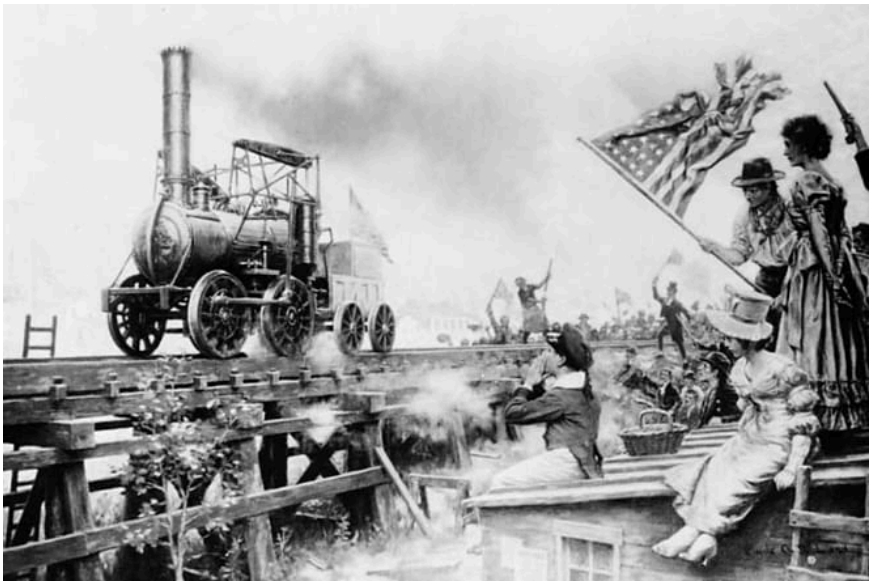


Figure 8.2.1: Clyde Osmer DeLand, "The First Locomotive. Aug. 8th, 1829. Trial Trip of the "Stourbridge Lion," 1916. *Library of Congress*.

State legislatures meanwhile pumped capital into the economy by chartering banks. The number of state-chartered banks skyrocketed from 1 in 1783, 266 in 1820, and 702 in 1840 to 1,371 in 1860.[5] European capital also helped build American infrastructure. By 1844, one British traveler declared that "the prosperity of America, her railroads, canals, steam navigation, and banks, are the fruit of English capital."[6]

Economic growth, however, proceeded unevenly. Depressions devastated the economy in 1819, 1837, and 1857. Each followed rampant speculation in various commodities: land in 1819, land and slaves in 1837, and railroad bonds in 1857. Eventually the bubbles all burst. The spread of paper currency untethered the economy from the physical signifiers of wealth familiar to the colonial generation, namely land. Counterfeit bills were endemic during this early period of banking. With so many fake bills circulating, Americans were constantly on the lookout for the "confidence man" and other deceptive characters in the urban landscape. Prostitutes and con men could look like regular honest Americans. Advice literature offered young men and women strategies for avoiding hypocrisy in an attempt to restore the social fiber. Intimacy in the domestic sphere became more important as duplicity proliferated in the public sphere. Fear of the confidence man, counterfeit bills, and a pending bust created

anxiety in the new capitalist economy. But Americans refused to blame the logic of their new commercial system for these depressions. Instead, they kept pushing "*to get forward*."

The so-called Transportation Revolution opened the vast lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. In 1810, before the rapid explosion of American infrastructure, Margaret Dwight left New Haven, Connecticut, in a wagon headed for Ohio Territory. Her trip was less than five hundred miles but took six weeks to complete. The journey was a terrible ordeal, she said. The roads were "so rocky & so gullied as to be almost impassable."[7] Ten days into the journey, at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Dwight said "it appeared to me that we had come to the end of the habitable part of the globe." She finally concluded that "the reason so few are willing to return from the Western country, is not that the country is so good, but because the journey is so bad."[8] Nineteen years later, in 1829, English traveler Frances Trollope made the reverse journey across the Allegheny Mountains from Cincinnati to the East Coast. At Wheeling, Virginia, her coach encountered the National Road, the first federally funded interstate infrastructure project. The road was smooth and her journey across the Alleghenies was a scenic delight. "I really can hardly conceive a higher enjoyment than a botanical tour among the Alleghany Mountains," she declared. The ninety miles of the National Road was to her "a garden."[9]



Figure 8.2.2: Engraving based on W.H. Bartlett, "Lockport, Erie Canal," 1839. *Wikimedia*.

If the two decades between Margaret Dwight's and Frances Trollope's journeys transformed the young nation, the pace of change only accelerated in the following years. If a transportation revolution began with improved road networks, it soon incorporated even greater improvements in the ways people and goods moved across the landscape.

New York State completed the Erie Canal in 1825. The 350-mile-long human-made waterway linked the Great Lakes with the Hudson River and the Atlantic Ocean. Soon crops grown in the Great Lakes region were carried by water to eastern cities, and goods from emerging eastern factories made the reverse journey to midwestern farmers. The success of New York's "artificial river" launched a canal-building boom. By 1840 Ohio created two navigable, all-water links from Lake Erie to the Ohio River.

Robert Fulton established the first commercial steamboat service up and down the Hudson River in New York in 1807. Soon thereafter steamboats filled the waters of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Downstream-only routes became watery two-way highways. By 1830, more than two hundred steamboats moved up and down western rivers.

The United States' first long-distance rail line launched from Maryland in 1827. Baltimore's city government and the state government of Maryland provided half the start-up funds for the new Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Rail Road Company. The B&O's founders imagined the line as a means to funnel the agricultural products of the trans-Appalachian West to an outlet on the Chesapeake Bay. Similar motivations led citizens in Philadelphia, Boston, New York City, and Charleston, South Carolina to launch their own rail lines. State and local governments provided the means for the bulk of this initial wave of railroad construction, but economic collapse following the Panic of 1837 made governments wary of such investments. Government supports continued throughout the century, but decades later the public origins of railroads were all but forgotten, and the railroad corporation became the most visible embodiment of corporate capitalism.

By 1860 Americans had laid more than thirty thousand miles of railroads.[10] The ensuing web of rail, roads, and canals meant that few farmers in the Northeast or Midwest had trouble getting goods to urban markets. Railroad development was slower in the South, but there a combination of rail lines and navigable rivers meant that few cotton planters struggled to transport their products to textile mills in the Northeast and in England.

Such internal improvements not only spread goods, they spread information. The transportation revolution was followed by a communications revolution. The telegraph redefined the limits of human communication. By 1843 Samuel Morse had persuaded Congress to fund a forty-mile telegraph line stretching from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore. Within a few short years, during the Mexican-American War, telegraph lines carried news of battlefield events to eastern newspapers within days. This contrasts starkly with the War of 1812, when the Battle of New Orleans took place nearly two full weeks after Britain and the United States had signed a peace treaty.

The consequences of the transportation and communication revolutions reshaped the lives of Americans. Farmers who previously produced crops mostly for their own family now turned to the market. They earned cash for what they had previously consumed; they purchased the goods they had previously made or went without. Market-based farmers soon accessed credit through eastern banks, which provided them with the opportunity to expand their enterprise but left also them prone before the risk of catastrophic failure wrought by distant market forces. In the Northeast and Midwest, where farm labor was ever in short supply, ambitious farmers invested in new technologies that promised to increase the productivity of the limited labor supply. The years between 1815 and 1850 witnessed an explosion of patents on agricultural technologies. The most famous of these, perhaps, was Cyrus McCormick's horse-drawn mechanical reaper, which partially mechanized wheat harvesting, and John Deere's steel-bladed plow, which more easily allowed for the conversion of unbroken ground into fertile farmland.



Figure 8.2.3: A. Janicke & Co., "Our City, (St. Louis, Mo.)," 1859. *Library of Congress*.

Most visibly, the market revolution encouraged the growth of cities and reshaped the lives of urban workers. In 1820, only New York had over one hundred thousand inhabitants. By 1850, six American cities met that threshold, including Chicago, which had been founded fewer than two decades earlier.[11] New technology and infrastructure paved the way for such growth. The Erie Canal captured the bulk of the trade emerging from the Great Lakes region, securing New York City's position as the nation's largest and most economically important city. The steamboat turned St. Louis and Cincinnati into centers of trade, and Chicago rose as it became the railroad hub of the western Great Lakes and Great Plains regions. The geographic center of the nation shifted westward. The development of steam power and the exploitation of Pennsylvania coalfields shifted the locus of American manufacturing. By the 1830s, for instance, New England was losing its competitive advantage to the West.

Meanwhile, the cash economy eclipsed the old, local, informal systems of barter and trade. Income became the measure of economic worth. Productivity and efficiencies paled before the measure of income. Cash facilitated new impersonal economic relationships and formalized new means of production. Young workers might simply earn wages, for instance, rather than receiving room and board and training as part of apprenticeships. Moreover, a new form of economic organization appeared: the business corporation.

States offered the privileges of incorporation to protect the fortunes and liabilities of entrepreneurs who invested in early industrial endeavors. A corporate charter allowed investors and directors to avoid personal liability for company debts. The legal status of incorporation had been designed to confer privileges to organizations embarking on expensive projects explicitly designed for the public good, such as universities, municipalities, and major public works projects. The business corporation was something new. Many Americans distrusted these new, impersonal business organizations whose officers lacked personal responsibility while nevertheless carrying legal rights. Many wanted limits. Thomas Jefferson himself wrote in 1816 that "I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country."[12] But in *Dartmouth v. Woodward* (1819) the Supreme Court upheld the rights of private corporations when it denied the attempt of the government of New Hampshire to reorganize Dartmouth College on behalf of the common good. Still, suspicions remained. A group of journeymen cordwainers in New Jersey publically declared in 1835 that they "entirely disapprov[ed] of the incorporation of Companies, for carrying on manual mechanical business, inasmuch as we believe their tendency is to eventuate and produce monopolies, thereby crippling the energies of individual enterprise."[13]

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8.3: The Decline of the Northern Kingdom and the Rise of the Cotton Kingdom

Slave labor helped fuel the market revolution. By 1832, textile companies made up 88 out of 106 American corporations valued at over $100,000.[14]These textile mills, worked by free labor, nevertheless depended on southern cotton, and the vast new market economy spurred the expansion of the plantation South.

By the early nineteenth century, states north of the Mason-Dixon Line had taken steps to abolish slavery. Vermont included abolition as a provision of its 1777 state constitution. Pennsylvania's emancipation act of 1780 stipulated that freed children must serve an indenture term of twenty-eight years. Gradualism brought emancipation while also defending the interests of northern masters and controlling still another generation of black Americans. In 1804 New Jersey became the last of the northern states to adopt gradual emancipation plans. There was no immediate moment of jubilee, as many northern states only promised to liberate future children born to enslaved mothers. Such laws also stipulated that such children remain in indentured servitude to their mother's master in order to compensate the slaveholder's loss. James Mars, a young man indentured under this system in Connecticut, risked being thrown in jail when he protested the arrangement that kept him bound to his mother's master until age twenty-five.[15]

Quicker routes to freedom included escape or direct emancipation by masters. But escape was dangerous and voluntary manumission rare. Congress, for instance, made the harboring of a fugitive slave a federal crime as early as 1793. Hopes for manumission were even slimmer, as few northern slaveholders emancipated their own slaves. Roughly one fifth of the white families in New York City owned slaves, and fewer than eighty slaveholders in the city voluntarily manumitted slaves between 1783 and 1800. By 1830, census data suggests that at least 3,500 people were still enslaved in the North. Elderly Connecticut slaves remained in bondage as late as 1848, and in New Jersey slavery endured until after the Civil War.[16]

Emancipation proceeded slowly, but proceeded nonetheless. A free black population of fewer than 60,000 in 1790 increased to more than 186,000 by 1810. Growing free black communities fought for their civil rights. In a number of New England locales, free African Americans could vote and send their children to public schools. Most northern states granted black citizens property rights and trial by jury. African Americans owned land and businesses, founded mutual aid societies, established churches, promoted education, developed print culture, and voted.

Nationally, however, the slave population continued to grow, from less than 700,000 in 1790 to more than 1.5 million by 1820.[17] The growth of abolition in the North and the acceleration of slavery in the South created growing divisions. Cotton drove the process more than any other crop. Eli Whitney's cotton gin, a simple hand-cranked device designed to mechanically remove sticky green seeds from short staple cotton, allowed southern planters to dramatically expand cotton production for the national and international markets. Water-powered textile factories in England and the American Northeast rapidly turned raw cotton into cloth. Technology increased both the supply of and demand for cotton. White southerners responded by expanding cultivation farther west, to the Mississippi River and beyond. Slavery had been growing less profitable in tobacco-planting regions like Virginia, but the growth of cotton farther south and west increased the demand for human bondage. Eager cotton planters invested their new profits in new slaves.

The cotton boom fueled speculation in slavery. Many slave owners leveraged potential profits into loans used to purchase ever increasing numbers of slaves. For example, one 1840 *Louisiana Courier* ad warned, "it is very difficult now to find persons willing to buy slaves from Mississippi or Alabama on account of the fears entertained that such property may be already mortgaged to the banks of the above named states."[18]

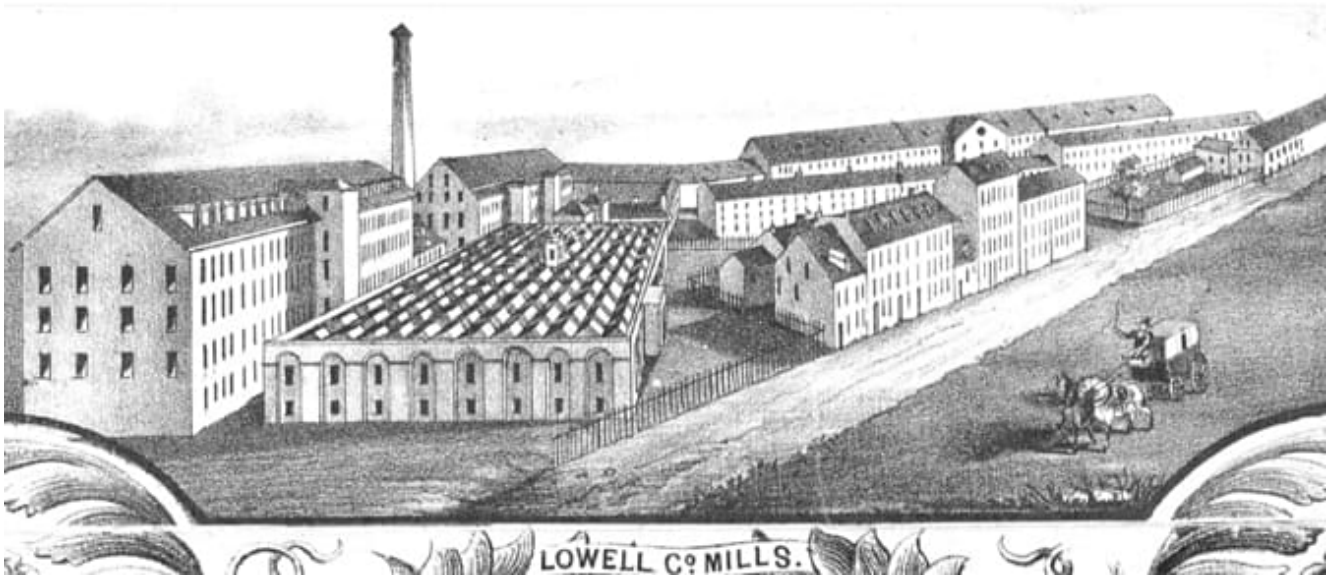


Figure 8.3.1: Sidney & Neff, Detail from Plan of the City of Lowell, Massachusetts, *1850*. *Wikimedia Commons*.

New national and international markets fueled the plantation boom. American cotton exports rose from 150,000 bales in 1815 to 4,541,000 bales in 1859. The Census Bureau's 1860 Census of Manufactures stated that "the manufacture of cotton constitutes the most striking feature of the industrial history of the last fifty years."[19] Slave owners shipped their cotton north to textile manufacturers and to northern financers for overseas shipments. Northern insurance brokers and exporters in the Northeast profited greatly.

While the United States ended its legal participation in the global slave trade in 1808, slave traders moved one million slaves from the tobacco-producing Upper South to cotton fields in the Lower South between 1790 and 1860.[20] This harrowing trade in human flesh supported middle-class occupations in the North and South: bankers, doctors, lawyers, insurance brokers, and shipping agents all profited. And of course it facilitated the expansion of northeastern textile mills.

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8.4: Changes in Labor Organization

While industrialization bypassed most of the American South, southern cotton production nevertheless nurtured industrialization in the Northeast and Midwest. The drive to produce cloth transformed the American system of labor. In the early republic, laborers in manufacturing might typically have been expected to work at every stage of production. But a new system, piecework, divided much of production into discrete steps performed by different workers. In this new system, merchants or investors sent or "put out" materials to individuals and families to complete at home. These independent laborers then turned over the partially finished goods to the owner to be given to another laborer to finish.

As early as the 1790s, however, merchants in New England began experimenting with machines to replace the putting-out system. To effect this transition, merchants and factory owners relied on the theft of British technological knowledge to build the machines they needed. In 1789, for instance, a textile mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, contracted twenty-one-year-old British immigrant Samuel Slater to build a yarn-spinning machine and then a carding machine. Slater had apprenticed in an English mill and succeeded in mimicking the English machinery. The fruits of American industrial espionage peaked in 1813 when Francis Cabot Lowell and Paul Moody re-created the powered loom used in the mills of Manchester, England. Lowell had spent two years in Britain observing and touring mills in England. He committed the design of the powered loom to memory so that, no matter how many times British customs officials searched his luggage, he could smuggle England's industrial know-how into New England.

Lowell's contribution to American industrialism was not only technological, it was organizational. He helped reorganize and centralize the American manufacturing process. A new approach, the Waltham-Lowell System, created the textile mill that defined antebellum New England and American industrialism before the Civil War. The modern American textile mill was fully realized in the planned mill town of Lowell in 1821, four years after Lowell himself died. Powered by the Merrimack River in northern Massachusetts and operated by local farm girls, the mills of Lowell centralized the process of textile manufacturing under one roof. The modern American factory was born. Soon ten thousand workers labored in Lowell alone. Sarah Rice, who worked at the nearby Millbury factory, found it "a noisy place" that was "more confined than I like to be."[21] Working conditions were harsh for the many desperate "mill girls" who operated the factories relentlessly from sunup to sundown. One worker complained that "a large class of females are, and have been, destined to a state of servitude."[22] Female workers went on strike. They lobbied for better working hours. But the lure of wages was too much. As another worker noted, "very many Ladies . . . have given up millinery, dressmaking & school keeping for work in the mill."[23] With a large supply of eager workers, Lowell's vision brought a rush of capital and entrepreneurs into New England. The first American manufacturing boom was under way.



Figure 8.4.1: Winslow Homer, "Bell-Time," Harper's Weekly vol. 12 (July 1868): 472. *Wikimedia*.

The market revolution shook other industries as well. Craftsmen began to understand that new markets increased the demand for their products. Some shoemakers, for instance, abandoned the traditional method of producing custom-built shoes at their home workshops and instead began producing larger quantities of shoes in ready-made sizes to be shipped to urban centers.

Manufacturers wanting increased production abandoned the old personal approach of relying on a single live-in apprentice for labor and instead hired unskilled wage laborers who did not have to be trained in all aspects of making shoes but could simply be assigned a single repeatable aspect of the task. Factories slowly replaced shops. The old paternalistic apprentice system, which involved long-term obligations between apprentice and master, gave way to a more impersonal and more flexible labor system in which unskilled laborers could be hired and fired as the market dictated. A writer in the *New York Observer* in 1826 complained, "The master no longer lives among his apprentices [and] watches over their moral as well as mechanical improvement."[24] Masters-turned-employers now not only had fewer obligations to their workers, they had a lesser attachment. They no longer shared the bonds of their trade but were subsumed under new class-based relationships: employers and employees, bosses and workers, capitalists and laborers. On the other hand, workers were freed from the long-term, paternalistic obligations of apprenticeship or the legal subjugation of indentured servitude. They could theoretically work when and where they wanted. When men or women made an agreement with an employer to work for wages, they were "left free to apportion among themselves their respective shares, untrammeled . . . by unwise laws," as Reverend Alonzo Potter rosily proclaimed in 1840.[25] But while the new labor system was celebrated throughout the northern United States as "free labor," it was simultaneously lamented by a growing powerless class of laborers.

As the northern United States rushed headlong toward commercialization and an early capitalist economy, many Americans grew uneasy with the growing gap between wealthy businessmen and impoverished wage laborers. Elites like Daniel Webster might defend their wealth and privilege by insisting that all workers could achieve "a career of usefulness and enterprise" if they were "industrious and sober," but labor activist Seth Luther countered that capitalism created "a cruel system of extraction on the bodies and minds of the producing classes . . . for no other object than to enable the 'rich' to 'take care of themselves' while the poor must work or starve."[26]

Americans embarked on their Industrial Revolution with the expectation that all men could start their careers as humble wage workers but later achieve positions of ownership and stability with hard work. Wage work had traditionally been looked down on as a state of dependence, suitable only as a temporary waypoint for young men without resources on their path toward the middle class and the economic success necessary to support a wife and children ensconced within the domestic sphere. Children's magazines—such as *Juvenile Miscellany* and *Parley's Magazine*—glorified the prospect of moving up the economic ladder. This "free labor ideology" provided many northerners with a keen sense of superiority over the slave economy of the southern states.[27]

But the commercial economy often failed in its promise of social mobility. Depressions and downturns might destroy businesses and reduce owners to wage work. Even in times of prosperity unskilled workers might perpetually lack good wages and economic security and therefore had to forever depend on supplemental income from their wives and young children.

Wage workers—a population disproportionately composed of immigrants and poorer Americans—faced low wages, long hours, and dangerous working conditions. Class conflict developed. Instead of the formal inequality of a master-servant contract, employer and employee entered a contract presumably as equals. But hierarchy was evident: employers had financial security and political power; employees faced uncertainty and powerlessness in the workplace. Dependent on the whims of their employers, some workers turned to strikes and unions to pool their resources. In 1825 a group of journeymen in Boston formed a Carpenters' Union to protest their inability "to maintain a family at the present time, with the wages which are now usually given."[28] Working men organized unions to assert themselves and win both the respect and the resources due to a breadwinner and a citizen.

For the middle-class managers and civic leaders caught between workers and owners, unions enflamed a dangerous antagonism between employers and employees. They countered any claims of inherent class conflict with the ideology of social mobility. Middle-class owners and managers justified their economic privilege as the natural product of superior character traits, including decision making and hard work. One group of master carpenters denounced their striking journeymen in 1825 with the claim that workers of "industrious and temperate habits, have, in their turn, become thriving and respectable Masters, and the great body of our Mechanics have been enabled to acquire property and respectability, with a just weight and influence in society."[29] In an 1856 speech in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Abraham Lincoln had to assure his audience that the country's commercial transformation had not reduced American laborers to slavery. Southerners, he said, "insist that their slaves are far better off than Northern freemen. What a mistaken view do these men have of Northern labourers! They think that men are always to remain labourers here—but there is no such class. The man who laboured for another last year, this year labours for himself. And next year he will hire others to labour for him."[30] This essential belief undergirded the northern commitment to "free labor" and won the market revolution much widespread acceptance.

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8.5: Changes in Gender Roles and Family

In the first half of the nineteenth century, families in the northern United States increasingly participated in the cash economy created by the market revolution. The first stirrings of industrialization shifted work away from the home. These changes transformed Americans' notions of what constituted work and therefore shifted what it meant to be an American woman and an American man. As Americans encountered more goods in stores and produced fewer at home, the ability to remove women and children from work determined a family's class status. This ideal, of course, ignored the reality of women's work at home and was possible for only the wealthy. The market revolution therefore not only transformed the economy, it changed the nature of the American family. As the market revolution thrust workers into new systems of production, it redefined gender roles. The market integrated families into a new cash economy. As Americans purchased more goods in stores and produced fewer at home, the purity of the domestic sphere—the idealized realm of women and children—increasingly signified a family's class status.

Women and children worked to supplement the low wages of many male workers. Around age eleven or twelve, boys could take jobs as office runners or waiters, earning perhaps a dollar a week to support their parents' incomes. The ideal of an innocent and protected childhood was a privilege for middle- and upper-class families, who might look down upon poor families. Joseph Tuckerman, a Unitarian minister who served poor Bostonians, lamented the lack of discipline and regularity among poor children: "At one hour they are kept at work to procure fuel, or perform some other service; in the next are allowed to go where they will, and to do what they will."[31] Prevented from attending school, poor children served instead as economic assets for their destitute families.

Meanwhile, the education received by middle-class children provided a foundation for future economic privilege. As artisans lost control over their trades, young men had a greater incentive to invest time in education to find skilled positions later in life. Formal schooling was especially important for young men who desired apprenticeships in retail or commercial work. Enterprising instructors established schools to assist "young gentlemen preparing for mercantile and other pursuits, who may wish for an education superior to that usually obtained in the common schools, but different from a college education, and better adapted to their particular business," such as that organized in 1820 by Warren Colburn of Boston.[32] In response to this need, the Boston School Committee created the English High School (as opposed to the Latin School) that could "give a child an education that shall fit him for active life, and shall serve as a foundation for eminence in his profession, whether Mercantile or Mechanical" beyond that "which our public schools can now furnish."[33]



Figure 8.5.1: "The Sphere of Woman," Godey's Lady's Book vol. 40 (March 1850): 209. University of Virginia.

Education equipped young women with the tools to live sophisticated, genteel lives. After sixteen-year-old Elizabeth Davis left home in 1816 to attend school, her father explained that the experience would "lay a foundation for your future character & respectability."[34] After touring the United States in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville praised the independence granted to the young American woman, who had "the great scene of the world . . . open to her" and whose education prepared her to exercise

both reason and moral sense.[35] Middling young women also used their education to take positions as schoolteachers in the expanding common school system. Bristol Academy in Tauten, Maine, for instance, advertised "instruction . . . in the art of teaching" for female pupils.[36] In 1825, Nancy Denison left Concord Academy with references indicating that she was "qualified to teach with success and profit" and "very cheerfully recommend[ed]" for "that very responsible employment."[37]

Middle-class youths found opportunities for respectable employment through formal education, but poor youths remained in marginalized positions. Their families' desperate financial state kept them from enjoying the fruits of education. When pauper children did receive teaching through institutions such the House of Refuge in New York City, they were often simultaneously indentured to successful families to serve as field hands or domestic laborers. The Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents in New York City sent its wards to places like Sylvester Lusk's farm in Enfield, Connecticut. Lusk took boys to learn "the trade and mystery of farming" and girls to learn "the trade and mystery of housewifery." In exchange for "sufficient Meat, Drink, Apparel, Lodging, and Washing, fitting for an Apprentice," and a rudimentary education, the apprentices promised obedience, morality, and loyalty.[38] Poor children also found work in factories such as Samuel Slater's textile mills in southern New England. Slater published a newspaper advertisement for "four or five active Lads, about 15 Years of Age to serve as Apprentices in the Cotton Factory."[39]

And so, during the early nineteenth century, opportunities for education and employment often depended on a given family's class. In colonial America, nearly all children worked within their parent's chosen profession, whether it be agricultural or artisanal. During the market revolution, however, more children were able to postpone employment. Americans aspired to provide a "Romantic Childhood"—a period in which boys and girls were sheltered within the home and nurtured through primary schooling.[40] This ideal was available to families that could survive without their children's labor. As these children matured, their early experiences often determined whether they entered respectable, well-paying positions or became dependent workers with little prospects for social mobility.

Just as children were expected to be sheltered from the adult world of work, American culture expected men and women to assume distinct gender roles as they prepared for marriage and family life. An ideology of "separate spheres" set the public realm—the world of economic production and political life—apart as a male domain, and the world of consumers and domestic life as a female one. (Even nonworking women labored by shopping for the household, producing food and clothing, cleaning, educating children, and performing similar activities. But these were considered "domestic" because they did not bring money into the household, although they too were essential to the household's economic viability.) While reality muddied the ideal, the divide between a private, female world of home and a public, male world of business defined American gender hierarchy.

The idea of separate spheres also displayed a distinct class bias. Middle and upper classes reinforced their status by shielding "their" women from the harsh realities of wage labor. Women were to be mothers and educators, not partners in production. But lower-class women continued to contribute directly to the household economy. The middle- and upper-class ideal was feasible only in households where women did not need to engage in paid labor. In poorer households, women engaged in wage labor as factory workers, pieceworkers producing items for market consumption, tavern- and innkeepers, and domestic servants. While many of the fundamental tasks women performed remained the same—producing clothing, cultivating vegetables, overseeing dairy production, and performing any number of other domestic labors—the key difference was whether and when they performed these tasks for cash in a market economy.

Domestic expectations constantly changed and the market revolution transformed many women's traditional domestic tasks. Cloth production, for instance, advanced throughout the market revolution as new mechanized production increased the volume and variety of fabrics available to ordinary people. This relieved many better-off women of a traditional labor obligation. As cloth production became commercialized, women's home-based cloth production became less important to household economies. Purchasing cloth and, later, ready-made clothes began to transform women from producers to consumers. One woman from Maine, Martha Ballard, regularly referenced spinning, weaving, and knitting in the diary she kept from 1785 to 1812.[41] Martha, her daughters, and her female neighbors spun and plied linen and woolen yarns and used them to produce a variety of fabrics to make clothing for her family. The production of cloth and clothing was a year-round, labor-intensive process, but it was for home consumption, not commercial markets.

In cities, where women could buy cheap imported cloth to turn into clothing, they became skilled consumers. They stewarded money earned by their husbands by comparing values and haggling over prices. In one typical experience, Mrs. Peter Simon, a captain's wife, inspected twenty-six yards of Holland cloth to ensure that it was worth the £130 price.[42] Even wealthy women shopped for high-value goods. While servants or slaves routinely made low-value purchases, the mistress of the household trusted her discriminating eye alone for expensive or specific purchases.

Women might also parlay their skills into businesses. In addition to working as seamstresses, milliners, or laundresses, women might undertake paid work for neighbors or acquaintances or combine clothing production with management of a boardinghouse. Even slaves with particular skill at producing clothing could be hired out for a higher price or might even negotiate to work part-time for themselves. Most slaves, however, continued to produce domestic items, including simpler cloths and clothing, for home consumption.



Figure 8.5.1: Thomas Horner, "Broadway, New York," 1836. *Smithsonian American Art Museum*.

Similar domestic expectations played out in the slave states. Enslaved women labored in the fields. Whites argued that African American women were less delicate and womanly than white women and therefore perfectly suited for agricultural labor. The southern ideal meanwhile established that white plantation mistresses were shielded from manual labor because of their very whiteness. Throughout the slave states, however, aside from the minority of plantations with dozens of slates, most white women by necessity continued to assist with planting, harvesting, and processing agricultural projects despite the cultural stigma attached to it. White southerners continued to produce large portions of their food and clothing at home. Even when they were market-oriented producers of cash crops, white southerners still insisted that their adherence to plantation slavery and racial hierarchy made them morally superior to greedy northerners and their callous, cutthroat commerce. Southerners and northerners increasingly saw their ways of life as incompatible.

While the market revolution remade many women's economic roles, their legal status remained essentially unchanged. Upon marriage, women were rendered legally dead by the notion of coverture, the custom that counted married couples as a single unit represented by the husband. Without special precautions or interventions, women could not earn their own money, own their own property, sue, or be sued. Any money earned or spent belonged by law to their husbands. Women shopped on their husbands' credit and at any time husbands could terminate their wives' access to their credit. Although a handful of states made divorce available—divorce had before only been legal in Congregationalist states such as Massachusetts and Connecticut, where marriage was strictly a civil contract rather than a religious one—it remained extremely expensive, difficult, and rare. Marriage was typically a permanently binding legal contract.

Ideas of marriage, if not the legal realities, began to change. This period marked the beginning of the shift from "institutional" to "companionate" marriage.[43] Institutional marriages were primarily labor arrangements that maximized the couple's and their children's chances of surviving and thriving. Men and women assessed each other's skills as they related to household production, although looks and personality certainly entered into the equation. But in the late eighteenth century, under the influence of Enlightenment thought, young people began to privilege character and compatibility in their potential partners. Money was still essential: marriages prompted the largest redistributions of property prior to the settling of estates at death. But the means of this redistribution was changing. Especially in the North, land became a less important foundation for matchmaking as wealthy young men became not only farmers and merchants but bankers, clerks, or professionals. The increased emphasis on affection and attraction that young people embraced was facilitated by an increasingly complex economy that offered new ways to store, move, and create wealth, which liberalized the criteria by which families evaluated potential in-laws.

To be considered a success in family life, a middle-class American man typically aspired to own a comfortable home and to

marry a woman of strong morals and religious conviction who would take responsibility for raising virtuous, well-behaved children. The duties of the middle-class husband and wife would be clearly delineated into separate spheres. The husband alone was responsible for creating wealth and engaging in the commerce and politics—the public sphere. The wife was responsible for the private—keeping a good home, being careful with household expenses, and raising children, inculcating them with the middle-class virtues that would ensure their future success. But for poor families, sacrificing the potential economic contributions of wives and children was an impossibility.

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8.6: The Rise of Industrial Labor in Antebellum America

More than five million immigrants arrived in the United States between 1820 and 1860. Irish, German, and Jewish immigrants sought new lives and economic opportunities. By the Civil War, nearly one out of every eight Americans had been born outside the United States. A series of push and pull factors drew immigrants to the United States.

In England, an economic slump prompted Parliament to modernize British agriculture by revoking common land rights for Irish farmers. These policies generally targeted Catholics in the southern counties of Ireland and motivated many to seek greater opportunity elsewhere. The booming American economy pulled Irish immigrants toward ports along the eastern United States. Between 1820 and 1840, over 250,000 Irish immigrants arrived in the United States.[44] Without the capital and skills required to purchase and operate farms, Irish immigrants settled primarily in northeastern cities and towns and performed unskilled work. Irish men usually emigrated alone and, when possible, practiced what became known as chain migration. Chain migration allowed Irish men to send portions of their wages home, which would then be used either to support their families in Ireland or to purchase tickets for relatives to come to the United States. Irish immigration followed this pattern into the 1840s and 1850s, when the infamous Irish Famine sparked a massive exodus out of Ireland. Between 1840 and 1860, 1.7 million Irish fled starvation and the oppressive English policies that accompanied it.[45] As they entered manual, unskilled labor positions in urban America's dirtiest and most dangerous occupations, Irish workers in northern cities were compared to African Americans, and anti-immigrant newspapers portrayed them with apelike features. Despite hostility, Irish immigrants retained their social, cultural, and religious beliefs and left an indelible mark on American culture.

While the Irish settled mostly in coastal cities, most German immigrants used American ports and cities as temporary waypoints before settling in the rural countryside. Over 1.5 million immigrants from the various German states arrived in the United States during the antebellum era. Although some southern Germans fled declining agricultural conditions and repercussions of the failed revolutions of 1848, many Germans simply sought steadier economic opportunity. German immigrants tended to travel as families and carried with them skills and capital that enabled them to enter middle-class trades. Germans migrated to the Old Northwest to farm in rural areas and practiced trades in growing communities such as St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee, three cities that formed what came to be called the German Triangle.

Catholic and Jewish Germans transformed regions of the republic. Although records are sparse, New York's Jewish population rose from approximately five hundred in 1825 to forty thousand in 1860.[46] Similar gains were seen in other American cities. Jewish immigrants hailing from southwestern Germany and parts of occupied Poland moved to the United States through chain migration and as family units. Unlike other Germans, Jewish immigrants rarely settled in rural areas. Once established, Jewish immigrants found work in retail, commerce, and artisanal occupations such as tailoring. They quickly found their footing and established themselves as an intrinsic part of the American market economy. Just as Irish immigrants shaped the urban landscape through the construction of churches and Catholic schools, Jewish immigrants erected synagogues and made their mark on American culture.

The sudden influx of immigration triggered a backlash among many native-born Anglo-Protestant Americans. This nativist movement, especially fearful of the growing Catholic presence, sought to limit European immigration and prevent Catholics from establishing churches and other institutions. Popular in northern cities such as Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and other cities with large Catholic populations, nativism even spawned its own political party in the 1850s. The American Party, more commonly known as the Know-Nothing Party, found success in local and state elections throughout the North. The party even nominated candidates for president in 1852 and 1856. The rapid rise of the Know-Nothings, reflecting widespread anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant sentiment, slowed European immigration. Immigration declined precipitously after 1855 as nativism, the Crimean War, and improving economic conditions in Europe discouraged potential migrants from traveling to the United States. Only after the American Civil War would immigration levels match and eventually surpass the levels seen in the 1840s and 1850s.

In industrial northern cities, Irish immigrants swelled the ranks of the working class and quickly encountered the politics of industrial labor. Many workers formed trade unions during the early republic. Organizations such as Philadelphia's Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers or the Carpenters' Union of Boston operated within specific industries in major American cities. These unions worked to protect the economic power of their members by creating closed shops—workplaces wherein employers could only hire union members—and striking to improve working conditions. Political leaders denounced these organizations as unlawful combinations and conspiracies to promote the narrow self-interest of workers above the rights of property holders and the interests of the common good. Unions did not become legally acceptable until 1842 when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in favor of a union organized among Boston bootmakers, arguing that the workers were capable of acting "in

such a manner as best to subserve their own interests."[47] Even after the case, unions remained in a precarious legal position.



Figure 8.6.1: N. Currier, "The Propagation Society, More Free than Welcome," 1855. *Library of Congress*.

In the 1840s, labor activists organized to limit working hours and protect children in factories. The New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen (NEA) mobilized to establish a ten-hour workday across industries. They argued that the ten-hour day would improve the immediate conditions of laborers by allowing "time and opportunities for intellectual and moral improvement."[48] After a citywide strike in Boston in 1835, the Ten-Hour Movement quickly spread to other major cities such as Philadelphia. The campaign for leisure time was part of the male working-class effort to expose the hollowness of the paternalistic claims of employers and their rhetoric of moral superiority.[49]

Women, a dominant labor source for factories since the early 1800s, launched some of the earliest strikes for better conditions. Textile operatives in Lowell, Massachusetts, "turned out" (walked off) their jobs in 1834 and 1836. During the Ten-Hour Movement of the 1840s, female operatives provided crucial support. Under the leadership of Sarah Bagley, the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association organized petition drives that drew thousands of signatures from "mill girls." Like male activists, Bagley and her associates used the desire for mental improvement as a central argument for reform. An 1847 editorial in the *Voice of Industry*, a labor newspaper published by Bagley, asked, "who, after thirteen hours of steady application to monotonous work, can sit down and apply her mind to deep and long continued thought?"[50] Despite the widespread support for a ten-hour day, the movement achieved only partial success. President Martin Van Buren established a ten-hour-day policy for laborers on federal public works projects. New Hampshire passed a statewide law in 1847, and Pennsylvania followed a year later. Both states, however, allowed workers to voluntarily consent to work more than ten hours per day.

In 1842, child labor became a dominant issue in the American labor movement. The protection of child laborers gained more middle-class support than the protection of adult workers. A petition from parents in Fall River, a southern Massachusetts mill town that employed a high portion of child workers, asked the legislature for a law "prohibiting the employment of children in manufacturing establishments at an age and for a number of hours which must be permanently injurious to their health and inconsistent with the education which is essential to their welfare."[51]Massachusetts quickly passed a law prohibiting children under age twelve from working more than ten hours a day. By the midnineteenth century, every state in New England had followed Massachusetts's lead. Between the 1840s and 1860s, these statutes slowly extended the age of protection of labor and the assurance of schooling. Throughout the region, public officials agreed that young children (between ages nine and twelve) should be prevented from working in dangerous occupations, and older children (between ages twelve and fifteen) should balance their labor with education and time for leisure.[52]

Male workers sought to improve their income and working conditions to create a household that kept women and children protected within the domestic sphere. But labor gains were limited, and the movement remained moderate. Despite its challenge to industrial working conditions, labor activism in antebellum America remained largely wedded to the free labor ideal. The labor movement later supported the northern free soil movement, which challenged the spread of slavery in the 1840s, simultaneously promoting the superiority of the northern system of commerce over the southern institution of slavery while trying, much less

successfully, to reform capitalism.

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8.7: Conclusion

During the early nineteenth century, southern agriculture produced by slaves fueled northern industry produced by wage workers and managed by the new middle class. New transportation, new machinery, and new organizations of labor integrated the previously isolated pockets of the colonial economy into a national industrial operation. Industrialization and the cash economy tied diverse regions together at the same time that ideology drove Americans apart. By celebrating the freedom of contract that distinguished the wage worker from the indentured servant of previous generations or the slave in the southern cotton field, political leaders claimed the American Revolution's legacy for the North. But the rise of industrial child labor, the demands of workers to unionize, the economic vulnerability of women, and the influx of non-Anglo immigrants left many Americans questioning the meaning of liberty after the market revolution.

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8.8: Primary Sources

James Madison Asks Congress to Support Internal Improvements, 1815

After the War of 1812, Americans looked to strengthen their nation through government spending on infrastructure, or what were then called internal improvements. In his seventh annual address to congress, Madison called for public investment to create national roads, canals, and even a national seminary. He also called for a tariff, or tax on certain imports, designed to make foreign goods more expensive, giving American producers an advantage in domestic markets.

A Traveler Describes Life Along the Erie Canal, 1829

Basil Hall, a British visitor traveled along the Erie Canal and took careful notes on what he found. In this excerpt, he described life in Rochester, New York. Rochester, and other small towns in upstate New York, grew rapidly as a result of the Erie Canal.

Blacksmith Apprentice Contract, 1836

The factories and production of the Market Revolution eroded the wealth and power of skilled small business owners called artisans. This indenture contract illustrated the former way of doing things, where a young person would agree to serve for a number of years as an apprentice to a skilled artisan before venturing out on his own.

Harriet H. Robinson Remembers a Mill Workers' Strike, 1836

The social upheavals of the Market Revolution created new tensions between rich and poor, particularly between the new class of workers and the new class of managers. Lowell, Massachusetts was the location of the first American factory. In this document, a woman reminisces about a strike that she participated in at a Lowell textile mill.

Alexis de Toqueville, "How Americans Understand the Equality of the Sexes," 1840

The French political thinker Alexis de Toqueville travelled extensively through the United States in gathering research for his book Democracy In America. *In this excerpt, he described the belief that American men and women lived in "separate spheres:" men in public, women in the home. This expectation justified the denial of rights to women. All women were denied political rights in nineteenth century America, but only a small number of wealthy families could afford to remove women from economic production, like de Toqueville claimed.*

Abolitionist Sheet Music Cover Page, 1844

The "transportation revolution" shaped economic change in the early 1800s, but the massive construction of railroads also had a profound impact on American politics and culture. This sheet music title page shows how abolitionists used railroad imagery to advocate for the immediate emancipation of enslaved people and to promote their political platform before the 1844 presidential election.

Anti-Catholic Cartoon, 1855

Irish immigration transformed American cities. Yet many Americans greeted the new arrivals with suspicion or hostility. Nathanial Currier's anti-Catholic cartoon reflected the popular American perception that Irish Catholic immigrants posed a threat to the United States.

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8.9: Reference Material

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9: DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA



George Caleb Bingham, The County Election. Reynolda House Museum of American Art.

9.1: Anti-Masons, Anti-Immigrants, and the Whig Coalition

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9.1: Anti-Masons, Anti-Immigrants, and the Whig Coalition

The Whig coalition drew strength from several earlier parties, including two that harnessed American political paranoia. The Anti-Masonic Party formed in the 1820s for the purpose of destroying the Freemasons. Later, anti-immigrant sentiment formed the American Party, also called the Know-Nothings. The American Party sought and won office across the country in the 1850s, but nativism had already been an influential force, particularly in the Whig Party, whose members could not fail to notice that urban Irish Catholics strongly tended to support Democrats.

Freemasonry, an international network of social clubs with arcane traditions and rituals, seems to have originated in medieval Europe as a trade organization for stonemasons. By the eighteenth century, however, it had outgrown its relationship with the masons' craft and had become a general secular fraternal order that proclaimed adherence to the ideals of the Enlightenment.

Freemasonry was an important part of the social life of men in the new republic's elite. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Jackson, and Henry Clay all claimed membership. Prince Hall, a free leather worker in Boston, founded a separate branch of the order for African American men. However, the Masonic brotherhood's secrecy, elitism, rituals, and secular ideals generated a deep suspicion of the organization among many Americans.

In 1820s upstate New York, which was fertile soil for new religious and social reform movements, anti-Masonic suspicion would emerge for the first time as an organized political force. The trigger for this was the strange disappearance and probable murder of William Morgan. Morgan announced plans to publish an exposé called *Illustrations of Masonry*.[35] This book purported to reveal the order's secret rites, and it outraged other local Freemasons. They launched a series of attempts to prevent the book from being published, including an attempt to burn the press and a conspiracy to have Morgan jailed for alleged debts. In September, Morgan disappeared. He was last seen being forced into a carriage by four men later identified as Masons. When a corpse washed up on the shore of Lake Ontario, Morgan's wife and friends claimed at first that it was his.

The Morgan story convinced many people that Masonry was a dangerous influence in the republic. The publicity surrounding the trials transformed local outrage into a political movement that, though small, had significant power in New York and parts of New England. This movement addressed Americans' widespread dissatisfaction about economic and political change by giving them a handy explanation: the republic was controlled by a secret society.

In 1827, local anti-Masonic committees began meeting across the state of New York, committing not to vote for any political candidate who belonged to the Freemasons. This boycott grew, and in 1828, a convention in the town of LeRoy produced an "Anti-Masonic Declaration of Independence," the basis for an Anti-Masonic Party. In 1828, Anti-Masonic politicians ran for state offices in New York, winning 12 percent of the vote for governor.[36]

In 1830, the Anti-Masons held a national convention in Philadelphia. But after a dismal showing in the 1832 presidential elections, the leaders of the Anti-Masonic Party folded their movement into the new Whig Party. The Anti-Masonic Party's absorption into the Whig coalition demonstrated the importance of conspiracy theories in American politics. Just as Andrew Jackson's followers detected a vast foreign plot in the form of the Bank of the United States, some of his enemies could detect it in the form of the Freemasons. Others, called nativists, blamed immigrants.

Nativists detected many foreign threats, but Catholicism may have been the most important. Nativists watched with horror as more and more Catholic immigrants (especially from Ireland and Germany) arrived in American cities. The immigrants professed different beliefs, often spoke unfamiliar languages, and participated in alien cultural traditions. Just as importantly, nativists remembered Europe's history of warfare between Catholics and Protestants. They feared that Catholics would bring religious violence with them to the United States.

In the summer of 1834, a mob of Protestants attacked a Catholic convent near Boston. The rioters had read newspaper rumors that a woman was being held against her will by the nuns. Angry men broke into the convent and burned it to the ground. Later, a young woman named Rebecca Reed, who had spent time in the convent, published a memoir describing abuses she claimed the nuns had directed toward novices and students.[37]The convent attack was among many eruptions of nativism, especially in New England and other parts of the Northeast, during the early nineteenth century.

Many Protestants saw the Catholic faith as a superstition that deprived individuals of the right to think for themselves and enslaved them to a dictator, the pope, in Rome. They accused Catholic priests of controlling their parishioners and preying sexually on young women. They feared that Catholicism would overrun and conquer the American political system, just as their

ancestors had feared it would conquer England.

The painter and inventor Samuel F. B. Morse, for example, warned in 1834 that European tyrants were conspiring together to "carry Popery through all our borders" by sending Catholic immigrants to the United States. If they succeeded, he predicted, Catholic dominance in America would mean "the *certain destruction of our free institutions*."[38] Around the same time, the Protestant minister Lyman Beecher lectured in various cities, delivering a similar warning. "If the potentates of Europe have no design upon our liberties," Beecher demanded, then why were they sending over "such floods of pauper emigrants—the contents of the poorhouse and the sweepings of the streets—multiplying tumults and violence, filling our prisons, and crowding our poorhouses, and quadrupling our taxation"—not to mention voting in American elections?[39]

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9.2: Race and Jacksonian Democracy

More than anything else, however, it was racial inequality that exposed American democracy's limits. Over several decades, state governments had lowered their property requirements so poorer men could vote. But as northern states ended slavery, whites worried that free black men could also go to the polls in large numbers. In response, they adopted new laws that made racial discrimination the basis of American democracy.

At the time of the Revolution, only two states explicitly limited black voting rights. By 1839, almost all states did. (The four exceptions were all in New England, where the Democratic Party was weakest.) For example, New York's 1821 state constitution enfranchised nearly all white male taxpayers but only the richest black men. In 1838, a similar constitution in Pennsylvania prohibited black voting completely.

The new Pennsylvania constitution disenfranchised even one of the richest people in Philadelphia. James Forten, a free-born sailmaker who had served in the American Revolution, had become a wealthy merchant and landowner. He used his wealth and influence to promote the abolition of slavery, and after the 1838 constitution, he undertook a lawsuit to protect his right to vote. But he lost, and his voting rights were terminated. An English observer commented sarcastically that Forten wasn't "white enough" to vote, but "he has always been considered quite white enough to be *taxed*."[40]

During the 1830s, furthermore, the social tensions that had promoted Andrew Jackson's rise also worsened race relations. Almost four hundred thousand free blacks lived in America by the end of the decade.[41] In the South and West, Native Americans stood in the way of white expansion. And the new Irish Catholic immigrants, along with native working-class whites, often despised nonwhites as competitors for scarce work, housing, and status.

Racial and ethnic resentment thus contributed to a wave of riots in American cities during the 1830s. In Philadelphia, thousands of white rioters torched an antislavery meeting house and attacked black churches and homes. Near St. Louis, abolitionist newspaper editor Elijah Lovejoy was murdered as he defended his printing press. Contemplating the violence, another journalist wondered, "Does it not appear that the character of our people has suffered a considerable change for the worse?"[42]

Racial tensions also influenced popular culture. The white actor Thomas Dartmouth Rice appeared on stage in blackface, singing and dancing as a clownish slave named "Jim Crow." Many other white entertainers copied him. Borrowing from the work of real black performers but pandering to white audiences' prejudices, they turned cruel stereotypes into one of antebellum America's favorite forms of entertainment.

Some whites in the 1830s, however, joined free black activists in protesting racial inequality. Usually, they lived in northern cities and came from the class of skilled laborers, or in other words, the lower middle class. Most of them were not rich, but they expected to rise in the world.

In Boston, for example, the Female Anti-Slavery Society included women whose husbands sold coal, mended clothes, and baked bread, as well as women from wealthy families. In the nearby village of Lynn, many abolitionists were shoemakers. They organized boycotts of consumer products like sugar that came from slave labor, and they sold their own handmade goods at antislavery fund-raising fairs. For many of them, the antislavery movement was a way to participate in "respectable" middle-class culture, a way for both men and women to have a say in American life.

Debates about slavery, therefore, reflected wider tensions in a changing society. The ultimate question was whether American democracy had room for people of different races as well as religions and classes. Some people said yes and struggled to make American society more welcoming. But the vast majority, whether Democrats or Whigs, said no.

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9.3: Primary Sources

Missouri Controversy Documents, 1819-1820

Southerners dominated the highest federal offices for the first decades of the United States, as Virginians held the Presidency for nation's first thirty-two of the first thirty-six years. Northerners resented this dominance and sectional tensions simmered until they threatened to boil over in 1820 when James Tallmadge included the below amendment to Missouri's application for statehood. Included below is Tallmadge's amendment; the final act which settled the crisis, at least temporarily; and a private letter from Thomas Jefferson illustrating his reaction to the crisis.

Rhode Islanders Protest Property Restrictions on Voting, 1834

Many poor white men gained voting rights, also known as suffrage, for the first time in the 1830s. These changes in American democracy did not take place without conflict. Voting rights in Rhode Island only changed after poor Rhode Islanders raised a militia and threatened violence. Below is the proposal of many of the men who seven years later took up arms to right for voting rights.

Black Philadelphians Defend their Voting Rights, 1838

The expansion of voting rights to poor white men brought a loss of voting rights for black men. Race, rather than class, quickly became the most important social distinction in the United States. Some wealthy black men, like James Forten and Robert Purvis of Pennsylvania, lost voting rights that they previously enjoyed. In this document, Philadelphians protest the loss of their voting rights.

Andrew Jackson's Veto Message Against Re-chartering the Bank of the United States, 1832

President Andrew Jackson, like Thomas Jefferson before him, was highly suspicious of the Bank of the United States. He blamed the bank for the Panic of 1819 and for corrupting politics with too much money. After congress renewed the bank charter, Jackson vetoed the bill. The following was the message he gave to congress after issuing his veto. Jackson's decision was controversial. Some Americans accused him of acting like a dictator to redistribute wealth. Others saw the act as an attack on a corrupt system that only favored the rich.

Samuel Morse Fears a Catholic Conspiracy, 1835

Irish immigrants in the early nineteenth century filled jobs created by the Market Revolution. Their arrival provided an important source of labor for a growing economy, but many Americans worried about the influence of these arrivals. Samuel Morse, an inventor who contributed to the development of the telegraph and Morse Code, feared that Irish immigrants represented the front line of a Catholic conspiracy to destroy the United States.

County Election Painting, 1854

Beginning in the late 1840s, George Caleb Bingham created a series of paintings illustrating American democracy. He was drawn to the energy and near-chaos of speeches, rallies, election days, public announcements of voting results and more. Prior to painting this work, Bingham himself ran for state office in Missouri as a Whig. Here he shows the tumult of a county election day. Children play games, drunkards raise their glass (while political operatives drag inebriated men to the poll), citizens carefully debate the issues, while others study the newspaper. Art historians argue whether Bingham is celebrating or mocking American democracy.

Martin Van Buren Cartoon, 1837

This caricature of President Martin Van Buren cloaked in worthless bank notes was created during the Panic of 1837. The artist mocks Van Buren and the policies of his predecessor, Andrew Jackson. The cartoon includes mentions to Jackson's "Specie Circular," an order that government officials only accept gold or silver as payment for land and Van Buren's "Safety Fund," a program designed to offset the damage of bank failures. A document labeled "Indian claims" also refers to Jackson's policy of Indian Removal. These and other subtle details reveal the anxieties of economic collapse and the policy differences between Democrats and Whigs.

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9.4: Reference Material

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9.5: Introduction

On May 30, 1806, Andrew Jackson, a thirty-nine-year-old Tennessee lawyer, came within inches of death. A duelist's bullet struck him in the chest, just shy of his heart (the man who fired the gun was purportedly the best shot in Tennessee). But the wounded Jackson remained standing. Bleeding, he slowly steadied his aim and returned fire. The other man dropped to the ground, mortally wounded. Jackson—still carrying the bullet in his chest—later boasted, "I should have hit him, if he had shot me through the brain."[1]

The duel in Logan County, Kentucky, was one of many that Jackson fought during the course of his long and highly controversial career. The tenacity, toughness, and vengefulness that carried Jackson alive out of that duel, and the mythology and symbolism that would be attached to it, would also characterize many of his later dealings on the battlefield and in politics. By the time of his death almost forty years later, Andrew Jackson would become an enduring and controversial symbol, a kind of cipher to gauge the ways that various Americans thought about their country.

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9.6: Democracy in the Early Republic

Today, most Americans think democracy is a good thing. We tend to assume the nation's early political leaders believed the same. Wasn't the American Revolution a victory for democratic principles? For many of the founders, however, the answer was no.

A wide variety of people participated in early U.S. politics, especially at the local level. But ordinary citizens' growing direct influence on government frightened the founding elites. At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Alexander Hamilton warned of the "vices of democracy" and said he considered the British government—with its powerful king and parliament—"the best in the world."[2] Another convention delegate, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, who eventually refused to sign the finished Constitution, agreed. "The evils we experience flow from an excess of democracy," he proclaimed.[3]

Too much participation by the multitudes, the elite believed, would undermine good order. It would prevent the creation of a secure and united republican society. The Philadelphia physician and politician Benjamin Rush, for example, sensed that the Revolution had launched a wave of popular rebelliousness that could lead to a dangerous new type of despotism. "In our opposition to monarchy," he wrote, "we forgot that the temple of tyranny has two doors. We bolted one of them by proper restraints; but we left the other open, by neglecting to guard against the effects of our own ignorance and licentiousness."[4]

Such warnings did nothing to quell Americans' democratic impulses in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Americans who were allowed to vote (and sometimes those who weren't) went to the polls in impressive numbers. Citizens also made public demonstrations. They delivered partisan speeches at patriotic holiday and anniversary celebrations. They petitioned Congress, openly criticized the president, and insisted that a free people should not defer even to elected leaders. In many people's eyes, the American republic was a *democratic* republic: the people were sovereign all the time, not only on election day.

The elite leaders of political parties could not afford to overlook "the cultivation of popular favour," as Alexander Hamilton put it.[5] Between the 1790s and 1830s, the elite of every state and party learned to listen—or pretend to listen—to the voices of the multitudes. And ironically, an American president, holding the office that most resembles a king's, would come to symbolize the democratizing spirit of American politics.

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9.7: The Missouri Crisis

A more troubling pattern was also emerging in national politics and culture. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, American politics shifted toward “sectional” conflict among the states of the North, South, and West.

Since the ratification of the Constitution in 1789, the state of Virginia had wielded more influence on the federal government than any other state. Four of the first five presidents, for example, were from Virginia. Immigration caused by the market revolution, however, caused the country’s population to grow fastest in northern states like New York. Northern political leaders were becoming wary of what they perceived to be a disproportionate influence in federal politics by Virginia and other southern states.

Furthermore, many northerners feared that the southern states’ common interest in protecting slavery was creating a congressional voting bloc that would be difficult for “free states” to overcome. The North and South began to clash over federal policy as northern states gradually ended slavery but southern states came to depend even more on slave labor.

The most important instance of these rising tensions erupted in the Missouri Crisis. When white settlers in Missouri, a new territory carved out of the Louisiana Purchase, applied for statehood in 1819, the balance of political power between northern and southern states became the focus of public debate. Missouri already had more than ten thousand slaves and was poised to join the southern slave states in Congress.[6]

Accordingly, Congressman James Tallmadge of New York proposed an amendment to Missouri’s application for statehood. Tallmadge claimed that the institution of slavery mocked the Declaration of Independence and the liberty it promised to “all men.” He proposed that Congress should admit Missouri as a state only if bringing more slaves to Missouri were prohibited and children born to the slaves there were freed at age twenty-five.

Congressmen like Tallmadge opposed slavery for moral reasons, but they also wanted to maintain a sectional balance of power. Unsurprisingly, the Tallmadge Amendment met with firm resistance from southern politicians. It passed in the House of Representatives because of the support of nearly all the northern congressmen, who had a majority there, but it was quickly defeated in the Senate.

When Congress reconvened in 1820, a senator from Illinois, another new western state, proposed a compromise. Jesse Thomas hoped his offer would not only end the Missouri Crisis but also prevent any future sectional disputes over slavery and statehood. Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky joined in promoting the deal, earning himself the nickname “the Great Compromiser.”

Their bargain, the Missouri Compromise of 1820, contained three parts.[7] First, Congress would admit Missouri as a slave state. Second, Congress would admit Maine (which until now had been a territory of Massachusetts) as a free state, maintaining the balance between the number of free and slave states. Third, the rest of the Louisiana Purchase territory would be divided along the 36°30’ line of latitude—or in other words, along the southern border of Missouri. Slavery would be prohibited in other new states north of this line, but it would be permitted in new states to the south. The compromise passed both houses of Congress, and the Missouri Crisis ended peacefully.

Not everyone, however, felt relieved. The Missouri Crisis made the sectional nature of American politics impossible to ignore. The Missouri Crisis split the Democratic-Republican party entirely along sectional lines, suggesting trouble to come.

Worse, the Missouri Crisis demonstrated the volatility of the slavery debate. Many Americans, including seventy-seven-year-old Thomas Jefferson, were alarmed at how readily some Americans spoke of disunion and even civil war over the issue. “This momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror,” Jefferson wrote. “I considered it at once as the [death] knell of the Union.”[8]

For now, the Missouri Crisis did not result in disunion and civil war as Jefferson and others feared. But it also failed to settle the issue of slavery’s expansion into new western territories. The issue would cause worse trouble in years ahead.

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9.8: The Rise of Andrew Jackson

The career of Andrew Jackson (1767–1845), the survivor of that backcountry Kentucky duel in 1806, exemplified both the opportunities and the dangers of political life in the early republic. A lawyer, slaveholder, and general—and eventually the seventh president of the United States—he rose from humble frontier beginnings to become one of the most powerful Americans of the nineteenth century.

Andrew Jackson was born on March 15, 1767, on the border between North and South Carolina, to two immigrants from northern Ireland. He grew up during dangerous times. At age thirteen, he joined an American militia unit in the Revolutionary War. He was soon captured, and a British officer slashed at his head with a sword after he refused to shine the officer's shoes. Disease during the war had claimed the lives of his two brothers and his mother, leaving him an orphan. Their deaths and his wounds had left Jackson with a deep and abiding hatred of Great Britain.

After the war, Jackson moved west to frontier Tennessee, where despite his poor education, he prospered, working as a lawyer and acquiring land and slaves. (He would eventually come to keep 150 slaves at the Hermitage, his plantation near Nashville.) In 1796, Jackson was elected as a U.S. representative, and a year later he won a seat in the Senate, although he resigned within a year, citing financial difficulties.

Thanks to his political connections, Jackson obtained a general's commission at the outbreak of the War of 1812. Despite having no combat experience, General Jackson quickly impressed his troops, who nicknamed him "Old Hickory" after a particularly tough kind of tree.

Jackson led his militiamen into battle in the Southeast, first during the Creek War, a side conflict that started between different factions of Muskogee (Creek) Indians in present-day Alabama. In that war, he won a decisive victory over hostile fighters at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814. A year later, he also defeated a large British invasion force at the Battle of New Orleans. There, Jackson's troops—including backwoods militiamen, free African Americans, Indians, and a company of slave-trading pirates—successfully defended the city and inflicted more than two thousand casualties against the British, sustaining barely three hundred casualties of their own.[9] The Battle of New Orleans was a thrilling victory for the United States, but it actually happened several days after a peace treaty was signed in Europe to end the war. News of the treaty had not yet reached New Orleans.

The end of the War of 1812 did not end Jackson's military career. In 1818, as commander of the U.S. southern military district, Jackson also launched an invasion of Spanish-owned Florida. He was acting on vague orders from the War Department to break the resistance of the region's Seminole Indians, who protected runaway slaves and attacked American settlers across the border. On Jackson's orders in 1816, U.S. soldiers and their Creek allies had already destroyed the "Negro Fort," a British-built fortress on Spanish soil, killing 270 former slaves and executing some survivors.[10] In 1818, Jackson's troops crossed the border again. They occupied Pensacola, the main Spanish town in the region, and arrested two British subjects, whom Jackson executed for helping the Seminoles. The execution of these two Britons created an international diplomatic crisis.

Most officials in President James Monroe's administration called for Jackson's censure. But Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, the son of former president John Adams, found Jackson's behavior useful. He defended the impulsive general, arguing that he had had been forced to act. Adams used Jackson's military successes in this First Seminole War to persuade Spain to accept the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, which gave Florida to the United States.



Figure 9.8.1: Images like this—showing a young Jackson defending his family from a British officer—established Jackson's legend. Currier & Ives, The Brave Boy of the Waxhaws, 1876. *Wikimedia*.

Any friendliness between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, however, did not survive long. In 1824, four nominees competed for the presidency in one of the closest elections in American history. Each came from a different part of the country—Adams from Massachusetts, Jackson from Tennessee, William H. Crawford from Georgia, and Henry Clay from Kentucky. Jackson won more popular votes than anyone else. But with no majority winner in the Electoral College, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. There, Adams used his political clout to claim the presidency, persuading Clay to support him. Jackson would never forgive Adams, whom his supporters accused of engineering a "corrupt bargain" with Clay to circumvent the popular will.

Four years later, in 1828, Adams and Jackson squared off in one of the dirtiest presidential elections to date.[11] Pro-Jackson partisans accused Adams of elitism and claimed that while serving in Russia as a diplomat he had offered the Russian emperor an American prostitute. Adams's supporters, on the other hand, accused Jackson of murder and attacked the morality of his marriage, pointing out that Jackson had unwittingly married his wife Rachel before the divorce on her prior marriage was complete. This time, Andrew Jackson won the election easily, but Rachel Jackson died suddenly before his inauguration. Jackson would never forgive the people who attacked his wife's character during the campaign.

In 1828, Jackson's broad appeal as a military hero won him the presidency. He was "Old Hickory," the "Hero of New Orleans," a leader of plain frontier folk. His wartime accomplishments appealed to many voters' pride. Over the next eight years, he would claim to represent the interests of ordinary white Americans, especially from the South and West, against the country's wealthy and powerful elite. This attitude would lead him and his allies into a series of bitter political struggles.

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9.9: The Nullification Crisis

Nearly every American had an opinion about President Jackson. To some, he epitomized democratic government and popular rule. To others, he represented the worst in a powerful and unaccountable executive, acting as president with the same arrogance he had shown as a general in Florida. One of the key issues dividing Americans during his presidency was a sectional dispute over national tax policy that would come to define Jackson's no-holds-barred approach to government.

Once Andrew Jackson moved into the White House, most southerners expected him to do away with the hated Tariff of 1828, the so-called Tariff of Abominations. This import tax provided protection for northern manufacturing interests by raising the prices of European products in America. Southerners, however, blamed the tariff for a massive transfer of wealth. It forced them to purchase goods from the North's manufacturers at higher prices, and it provoked European countries to retaliate with high tariffs of their own, reducing foreign purchases of the South's raw materials.

Only in South Carolina, though, did the discomfort turn into organized action. The state was still trying to shrug off the economic problems of the Panic of 1819, but it had also recently endured the Denmark Vesey slave conspiracy, which convinced white South Carolinians that antislavery ideas put them in danger of a massive slave uprising.

Elite South Carolinians were especially worried that the tariff was merely an entering wedge for federal legislation that would limit slavery. Andrew Jackson's own vice president, John C. Calhoun, who was from South Carolina, asserted that the tariff was "the occasion, rather than the real cause of the present unhappy state of things." The real fear was that the federal government might attack "the peculiar domestick institution of the Southern States"—meaning slavery.[12] When Jackson failed to act against the tariff, Vice President Calhoun was caught in a tight position.

In 1828, Calhoun secretly drafted the "South Carolina Exposition and Protest," an essay and set of resolutions that laid out the doctrine of nullification."[13] Drawing from the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798 and 1799, Calhoun argued that the United States was a compact among the states rather than among the whole American people. Since the states had created the Union, he reasoned, they were still sovereign, so a state could nullify a federal statute it considered unconstitutional. Other states would then have to concede the right of nullification or agree to amend the Constitution. If necessary, a nullifying state could leave the Union.

When Calhoun's authorship of the essay became public, Jackson was furious, interpreting it both as a personal betrayal and as a challenge to his authority as president. His most dramatic confrontation with Calhoun came in 1832 during a commemoration for Thomas Jefferson. At dinner, the president rose and toasted, "Our Federal Union: it must be preserved." Calhoun responded with a toast of his own: "The Union: next to our Liberty the most dear."[14] Their divorce was not pretty. Martin Van Buren, a New York political leader whose skill in making deals had earned him the nickname "the Little Magician," replaced Calhoun as vice president when Jackson ran for reelection in 1832.

Calhoun returned to South Carolina, where a special state convention nullified the federal tariffs of 1828 and 1832. It declared them unconstitutional and therefore "null, void, and no law" within South Carolina.[15] The convention ordered South Carolina customs officers not to collect tariff revenue and declared that any federal attempt to enforce the tariffs would cause the state to secede from the Union.

President Jackson responded dramatically. He denounced the ordinance of nullification and declared that "disunion, by armed force, is TREASON."[16] Vowing to hang Calhoun and any other nullifier who defied federal power, he persuaded Congress to pass a Force Bill that authorized him to send the military to enforce the tariffs. Faced with such threats, other southern states declined to join South Carolina. Privately, however, Jackson supported the idea of compromise and allowed his political enemy Henry Clay to broker a solution with Calhoun. Congress passed a compromise bill that slowly lowered federal tariff rates. South Carolina rescinded nullification for the tariffs but nullified the Force Bill.

The legacy of the Nullification Crisis is difficult to sort out. Jackson's decisive action seemed to have forced South Carolina to back down. But the crisis also united the ideas of secession and states' rights, two concepts that had not necessarily been linked before. Perhaps most clearly, nullification showed that the immense political power of slaveholders was matched only by their immense anxiety about the future of slavery. During later debates in the 1840s and 1850s, they would raise the ideas of the Nullification Crisis again.

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9.10: The Eaton Affair and the Politics of Sexuality

Meanwhile, a more personal crisis during Jackson's first term also drove a wedge between him and Vice President Calhoun. The Eaton Affair, sometimes insultingly called the "Petticoat Affair," began as a disagreement among elite women in Washington, D.C., but it eventually led to the disbanding of Jackson's cabinet.

True to his backwoods reputation, when he took office in 1829, President Jackson chose mostly provincial politicians, not Washington veterans, to serve in his administration. One of them was his friend John Henry Eaton, a senator from Tennessee, whom Jackson nominated to be his secretary of war.

A few months earlier, Eaton had married Margaret O'Neale Timberlake, the recent widow of a navy officer. She was the daughter of Washington boardinghouse proprietors, and her humble origins and combination of beauty, outspokenness, and familiarity with so many men in the boardinghouse had led to gossip. During her first marriage, rumors had circulated that she and John Eaton were having an affair while her husband was at sea. When her first husband committed suicide and she married Eaton just nine months later, the society women of Washington had been scandalized. One wrote that Margaret Eaton's reputation had been "totally destroyed."[17]



Figure 9.10.1: This photograph shows Eaton at a much older age. "Eaton, Mrs. Margaret (Peggy O'Neill), old lady," c. 1870-1880. *Library of Congress*.

John Eaton was now secretary of war, but other cabinet members' wives refused have anything to do with his wife. No respectable lady who wanted to protect her own reputation could exchange visits with her, invite her to social events, or be seen chatting with her. Most importantly, the vice president's wife, Floride Calhoun, shunned Margaret Eaton, spending most of her time in South Carolina to avoid her. Even Jackson's own niece, Emily Donelson, visited Eaton once and then refused to have anything more to do with her.

Although women could not vote or hold office, they played an important role in politics as people who controlled influence.[18] They helped hold official Washington together. And according to one local society woman, "the ladies" had "as much rivalship and party spirit, desire of precedence and authority" as male politicians had.[19] These women upheld a strict code of femininity and sexual morality. They paid careful attention to the rules that governed personal interactions and official relationships.

Margaret Eaton's social exclusion thus greatly affected Jackson, his cabinet, and the rest of Washington society. At first, President Jackson blamed his rival Henry Clay for the attacks on the Eatons. But he soon perceived that Washington women and his new cabinet had initiated the gossip. Jackson scoffed, "I did not come here to make a cabinet for the ladies of this place," and claimed that he "had rather have live vermin on my back than the tongue of one of these Washington women on my reputation."[20] He began to blame the ambition of Vice President Calhoun for Floride Calhoun's actions, deciding "it was necessary to put him out

of the cabinet and destroy him."[21]

Jackson was so indignant because he had recently been through a similar scandal with his late wife, Rachel. Her character, too, had been insulted by leading politicians' wives because of the circumstances of her marriage. Jackson believed that Rachel's death had been caused by those slanderous attacks. Furthermore, he saw the assaults on the Eatons as attacks on his authority.

In one of the most famous presidential meetings in American history, Jackson called together his cabinet members to discuss what they saw as the bedrock of society: women's position as protectors of the nation's values. There, the men of the cabinet debated Margaret Eaton's character. Jackson delivered a long defense, methodically presenting evidence against her attackers. But the men attending the meeting—and their wives—were not swayed. They continued to shun Margaret Eaton, and the scandal was resolved only with the resignation of four members of the cabinet, including Eaton's husband.

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9.11: The Bank War

Andrew Jackson's first term was full of controversy. For all of his reputation as a military and political warrior, however, the most characteristic struggle of his presidency was financial. As president, he waged a "war" against the Bank of the United States.

The charter of the controversial national bank that Congress established under Alexander Hamilton's financial plan had expired in 1811. But five years later, Congress had given a new charter to the Second Bank of the United States. Headquartered in Philadelphia, the bank was designed to stabilize the growing American economy. By requiring other banks to pay their debts promptly in gold, it was supposed to prevent them from issuing too many paper banknotes that could drop suddenly in value. Of course, the Bank of the United States was also supposed to reap a healthy profit for its private stockholders, like the Philadelphia banker Stephen Girard and the New York merchant John Jacob Astor.

Though many Democratic-Republicans had supported the new bank, some never gave up their Jeffersonian suspicion that such a powerful institution was dangerous to the republic. Andrew Jackson was one of the skeptics. He and many of his supporters blamed the bank for the Panic of 1819, which had become a severe economic depression. The national bank had made that crisis worse, first by lending irresponsibly and then, when the panic hit, by hoarding gold currency to save itself at the expense of smaller banks and their customers. Jackson's supporters also believed the bank had corrupted many politicians by giving them financial favors.

In 1829, after a few months in office, Jackson set his sights on the bank and its director, Nicholas Biddle. Jackson became more and more insistent over the next three years as Biddle and the bank's supporters fought to save it. A visiting Frenchman observed that Jackson had "declared a war to the death against the Bank," attacking it "in the same cut-and-thrust style" with which he had once fought the Indians and the British. For Jackson, the struggle was a personal crisis. "The Bank is trying to kill me," he told Martin Van Buren, "but I will kill it!"[22]

The bank's charter was not due for renewal for several years, but in 1832, while Jackson was running for reelection, Congress held an early vote to reauthorize the Bank of the United States. The president vetoed the bill.

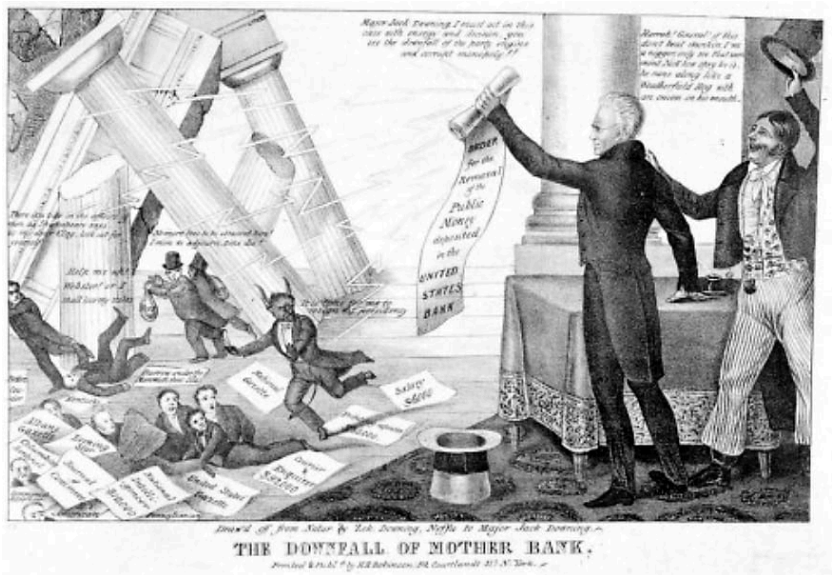


Figure 9.11.1: "The bank," Andrew Jackson told Martin Van Buren, "is trying to kill me, but I will kill it!" That is just the unwavering force that Edward Clay depicted in this lithograph, which praised Jackson for terminating the Second Bank of the United States. Clay shows Nicholas Biddle as the Devil running away from Jackson as the bank collapses around him, his hirelings, and speculators. Edward W. Clay, c. 1832. Wikimedia.

In his veto message, Jackson called the bank unconstitutional and "dangerous to the liberties of the people." The charter, he explained, didn't do enough to protect the bank from its British stockholders, who might not have Americans' interests at heart. In addition, Jackson wrote, the Bank of the United States was virtually a federal agency, but it had powers that were not granted anywhere in the Constitution. Worst of all, the bank was a way for well-connected people to get richer at everyone else's expense.

"The rich and powerful," the president declared, "too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes."[23] Only a strictly limited government, Jackson believed, would treat people equally.

Although its charter would not be renewed, the Bank of the United States could still operate for several more years. So in 1833, to diminish its power, Jackson also directed his cabinet to stop depositing federal funds in it. From now on, the government would do business with selected state banks instead. Critics called them Jackson's "pet banks."

Jackson's bank veto set off fierce controversy. Opponents in Philadelphia held a meeting and declared that the president's ideas were dangerous to private property. Jackson, they said, intended to "place the honest earnings of the industrious citizen at the disposal of the idle"—in other words, redistribute wealth to lazy people—and become a "dictator."[24] A newspaper editor said that Jackson was trying to set "the poor against the rich," perhaps in order to take over as a military tyrant.[25] But Jackson's supporters praised him. Pro-Jackson newspaper editors wrote that he had kept a "monied aristocracy" from conquering the people.[26]

By giving President Jackson a vivid way to defy the rich and powerful, or at least appear to do so, the Bank War gave his supporters a specific "democratic" idea to rally around. More than any other issue, opposition to the national bank came to define their beliefs. And by leading Jackson to exert executive power so dramatically against Congress, the Bank War also helped his political enemies organize.

Increasingly, supporters of Andrew Jackson referred to themselves as Democrats. Under the strategic leadership of Martin Van Buren, they built a highly organized national political party, the first modern party in the United States. Much more than earlier political parties, this Democratic Party had a centralized leadership structure and a consistent ideological program for all levels of government. Meanwhile, Jackson's enemies, mocking him as "King Andrew the First," named themselves after the patriots of the American Revolution, the Whigs.

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9.12: The Panic of 1837

Unfortunately for Jackson's Democrats (and most other Americans), their victory over the Bank of the United States worsened rather than solved the country's economic problems.

Things looked good initially. Between 1834 and 1836, a combination of high cotton prices, freely available foreign and domestic credit, and an infusion of specie ("hard" currency in the form of gold and silver) from Europe spurred a sustained boom in the American economy. At the same time, sales of western land by the federal government promoted speculation and poorly regulated lending practices, creating a vast real estate bubble.

Meanwhile, the number of state-chartered banks grew from 329 in 1830 to 713 just six years later. As a result, the volume of paper banknotes per capita in circulation in the United States increased by 40 percent between 1834 and 1836. Low interest rates in Great Britain also encouraged British capitalists to make risky investments in America. British lending across the Atlantic surged, raising American foreign indebtedness from $110 million to $220 million over the same two years.[27]

As the boom accelerated, banks became more careless about the amount of hard currency they kept on hand to redeem their banknotes. And although Jackson had hoped his bank veto would reduce bankers' and speculators' power over the economy, it actually made the problems worse.

Two further federal actions late in the Jackson administration also worsened the situation. In June 1836, Congress decided to increase the number of banks receiving federal deposits. This plan undermined the banks that were already receiving federal money, since they saw their funds distributed to other banks. Next, seeking to reduce speculation on credit, the Treasury Department issued an order called the Specie Circular in July 1836, requiring payment in hard currency for all federal land purchases. As a result, land buyers drained eastern banks of even more gold and silver.

By late fall in 1836, America's economic bubbles began to burst. Federal land sales plummeted. The *New York Herald* reported that "lands in Illinois and Indiana that were cracked up to $10 an acre last year, are now to be got at $3, and even less." The newspaper warned darkly, "The reaction has begun, and nothing can stop it."[28]

Runs on banks began in New York on May 4, 1837, as panicked customers scrambled to exchange their banknotes for hard currency. By May 10, the New York banks, running out of gold and silver, stopped redeeming their notes. As news spread, banks around the nation did the same. By May 15, the largest crowd in Pennsylvania history had amassed outside Independence Hall in Philadelphia, denouncing banking as a "system of fraud and oppression."[29]

The Panic of 1837 led to a general economic depression. Between 1839 and 1843, the total capital held by American banks dropped by 40 percent as prices fell and economic activity around the nation slowed to a crawl. The price of cotton in New Orleans, for instance, dropped 50 percent.[30]

Traveling through New Orleans in January 1842, a British diplomat reported that the country "presents a lamentable appearance of exhaustion and demoralization."[31] Over the previous decade, the American economy had soared to fantastic new heights and plunged to dramatic new depths.

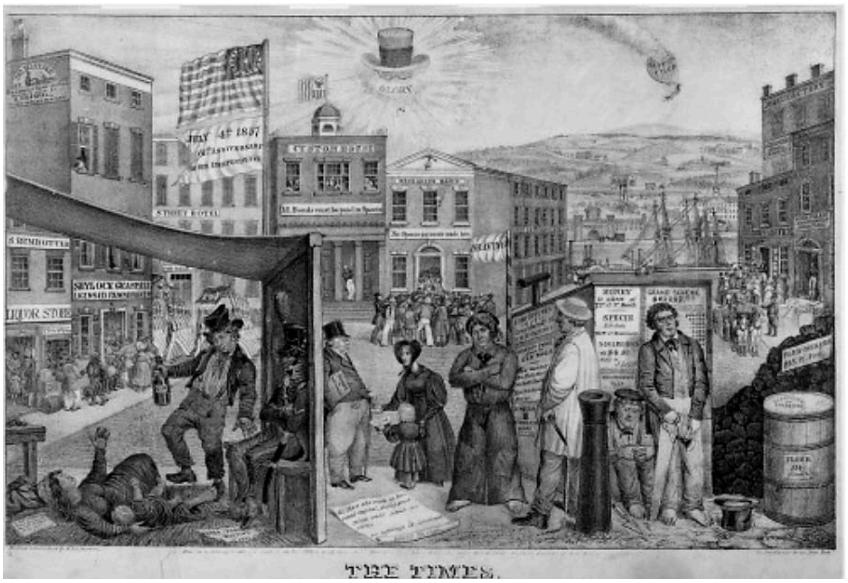


Figure 9.12.1: Many Americans blamed the Panic of 1837 on the economic policies of Andrew Jackson, who is sarcastically represented in the lithograph as the sun with top hat, spectacle, and a banner of “Glory” around him. The destitute people in the foreground (representing the common man) are suffering while a prosperous attorney rides in an elegant carriage in the background (right side of frame). Edward W. Clay, “The Times,” 1837. *Wikimedia*.

Normal banking activity did not resume around the nation until late 1842. Meanwhile, two hundred banks closed, cash and credit became scarce, prices declined, and trade slowed. During this downturn, eight states and a territorial government defaulted on loans made by British banks to finance internal improvements.[32]

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9.13: Rise of the Whigs

The disaster of the Panic of 1837 created an opportunity for the Whig Party, which had grown partly out of the political coalition of John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay and opposed Andrew Jackson and the Democratic Party. The National Republicans, a loose alliance concentrated in the Northeast, had become the core of a new anti-Jackson movement. But Jackson's enemies were a varied group; they included pro-slavery southerners angry about Jackson's behavior during the Nullification Crisis as well as antislavery Yankees.

After they failed to prevent Andrew Jackson's reelection, this fragile coalition formally organized as a new party in 1834 "to rescue the Government and public liberty."[33] Henry Clay, who had run against Jackson for president and was now serving again as a senator from Kentucky, held private meetings to persuade anti-Jackson leaders from different backgrounds to unite. He also gave the new Whig Party its anti-monarchical name.

At first, the Whigs focused mainly on winning seats in Congress, opposing "King Andrew" from outside the presidency. They remained divided by regional and ideological differences. The Democratic presidential candidate, Vice President Martin Van Buren, easily won election as Jackson's successor in 1836. But the Whigs gained significant public support after the Panic of 1837, and they became increasingly well organized. In late 1839, they held their first national convention in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.



Figure 9.13.1: Andrew Jackson portrayed himself as the defender of the common man, and in many ways he democratized American politics. His opponents, however, zeroed in on Jackson's willingness to utilize the powers of the executive office. Unwilling to defer to Congress and absolutely willing to use his veto power, Jackson came to be regarded by his adversaries as a tyrant (or, in this case, "King Andrew I".) Anonymous, c. 1832. *Wikimedia*.

To Henry Clay's disappointment, the convention voted to nominate not him but General William Henry Harrison of Ohio as the Whig candidate for president in 1840. Harrison was known primarily for defeating Shawnee warriors led by Tecumseh before and during the War of 1812, most famously at the Battle of Tippecanoe in present-day Indiana. Whig leaders viewed him as a candidate with broad patriotic appeal. They portrayed him as the "log cabin and hard cider" candidate, a plain man of the country, unlike the easterner Martin Van Buren. To balance the ticket with a southerner, the Whigs nominated a slave-owning Virginia senator, John Tyler, for vice president. Tyler had been a Jackson supporter but had broken with him over states' rights during the Nullification Crisis.

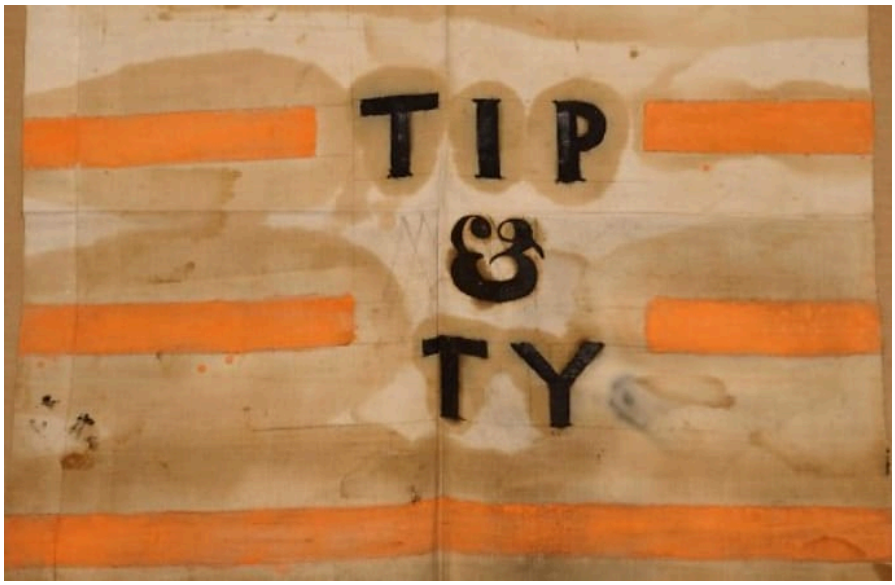


Figure 9.13.2: The popular slogan “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too” helped the Whigs and William Henry Harrison (with John Tyler) win the presidential election in 1840. Pictured here is a campaign banner with shortened “Tip and Ty,” one of the many ways that Whigs waged the “log cabin campaign,” *Wikimedia*.

Although “Tippecanoe and Tyler Too” easily won the presidential election of 1840, this choice of ticket turned out to be disastrous for the Whigs. Harrison became ill (for unclear reasons, though tradition claims he contracted pneumonia after delivering a nearly two-hour inaugural address without an overcoat or hat) and died after just thirty-one days in office. Harrison thus holds the ironic honor of having the longest inaugural address and the shortest term in office of any American president.[34] Vice President Tyler became president and soon adopted policies that looked far more like Andrew Jackson’s than like a Whig’s. After Tyler twice vetoed charters for another Bank of the United States, nearly his entire cabinet resigned, and the Whigs in Congress expelled “His Accidency” from the party.

The crisis of Tyler’s administration was just one sign of the Whig Party’s difficulty uniting around issues besides opposition to Democrats. The Whig Party succeeded in electing two more presidents but remained deeply divided. Its problems grew as the issue of slavery strained the Union in the 1850s. Unable to agree on a consistent national position on slavery, and unable to find another national issue to rally around, the Whigs broke apart by 1856.

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10: RELIGION AND REFORM



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10.1: Introduction

The early nineteenth century was a period of immense change in the United States. Economic, political, demographic, and territorial transformations radically altered how Americans thought about themselves, their communities, and the rapidly expanding nation. It was a period of great optimism, with the possibilities of self-governance infusing everything from religion to politics. Yet it was also a period of great conflict, as the benefits of industrialization and democratization increasingly accrued along starkly uneven lines of gender, race, and class. Westward expansion distanced urban dwellers from frontier settlers more than ever before, even as the technological innovations of industrialization—like the telegraph and railroads—offered exciting new ways to maintain communication. The spread of democracy opened the franchise to nearly all white men, but urbanization and a dramatic influx of European migration increased social tensions and class divides.

Americans looked on these changes with a mixture of enthusiasm and suspicion, wondering how the moral fabric of the new nation would hold up to emerging social challenges. Increasingly, many turned to two powerful tools to help understand and manage the various transformations: spiritual revivalism and social reform. Reacting to the rationalism of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the religious revivals of the Second Great Awakening reignited Protestant spirituality during the early nineteenth century. The revivals incorporated worshippers into an expansive religious community that crisscrossed all regions of the United States and armed them with a potent evangelical mission. Many emerged from these religious revivals with a conviction that human society could be changed to look more heavenly. They joined their spiritual networks to rapidly developing social reform networks that sought to alleviate social ills and eradicate moral vice. Tackling numerous issues, including alcoholism, slavery, and the inequality of women, reformers worked tirelessly to remake the world around them. While not all these initiatives were successful, the zeal of reform and the spiritual rejuvenation that inspired it were key facets of antebellum life and society.

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10.2: Revival and Religious Change

In the early nineteenth century, a succession of religious revivals collectively known as the Second Great Awakening remade the nation's religious landscape. Revivalist preachers traveled on horseback, sharing the message of spiritual and moral renewal to as many as possible. Residents of urban centers, rural farmlands, and frontier territories alike flocked to religious revivals and camp meetings, where intense physical and emotional enthusiasm accompanied evangelical conversion.

The Second Great Awakening emerged in response to powerful intellectual and social currents. Camp meetings captured the democratizing spirit of the American Revolution, but revivals also provided a unifying moral order and new sense of spiritual community for Americans struggling with the great changes of the day. The market revolution, western expansion, and European immigration all challenged traditional bonds of authority, and evangelicalism promised equal measures of excitement and order. Revivals spread like wildfire throughout the United States, swelling church membership, spawning new Christian denominations, and inspiring social reform.

One of the earliest and largest revivals of the Second Great Awakening occurred in Cane Ridge, Kentucky, over a one-week period in August 1801. The Cane Ridge Revival drew thousands of people, and possibly as many as one of every ten residents of Kentucky.[1] Though large crowds had previously gathered annually in rural areas each late summer or fall to receive communion, this assembly was very different.[2] Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian preachers all delivered passionate sermons, exhorting the crowds to strive for their own salvation. They preached from inside buildings, evangelized outdoors under the open sky, and even used tree stumps as makeshift pulpits, all to reach their enthusiastic audiences in any way possible. Women, too, exhorted, in a striking break with common practice. Attendees, moved by the preachers' fervor, responded by crying, jumping, speaking in tongues, or even fainting.[3]

Events like the Cane Ridge Revival did spark significant changes in Americans' religious affiliations. Many revivalists abandoned the comparatively formal style of worship observed in the well-established Congregationalist and Episcopalian churches and instead embraced more impassioned forms of worship that included the spontaneous jumping, shouting, and gesturing found in new and alternative denominations. The ranks of Christian denominations such as the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians swelled precipitously alongside new denominations such as the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The evangelical fire reached such heights, in fact, that one swath of western and central New York state came to be known as the Burned-Over District. Charles Grandison Finney, the influential revivalist preacher who first coined the term, explained that the residents of this area had experienced so many revivals by different religious groups that that there were no more souls to awaken to the fire of spiritual conversion.[4]

Removing the government support of churches created what historians call the American spiritual marketplace. Methodism achieved the most remarkable success, enjoying the most significant denominational increase in American history. By 1850, Methodism was by far the most popular American denomination. The Methodist denomination grew from fewer than one thousand members at the end of the eighteenth century to constitute 34 percent of all American church membership by the midnineteenth century.[5] After its leaders broke with the Church of England to form a new American denomination in 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) achieved its growth through innovation. Methodists used itinerant preachers, known as circuit riders. These men (and the occasional woman) won converts by pushing west with the expanding United States over the Alleghenies and into the Ohio River Valley, bringing religion to new settlers hungry to have their spiritual needs attended. Circuit riding took preachers into homes, meetinghouses, and churches, all mapped out at regular intervals that collectively took about two weeks to complete.

Revolutionary ideals also informed a substantial theological critique of orthodox Calvinism that had far-reaching consequences for religious individuals and for society as a whole. Calvinists believed that all of humankind was marred by sin, and God predestined only some for salvation. These attitudes began to seem too pessimistic for many American Christians. Worshippers increasingly began to take responsibility for their own spiritual fates by embracing theologies that emphasized human action in effecting salvation, and revivalist preachers were quick to recognize the importance of these cultural shifts. Radical revivalist preachers, such as Charles Grandison Finney, put theological issues aside and evangelized by appealing to worshippers' hearts and emotions. Even more conservative spiritual leaders, such as Lyman Beecher of the Congregational Church, appealed to younger generations of Americans by adopting a less orthodox approach to Calvinist doctrine.[6] Though these men did not see eye to eye, they both contributed to the emerging consensus that all souls are equal in salvation and that all people can be saved by surrendering to God. This idea of spiritual egalitarianism was one of the most important transformations to emerge out of the

Second Great Awakening.

Spiritual egalitarianism dovetailed neatly with an increasingly democratic United States. In the process of winning independence from Britain, the revolution weakened the power of long-standing social hierarchies and the codes of conduct that went along with them. The democratizing ethos opened the door for a more egalitarian approach to spiritual leadership. Whereas preachers of long-standing denominations like the Congregationalists were required to have a divinity degree and at least some theological training in order to become spiritual leaders, many alternative denominations only required a conversion experience and a supernatural "call to preach." This meant, for example, that a twenty-year-old man could go from working in a mill to being a full-time circuit-riding preacher for the Methodists practically overnight. Indeed, their emphasis on spiritual egalitarianism over formal training enabled Methodists to outpace spiritual competition during this period. Methodists attracted more new preachers to send into the field, and the lack of formal training meant that individual preachers could be paid significantly less than a Congregationalist preacher with a divinity degree.

In addition to the divisions between evangelical and nonevangelical denominations wrought by the Second Great Awakening, the revivals and subsequent evangelical growth also revealed strains within the Methodist and Baptist churches. Each witnessed several schisms during the 1820s and 1830s as reformers advocated for a return to the practices and policies of an earlier generation. Many others left mainstream Protestantism altogether, opting instead to form their own churches. Some, like Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, proposed a return to (or "restoration" of) New Testament Christianity, stripped of centuries of additional teachings and practices.[7] Other restorationists built on the foundation laid by the evangelical churches by using their methods and means to both critique the Protestant mainstream and move beyond the accepted boundaries of contemporary Christian orthodoxy. Self-declared prophets claimed that God had called them to establish new churches and introduce new (or, in their understanding, restore *lost*) teachings, forms of worship, and even scripture.

Mormon founder Joseph Smith, for example, claimed that God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him in a vision in a grove of trees near his boyhood home in upstate New York and commanded him to "join none of [the existing churches], for they are all wrong."[8] Subsequent visitations from angelic beings revealed to Smith the location of a buried record, purportedly containing the writings and histories of an ancient Christian civilization on the American continent. Smith published the Book of Mormon in early 1830 and organized the Church of Christ (later renamed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) a short time later. Borrowing from the Methodists a faith in the abilities of itinerant preachers without formal training, Smith dispatched early converts as missionaries to take the message of the Book of Mormon throughout the United States, across the ocean to England and Ireland, and eventually even farther abroad. He attracted a sizable number of followers on both sides of the Atlantic and commanded them to gather to a center place, where they collectively anticipated the imminent second coming of Christ. Continued growth and near-constant opposition from both Protestant ministers and neighbors suspicious of their potential political power forced the Mormons to move several times, first from New York to Ohio, then to Missouri, and finally to Illinois, where they established a thriving community on the banks of the Mississippi River. In Nauvoo, as they called their city, Smith moved even further beyond the bounds of the Christian orthodoxy by continuing to pronounce additional revelations and introducing secret rites to be performed in Mormon temples. Most controversially, Smith and a select group of his most loyal followers began taking additional wives (Smith himself married at least thirty women). Although Mormon polygamy was not publicly acknowledged and openly practiced until 1852 (when the Mormons had moved yet again, this time to the protective confines of the intermountain west on the shores of the Great Salt Lake), rumors of Smith's involvement circulated almost immediately after its quiet introduction and played a part in the motivations of the mob that eventually murdered the Mormon prophet in the summer of 1844.

Mormons were not the only religious community in antebellum America to challenge the domestic norms of the era through radical sexual experiments: Shakers strictly enforced celibacy in their several communes scattered throughout New England and the upper Midwest, while John Humphrey Noyes introduced free love (or "complex marriage") to his Oneida community in upstate New York. Others challenged existing cultural customs in less radical ways. For individual worshippers, spiritual egalitarianism in revivals and camp meetings could break down traditional social conventions. For example, revivals generally admitted both men and women. Furthermore, in an era when many American Protestants discouraged or outright forbade women from speaking in church meetings, some preachers provided women with new opportunities to openly express themselves and participate in spiritual communities. This was particularly true in the Methodist and Baptist traditions, though by the midnineteenth century most of these opportunities would be curtailed as these denominations attempted to move away from radical revivalism and toward the status of respectable denominations. Some preachers also promoted racial integration in religious gatherings, expressing equal concern for white and black people's spiritual salvation and encouraging both slaveholders and the enslaved to attend the same meetings. Historians have even suggested that the extreme physical and vocal manifestations of conversion seen at impassioned revivals and camp meetings offered the ranks of worshippers a way to enact a sort of social leveling by flouting the codes of self-restraint prescribed by upper-class elites. Although the revivals did not always live up to such progressive ideals in practice, particularly in the more conservative regions of the slaveholding South, the concept of spiritual egalitarianism

nonetheless changed how Protestant Americans thought about themselves, their God, and one another.

As the borders of the United States expanded during the nineteenth century and as new demographic changes altered urban landscapes, revivalism also offered worshippers a source of social and religious structure to help cope with change. Revival meetings held by itinerant preachers offered community and collective spiritual purpose to migrant families and communities isolated from established social and religious institutions. In urban centers, where industrialization and European famines brought growing numbers of domestic and foreign migrants, evangelical preachers provided moral order and spiritual solace to an increasingly anonymous population. Additionally, and quite significantly, the Second Great Awakening armed evangelical Christians with a moral purpose to address and eradicate the many social problems they saw as arising from these dramatic demographic shifts.

Not all American Christians, though, were taken with the revivals. The early nineteenth century also saw the rise of Unitarianism as a group of ministers and their followers came to reject key aspects of "orthodox" Protestant belief including the divinity of Christ. Christians in New England were particularly involved in the debates surrounding Unitarianism as Harvard University became a hotly contested center of cultural authority between Unitarians and Trinitarians. Unitarianism had important effects on the world of reform when a group of Unitarian ministers founded the Transcendental Club in 1836.[9] The club met for four years and included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Frederic Henry Hedge, George Ripley, Orestes Brownson, James Freeman Clarke, and Theodore Parker. While initially limited to ministers or former ministers—except for the eccentric Alcott—the club quickly expanded to include numerous literary intellectuals. Among these were the author Henry David Thoreau, the protofeminist and literary critic Margaret Fuller, and the educational reformer Elizabeth Peabody.

Transcendentalism had no established creed, but this was intentional. What united the Transcendentalists was their belief in a higher spiritual principle within each person that could be trusted to discover truth, guide moral action, and inspire art. They often referred to this principle as Soul, Spirit, Mind, or Reason. Deeply influenced by British Romanticism and German idealism's celebration of individual artistic inspiration, personal spiritual experience, and aspects of human existence not easily explained by reason or logic, the Transcendentalists established an enduring legacy precisely because they developed distinctly American ideas that emphasized individualism, optimism, oneness with nature, and a modern orientation toward the future rather than the past. These themes resonated in an American nineteenth century where political democracy and readily available land distinguished the United States from Europe.

Ralph Waldo Emerson espoused a religious worldview wherein God, "the eternal ONE," manifested through the special harmony between the individual soul and nature. In "The American Scholar" (1837) and "Self-Reliance" (1841), Emerson emphasized the utter reliability and sufficiency of the individual soul and exhorted his audience to overcome "our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands."[10] Emerson believed that the time had come for Americans to declare their intellectual independence from Europe. Henry David Thoreau espoused a similar enthusiasm for simple living, communion with nature, and self-sufficiency. Thoreau's sense of rugged individualism, perhaps the strongest among even the Transcendentalists, also yielded "Resistance to Civil Government" (1849).[11] Several of the Transcendentalists also participated in communal living experiments. For example, in the mid-1840s, George Ripley and other members of the utopian Brook Farm community began to espouse Fourierism, a vision of society based on cooperative principles, as an alternative to capitalist conditions.[12]

Many of these different types of response to the religious turmoil of the time had a similar endpoint in the embrace of voluntary associations and social reform work. During the antebellum period, many American Christians responded to the moral anxiety of industrialization and urbanization by organizing to address specific social needs. Social problems such as intemperance, vice, and crime assumed a new and distressing scale that older solutions, such as almshouses, were not equipped to handle. Moralists grew concerned about the growing mass of urban residents who did not attend church, and who, thanks to poverty or illiteracy, did not even have access to scripture. Voluntary benevolent societies exploded in number to tackle these issues. Led by ministers and dominated by middle-class women, voluntary societies printed and distributed Protestant tracts, taught Sunday school, distributed outdoor relief, and evangelized in both frontier towns and urban slums. These associations and their evangelical members also lent moral backing and workers to large-scale social reform projects, including the temperance movement designed to curb Americans' consumption of alcohol, the abolitionist campaign to eradicate slavery in the United States, and women's rights agitation to improve women's political and economic rights. As such wide-ranging reform projects combined with missionary zeal, evangelical Christians formed a "benevolent empire" that swiftly became a cornerstone of the antebellum period.

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10.3: Atlantic Origins of Reform

The reform movements that emerged in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century were not American inventions. Instead, these movements were rooted in a transatlantic world where both sides of the ocean faced similar problems and together collaborated to find similar solutions. Many of the same factors that spurred American reformers to action—such as urbanization, industrialization, and class struggle—equally affected Europe. Reformers on both sides of the Atlantic visited and corresponded with one another. Exchanging ideas and building networks proved crucial to shared causes like abolition and women's rights.

Improvements in transportation, including the introduction of the steamboat, canals, and railroads, connected people not just across the United States, but also with other like-minded reformers in Europe. (Ironically, the same technologies also helped ensure that even after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, the British remained heavily invested in slavery, both directly and indirectly.) Equally important, the reduction of publication costs created by new printing technologies in the 1830s allowed reformers to reach new audiences across the world.[13] Almost immediately after its publication in the United States, for instance, the escaped slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass's autobiography was republished in Europe and translated into French and Dutch, galvanizing Douglass's supporters across the Atlantic.[14]

Such exchanges began as part of the larger processes of colonialism and empire building. Missionary organizations from the colonial era had created many of these transatlantic links. The Atlantic travel of major figures during the First Great Awakening such as George Whitefield had built enduring networks. These networks changed as a result of the American Revolution but still revealed spiritual and personal connections between religious individuals and organizations in the United States and Great Britain. These connections can be seen in multiple areas. Mission work continued to be a joint effort, with American and European missionary societies in close correspondence throughout the early nineteenth century, as they coordinated domestic and foreign evangelistic missions. The transportation and print revolutions meant that news of British missionary efforts in India and Tahiti could be quickly printed in American religious periodicals, galvanizing American efforts to evangelize Native Americans, frontier settlers, immigrant groups, and even people overseas.

In addition to missions, antislavery work had a decidedly transatlantic cast from its very beginnings. American Quakers began to question slavery as early as the late seventeenth century and worked with British reformers in the successful campaign that ended the slave trade.[15] Before, during, and after the Revolution, many Americans continued to admire European thinkers. Influence extended both east and west. By foregrounding questions about rights, the American Revolution helped inspire British abolitionists, who in turn offered support to their American counterparts. American antislavery activists developed close relationships with abolitionists on the other side of the Atlantic, such as Thomas Clarkson, Daniel O'Connell, and Joseph Sturge. Prominent American abolitionists such as Theodore Dwight Weld, Lucretia Mott, and William Lloyd Garrison were converted to the antislavery idea of immediatism—that is, the demand for emancipation without delay—by British abolitionists Elizabeth Heyrick and Charles Stuart.[16] Although Anglo-American antislavery networks reached back to the late eighteenth century, they dramatically grew in support and strength over the antebellum period, as evidenced by the General Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840. This antislavery delegation consisted of more than five hundred abolitionists, mostly coming from France, England, and the United States. All met together in England, united by their common goal of ending slavery in their time. Although abolitionism was not the largest American reform movement of the antebellum period (that honor belongs to temperance), it did foster greater cooperation among reformers in England and the United States.



Figure 10.3.1: This enormous painting documents the 1840 convention of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, established by both American and English anti-slavery activists to promote worldwide abolition. Benjamin Haydon, The Anti-Slavery Society Convention, 1840. *Wikimedia*.

In the course of their abolitionist activities, many American women began to establish contact with their counterparts across the Atlantic, each group penning articles and contributing material support to the others' antislavery publications and fundraisers. The bonds between British and American reformers can be traced throughout the many social improvement projects of the nineteenth century. Transatlantic cooperation galvanized efforts to reform individuals' and societies' relationships to alcohol, labor, religion, education, commerce, and land ownership. This cooperation stemmed from the recognition that social problems on both sides of the Atlantic were strikingly similar. Atlantic activists helped American reformers conceptualize themselves as part of a worldwide moral mission to attack social ills and spread the gospel of Christianity.

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10.4: The Benevolent Empire

After religious disestablishment, citizens of the United States faced a dilemma: how to cultivate a moral and virtuous public without aid from state-sponsored religion. Most Americans agreed that a good and moral citizenry was essential for the national project to succeed, but many shared the perception that society's moral foundation was weakening. Narratives of moral and social decline, known as jeremiads, had long been embedded in Protestant story-telling traditions, but jeremiads took on new urgency in the antebellum period. In the years immediately following disestablishment, "traditional" Protestant Christianity was at low tide, while the Industrial Revolution and the spread of capitalism had led to a host of social problems associated with cities and commerce. The Second Great Awakening was in part a spiritual response to such changes, revitalizing Christian spirits through the promise of salvation. The revivals also provided an institutional antidote to the insecurities of a rapidly changing world by inspiring an immense and widespread movement for social reform. Growing directly out of nineteenth-century revivalism, reform societies proliferated throughout the United States between 1815 and 1861, melding religion and reform into a powerful force in American culture known as the *benevolent empire*.

The benevolent empire departed from revivalism's early populism, as middle-class ministers dominated the leadership of antebellum reform societies. Because of the economic forces of the market revolution, middle-class evangelicals had the time and resources to devote to reform campaigns. Often, their reforms focused on creating and maintaining respectable middle-class culture throughout the United States. Middle-class women, in particular, played a leading role in reform activity. They became increasingly responsible for the moral maintenance of their homes and communities, and their leadership signaled a dramatic departure from previous generations when such prominent roles for ordinary women would have been unthinkable.[17]

Different forces within evangelical Protestantism combined to encourage reform. One of the great lights of benevolent reform was Charles Grandison Finney, the radical revivalist, who promoted a movement known as "perfectionism." Premised on the belief that truly redeemed Christians would be motivated to live free of sin and reflect the perfection of God himself, his wildly popular revivals encouraged his converted followers to join reform movements and create God's kingdom on earth. The idea of "disinterested benevolence" also turned many evangelicals toward reform. Preachers championing disinterested benevolence argued that true Christianity requires that a person give up self-love in favor of loving others. Though perfectionism and disinterested benevolence were the most prominent forces encouraging benevolent societies, some preachers achieved the same end in their advocacy of postmillennialism. In this worldview, Christ's return was foretold to occur after humanity had enjoyed one thousand years' peace, and it was the duty of converted Christians to improve the world around them in order to pave the way for Christ's redeeming return. Though ideological and theological issues like these divided Protestants into more and more sects, church leaders often worked on an interdenominational basis to establish benevolent societies and draw their followers into the work of social reform.

Under the leadership of preachers and ministers, reform societies attacked many social problems. Those concerned about drinking could join temperance societies; other groups focused on eradicating dueling and gambling. Evangelical reformers might support home or foreign missions or Bible and tract societies. Sabbatarians fought tirelessly to end nonreligious activity on the Sabbath. Moral reform societies sought to end prostitution and redeem "fallen women." Over the course of the antebellum period, voluntary associations and benevolent activists also worked to reform bankruptcy laws, prison systems, insane asylums, labor laws, and education. They built orphanages and free medical dispensaries and developed programs to provide professional services like social work, job placement, and day camps for children in the slums.

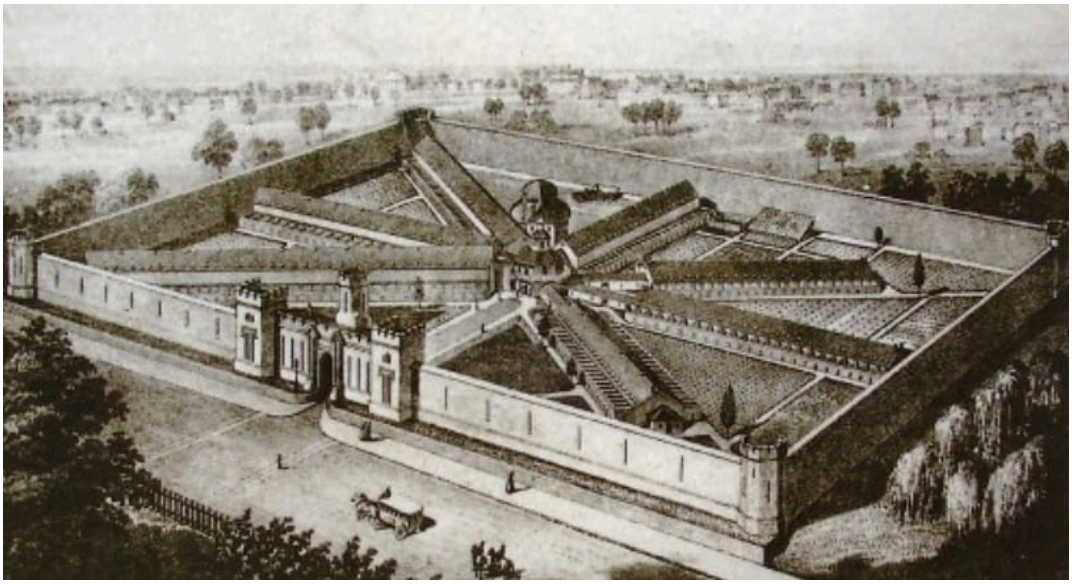


Figure 10.4.1: Eastern State Penitentiary changed the principles of imprisonment, focusing on reform rather than punishment. The structure itself used the panopticon surveillance system, and was widely copied by prison systems around the world. P.S: Duval and Co., The State Penitentiary for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1855. *Wikimedia*.

These organizations often shared membership as individuals found themselves interested in a wide range of reform movements. On Anniversary Week, many of the major reform groups coordinated the schedules of their annual meetings in New York or Boston to allow individuals to attend multiple meetings in a single trip.[18]

Among all the social reform movements associated with the benevolent empire, the temperance crusade was the most successful. Championed by prominent preachers like Lyman Beecher, the movement's effort to curb the consumption of alcohol galvanized widespread support among the middle class. Alcohol consumption became a significant social issue after the American Revolution. Commercial distilleries produced readily available, cheap whiskey that was frequently more affordable than milk or beer and safer than water, and hard liquor became a staple beverage in many lower- and middle-class households. Consumption among adults skyrocketed in the early nineteenth century, and alcoholism had become an endemic problem across the United States by the 1820s. As alcoholism became an increasingly visible issue in towns and cities, most reformers escalated their efforts from advocating moderation in liquor consumption to full abstinence from all alcohol.

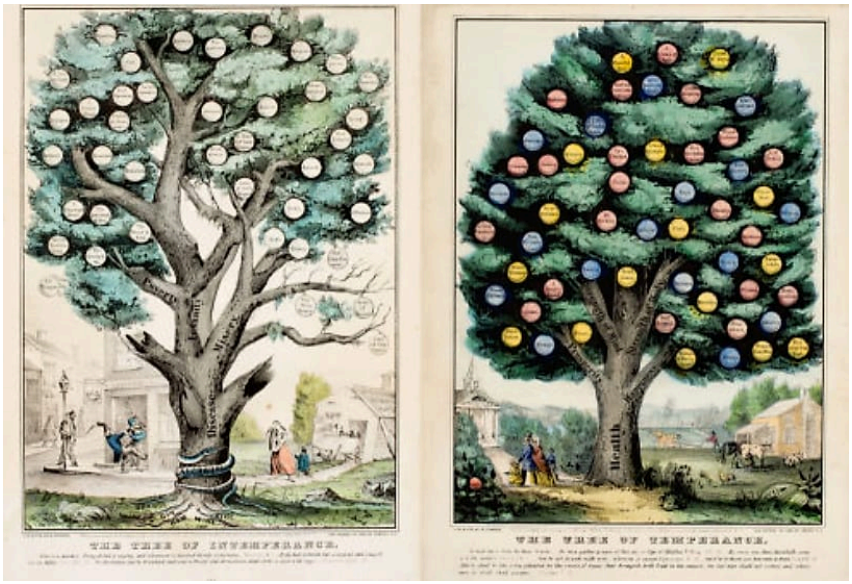


Figure 10.4.2: N. Currier, "Tree of Temperance" and "Tree of Intemperance," 1849. Courtesy *American Antiquarian Society*.

Many reformers saw intemperance as the biggest impediment to maintaining order and morality in the young republic. Temperance reformers saw a direct correlation between alcohol and other forms of vice and, most importantly, felt that

it endangered family life. In 1826, evangelical ministers organized the American Temperance Society to help spread the crusade nationally. It supported lecture campaigns, produced temperance literature, and organized revivals specifically aimed at encouraging worshippers to give up the drink. It was so successful that within a decade, it established five thousand branches and grew to over a million members.[19] Temperance reformers pledged not to touch the bottle and canvassed their neighborhoods and towns to encourage others to join their "Cold Water Army." They also influenced lawmakers in several states to prohibit the sale of liquor.

In response to the perception that heavy drinking was associated with men who abused, abandoned, or neglected their family obligations, women formed a significant presence in societies dedicated to eradicating liquor. Temperance became a hallmark of middle-class respectability among both men and women and developed into a crusade with a visible class character. Temperance, like many other reform efforts, was championed by the middle class and threatened to intrude on the private lives of lower-class workers, many of whom were Irish Catholics. Such intrusions by the Protestant middle class exacerbated class, ethnic, and religious tensions. Still, while the temperance movement made less substantial inroads into lower-class workers' drinking culture, the movement was still a great success for reformers. In the 1840s, Americans drank half of what they had in the 1820s, and per capita consumption continued to decline over the next two decades.[20].



Figure 10.4.3: Nathaniel Currier, "The Drunkard's Progress." 1846. *Wikimedia.*

Though middle-class reformers worked tirelessly to cure all manner of social problems through institutional salvation and voluntary benevolent work, they regularly participated in religious organizations founded explicitly to address the spiritual mission at the core of evangelical Protestantism. In fact, for many reformers, it was actually the experience of evangelizing among the poor and seeing firsthand the rampant social issues plaguing life in the slums that first inspired them to get involved in benevolent reform projects. Modeling themselves on the British and Foreign Bible Society, formed in 1804 to spread Christian doctrine to the British working class, urban missionaries emphasized the importance of winning the world for Christ, one soul at a time. For example, the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society used the efficient new steam-powered printing press to distribute Bibles and evangelizing religious tracts throughout the United States. For example, the New York Religious Tract Society alone managed to distribute religious tracts to all but 388 of New York City's 28,383 families.[21] In places like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, middle-class women also established groups specifically to canvass neighborhoods and bring the gospel to lower-class "wards."

Such evangelical missions extended well beyond the urban landscape, however. Stirred by nationalism and moral purpose, evangelicals labored to make sure the word of God reached far-flung settlers on the new American frontier. The American Bible Society distributed thousands of Bibles to frontier areas where churches and clergy were scarce, while the American Home Missionary Society provided substantial financial assistance to frontier congregations struggling to achieve self-sufficiency. Missionaries worked to translate the Bible into Iroquois and other languages in order to more effectively evangelize Native American populations. As efficient printing technology and faster transportation facilitated new transatlantic and global connections, religious Americans also began to flex their missionary zeal on a global stage. In 1810, for example, Presbyterian and Congregationalist leaders established the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to evangelize in India, Africa, East Asia, and the Pacific.[22]

The potent combination of social reform and evangelical mission at the heart of the nineteenth century's benevolent empire produced reform agendas and institutional changes that have reverberated through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. By devoting their time to the moral uplift of their communities and the world at large, middle-class reformers created many of the largest and most influential organizations in the nation's history. For the optimistic, religiously motivated American, no problem seemed too great to solve.

Difficulties arose, however, when the benevolent empire attempted to take up more explicitly political issues. The movement against Indian removal was the first major example of this. Missionary work had first brought the Cherokee Nation to the attention of northeastern evangelicals in the early nineteenth century. Missionaries sent by the American Board and other groups sought to introduce Christianity and American cultural values to the Cherokee and celebrated when their efforts seemed to be met with success. Evangelicals proclaimed that the Cherokee were becoming "civilized," which could be seen in their adoption of a written language and of a constitution modeled on that of the U.S. government. Mission supporters were shocked, then, when the election of Andrew Jackson brought a new emphasis on the removal of Native Americans from the land east of the Mississippi River. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 was met with fierce opposition from within the affected Native American communities as well as from the benevolent empire. Jeremiah Evarts, one of the leaders of the American Board, wrote a series of essays under the pen name William Penn urging Americans to oppose removal.[23] He used the religious and moral arguments of the mission movement but added a new layer of politics in his extensive discussion of the history of treaty law between the United States and Native Americans. This political shift was even more evident when American missionaries challenged Georgia state laws asserting sovereignty over Cherokee territory in the Supreme Court Case *Worcester v. Georgia*.[24] Although the case was successful, the federal government did not enforce the Court's decision, and Indian removal was accomplished through the Trail of Tears, the tragic, forced removal of Native Americans to territories west of the Mississippi River.

Anti-removal activism was also notable for the entry of ordinary American women into political discourse. The first major petition campaign by American women focused on opposition to removal and was led (anonymously) by Catharine Beecher. Beecher was already a leader in the movement to reform women's education and came to her role in removal through her connections to the mission movement. Inspired by a meeting with Jeremiah Evarts, Beecher echoed his arguments from the William Penn letters in her appeal to American women.[25] Beecher called on women to petition the government to end the policy of Indian removal. She used religious and moral arguments to justify women's entry into political discussion when it concerned an obviously moral cause. This effort was ultimately unsuccessful but still introduced the kinds of arguments that paved the way for women's political activism for abolitionism and women's rights. The divisions that the anti-removal campaign revealed became more dramatic with the next political cause of nineteenth century reformers: abolitionism.

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10.5: Antislavery and Abolitionism

The revivalist doctrines of salvation, perfectionism, and disinterested benevolence led many evangelical reformers to believe that slavery was the most God-defying of all sins and the most terrible blight on the moral virtue of the United States. While white interest in and commitment to abolition had existed for several decades, organized antislavery advocacy had been largely restricted to models of gradual emancipation (seen in several northern states following the American Revolution) and conditional emancipation (seen in colonization efforts to remove black Americans to settlements in Africa). The colonizationist movement of the early nineteenth century had drawn together a broad political spectrum of Americans with its promise of gradually ending slavery in the United States by removing the free black population from North America. By the 1830s, however, a rising tide of anticolonization sentiment among northern free black Americans and middle-class evangelicals' flourishing commitment to social reform radicalized the movement. Baptists such as William Lloyd Garrison, Congregational revivalists like Arthur and Lewis Tappan and Theodore Dwight Weld, and radical Quakers including Lucretia Mott and John Greenleaf Whittier helped push the idea of immediate emancipation onto the center stage of northern reform agendas. Inspired by a strategy known as "moral suasion," these young abolitionists believed they could convince slaveholders to voluntarily release their slaves by appealing to their sense of Christian conscience. The result would be national redemption and moral harmony.

William Lloyd Garrison's early life and career famously illustrated this transition toward immediatism. As a young man immersed in the reform culture of antebellum Massachusetts, Garrison had fought slavery in the 1820s by advocating for both black colonization and gradual abolition. Fiery tracts penned by black northerners David Walker and James Forten, however, convinced Garrison that colonization was an inherently racist project and that African Americans possessed a hard-won right to the fruits of American liberty.[26] So, in 1831, he established a newspaper called *The Liberator*, through which he organized and spearheaded an unprecedented interracial crusade dedicated to promoting immediate emancipation and black citizenship. Then, in 1833, Garrison presided as reformers from ten states came together to create the American Anti-Slavery Society. They rested their mission for immediate emancipation "upon the Declaration of our Independence, and upon the truths of Divine Revelation," binding their cause to both national and Christian redemption.[27] Abolitionists fought to save slaves and their nation's soul.

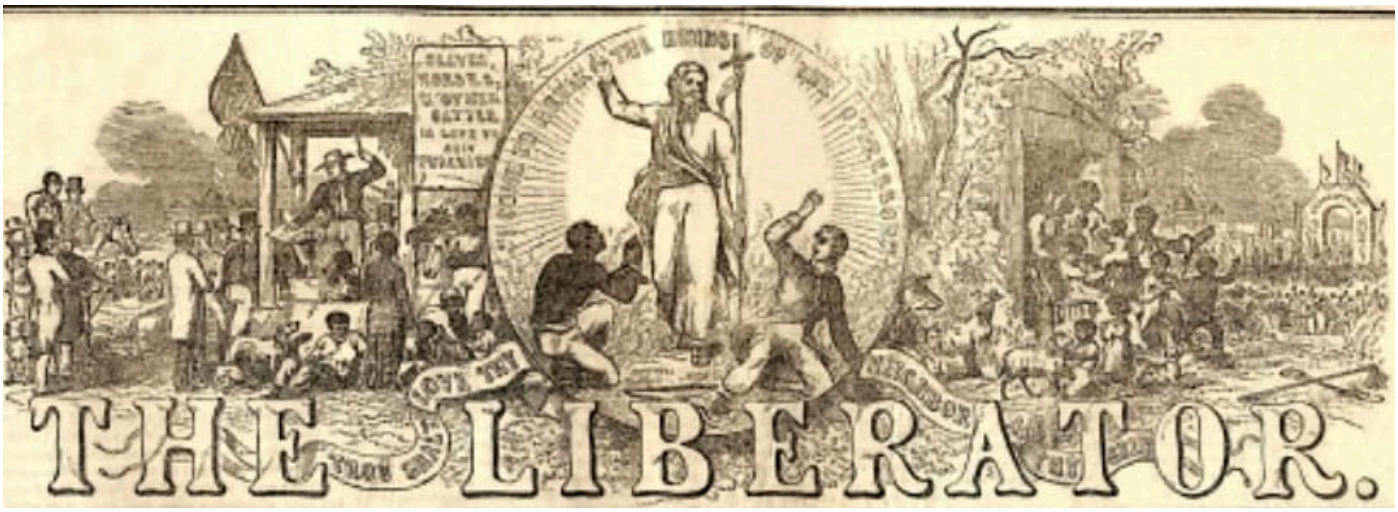


Figure 10.5.1: The Liberator, April 17, 1857. Masthead designed by Hammatt Billings in 1850. Metropolitan State University.

In order to accomplish their goals, abolitionists employed every method of outreach and agitation. At home in the North, abolitionists established hundreds of antislavery societies and worked with long-standing associations of black activists to establish schools, churches, and voluntary associations. Women and men of all colors were encouraged to associate together in these spaces to combat what they termed "color phobia." Harnessing the potential of steam-powered printing and mass communication, abolitionists also blanketed the free states with pamphlets and antislavery newspapers. They blared their arguments from lyceum podiums and broadsides. Prominent individuals such as Wendell Phillips and Angelina Grimké saturated northern media with shame-inducing exposés of northern complicity in the return of fugitive slaves, and white reformers sentimentalized slave narratives that tugged at middle-class heartstrings. Abolitionists used the U.S. Postal Service in 1835 to inundate southern slaveholders with calls to emancipate their slaves in order to save their souls, and, in 1836, they prepared thousands of petitions for Congress as part of the Great Petition Campaign. In the six years from 1831 to 1837, abolitionist

activities reached dizzying heights.[28]

However, such efforts encountered fierce opposition, as most Americans did not share abolitionists' particular brand of nationalism. In fact, abolitionists remained a small, marginalized group detested by most white Americans in both the North and the South. Immediatists were attacked as the harbingers of disunion, rabble-rousers who would stir up sectional tensions and thereby imperil the American experiment of self-government. Particularly troubling to some observers was the public engagement of women as abolitionist speakers and activists. Fearful of disunion and outraged by the interracial nature of abolitionism, northern mobs smashed abolitionist printing presses and even killed a prominent antislavery newspaper editor named Elijah Lovejoy. White southerners, believing that abolitionists had incited Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831, aggressively purged antislavery dissent from the region. Violent harassment threatened abolitionists' personal safety. In Congress, Whigs and Democrats joined forces in 1836 to pass an unprecedented restriction on freedom of political expression known as the gag rule, prohibiting all discussion of abolitionist petitions in the House of Representatives. Two years later, mobs attacked the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, throwing rocks through the windows and burning the newly constructed Pennsylvania Hall to the ground.[29]

In the face of such substantial external opposition, the abolitionist movement began to splinter. In 1839, an ideological schism shook the foundations of organized antislavery. Moral suasionists, led most prominently by William Lloyd Garrison, felt that the U.S. Constitution was a fundamentally pro-slavery document, and that the present political system was irredeemable. They dedicated their efforts exclusively toward persuading the public to redeem the nation by reestablishing it on antislavery grounds. However, many abolitionists, reeling from the level of entrenched opposition met in the 1830s, began to feel that moral suasion was no longer realistic. Instead, they believed, abolition would have to be effected through existing political processes. So, in 1839, political abolitionists formed the Liberty Party under the leadership of James G. Birney. This new abolitionist society was predicated on the belief that the U.S. Constitution was actually an antislavery document that could be used to abolish the stain of slavery through the national political system.[30]

Women's rights, too, divided abolitionists. Many abolitionists who believed full-heartedly in moral suasion nonetheless felt compelled to leave the American Anti-Slavery Society because, in part, it elevated women to leadership positions and endorsed women's suffrage. This question came to a head when, in 1840, Abby Kelly was elected to the business committee of the society. The elevation of women to full leadership roles was too much for some conservative members who saw this as evidence that the society had lost sight of its most important goal. Under the leadership of Arthur Tappan, they left to form the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. These disputes became so bitter and acrimonious that former friends cut social ties and traded public insults.

Another significant shift stemmed from the disappointments of the 1830s. Abolitionists in the 1840s increasingly moved from agendas based on reform to agendas based on resistance. Moral suasionists continued to appeal to hearts and minds, and political abolitionists launched sustained campaigns to bring abolitionist agendas to the ballot box. Meanwhile the entrenched and violent opposition of both slaveholders and the northern public encouraged abolitionists to find other avenues of fighting the slave power. Increasingly, for example, abolitionists aided runaway slaves established international antislavery networks to pressure the United States to abolish slavery. Frederick Douglass represented the intersection of these two trends. After escaping from slavery, Douglass came to the fore of the abolitionist movement as a naturally gifted orator and a powerful narrator of his experiences in slavery. His first autobiography, published in 1845, was so widely read that it was reprinted in nine editions and translated into several languages.[31] Douglass traveled to Great Britain in 1845 and met with famous British abolitionists like Thomas Clarkson, drumming up moral and financial support from British and Irish antislavery societies. He was neither the first nor the last runaway slave to make this voyage, but his great success abroad contributed significantly to rousing morale among weary abolitionists at home.

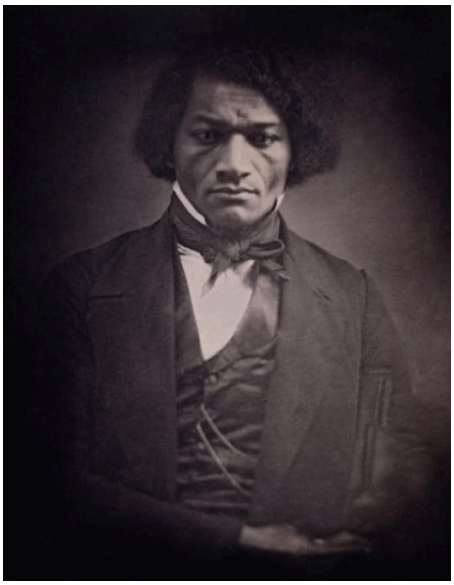


Figure 10.5.2: Frederick Douglass was perhaps the most famous African American abolitionist, fighting tirelessly not only for the end of slavery but for equal rights of all American citizens. This copy of a daguerreotype shows him as a young man, around the age of 29 and soon after his self-emancipation. Print, c. 1850 after c. 1847 daguerreotype. *Wikimedia*.

The model of resistance to the slave power only became more pronounced after 1850, when a long-standing Fugitive Slave Act was given new teeth. Though a legal mandate to return runway slaves had existed in U.S. federal law since 1793, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 upped the ante by harshly penalizing officials who failed to arrest runaways and private citizens who tried to help them. This law, coupled with growing concern over the possibility that slavery would be allowed in Kansas when it was admitted as a state, made the 1850s a highly volatile and violent period of American antislavery. Reform took a backseat as armed mobs protected runaway slaves in the North and fortified abolitionists engaged in bloody skirmishes in the West. Culminating in John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, the violence of the 1850s convinced many Americans that the issue of slavery was pushing the nation to the brink of sectional cataclysm. After two decades of immediatist agitation, the idealism of revivalist perfectionism had given way to a protracted battle for the moral soul of the country.

For all of the problems that abolitionism faced, the movement was far from a failure. The prominence of African Americans in abolitionist organizations offered a powerful, if imperfect, model of interracial coexistence. While immediatists always remained a minority, their efforts paved the way for the moderately antislavery Republican Party to gain traction in the years preceding the Civil War. It is hard to imagine that Abraham Lincoln could have become president in 1860 without the ground prepared by antislavery advocates and without the presence of radical abolitionists against whom he could be cast as a moderate alternative. Though it ultimately took a civil war to break the bonds of slavery in the United States, the evangelical moral compass of revivalist Protestantism provided motivation for the embattled abolitionists.

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10.6: Women's Rights in Antebellum America

In the era of revivalism and reform, Americans understood the family and home as the hearthstones of civic virtue and moral influence. This increasingly confined middle-class white women to the domestic sphere, where they were responsible for educating children and maintaining household virtue. Yet women took the very ideology that defined their place in the home and managed to use it to fashion a public role for themselves. As a result, women actually became more visible and active in the public sphere than ever before. The influence of the Second Great Awakening, coupled with new educational opportunities available to girls and young women, enabled white middle-class women to leave their homes en masse, joining and forming societies dedicated to everything from literary interests to the antislavery movement.

In the early nineteenth century, the dominant understanding of gender claimed that women were the guardians of virtue and the spiritual heads of the home. Women were expected to be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic, and to pass these virtues on to their children. Historians have described these expectations as the "Cult of Domesticity," or the "Cult of True Womanhood," and they developed in tandem with industrialization, the market revolution, and the Second Great Awakening.[32] These economic and religious transformations increasingly seemed to divide the world into the public space of work and politics and the domestic space of leisure and morality. Voluntary work related to labor laws, prison reform, and antislavery applied women's roles as guardians of moral virtue to address all forms of social issues that they felt contributed to the moral decline of society. In spite of this apparent valuation of women's position in society, there were clear limitations. Under the terms of coverture, men gained legal control over their wives' property, and women with children had no legal rights over their offspring. Additionally, women could not initiate divorce, make wills, sign contracts, or vote.

Female education provides an example of the great strides made by and for women during the antebellum period. As part of a larger education reform movement in the early republic, several female reformers worked tirelessly to increase women's access to education. They argued that if women were to take charge of the education of their children, they needed to be well educated themselves. While the women's education movement did not generally push for women's political or social equality, it did assert women's intellectual equality with men, an idea that would eventually have important effects. Educators such as Emma Willard, Catharine Beecher, and Mary Lyons (founders of the Troy Female Seminary, Hartford Female Seminary, and Mount Holyoke Seminary, respectively) adopted the same rigorous curriculum that was used for boys. Many of these schools had the particular goal of training women to be teachers. Many graduates of these prominent seminaries would found their own schools, spreading women's education across the country, and with it ideas about women's potential to take part in public life.

The abolitionist movement was another important school for women's public engagement. Many of the earliest women's rights advocates began their activism by fighting the injustices of slavery, including Angelina and Sarah Grimké, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony. In the 1830s, women in cities such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia established female societies dedicated to the antislavery cause. Initially, these societies were similar to the prayer and fund-raising-based projects of other reform societies. As such societies proliferated, however, their strategies changed. Women could not vote, for example, but they increasingly used their right to petition to express their antislavery grievances to the government. Impassioned women like the Grimké sisters even began to travel on lecture circuits. This latter strategy, born of fervent antislavery advocacy, ultimately tethered the cause of women's rights to abolitionism.

Sarah Moore Grimké and Angelina Emily Grimké were born to a wealthy family in Charleston, South Carolina, where they witnessed the horrors of slavery firsthand. Repulsed by the treatment of the slaves on the Grimké plantation, they decided to support the antislavery movement by sharing their experiences on northern lecture tours. At first speaking to female audiences, they soon attracted "promiscuous" crowds of both men and women. They were among the earliest and most famous American women to take such a public role in the name of reform. When the Grimké sisters met substantial harassment and opposition to their public speaking on antislavery, they were inspired to speak out against more than the slave system. They began to see that they would need to fight for women's rights in order to fight for the rights of slaves.[33] Other female abolitionists soon joined them in linking the issues of women's rights and abolitionism by drawing direct comparisons between the condition of free women in the United States and the condition of the slave.

As the antislavery movement gained momentum in northern states in the 1830s and 1840s, so too did efforts for women's rights. These efforts came to a head at an event that took place in London in 1840. That year, Lucretia Mott was among the American delegates attending the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. Because of ideological disagreements between some of the abolitionists, the convention's organizers refused to seat the female delegates or allow them to vote during the proceedings. Angered by such treatment, Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, whose husband was also a delegate, returned to the United States

with a renewed interest in pursuing women's rights. In 1848, they organized the Seneca Falls Convention, a two-day summit in New York state in which women's rights advocates came together to discuss the problems facing women.



Figure 10.6.1: Lucretia Mott campaigned for women's rights, abolition, and equality in the United States. Joseph Kyle (artist), Lucretia Mott, 1842. *Wikimedia.*

Stanton wrote the Declaration of Sentiments for the Seneca Falls Convention to capture the wide range of issues embraced by the early women's rights movement. She modeled the document on the Declaration of Independence to make explicit the connection between women's liberty and the rhetoric of America's founding. The Declaration of Sentiments outlined fifteen grievances and eleven resolutions. They championed property rights, access to the professions, and, most controversially, the right to vote. Sixty-eight women and thirty-two men, all of whom were already involved in some aspect of reform, signed the Declaration of Sentiments.[34]

Antebellum women's rights fought what they perceived as senseless gender discrimination, such as the barring of women from college and inferior pay for female teachers. They also argued that men and women should be held to the same moral standards. The Seneca Falls Convention was the first of many such gatherings promoting women's rights, held almost exclusively in the northern states. Yet the women's rights movement grew slowly and experienced few victories. Few states reformed married women's property laws before the Civil War, and no state was prepared to offer women the right to vote during the antebellum period. At the onset of the Civil War, women's rights advocates temporarily threw the bulk of their support behind abolition, allowing the cause of racial equality to temporarily trump that of gender equality. But the words of the Seneca Falls convention continued to inspire generations of activists.

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10.7: Conclusion

By the time civil war erupted in 1861, the revival and reform movements of the antebellum period had made an indelible mark on the American landscape. The Second Great Awakening ignited Protestant spirits by connecting evangelical Christians in national networks of faith. Social reform spurred members of the middle class to promote national morality and the public good. Not all reform projects were equally successful, however. While the temperance movement made substantial inroads against the excesses of alcohol consumption, the abolitionist movement proved so divisive that it paved the way for sectional crisis. Yet participation in reform movements, regardless of their ultimate success, encouraged many Americans to see themselves in new ways. Black activists became a powerful voice in antislavery societies, for example, developing domestic and transnational connections to pursue the cause of liberty. Middle-class women's dominant presence in the benevolent empire encouraged them to pursue a full-fledged women's right movement that has lasted in various forms up through the present day. In their efforts to make the United States a more virtuous and moral nation, nineteenth-century reform activists developed cultural and institutional foundations for social change that have continued to reverberate through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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10.8: Primary Sources

Revivalist Charles G. Finney Emphasizes Human Choice in Salvation, 1836

Charles Grandison Finney left a successful law practice when he believed God called him to become a preacher. He enjoyed great success, particularly in Upstate New York, a region that Finney called "the burned over district." Finney's revivals emphasized human action, and he encouraged his converts to join various reform organizations, including avoiding alcohol and eventually opposing slavery.

David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, 1829

David Walker was the son of an enslaved man and a free black woman. He traveled widely before settling in Boston where he worked in and owned clothing stores and involved himself in various reform causes. In 1829, he wrote the remarkable Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World. In it, he exposed the hypocrisies of American claims of freedom and Christianity, attacked the plan to colonize black Americans in Africa, and predicted that God's justice promised violence for the slaveholding United States.

William Lloyd Garrison Introduces *The Liberator*, 1831

William Lloyd Garrison participated in reform causes in Massachusetts from a young age. In the 1820s he advocated black colonization in Africa and the gradual abolition of slavery. Reading the work of black northerners like David Walker changed his mind. In 1831, he created a newspaper, called The Liberator. *The following is the opening essay that Garrison used to explain the purpose of his paper.*

Sarah Grimké Calls for Women's Rights, 1838

Antebellum Americans increasingly confined middle-class white women to the home, where they were responsible for educating children and maintaining household virtue. Yet women used these ideas to become more active in the public sphere than ever before, taking prominent roles in all the major reform causes of the era. Women's participation in the antislavery crusade most directly inspired specific women's rights campaigns. In this document, Sarah Moore Grimké calls for equality between men and women.

Henry David Thoreau Reflects on Nature, 1854

The Transcendentalist movement began in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1836, when a group of Unitarian clergymen formed what later became known as the Transcendental Club. The club met for four years and quickly expanded to include numerous literary intellectuals. Among these were the author Henry David Thoreau. In 1845, Thoreau took up residence at Walden Pond and began to write. The result was Walden, which touted simple living, communion with nature, and self-sufficiency.

The Fruit of Alcohol and Temperance Lithographs, 1849

This pair of lithographs, created by Nathaniel Currier (later of Currier & Ives fame), contrasts the "fruits" of abstaining from alcohol to those of indulging in strong drink. It leaves little to the imagination. Intemperance is symbolized by a diseased tree, surrounded by drunks outside of a pawn shop and a woman and her children being thrown out of their home. The lush foliage of temperance, on the other hand, is surrounded by prosperous church-going farm families.

Missionary Society Membership Certificate, 1848

The Second Great Awakening moved American evangelicals to proselytize at home and abroad. The image on this lifetime membership certificate to a missionary society shows how the new member's money will be used. The guiding hand of Providence and an angel bearing a book (presumably a Bible) hover at the top of the image. In the background, a mosque topples over. An African family kneels and reaches towards the heavens on the left side, while a minister preaches to Native Americans gathered before him on the right.

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10.9: Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Emily Conroy-Krutz, with content contributions by Elena Abbott, Cameron Blevins, Frank Cirillo, Justin Clark, Emily Conroy-Krutz, Nicolas Hoffmann, Christopher C. Jones, Jonathan Koefoed, Charles McCrary, William E. Skidmore, Megan Stanton, Kelly Weber, and Ben Wright.

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11: THE COTTON REVOLUTION



Eyre Crowe, Slaves Waiting for Sale, Richmond, Virginia, 1861. University of Virginia, The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas.

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11.1: Introduction

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the southern states experienced extraordinary change that would define the region and its role in American history for decades, even centuries, to come. Between the 1830s and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, the American South expanded its wealth and population and became an integral part of an increasingly global economy. It did not, as previous generations of histories have told, sit back on its cultural and social traditions and insulate itself from an expanding system of communication, trade, and production that connected Europe and Asia to the Americas. Quite the opposite; the South actively engaged new technologies and trade routes while also seeking to assimilate and upgrade its most "traditional" and culturally ingrained practices—such as slavery and agricultural production—within a modernizing world.

Beginning in the 1830s, merchants from the Northeast, Europe, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean flocked to southern cities, setting up trading firms, warehouses, ports, and markets. As a result, these cities—Richmond, Charleston, St. Louis, Mobile, Savannah, and New Orleans, to name a few—doubled and even tripled in size and global importance. Populations became more cosmopolitan, more educated, and wealthier. Systems of class—lower-, middle-, and upper-class communities—developed where they had never clearly existed. Ports that had once focused entirely on the importation of slaves and shipped only regionally became home to daily and weekly shipping lines to New York City, Liverpool, Manchester, Le Havre, and Lisbon. The world was slowly but surely coming closer together, and the South was right in the middle.

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11.2: The Importance of Cotton

In November 1785, the Liverpool firm of Peel, Yates & Co. imported the first seven bales of American cotton ever to arrive in Europe. Prior to this unscheduled, and frankly unwanted, delivery, European merchants saw cotton as a product of the colonial Caribbean islands of Barbados, Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), Martinique, Cuba, and Jamaica. The American South, though relatively wide and expansive, was the go-to source for rice and, most importantly, tobacco.

Few knew that the seven bales sitting in Liverpool that winter of 1785 would change the world. But they did. By the early 1800s, the American South had developed a niche in the European market for "luxurious" long-staple cotton grown exclusively on the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.[1] But this was only the beginning of a massive flood to come and the foundation of the South's astronomical rise to global prominence. Before long, botanists, merchants, and planters alike set out to develop strains of cotton seed that would grow farther west on the southern mainland, especially in the new lands opened up by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803—an area that stretched from New Orleans in the South to what is today Minnesota, parts of the Dakotas, and Montana.

The discovery of *Gossypium barbadense*—often called Petit Gulf cotton—near Rodney, Mississippi, in 1820 changed the American and global cotton markets forever.[2] "Petit Gulf, it was said, slid through the cotton gin—a machine developed by Eli Whitney in 1794 for deseeding cotton—more easily than any other strain. It also grew tightly, producing more usable cotton than anyone had imagined to that point. Perhaps most importantly, though, it came up at a time when Native peoples were removed from the Southwest—southern Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and northern Louisiana. After Indian removal, land became readily available for white men with a few dollars and big dreams. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, the federal government implemented several forced migrations of Native Americans, establishing a system of reservations west of the Mississippi River on which all eastern peoples were required to relocate and settle. This system, enacted through the Indian Removal Act of 1830, allowed the federal government to survey, divide, and auction off millions of acres of land for however much bidders were willing to pay. Suddenly, farmers with dreams of owning a large plantation could purchase dozens, even hundreds, of acres in the fertile Mississippi River Delta for cents on the dollar. Pieces of land that would cost thousands of dollars elsewhere sold in the 1830s for several hundred, at prices as low as 40¢ per acre.[3]

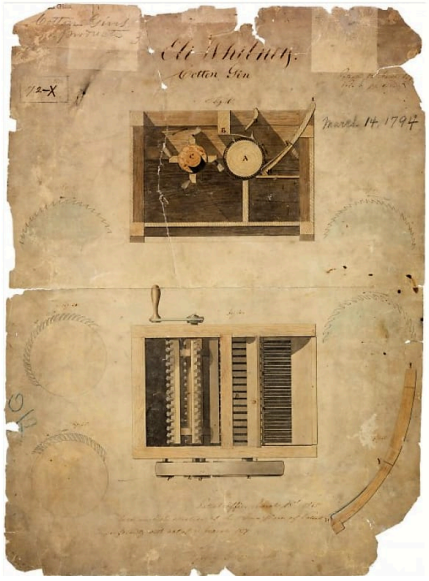


Figure 11.2.1: Eli Whitney's mechanical cotton gin revolutionized cotton production and expanded and strengthened slavery throughout the South. Eli Whitney's Patent for the Cotton gin, March 14, 1794; Records of the Patent and Trademark Office; Record Group 241. *Wikimedia*.

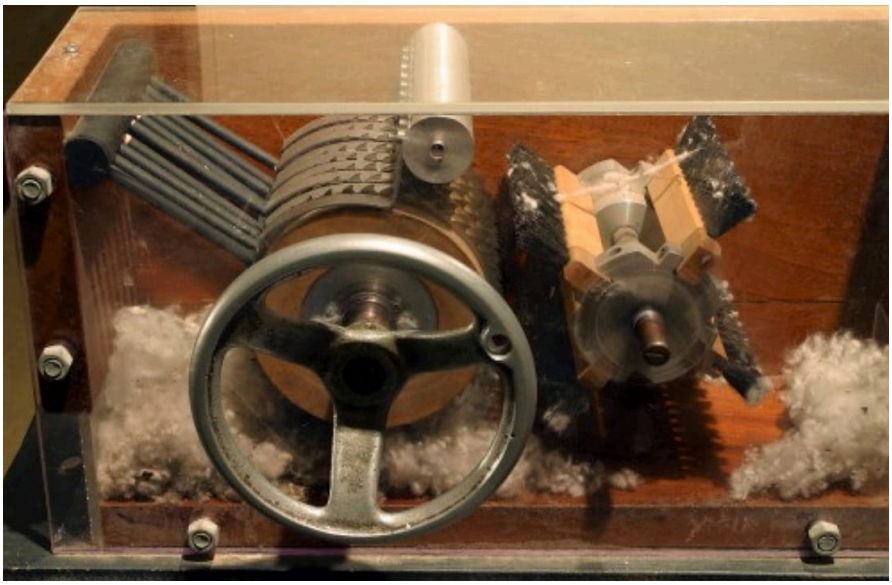


Figure 11.2.2: A 19th-century cotton gin on display at the Eli Whitney Museum. *Wikimedia.*

Thousands rushed into the Cotton Belt. Joseph Holt Ingraham, a writer and traveler from Maine, called it a "mania."[4] William Henry Sparks, a lawyer living in Natchez, Mississippi, remembered it as "a new El Dorado" in which "fortunes were made in a day, without enterprise or work." The change was astonishing. "Where yesterday the wilderness darkened over the land with her wild forests," he recalled, "to-day the cotton plantations whitened the earth."[5] Money flowed from banks, many newly formed, on promises of "other-worldly" profits and overnight returns. Banks in New York City, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and even London offered lines of credit to anyone looking to buy land in the Southwest. Some even sent their own agents to purchase cheap land at auction for the express purpose of selling it, sometimes the very next day, at double and triple the original value, a process known as speculation.

The explosion of available land in the fertile Cotton Belt brought new life to the South. By the end of the 1830s, Petit Gulf cotton had been perfected, distributed, and planted throughout the region. Advances in steam power and water travel revolutionized southern farmers' and planters' ability to deseed and bundle their products and move them to ports popping up along the Atlantic seaboard. Indeed, by the end of the 1830s, cotton had become the primary crop not only of the southwestern states but of the entire nation.

The numbers were staggering. In 1793, just a few years after the first, albeit unintentional, shipment of American cotton to Europe, the South produced around five million pounds of cotton, again almost exclusively the product of South Carolina's Sea Islands. Seven years later, in 1800, South Carolina remained the primary cotton producer in the South, sending 6.5 million pounds of the luxurious long-staple blend to markets in Charleston, Liverpool, London, and New York.[6] But as the tighter, more abundant, and vibrant Petit Gulf strain moved west with the dreamers, schemers, and speculators, the American South quickly became the world's leading cotton producer. By 1835, the five main cotton-growing states—South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana—produced more than five hundred million pounds of Petit Gulf for a global market stretching from New Orleans to New York and to London, Liverpool, Paris and beyond. That five hundred million pounds of cotton made up nearly 55 percent of the entire United States export market, a trend that continued nearly every year until the outbreak of the Civil War. Indeed, the two billion pounds of cotton produced in 1860 alone amounted to more than 60 percent of the United States' total exports for that year.[7]

The astronomical rise of American cotton production came at the cost of the South's first staple crop—tobacco. Perfected in Virginia but grown and sold in nearly every southern territory and state, tobacco served as the South's main economic commodity for more than a century. But tobacco was a rough crop. It treated the land poorly, draining the soil of nutrients. Tobacco fields did not last forever. In fact, fields rarely survived more than four or five cycles of growth, which left them dried and barren, incapable of growing much more than patches of grass. Of course, tobacco is, and was, an addictive substance, but because of its violent pattern of growth, farmers had to move around, purchasing new lands, developing new methods of production, and even creating new fields through deforestation and westward expansion. Tobacco, then, was expensive to produce—and not only because of the ubiquitous use of slave labor. It required massive, temporary fields, large numbers of slaves and laborers, and constant movement.

Cotton was different, and it arrived at a time best suited for its success. Petit Gulf cotton, in particular, grew relatively quickly on

cheap, widely available land. With the invention of the cotton gin in 1794, and the emergence of steam power three decades later, cotton became the common person's commodity, the product with which the United States could expand westward, producing and reproducing Thomas Jefferson's vision of an idyllic republic of small farmers—a nation in control of its land, reaping the benefits of honest, free, and self-reliant work, a nation of families and farmers, expansion and settlement. But this all came at a violent cost. With the democratization of land ownership through Indian removal, federal auctions, readily available credit, and the seemingly universal dream of cotton's immediate profit, one of the South's lasting traditions became normalized and engrained. And by the 1860s, that very tradition, seen as the backbone of southern society and culture, would split the nation in two. The heyday of American slavery had arrived.

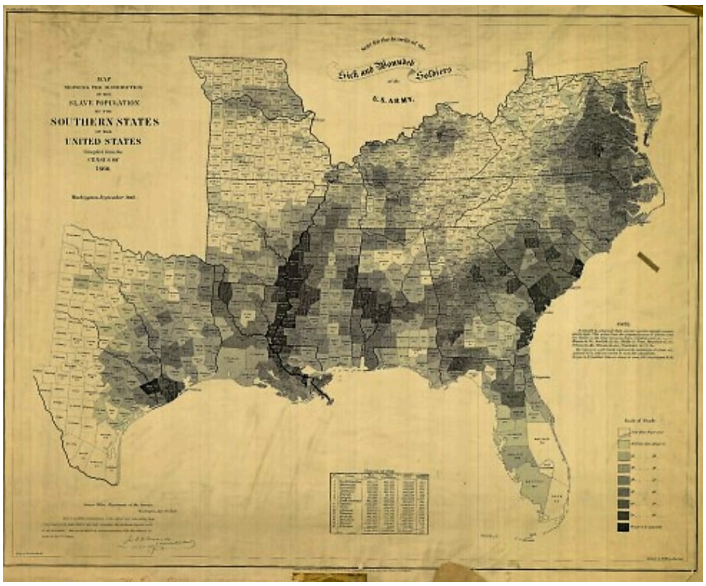


FIgure 11.2.3***:*** *This map, published by the US Coast Guard, shows the percentage of slaves in the population in each county of the slave-holding states in 1860. The highest percentages lie along the Mississippi River, in the "Black Belt" of Alabama, and coastal South Carolina, all of which were centers of agricultural production (cotton and rice) in the United States. E. Hergesheimer (cartographer), Th. Leonhardt (engraver), Map Showing the Distribution of the Slave Population of the Southern States of the United States Compiled from the Census of 1860, c. 1861. Wikimedia.*

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11.3: Cotton and Slavery

The rise of cotton and the resulting upsurge in the United States' global position wed the South to slavery. Without slavery there could be no Cotton Kingdom, no massive production of raw materials stretching across thousands of acres worth millions of dollars. Indeed, cotton grew alongside slavery. The two moved hand-in-hand. The existence of slavery and its importance to the southern economy became the defining factor in what would be known as the Slave South. Although slavery arrived in the Americas long before cotton became a profitable commodity, the use and purchase of slaves, the moralistic and economic justifications for the continuation of slavery, and even the urgency to protect the practice from extinction before the Civil War all received new life from the rise of cotton and the economic, social, and cultural growth spurt that accompanied its success.

Slavery had existed in the South since at least 1619, when a group of Dutch traders arrived at Jamestown with twenty Africans. Although these Africans remained under the ambiguous legal status of "unfree" rather than being actual slaves, their arrival set in motion a practice that would stretch across the entire continent over the next two centuries. Slavery was everywhere by the time the American Revolution created the United States, although northern states began a process of gradually abolishing the practice soon thereafter. In the more rural, agrarian South, slavery became a way of life, especially as farmers expanded their lands, planted more crops, and entered the international trade market. By 1790, two years after the ratification of the Constitution, 654,121 slaves lived in the South—then just Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and the Southwest Territory (now Tennessee). Just twenty years later, in 1810, that number had increased to more than 1.1 million individuals in bondage.[8]



Figure 11.3.1: Though taken after the end of slavery, these stereographs show various stages of cotton production. The fluffy white staple fiber is first extracted from the boll (a prickly, sharp protective capsule), after which the seed is separated in the ginning and taken to a storehouse. Unknown, Picking cotton in a great plantation in North Carolina, U.S.A., c. 1865-1903. *Wikimedia.*

The massive change in the South's enslaved population between 1790 and 1810 makes historical sense. During that time, the South advanced from a region of four states and one rather small territory to a region of six states (Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee) and three rather large territories (Mississippi, Louisiana, and Orleans). The free population of the South also nearly doubled over that period—from around 1.3 million in 1790 to more than 2.3 million in 1810. The enslaved population of the South did not increase at any rapid rate over the next two decades, until the cotton boom took hold in the mid-1830s. Indeed, following the constitutional ban on the international slave trade in 1808, the number of slaves in the South increased by just 750,000 in twenty years.

But then cotton came, and grew, and changed everything. Over the course of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, slavery became so endemic to the Cotton Belt that travelers, writers, and statisticians began referring to the area as the Black Belt, not only to describe the color of the rich land but also to describe the skin color of those forced to work its fields, line its docks, and move its products.

Perhaps the most important aspect of southern slavery during this so-called Cotton Revolution was the value placed on both the

work and the body of the slaves themselves. Once the fever of the initial land rush subsided, land values became more static and credit less free-flowing. For Mississippi land that in 1835 cost no more than $600, a farmer or investor would have to shell out more than $3,000 in 1850. By 1860, that same land, depending on its record of production and location, could cost as much as $100,000.[9] In many cases, cotton growers, especially planters with large lots and enslaved workforces, put up slaves as collateral for funds dedicated to buying more land. If that land, for one reason or another, be it weevils, a late freeze, or a simple lack of nutrients, did not produce a viable crop within a year, the planter would lose not only the new land but also the slaves he or she put up as a guarantee of payment.



Figure 11.3.2: The slave markets of the South varied in size and style, but the St. Louis Exchange in New Orleans was so frequently described it became a kind of representation for all southern slave markets. Indeed, the St. Louis Hotel rotunda was cemented in the literary imagination of nineteenth-century Americans after Harriet Beecher Stowe chose it as the site for the sale of Uncle Tom in her 1852 novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin. After the ruin of the St. Clare plantation, Tom and his fellow slaves were suddenly property that had to be liquidated. Brought to New Orleans to be sold to the highest bidder, Tom found himself "[b]eneath a splendid dome" where "men of all nations" scurried about. J. M. Starling (engraver), *Sale of estates, pictures and slaves in the rotunda, New Orleans, 1842*. *Wikimedia*.

So much went into the production of cotton, the expansion of land, and the maintenance of enslaved workforces that by the 1850s, nearly every ounce of credit offered by southern, and even northern, banks dealt directly with some aspect of the cotton market. Millions of dollars changed hands. Slaves, the literal and figurative backbone of the southern cotton economy, served as the highest and most important expense for any successful cotton grower. Prices for slaves varied drastically, depending on skin color, sex, age, and location, both of purchase and birth. In Virginia in the 1820s, for example, a single female slave of childbearing age sold for an average of $300; an unskilled man above age eighteen sold for around $450; and boys and girls below age thirteen sold for between $100 and $150.[10]

By the 1840s and into the 1850s, prices had nearly doubled—a result of both standard inflation and the increasing importance of enslaved laborers in the cotton market. In 1845, "plow boys" under age eighteen sold for more than $600 in some areas, measured at "five or six dollars per pound."[11] "Prime field hands," as they were called by merchants and traders, averaged $1,600 at market by 1850, a figure that fell in line with the rising prices of the cotton they picked. For example, when cotton sat at 7¢ per pound in 1838, the average "field hand" cost around $700. As the price of cotton increased to 9¢, 10¢, then 11¢ per pound over the next ten years, the average cost of an enslaved male laborer likewise rose to $775, $900, and then more than $1,600.[12]

The key is that cotton and slaves helped define each other, at least in the cotton South. By the 1850s, slavery and cotton had become so intertwined that the very idea of change—be it crop diversity, antislavery ideologies, economic diversification, or the increasingly staggering cost of purchasing and maintaining slaves—became anathema to the southern economic and cultural identity. Cotton had become the foundation of the southern economy. Indeed, it was the only major product, besides perhaps sugarcane in Louisiana, that the South could effectively market internationally. As a result, southern planters, politicians, merchants, and traders became more and more dedicated—some would say "obsessed"—to the means of its production: slaves and slavery. In 1834, Joseph Ingraham wrote that "to sell cotton in order to buy negroes—to make more cotton to buy more negroes, 'ad infinitum,' is the aim and direct tendency of all the operations of the thorough going cotton planter; his whole soul is wrapped up in the pursuit."[13] Twenty-three years later, such pursuit had taken a seemingly religious character, as James Stirling,

an Englishman traveling through the South, observed, "[slaves] and cotton—cotton and [slaves]; these are the law and the prophets to the men of the South."[14]

The Cotton Revolution was a time of capitalism, panic, stress, and competition. Planters expanded their lands, purchased slaves, extended lines of credit, and went into massive amounts of debt because they were constantly working against the next guy, the newcomer, the social mover, the speculator, the trader. A single bad crop could cost even the most wealthy planter his or her entire life, along with those of his or her slaves and their families. Although the cotton market was large and profitable, it was also fickle, risky, and cost intensive. The more wealth one gained, the more land one needed to procure, which led to more slaves, more credit, and more mouths to feed. The decades before the Civil War in the South, then, were not times of slow, simple tradition. They were times of high competition, high risk, and high reward, no matter where one stood in the social hierarchy. But the risk was not always economic.

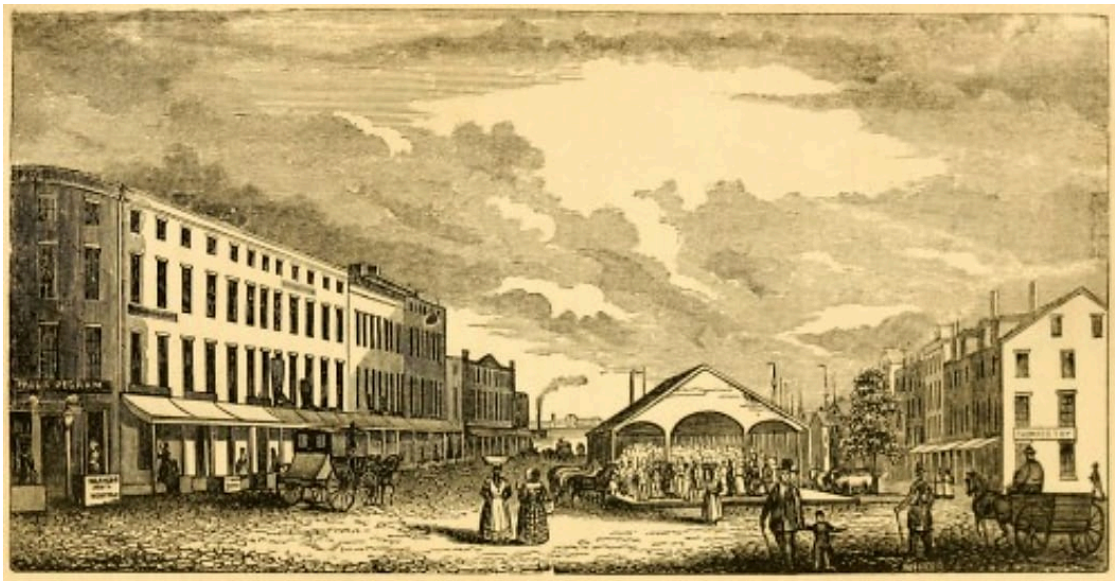


Figure 11.3.3: In southern cities like Norfolk, VA, markets sold not only vegetables, fruits, meats, and sundries, but also slaves. Enslaved men and women, like the two walking in the direct center, lived and labored next to free people, black and white. S. Weeks, *Market Square, Norfolk, from Henry Howe's Historical Collections of Virginia, 1845. Wikimedia.*

The most tragic, indeed horrifying, aspect of slavery was its inhumanity. All slaves had memories, emotions, experiences, and thoughts. They saw their experiences in full color, felt the pain of the lash, the heat of the sun, and the heartbreak of loss, whether through death, betrayal, or sale. Communities developed on a shared sense of suffering, common work, and even family ties. Slaves communicated in the slave markets of the urban South and worked together to help their families, ease their loads, or simply frustrate their owners. Simple actions of resistance, such as breaking a hoe, running a wagon off the road, causing a delay in production due to injury, running away, or even pregnancy provided a language shared by nearly all slaves in the agricultural workforce, a sense of unity that remained unsaid but was acted out daily.

Beyond the basic and confounding horror of it all, the problem of slavery in the cotton South was twofold. First and most immediate was the fear and risk of rebellion. With nearly four million individual slaves residing in the South in 1860, and nearly 2.5 million living in the Cotton Belt alone, the system of communication, resistance, and potential violence among slaves did not escape the minds of slaveholders across the region and the nation as a whole. As early as 1785, Thomas Jefferson wrote in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* that slaves should be freed, but then they should be colonized to another country, where they could become an "independant people." White people's prejudices, and black people's "recollections . . . of the injuries they have sustained" under slavery, would keep the two races from successfully living together in America. If freed slaves were not colonized, eventually there would be "convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race."[15]

Southern writers, planters, farmers, merchants, and politicians expressed the same fears more than a half century later. "The South cannot recede," declared an anonymous writer in an 1852 issue of the New Orleans–based *De Bow's Review*. "She must fight *for* her slaves or *against* them. Even cowardice would not save her."[16] To many slaveholders in the South, slavery was the saving grace of not only their own economic stability but also the maintenance of peace and security in everyday life. Much of pro-slavery ideology rested on the notion that slavery provided a sense of order, duty, and legitimacy to the lives of individual

slaves, feelings that Africans and African Americans, it was said, could not otherwise experience. Without slavery, many thought, “blacks” (the word most often used for “slaves” in regular conversation) would become violent, aimless, and uncontrollable.

Some commentators recognized the problem in the 1850s as the internal slave trade, the legal trade of slaves between states, along rivers, and along the Atlantic coastline. The internal trade picked up in the decade before the Civil War. The problem was rather simple. The more slaves one owned, the more money it cost to maintain them and to extract product from their work. As planters and cotton growers expanded their lands and purchased more slaves, their expectations increased.

And productivity, in large part, did increase. But it came on the backs of slaves with heavier workloads, longer hours, and more intense punishments. “The great limitation to *production is labor*,” wrote one commentator in the *American Cotton Planter* in 1853. And many planters recognized this limitation and worked night and day, sometimes literally, to find the furthest extent of that limit.[17] According to some contemporary accounts, by the mid-1850s, the expected production of an individual slave in Mississippi’s Cotton Belt had increased from between four and five bales (weighing about 500 pounds each) per day to between eight and ten bales per day, on average.[18] Other, perhaps more reliable sources, such as the account book of Buena Vista Plantation in Tensas Parish, Louisiana, list average daily production at between 300 and 500 pounds “per hand,” with weekly averages ranging from 1,700 to 2,100 pounds “per hand.” Cotton production “per hand” increased by 600 percent in Mississippi between 1820 and 1860.[19] Each slave, then, was working longer, harder hours to keep up with his or her master’s expected yield.

Here was capitalism with its most colonial, violent, and exploitative face. Humanity became a commodity used and worked to produce profit for a select group of investors, regardless of its shortfalls, dangers, and immoralities. But slavery, profit, and cotton did not exist only in the rural South. The Cotton Revolution sparked the growth of an urban South, cities that served as southern hubs of a global market, conduits through which the work of slaves and the profits of planters met and funded a wider world.



Figure 11.3.4: The slave trade sold bondspeople — men, women, and children — like mere pieces of property, as seen in the advertisements produced during the era. 1840 poster advertising slaves for sale in New Orleans. *Wikimedia.*

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11.4: The South and the City

Much of the story of slavery and cotton lies in the rural areas where cotton actually grew. Slaves worked in the fields, and planters and farmers held reign over their plantations and farms. But the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s saw an extraordinary spike in urban growth across the South. For nearly a half century after the Revolution, the South existed as a series of plantations, county seats, and small towns, some connected by roads, others connected only by rivers, streams, and lakes. Cities certainly existed, but they served more as local ports than as regional, or national, commercial hubs. For example, New Orleans, then the capital of Louisiana, which entered the union in 1812, was home to just over 27,000 people in 1820; and even with such a seemingly small population, it was the second-largest city in the South—Baltimore had more than 62,000 people in 1820.[20]Given the standard nineteenth-century measurement of an urban space (2,500+ people), the South had just ten in that year, one of which—Mobile, Alabama—contained only 2,672 individuals, nearly half of whom were enslaved.[21]

As late as the 1820s, southern life was predicated on a rural lifestyle—farming, laboring, acquiring land and slaves, and producing whatever that land and those slaves could produce. The market, often located in the nearest town or city, rarely stretched beyond state lines. Even in places like New Orleans, Charleston, and Norfolk, Virginia, which had active ports as early as the 1790s, shipments rarely, with some notable exceptions, left American waters or traveled farther than the closest port down the coast. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, American involvement in international trade was largely confined to ports in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and sometimes Baltimore—which loosely falls under the demographic category of the South. Imports dwarfed exports. In 1807, U.S. imports outnumbered exports by nearly $100 million, and even as the Napoleonic Wars broke out in Europe, causing a drastic decrease in European production and trade, the United States still took in almost $50 million more than it sent out.[22]

Cotton changed much of this, at least with respect to the South. Before cotton, the South had few major ports, almost none of which actively maintained international trade routes or even domestic supply routes. Internal travel and supply was difficult, especially on the waters of the Mississippi River, the main artery of the North American continent, and the eventual gold mine of the South. With the Mississippi's strong current, deadly undertow, and constant sharp turns, sandbars, and subsystems, navigation was difficult and dangerous. The river promised a revolution in trade, transportation, and commerce only *if* the technology existed to handle its impossible bends and fight against its southbound current. By the 1820s and into the 1830s, small ships could successfully navigate their way to New Orleans from as far north as Memphis and even St. Louis, if they so dared. But the problem was getting back. Most often, traders and sailors scuttled their boats on landing in New Orleans, selling the wood for a quick profit or a journey home on a wagon or caravan.

The rise of cotton benefited from a change in transportation technology that aided and guided the growth of southern cotton into one of the world's leading commodities. In January 1812, a 371-ton ship called the *New Orleans* arrived at its namesake city from the distant internal port of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was the first steamboat to navigate the internal waterways of the North American continent from one end to the other and remain capable of returning home. The technology was far from perfect—the *New Orleans* sank two years later after hitting a submerged sandbar covered in driftwood—but its successful trial promised a bright, new future for river-based travel.

And that future was, indeed, bright. Just five years after the *New Orleans* arrived in its city, 17 steamboats ran regular upriver lines. By the mid-1840s, more than 700 steamboats did the same. In 1860, the port of New Orleans received and unloaded 3,500 steamboats, all focused entirely on internal trade. These boats carried around 160,000 tons of raw product that merchants, traders, and agents converted into nearly $220 million in trade, all in a single year.[23] More than 80 percent of the yield was from cotton alone, the product of the same fields tilled, expanded, and sold over the preceding three decades. Only now, in the 1840s and 1850s, could those fields, plantations, and farms simply load their products onto a boat and wait for the profit, credit, or supplies to return from downriver.



Figure 11.4.1: Gordon, pictured here, endured terrible brutality from his master before escaping to Union Army lines in 1863. He would become a soldier and help fight to end the violent system that produced the horrendous scars on his back. Matthew Brady, *Gordon, 1863. Wikimedia.*

The explosion of steam power changed the face of the South, and indeed the nation as a whole. Everything that could be steam-powered was steam-powered, sometimes with mixed results. Cotton gins, wagons, grinders, looms, and baths, among countless others, all fell under the net of this new technology. Most importantly, the South's rivers, lakes, and bays were no longer barriers and hindrances to commerce. Quite the opposite; they had become the means by which commerce flowed, the roads of a modernizing society and region. And most importantly, the ability to use internal waterways connected the rural interior to increasingly urban ports, the sources of raw materials—cotton, tobacco, wheat, and so on—to an eager global market.

Coastal ports like New Orleans, Charleston, Norfolk, and even Richmond became targets of steamboats and coastal carriers. Merchants, traders, skilled laborers, and foreign speculators and agents flooded the towns. In fact, the South experienced a a greater rate of urbanization between 1820 and 1860 than the seemingly more industrial, urban-based North. Urbanization of the South simply looked different from that seen in the North and in Europe. Where most northern and some European cities (most notably London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Paris) developed along the lines of industry, creating public spaces to boost the morale of wage laborers in factories, on the docks, and in storehouses, southern cities developed within the cyclical logic of sustaining the trade in cotton that justified and paid for the maintenance of an enslaved labor force. The growth of southern cities, then, allowed slavery to flourish and brought the South into a more modern world.

Between 1820 and 1860, quite a few southern towns experienced dramatic population growth, which paralleled the increase in cotton production and international trade to and from the South. The 27,176 people New Orleans claimed in 1820 expanded to more than 168,000 by 1860. In fact, in New Orleans, the population nearly quadrupled from 1830 to 1840 as the Cotton Revolution hit full stride. At the same time, Charleston's population nearly doubled, from 24,780 to 40,522; Richmond expanded threefold, growing from a town of 12,067 to a capital city of 37,910; and St. Louis experienced the largest increase of any city in the nation, expanding from a frontier town of 10,049 to a booming Mississippi River metropolis of 160,773.[24]

The city and the field, the urban center and the rural space, were inextricably linked in the decades before the Civil War. And that relationship connected the region to a global market and community. As southern cities grew, they became more cosmopolitan, attracting types of people either unsuited for or uninterested in rural life. These people—merchants, skilled laborers, traders, sellers of all kinds and colors—brought rural goods to a market desperate for raw materials. Everyone, it seemed, had a place in the cotton trade. Agents, many of them transients from the North, and in some cases Europe, represented the interests of planters and cotton farmers in the cities, making connections with traders who in turn made deals with manufactories in the Northeast, Liverpool, and Paris.

Among the more important aspects of southern urbanization was the development of a middle class in the urban centers, something that never fully developed in the more rural areas. In a very general sense, the rural South fell under a two-class system in which a landowning elite controlled the politics and most of the capital, and a working poor survived on subsistence farming or basic, unskilled labor funded by the elite. The development of large urban centers founded on trade, and flush with transient populations of sailors, merchants, and travelers, gave rise to a large, highly developed middle class in the South. Predicated on the idea of separation from those above and below them, middle-class men and women in the South thrived in the active, feverish

rush of port city life.

Skilled craftsmen, merchants, traders, speculators, and store owners made up the southern middle class. Fashion trends no longer required an honest function—such as a broad-brimmed hat to protect one from the sun, knee-high boots for horse riding, and linen shirts and trousers to fight the heat of an unrelenting sun. Silk, cotton, and bright colors came into vogue, especially in coastal cities like New Orleans and Charleston; cravats, golden brooches, diamonds, and "the best stylings of Europe" became the standards of urban middle-class life in the South.[25] Neighbors, friends, and business partners formed and joined the same benevolent societies. These societies worked to aid the less fortunate in society, the orphans, the impoverished, the destitute. But in many cases these benevolent societies simply served as a way to keep other people out of middle-class circles, sustaining both wealth and social prestige within an insular, well-regulated community. Members and partners married each others' sisters, stood as godparents for each others' children, and served, when the time came, as executors of fellow members' wills.

The city bred exclusivity. That was part of the rush, part of fever of the time. Built upon the cotton trade, funded by European and Northeastern merchants, markets, and manufactories, Southern cities became headquarters of the nation's largest and most profitable commodities—cotton and slaves. And they welcomed the world with open checkbooks and open arms.

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11.5: Southern Cultures

To understand the global and economic functions of the South, we also must understand the people who made the whole thing work. The South, more than perhaps any other region in the United States, had a great diversity of cultures and situations. The South still relied on the existence of slavery; and as a result, it was home to nearly 4 million enslaved people by 1860, amounting to more than 45 percent of the entire Southern population.[26] Naturally, these people, though fundamentally unfree in their movement, developed a culture all their own. They created kinship and family networks, systems of (often illicit) trade, linguistic codes, religious congregations, and even benevolent and social aid organizations—all within the grip of slavery, a system dedicated to extraction rather than development, work and production rather than community and emotion.

The concept of family, more than anything else, played a crucial role in the daily lives of slaves. Family and kinship networks, and the benefits they carried, represented an institution through which slaves could piece together a sense of community, a sense of feeling and dedication, separate from the forced system of production that defined their daily lives. The creation of family units, distant relations, and communal traditions allowed slaves to maintain religious beliefs, ancient ancestral traditions, and even names passed down from generation to generation in a way that challenged enslavement. Ideas passed between relatives on different plantations, names given to children in honor of the deceased, and basic forms of love and devotion created a sense of individuality, an identity that assuaged the loneliness and desperation of enslaved life. Family defined how each plantation, each community, functioned, grew, and labored.

Nothing under slavery lasted long, at least not in the same form. Slave families and networks were no exceptions to this rule. African-born slaves during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries engaged in marriages—sometimes polygamous—with those of the same ethnic groups whenever possible. This, most importantly, allowed for the maintenance of cultural traditions, such as language, religion, name practices, and even the rare practice of bodily scaring. In some parts of the South, such as Louisiana and coastal South Carolina, ethnic homogeneity thrived, and as a result, traditions and networks survived relatively unchanged for decades. As the number of slaves arriving in the United States increased, and generations of American-born slaves overtook the original African-born populations, the practice of marriage, especially among members of the same ethnic group, or even simply the same plantation, became vital to the continuation of aging traditions. Marriage served as the single most important aspect of cultural and identity formation, as it connected slaves to their own pasts, and gave some sense of protection for the future.[27] By the start of the Civil War, approximately two-thirds of slaves were members of nuclear households, each household averaging six people—mother, father, children, and often a grandparent, elderly aunt or uncle, and even “in-laws.” Those who did not have a marriage bond, or even a nuclear family, still maintained family ties, most often living with a single parent, brother, sister, or grandparent.[28]



Figure 11.5.1: Free people of color were present throughout the American South, particularly in urban areas like Charleston and New Orleans. Some were relatively well off, like this femme de couleur libre who posed with her mixed-race child in front of her New Orleans home, maintaining a middling position between free whites and unfree blacks. Free woman of color with quadroon daughter; late 18th century collage painting, New Orleans. *Wikimedia*

Many slave marriages endured for many years. But the threat of disruption, often through sale, always loomed. As the internal slave trade increased following the constitutional ban on slave importation in 1808 and the rise of cotton in the 1830s and 1840s, slave families, especially those established prior to the slaves' arrival in the United States, came under increased threat. Hundreds of thousands of marriages, many with children, fell victim to sale "downriver"—a euphemism for the near constant flow of slave laborers down the Mississippi River to the developing cotton belt in the Southwest.[29] In fact, during the Cotton Revolution alone, between one-fifth and one-third of all slave marriages were broken up through sale or forced migration. But this was not the only threat. Planters, and slaveowners of all shapes and sizes, recognized that marriage was, in the most basic and tragic sense, a privilege granted and defined by them for their slaves. And as a result, many slaveholders used slaves' marriages, or the threats thereto, to squeeze out more production, counteract disobedience, or simply make a gesture of power and superiority.

Threats to family networks, marriages, and household stability did not stop with the death of a master. A slave couple could live their entire lives together, even having been born, raised, and married on the slave plantation, and, following the death of their master, find themselves at opposite sides of the known world. It only took a single relative, executor, creditor, or friend of the deceased to make a claim against the estate to cause the sale and dispersal of an entire slave community.

Enslaved women were particularly vulnerable to the shifts of fate attached to slavery. In many cases, female slaves did the same work as men, spending the day—from sun up to sun down—in the fields picking and bundling cotton. In some rare cases, especially among the larger plantations, planters tended to use women as house servants more than men, but this was not universal. In both cases, however, females slaves' experiences were different than their male counterparts, husbands, and neighbors. Sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies, and constant childrearing while continuing to work the fields all made life as a female slave more prone to disruption and uncertainty. Harriet Jacobs, an enslaved woman from North Carolina, chronicled her master's attempts to sexually abuse her in her narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Jacobs suggested that her successful attempts to resist sexual assault and her determination to love whom she pleased was "something akin to freedom."[30] But this "freedom," however empowering and contextual, did not cast a wide net. Many enslaved women had no choice concerning love, sex, and motherhood. On plantations, small farms, and even in cities, rape was ever-present. Like the splitting of families, slaveowners used sexual violence as a form of terrorism, a way to promote increased production, obedience, and power relations. And this was not restricted only to unmarried women. In numerous contemporary accounts, particularly violent slaveowners forced men to witness the rape of their wives, daughters, and relatives, often as punishment, but occasionally as a sadistic expression of power and dominance.[31]

As property, enslaved women had no recourse, and society, by and large, did not see a crime in this type of violence. Racist pseudo-scientists claimed that whites could not physically rape Africans or African Americans, as the sexual organs of each were not compatible in that way. State law, in some cases, supported this view, claiming that rape could only occur between either two white people or a black man and a white woman. All other cases fell under a silent acceptance.[32] The consequences of rape, too,

fell to the victim in the case of slaves. Pregnancies that resulted from rape did not always lead to a lighter workload for the mother. And if a slave acted out against a rapist, whether that be her master, mistress, or any other white attacker, her actions were seen as crimes rather than desperate acts of survival. For example, a 19-year-old slave named Celia fell victim to repeated rape by her master in Callaway County, Missouri. Between 1850 and 1855, Robert Newsom raped Celia hundreds of times, producing two children and several miscarriages. Sick and desperate in the fall of 1855, Celia took a club and struck her master in the head, killing him. But instead of sympathy and aid, or even an honest attempt to understand and empathize, the community called for the execution of Celia. On November 16, 1855, after a trial of ten days, Celia, the 19-year-old rape victim and slave, was hanged for her crimes against her master.[33]



Figure 11.5.2: This women in this photograph are Selina Gray and two of her daughters. Gray was the enslaved housekeeper to Robert E. Lee. *National Park Service*.

Gender inequality did not always fall along the same lines as racial inequality. Southern society, especially in the age of cotton, deferred to white men, under whom laws, social norms, and cultural practices were written, dictated, and maintained. White and free women of color lived in a society dominated, in nearly every aspect, by men. Denied voting rights, women, of all statuses and colors, had no direct representation in the creation and discussion of law. Husbands, it was said, represented their wives, as the public sphere was too violent, heated, and high-minded for women. Society expected women to represent the foundations of the republic, gaining respectability through their work at home, in support of their husbands and children, away from the rough and boisterous realm of masculinity. In many cases, too, law did not protect women the same way it protected men. In most states, marriage, an act expected of any self-respecting, reasonable woman of any class, effectively transferred all of a woman's property to her husband, forever, regardless of claim or command. Divorce existed, but it hardly worked in a woman's favor, and often, if successful, ruined the wife's standing in society, and even led to well-known cases of suicide.[34]

Life on the ground in cotton South, like the cities, systems, and networks within which it rested, defied the standard narrative of the Old South. Slavery existed to dominate, yet slaves formed bonds, maintained traditions, and crafted new culture. They fell in love, had children, and protected one another using the privileges granted them by their captors, and the basic intellect allowed all human beings. They were resourceful, brilliant, and vibrant, and they created freedom where freedom seemingly could not exist. And within those communities, resilience and dedication often led to cultural sustenance. Among the enslaved, women, and the impoverished-but-free, culture thrived in ways that are difficult to see through the bales of cotton and the stacks of money sitting on the docks and in the counting houses of the South's urban centers. But religion, honor, and pride transcended material goods, especially among those who could not express themselves that way.



Figure 11.5.3: The issue of emigration elicited disparate reactions from African Americans. Tens of thousands left the United States for Liberia, a map of which is shown here, to pursue greater freedoms and prosperity. Most emigrants did not experience such success, but Liberia continued to attract black settlers for decades. J. Ashmun, Map of the West Coast of Africa from Sierra Leone to Cape Palmas, including the colony of Liberia..., 1830. *Library of Congress.*

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11.6: Religion and Honor in the Slave South

Economic growth, violence, and exploitation coexisted and mutually reinforced evangelical Christianity in the South. The revivals the Second Great Awakening established the region's prevailing religious culture. Led by Methodists, Baptists, and to a lesser degree, Presbyterians, this intense period of religious regeneration swept the along southern backcountry. By the outbreak of the Civil War, the vast majority of southerners who affiliated with a religious denomination belonged to either the Baptist or Methodist faith.[35] Both churches in the South briefly attacked slavery before transforming into some of the most vocal defenders of slavery and the southern social order.

Southern ministers contended that God himself had selected Africans for bondage but also considered the evangelization of slaves to be one of their greatest callings.[36] Missionary efforts among southern slaves largely succeeded and Protestantism spread rapidly among African Americans, leading to a proliferation of biracial congregations and prominent independent black churches. Some black and white southerners forged positive and rewarding biracial connections; however, more often black and white southerners described strained or superficial religious relationships.

As the institution of slavery hardened racism in the South, relationships between missionaries and Native Americans transformed as well. Missionaries of all denominations were among the first to represent themselves as "pillars of white authority." After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, plantation culture expanded into the Deep South, and mission work became a crucial element of Christian expansion. Frontier mission schools carried a continual flow of Christian influence into Native American communities. Some missionaries learned indigenous languages, but many more worked to prevent indigenous children from speaking their native tongues, insisting on English for Christian understanding. By the Indian removals of 1835 and the Trail of Tears in 1838, missionaries in the South preached a pro-slavery theology that emphasized obedience to masters, the biblical basis of racial slavery via the curse of Ham, and the "civilizing" paternalism of slave owners.

Slaves most commonly received Christian instruction from white preachers or masters, whose religious message typically stressed slave subservience. Anti-literacy laws ensured that most slaves would be unable to read the Bible in its entirety and thus could not acquaint themselves with such inspirational stories as Moses delivering the Israelites out of slavery. Contradictions between God's Word and master and mistress cruelty did not pass unnoticed by many enslaved African Americans. As former slave William Wells Brown declared, "slaveholders hide themselves behind the Church," adding that "a more praying, preaching, psalm-singing people cannot be found than the slaveholders of the South."[37]

Many slaves chose to create and practice their own versions of Christianity, one that typically incorporated aspects of traditional African religions with limited input from the white community. Nat Turner, the leader of the great slave rebellion, found inspiration from religion early in life. Adopting an austere Christian lifestyle during his adolescence, Turner claimed to have been visited by "spirits" during his twenties and considered himself something of a prophet. He claimed to have had visions, in which he was called on to do the work of God, leading some contemporaries (as well as historians) to question his sanity.[38]

Inspired by his faith, Turner led the most deadly slave rebellion in the antebellum South. On the morning of August 22, 1831, in Southampton County, Virginia, Nat Turner and six collaborators attempted to free the region's enslaved population. Turner initiated the violence by killing his master with an ax blow to the head. By the end of the day, Turner and his band, which had grown to over fifty men, killed fifty-seven white men, women, and children on eleven farms. By the next day, the local militia and white residents had captured or killed all of the participants except Turner, who hid for a number of weeks in nearby woods before being captured and executed. The white terror that followed Nat Turner's rebellion transformed southern religion, as anti-literacy laws increased and black-led churches were broken up and placed under the supervision of white ministers.

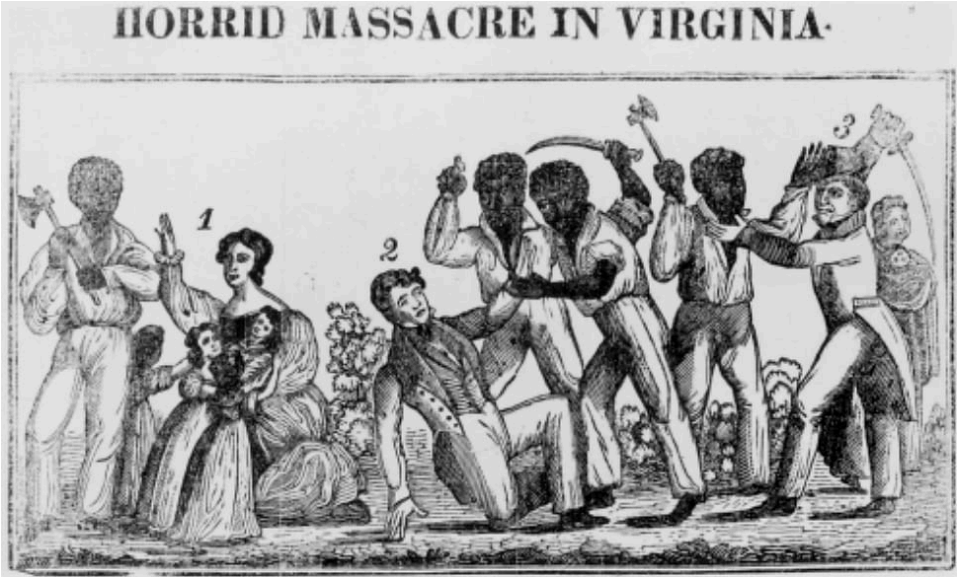


Figure 11.6.1: This woodcut captured the terror felt by white southerners in the aftermath of Nat Turner's rebellion. After the rebellion, fearful white reactionaries killed hundreds of enslaved people—most of whom were unconnected to the rebellion— and the state created stricter, more limiting laws concerning slavery. *African American Intellectual History Society.*

Evangelical religion also shaped understandings of what it meant to be a southern man or a southern woman. Southern manhood was largely shaped by an obsession with masculine honor, whereas southern womanhood centered on expectations of sexual virtue or purity. Honor prioritized the public recognition of white masculine claims to reputation and authority. Southern men developed a code to ritualize their interactions with each other and to perform their expectations of honor. This code structured language and behavior and was designed to minimize conflict. But when conflict did arise, the code also provided rituals that would reduce the resulting violence.

The formal duel exemplified the code in action. If two men could not settle a dispute through the arbitration of their friends, they would exchange pistol shots to prove their equal honor status. Duelists arranged a secluded meeting, chose from a set of deadly weapons, and risked their lives as they clashed with swords or fired pistols at one another. Some of the most illustrious men in American history participated in a duel at some point during their lives, including President Andrew Jackson, Vice President Aaron Burr, and U.S. senators Henry Clay and Thomas Hart Benton. In all but Burr's case, dueling helped elevate these men to prominence.

Violence among the lower classes, especially those in the backcountry, involved fistfights and shoot-outs. Tactics included the sharpening of fingernails and filing of teeth into razor-sharp points, which would be used to gouge eyes and bite off ears and noses. In a duel, a gentleman achieved recognition by risking his life rather than killing his opponent, whereas those involved in rough-and-tumble fighting achieved victory through maiming their opponent.

The legal system was partially to blame for the prevalence of violence in the Old South. Although states and territories had laws against murder, rape, and various other forms of violence, including specific laws against dueling, upper-class southerners were rarely prosecuted, and juries often acquitted the accused. Despite the fact that hundreds of duelists fought and killed one another, there is little evidence that many duelists faced prosecution, and only one, Timothy Bennett (of Belleville, Illinois), was ever executed. By contrast, prosecutors routinely sought cases against lower-class southerners, who were found guilty in greater numbers than their wealthier counterparts.

The southern emphasis on honor affected women as well. While southern men worked to maintain their sense of masculinity; so too southern women cultivated a sense of femininity. Femininity in the South was intimately tied to the domestic sphere, even more so than for women in the North. The cult of domesticity strictly limited the ability of wealthy southern women to engage in public life. While northern women began to organize reform societies, southern women remained bound to the home, where they were instructed to cultivate their families' religious sensibility and manage their household. Managing the household was not easy work, however. For women on large plantations, managing the household would include directing a large bureaucracy of potentially rebellious slaves. For most southern women who did not live on plantations, managing the household included nearly constant work in keeping families clean, fed, and well-behaved. On top of these duties, many southern women were required to help with agricultural tasks.

Female labor was an important aspect of the southern economy, but the social position of women in southern culture was understood not through economic labor but rather through moral virtue. While men fought to get ahead in the turbulent world of the cotton boom, women were instructed to offer a calming, moralizing influence on husbands and children. The home was to be a place of quiet respite and spiritual solace. Under the guidance of a virtuous woman, the southern home would foster the values required for economic success and cultural refinement. Female virtue came to be understood largely as a euphemism for sexual purity, and southern culture, southern law, and southern violence largely centered on protecting that virtue of sexual purity from any possible imagined threat. In a world saturated with the sexual exploitation of black women, southerners developed a paranoid obsession with protecting the sexual purity of white women. Black men were presented as an insatiable sexual threat. Racial systems of violence and domination were wielded with crushing intensity for generations, all in the name of keeping white womanhood as pure as the cotton that anchored southern society.

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11.7: Conclusion

Economic growth, violence, and exploitation coexisted and mutually reinforced evangelical Christianity in the South. The revivals the Second Great Awakening established the region's prevailing religious culture. Led by Methodists, Baptists, and to a lesser degree, Presbyterians, this intense period of religious regeneration swept the along southern backcountry. By the outbreak of the Civil War, the vast majority of southerners who affiliated with a religious denomination belonged to either the Baptist or Methodist faith.[35] Both churches in the South briefly attacked slavery before transforming into some of the most vocal defenders of slavery and the southern social order.

Southern ministers contended that God himself had selected Africans for bondage but also considered the evangelization of slaves to be one of their greatest callings.[36] Missionary efforts among southern slaves largely succeeded and Protestantism spread rapidly among African Americans, leading to a proliferation of biracial congregations and prominent independent black churches. Some black and white southerners forged positive and rewarding biracial connections; however, more often black and white southerners described strained or superficial religious relationships.

As the institution of slavery hardened racism in the South, relationships between missionaries and Native Americans transformed as well. Missionaries of all denominations were among the first to represent themselves as "pillars of white authority." After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, plantation culture expanded into the Deep South, and mission work became a crucial element of Christian expansion. Frontier mission schools carried a continual flow of Christian influence into Native American communities. Some missionaries learned indigenous languages, but many more worked to prevent indigenous children from speaking their native tongues, insisting on English for Christian understanding. By the Indian removals of 1835 and the Trail of Tears in 1838, missionaries in the South preached a pro-slavery theology that emphasized obedience to masters, the biblical basis of racial slavery via the curse of Ham, and the "civilizing" paternalism of slave owners.

Slaves most commonly received Christian instruction from white preachers or masters, whose religious message typically stressed slave subservience. Anti-literacy laws ensured that most slaves would be unable to read the Bible in its entirety and thus could not acquaint themselves with such inspirational stories as Moses delivering the Israelites out of slavery. Contradictions between God's Word and master and mistress cruelty did not pass unnoticed by many enslaved African Americans. As former slave William Wells Brown declared, "slaveholders hide themselves behind the Church," adding that "a more praying, preaching, psalm-singing people cannot be found than the slaveholders of the South."[37]

Many slaves chose to create and practice their own versions of Christianity, one that typically incorporated aspects of traditional African religions with limited input from the white community. Nat Turner, the leader of the great slave rebellion, found inspiration from religion early in life. Adopting an austere Christian lifestyle during his adolescence, Turner claimed to have been visited by "spirits" during his twenties and considered himself something of a prophet. He claimed to have had visions, in which he was called on to do the work of God, leading some contemporaries (as well as historians) to question his sanity.[38]

Inspired by his faith, Turner led the most deadly slave rebellion in the antebellum South. On the morning of August 22, 1831, in Southampton County, Virginia, Nat Turner and six collaborators attempted to free the region's enslaved population. Turner initiated the violence by killing his master with an ax blow to the head. By the end of the day, Turner and his band, which had grown to over fifty men, killed fifty-seven white men, women, and children on eleven farms. By the next day, the local militia and white residents had captured or killed all of the participants except Turner, who hid for a number of weeks in nearby woods before being captured and executed. The white terror that followed Nat Turner's rebellion transformed southern religion, as anti-literacy laws increased and black-led churches were broken up and placed under the supervision of white ministers.

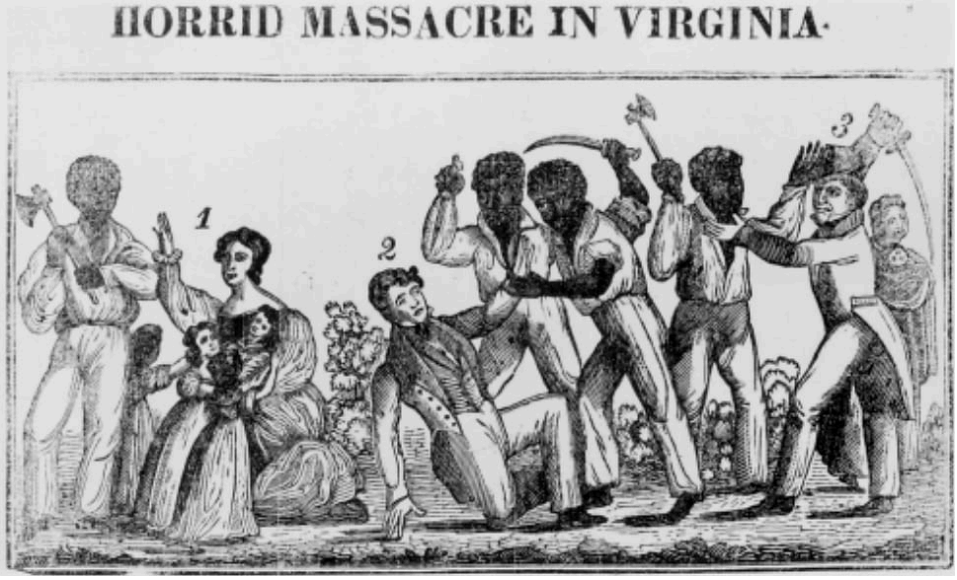


Figure 11.7.1: This woodcut captured the terror felt by white southerners in the aftermath of Nat Turner's rebellion. After the rebellion, fearful white reactionaries killed hundreds of enslaved people—most of whom were unconnected to the rebellion— and the state created stricter, more limiting laws concerning slavery. *African American Intellectual History Society.*

Evangelical religion also shaped understandings of what it meant to be a southern man or a southern woman. Southern manhood was largely shaped by an obsession with masculine honor, whereas southern womanhood centered on expectations of sexual virtue or purity. Honor prioritized the public recognition of white masculine claims to reputation and authority. Southern men developed a code to ritualize their interactions with each other and to perform their expectations of honor. This code structured language and behavior and was designed to minimize conflict. But when conflict did arise, the code also provided rituals that would reduce the resulting violence.

The formal duel exemplified the code in action. If two men could not settle a dispute through the arbitration of their friends, they would exchange pistol shots to prove their equal honor status. Duelists arranged a secluded meeting, chose from a set of deadly weapons, and risked their lives as they clashed with swords or fired pistols at one another. Some of the most illustrious men in American history participated in a duel at some point during their lives, including President Andrew Jackson, Vice President Aaron Burr, and U.S. senators Henry Clay and Thomas Hart Benton. In all but Burr's case, dueling helped elevate these men to prominence.

Violence among the lower classes, especially those in the backcountry, involved fistfights and shoot-outs. Tactics included the sharpening of fingernails and filing of teeth into razor-sharp points, which would be used to gouge eyes and bite off ears and noses. In a duel, a gentleman achieved recognition by risking his life rather than killing his opponent, whereas those involved in rough-and-tumble fighting achieved victory through maiming their opponent.

The legal system was partially to blame for the prevalence of violence in the Old South. Although states and territories had laws against murder, rape, and various other forms of violence, including specific laws against dueling, upper-class southerners were rarely prosecuted, and juries often acquitted the accused. Despite the fact that hundreds of duelists fought and killed one another, there is little evidence that many duelists faced prosecution, and only one, Timothy Bennett (of Belleville, Illinois), was ever executed. By contrast, prosecutors routinely sought cases against lower-class southerners, who were found guilty in greater numbers than their wealthier counterparts.

The southern emphasis on honor affected women as well. While southern men worked to maintain their sense of masculinity; so too southern women cultivated a sense of femininity. Femininity in the South was intimately tied to the domestic sphere, even more so than for women in the North. The cult of domesticity strictly limited the ability of wealthy southern women to engage in public life. While northern women began to organize reform societies, southern women remained bound to the home, where they were instructed to cultivate their families' religious sensibility and manage their household. Managing the household was not easy work, however. For women on large plantations, managing the household would include directing a large bureaucracy of potentially rebellious slaves. For most southern women who did not live on plantations, managing the household included nearly constant work in keeping families clean, fed, and well-behaved. On top of these duties, many southern women were required to help with agricultural tasks.

Female labor was an important aspect of the southern economy, but the social position of women in southern culture was understood not through economic labor but rather through moral virtue. While men fought to get ahead in the turbulent world of the cotton boom, women were instructed to offer a calming, moralizing influence on husbands and children. The home was to be a place of quiet respite and spiritual solace. Under the guidance of a virtuous woman, the southern home would foster the values required for economic success and cultural refinement. Female virtue came to be understood largely as a euphemism for sexual purity, and southern culture, southern law, and southern violence largely centered on protecting that virtue of sexual purity from any possible imagined threat. In a world saturated with the sexual exploitation of black women, southerners developed a paranoid obsession with protecting the sexual purity of white women. Black men were presented as an insatiable sexual threat. Racial systems of violence and domination were wielded with crushing intensity for generations, all in the name of keeping white womanhood as pure as the cotton that anchored southern society.

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11.8: Primary Sources

Nat Turner Explains His Rebellion, 1831

In August, 1831, Nat Turner led a group of enslaved and free black men in a rebellion that killed over fifty white men, women, and children. Nat Turner understood his rebellion as an act of God. While he awaited trial, Turner spoke with the white attorney, Thomas Ruffin Gray, who wrote their conversations into the following document.

Harriet Jacobs on Rape and Slavery, 1860

Harriet Jacobs was born into slavery in North Carolina. After escaping to New York, Jacobs eventually wrote a narrative of her enslavement under the pseudonym of Linda Brent. In this excerpt Jacobs explains her experience struggling with sexual assault from her master.

Solomon Northup Describes a Slave Market, 1841

Solomon Northup was a free black man in New York who was captured and sold into slavery. After twelve years, he was rescued and returned to his family. Shortly thereafter, he published a narrative of his experiences as a slave. This excerpt describes the horrors he saw in a slave market.

George Fitzhugh Argues that Slavery is Better than Liberty and Equality, 1854

As the nineteenth century progressed, some Americans shifted their understanding of slavery from a necessary evil to a positive good. George Fitzhugh offered one of the most consistent and sophisticated defenses of slavery. His study Sociology for the South *attacked northern society as corrupt and slavery as a gentle system designed to "protect" the inferior black race and promote social harmony.*

Sermon on the Duties of a Christian Woman, 1851

The Market Revolution brought a hardening of gender roles in both the North and the South, but the South tended to hold more tightly to the expectation of "separate spheres." In this sermon, Rev. Aldert Smedes of Raleigh, North Carolina, praises the virtues of women and explains the duties of a Christian woman.

Painting of Enslaved Persons for Sale, 1861

The English painter Eyre Crowe traveled through the American South in the early 1850s. He was particularly shocked to see the horrors of a slave market where families were torn apart by sale. In this painting, Crowe depicts an enslaved man, several women, and children waiting to be sold at auction.

Proslavery Cartoon, 1850

European alliances helped the American antislavery movement. But proslavery supporters also drew transatlantic comparisons. This proslavery image ignorantly portrays enslaved people who, according to white observers, were cheerful and pleased with their bondage. Proslavery advocates attempted to claim that English factory workers suffered a worse "slavery" than enslaved Africans and African Americans in the American South.

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11.9: Reference Material

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12: MANIFEST DESTINY



Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way, 1862. Mural, United States Capitol.

12.1: Introduction

12.2: Antebellum Western Migration and Indian Removal

12.3: Life and Culture in the West

12.4: Texas, Mexico, and America

12.5: Manifest Destiny and the Gold Rush

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12.1: Introduction

John Louis O'Sullivan, a popular editor and columnist, articulated the long-standing American belief in the God-given mission of the United States to lead the world in the peaceful transition to democracy. In a little-read essay printed in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, O'Sullivan outlined the importance of annexing Texas to the United States:

> *Why, were other reasoning wanting, in favor of now elevating this question of the reception of Texas into the Union, out of the lower region of our past party dissensions, up to its proper level of a high and broad nationality, it surely is to be found, found abundantly, in the manner in which other nations have undertaken to intrude themselves into it, between us and the proper parties to the case, in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.*[1]

O'Sullivan and many others viewed expansion as necessary to achieve America's destiny and to protect American interests. The quasi-religious call to spread democracy coupled with the reality of thousands of settlers pressing westward. Manifest destiny was grounded in the belief that a democratic, agrarian republic would save the world.



Figure 12.1.1: John O'Sullivan, shown here in a 1874 Harper's Weekly sketch, coined the phrase "manifest destiny" in an 1845 newspaper article. *Wikimedia*.

Although called into name in 1845, manifest destiny was a widely held but vaguely defined belief that dated back to the founding of the nation. First, many Americans believed that the strength of American values and institutions justified moral claims to hemispheric leadership. Second, the lands on the North American continent west of the Mississippi River (and later into the Caribbean) were destined for American-led political and agricultural improvement. Third, God and the Constitution ordained an irrepressible destiny to accomplish redemption and democratization throughout the world. All three of these claims pushed many Americans, whether they uttered the words *manifest destiny* or not, to actively seek the expansion of democracy. These beliefs and the resulting actions were often disastrous to anyone in the way of American expansion. The new religion of American democracy spread on the feet and in the wagons of those who moved west, imbued with the hope that their success would be the nation's success.

The Young America movement, strongest among members of the Democratic Party but spanning the political spectrum, downplayed divisions over slavery and ethnicity by embracing national unity and emphasizing American exceptionalism, territorial expansion, democratic participation, and economic interdependence.[2] Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson captured the political outlook of this new generation in a speech he delivered in 1844 titled "The Young American":

> *In every age of the world, there has been a leading nation, one of a more generous sentiment, whose eminent citizens were willing to stand for the interests of general justice and humanity, at the risk of being called, by the men of the*

> *moment, chimerical and fantastic. Which should be that nation but these States? Which should lead that movement, if not New England? Who should lead the leaders, but the Young American?*[3]

However, many Americans, including Emerson, disapproved of aggressive expansion. For opponents of manifest destiny, the lofty rhetoric of the Young Americans was nothing other than a kind of imperialism that the American Revolution was supposed to have repudiated.[4] Many members of the Whig Party (and later the Republican Party) argued that the United States' mission was to lead by example, not by conquest. Abraham Lincoln summed up this criticism with a fair amount of sarcasm during a speech in 1859:

> *He (the Young American) owns a large part of the world, by right of possessing it; and all the rest by right of wanting it, and intending to have it. . . . Young America had "a pleasing hope—a fond desire—a longing after" territory. He has a great passion—a perfect rage—for the "new"; particularly new men for office, and the new earth mentioned in the revelations, in which, being no more sea, there must be about three times as much land as in the present. He is a great friend of humanity; and his desire for land is not selfish, but merely an impulse to extend the area of freedom. He is very anxious to fight for the liberation of enslaved nations and colonies, provided, always, they have land. . . . As to those who have no land, and would be glad of help from any quarter, he considers they can afford to wait a few hundred years longer. In knowledge he is particularly rich. He knows all that can possibly be known; inclines to believe in spiritual trappings, and is the unquestioned inventor of "Manifest Destiny."*[5]

But Lincoln and other anti-expansionists would struggle to win popular opinion. The nation, fueled by the principles of manifest destiny, would continue westward. Along the way, Americans battled both native peoples and foreign nations, claiming territory to the very edges of the continent. But westward expansion did not come without a cost. It exacerbated the slavery question, pushed Americans toward civil war, and, ultimately, threatened the very mission of American democracy it was designed to aid.



Figure 12.1.2: Artistic propaganda like this promoted the national project of manifest destiny. Columbia, the female figure of America, leads Americans into the West and into the future by carrying the values of republicanism (as seen through her Roman garb) and progress (shown through the inclusion of technological innovations like the telegraph) and clearing native peoples and animals, seen being pushed into the darkness. John Gast, American Progress, 1872. *Wikimedia*

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12.2: Antebellum Western Migration and Indian Removal

After the War of 1812, Americans settled the Great Lakes region rapidly thanks in part to aggressive land sales by the federal government.[6]Missouri's admission as a slave state presented the first major crisis over westward migration and American expansion in the antebellum period. Farther north, lead and iron ore mining spurred development in Wisconsin.[7] By the 1830s and 1840s, increasing numbers of German and Scandinavian immigrants joined easterners in settling the Upper Mississippi watershed.[8] Little settlement occurred west of Missouri as migrants viewed the Great Plains as a barrier to farming. Farther west, the Rocky Mountains loomed as undesirable to all but fur traders, and all American Indians west of the Mississippi appeared too powerful to allow for white expansion.

"Do not lounge in the cities!" commanded publisher Horace Greeley in 1841, "There is room and health in the country, away from the crowds of idlers and imbeciles. Go west, before you are fitted for no life but that of the factory."[9] The *New York Tribune* often argued that American exceptionalism required the United States to benevolently conquer the continent as the prime means of spreading American capitalism and American democracy. However, the vast West was not empty. American Indians controlled much of the land east of the Mississippi River and almost all of the West. Expansion hinged on a federal policy of Indian removal.

The harassment and dispossession of American Indians—whether driven by official U.S. government policy or the actions of individual Americans and their communities—depended on the belief in manifest destiny. Of course, a fair bit of racism was part of the equation as well. The political and legal processes of expansion always hinged on the belief that white Americans could best use new lands and opportunities. This belief rested on the idea that only Americans embodied the democratic ideals of yeoman agriculturalism extolled by Thomas Jefferson and expanded under Jacksonian democracy.

Florida was an early test case for the Americanization of new lands. The territory held strategic value for the young nation's growing economic and military interests in the Caribbean. The most important factors that led to the annexation of Florida included anxieties over runaway slaves, Spanish neglect of the region, and the desired defeat of Native American tribes who controlled large portions of lucrative farm territory.

During the early nineteenth century, Spain wanted to increase productivity in Florida and encouraged migration of mostly southern slave owners. By the second decade of the 1800s, Anglo settlers occupied plantations along the St. Johns River, from the border with Georgia to Lake George a hundred miles upstream. Spain began to lose control as the area quickly became a haven for slave smugglers bringing illicit human cargo into the United States for lucrative sale to Georgia planters. Plantation owners grew apprehensive about the growing numbers of slaves running to the swamps and Indian-controlled areas of Florida. American slave owners pressured the U.S. government to confront the Spanish authorities. Southern slave owners refused to quietly accept the continued presence of armed black men in Florida. During the War of 1812, a ragtag assortment of Georgia slave owners joined by a plethora of armed opportunists raided Spanish and British-owned plantations along the St. Johns River. These private citizens received U.S. government help on July 27, 1816, when U.S. army regulars attacked the Negro Fort (established as an armed outpost during the war by the British and located about sixty miles south of the Georgia border). The raid killed 270 of the fort's inhabitants as a result of a direct hit on the fort's gunpowder stores. This conflict set the stage for General Andrew Jackson's invasion of Florida in 1817 and the beginning of the First Seminole War.[10]

Americans also held that Creek and Seminole Indians, occupying the area from the Apalachicola River to the wet prairies and hammock islands of central Florida, were dangers in their own right. These tribes, known to the Americans collectively as Seminoles, migrated into the region over the course of the eighteenth century and established settlements, tilled fields, and tended herds of cattle in the rich floodplains and grasslands that dominated the northern third of the Florida peninsula. Envious eyes looked upon these lands. After bitter conflict that often pitted Americans against a collection of Native Americans and former slaves, Spain eventually agreed to transfer the territory to the United States. The resulting Adams-Onís Treaty exchanged Florida for $5 million and other territorial concessions elsewhere.[11]

After the purchase, planters from the Carolinas, Georgia, and Virginia entered Florida. However, the influx of settlers into the Florida territory was temporarily halted in the mid-1830s by the outbreak of the Second Seminole War (1835–1842). Free black men and women and escaped slaves also occupied the Seminole district, a situation that deeply troubled slave owners. Indeed, General Thomas Sidney Jesup, U.S. commander during the early stages of the Second Seminole War, labeled that conflict "a negro, not an Indian War," fearful as he was that if the revolt "was not speedily put down, the South will feel the effect of it on their slave population before the end of the next season."[12] Florida became a state in 1845 and settlement expanded into the former

Indian lands.

American action in Florida seized Indians' eastern lands, reduced lands available for runaway slaves, and killed entirely or removed Indian peoples farther west. This became the template for future action. Presidents, since at least Thomas Jefferson, had long discussed removal, but President Andrew Jackson took the most dramatic action. Jackson believed, "It [speedy removal] will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters."[13] Desires to remove American Indians from valuable farmland motivated state and federal governments to cease trying to assimilate Indians and instead plan for forced removal.

Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, thereby granting the president authority to begin treaty negotiations that would give American Indians land in the West in exchange for their lands east of the Mississippi. Many advocates of removal, including President Jackson, paternalistically claimed that it would protect Indian communities from outside influences that jeopardized their chances of becoming "civilized" farmers. Jackson emphasized this paternalism—the belief that the government was acting in the best interest of Native peoples—in his 1830 State of the Union Address. "It [removal] will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites . . . and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community."[14]

The experience of the Cherokee was particularly brutal. Despite many tribal members adopting some Euro-American ways, including intensified agriculture, slave ownership, and Christianity, state and federal governments pressured the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Cherokee Nations to sign treaties and surrender land. Many of these tribal nations used the law in hopes of protecting their lands. Most notable among these efforts was the Cherokee Nation's attempt to sue the state of Georgia.

Beginning in 1826, Georgian officials asked the federal government to negotiate with the Cherokee to secure lucrative lands. The Adams administration resisted the state's request, but harassment from local settlers against the Cherokee forced the Adams and Jackson administrations to begin serious negotiations with the Cherokee. Georgia grew impatient with the process of negotiation and abolished existing state agreements with the Cherokee that had guaranteed rights of movement and jurisdiction of tribal law. Andrew Jackson penned a letter soon after taking office that encouraged the Cherokee, among others, to voluntarily relocate to the West. The discovery of gold in Georgia in the fall of 1829 further antagonized the situation.

The Cherokee defended themselves against Georgia's laws by citing treaties signed with the United States that guaranteed the Cherokee Nation both their land and independence. The Cherokee appealed to the Supreme Court against Georgia to prevent dispossession. The Court, while sympathizing with the Cherokee's plight, ruled that it lacked jurisdiction to hear the case (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* [1831]). In an associated case, *Worcester* v. *Georgia* (1832), the Supreme Court ruled that Georgia laws did not apply within Cherokee territory.[15] Regardless of these rulings, the state government ignored the Supreme Court and did little to prevent conflict between settlers and the Cherokee.

Jackson wanted a solution that might preserve peace and his reputation. He sent secretary of war Lewis Cass to offer title to western lands and the promise of tribal governance in exchange for relinquishing of the Cherokee's eastern lands. These negotiations opened a rift within the Cherokee Nation. Cherokee leader John Ridge believed removal was inevitable and pushed for a treaty that would give the best terms. Others, called nationalists and led by John Ross, refused to consider removal in negotiations. The Jackson administration refused any deal that fell short of large-scale removal of the Cherokee from Georgia, thereby fueling a devastating and violent intratribal battle between the two factions. Eventually tensions grew to the point that several treaty advocates were assassinated by members of the national faction.[16]

In 1835, a portion of the Cherokee Nation led by John Ridge, hoping to prevent further tribal bloodshed, signed the Treaty of New Echota. This treaty ceded lands in Georgia for $5 million and, the signatories hoped, limiting future conflicts between the Cherokee and white settlers. However, most of the tribe refused to adhere to the terms, viewing the treaty as illegitimately negotiated. In response, John Ross pointed out the U.S. government's hypocrisy. "You asked us to throw off the hunter and warrior state: We did so—you asked us to form a republican government: We did so. Adopting your own as our model. You asked us to cultivate the earth, and learn the mechanic arts. We did so. You asked us to learn to read. We did so. You asked us to cast away our idols and worship your god. We did so. Now you demand we cede to you our lands. That we will not do."[17]

President Martin van Buren, in 1838, decided to press the issue beyond negotiation and court rulings and used the New Echota Treaty provisions to order the army to forcibly remove those Cherokee not obeying the treaty's cession of territory. Harsh weather, poor planning, and difficult travel compounded the tragedy of what became known as the Trail of Tears. Sixteen thousand Cherokee embarked on the journey; only ten thousand completed it.[18] Not every instance was of removal was as treacherous or

demographically disastrous as the Cherokee example, while, on the other hand, some tribes violently resisted removal. Regardless, over sixty thousand Indians were forced west prior to the Civil War.[19]

The allure of manifest destiny encouraged expansion regardless of terrain or locale, and Indian removal also took place, to a lesser degree, in northern lands. In the Old Northwest, Odawa and Ojibwe communities in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota resisted removal as many lived on land north of desirable farming land. Moreover, some Ojibwe and Odawa individuals purchased land independently. They formed successful alliances with missionaries to help advocate against removal, as well as with some traders and merchants who depended on trade with Native peoples. Yet Indian removal occurred in the North as well—the Black Hawk War in 1832, for instance, led to the removal of many Sauk to Kansas.[20]

Despite the disaster of removal, tribal nations slowly rebuilt their cultures and in some cases even achieved prosperity in Indian Territory. Tribal nations blended traditional cultural practices, including common land systems, with western practices including constitutional governments, common school systems, and creating an elite slaveholding class.

Some Indian groups remained too powerful to remove. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the Comanche rose to power in the Southern Plains region of what is now the southwestern United States. By quickly adapting to the horse culture first introduced by the Spanish, the Comanche transitioned from a foraging economy into a mixed hunting and pastoral society. After 1821, the new Mexican nation-state claimed the region as part of the northern Mexican frontier, but they had little control. Instead, the Comanche remained in power and controlled the economy of the Southern Plains. A flexible political structure allowed the Comanche to dominate other Indian groups as well as Mexican and American settlers.

In the 1830s, the Comanche launched raids into northern Mexico, ending what had been an unprofitable but peaceful diplomatic relationship with Mexico. At the same time, they forged new trading relationships with Anglo-American traders in Texas. Throughout this period, the Comanche and several other independent Native groups, particularly the Kiowa, Apache, and Navajo, engaged in thousands of violent encounters with northern Mexicans. Collectively, these encounters comprised an ongoing war during the 1830s and 1840s as tribal nations vied for power and wealth. By the 1840s, Comanche power peaked with an empire that controlled a vast territory in the trans-Mississippi west known as Comancheria. By trading in Texas and raiding in northern Mexico, the Comanche controlled the flow of commodities, including captives, livestock, and trade goods. They practiced a fluid system of captivity and captive trading, rather than a rigid chattel system. The Comanche used captives for economic exploitation but also adopted captives into kinship networks. This allowed for the assimilation of diverse peoples in the region into the empire. The ongoing conflict in the region had sweeping consequences on both Mexican and American politics. The U.S.-Mexican War, beginning in 1846, can be seen as a culmination of this violence.[21]



Figure 12.2.1: "Map of the Plains Indians," undated. *Smithsonian Institute*.

In the Great Basin region, Mexican independence also escalated patterns of violence. This region, on the periphery of the Spanish empire, was nonetheless integrated in the vast commercial trading network of the West. Mexican officials and Anglo-American traders entered the region with their own imperial designs. New forms of violence spread into the homelands of the Paiute and Western Shoshone. Traders, settlers, and Mormon religious refugees, aided by U.S. officials and soldiers, committed daily

acts of violence and laid the groundwork for violent conquest. This expansion of the American state into the Great Basin meant groups such as the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe had to compete over land, resources, captives, and trade relations with Anglo-Americans. Eventually, white incursion and ongoing Indian wars resulted in traumatic dispossession of land and the struggle for subsistence.

The federal government attempted more than relocation of American Indians. Policies to "civilize" Indians coexisted along with forced removal and served an important "Americanizing" vision of expansion that brought an ever-increasing population under the American flag and sought to balance aggression with the uplift of paternal care. Thomas L. McKenney, superintendent of Indian trade from 1816 to 1822 and the Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1824 to 1830, served as the main architect of the civilization policy. He asserted that American Indians were morally and intellectually equal to whites. He sought to establish a national Indian school system.

Congress rejected McKenney's plan but instead passed the Civilization Fund Act in 1819. This act offered $10,000 annually to be allocated toward societies that funded missionaries to establish schools among Indian tribes. However, providing schooling for American Indians under the auspices of the civilization program also allowed the federal government to justify taking more land. Treaties, such as the 1820 Treaty of Doak's Stand made with the Choctaw nation, often included land cessions as requirements for education provisions. Removal and Americanization reinforced Americans' sense of cultural dominance.[22]

After removal in the 1830s, the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw began to collaborate with missionaries to build school systems of their own. Leaders hoped education would help ensuing generations to protect political sovereignty. In 1841, the Cherokee Nation opened a public school system that within two years included eighteen schools. By 1852, the system expanded to twenty-one schools with a national enrollment of 1,100 pupils.[23] Many of the students educated in these tribally controlled schools later served their nations as teachers, lawyers, physicians, bureaucrats, and politicians.

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12.3: Life and Culture in the West

The dream of creating a democratic utopia in the West ultimately rested on those who picked up their possessions and their families and moved west. Western settlers usually migrated as families and settled along navigable and potable rivers. Settlements often coalesced around local traditions, especially religion, carried from eastern settlements. These shared understandings encouraged a strong sense of cooperation among western settlers that forged communities on the frontier.

Before the Mexican War, the West for most Americans still referred to the fertile area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River with a slight amount of overspill beyond its banks. With soil exhaustion and land competition increasing in the East, most early western migrants sought a greater measure of stability and self-sufficiency by engaging in small-scale farming. Boosters of these new agricultural areas along with the U.S. government encouraged perceptions of the West as a land of hard-built opportunity that promised personal and national bounty.

Women migrants bore the unique double burden of travel while also being expected to conform to restrictive gender norms. The key virtues of femininity, according to the “cult of true womanhood,” included piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness. The concept of “separate spheres” expected women to remain in the home. These values accompanied men and women as they traveled west to begin their new lives.

While many of these societal standards endured, there often existed an openness of frontier society that resulted in modestly more opportunities for women. Husbands needed partners in setting up a homestead and working in the field to provide food for the family. Suitable wives were often in short supply, enabling some to informally negotiate more power in their households.[24]

Americans debated the role of government in westward expansion. This debate centered on the proper role of the U.S. government in paying for the internal improvements that soon became necessary to encourage and support economic development. Some saw frontier development as a self-driven undertaking that necessitated private risk and investment devoid of government interference. Others saw the federal government’s role as providing the infrastructural development needed to give migrants the push toward engagement with the larger national economy. In the end, federal aid proved essential for the conquest and settlement of the region.



Figure 12.3.1: American artist George Catlin traveled west to paint Native Americans. In 1832 he painted Eeh-nís-kim, Crystal Stone, wife of a Blackfoot leader. *Smithsonian American Art Museum*

Economic busts constantly threatened western farmers and communities. The economy worsened after the Panic of 1819. Falling prices and depleted soil meant farmers were unable to make their loan payments. The dream of subsistence and stability abruptly ended as many migrants lost their land and felt the hand of the distant market economy forcing them even farther west to escape debt. As a result, the federal government consistently sought to increase access to land in the West, including efforts to lower the amount of land required for purchase. Smaller lots made it easier for more farmers to clear land and begin farming faster.[25]

More than anything else, new roads and canals provided conduits for migration and settlement. Improvements in travel and exchange fueled economic growth in the 1820s and 1830s. Canal improvements expanded in the East, while road building prevailed in the West. Congress continued to allocate funds for internal improvements. Federal money pushed the National Road, begun in 1811, farther west every year. Laborers needed to construct these improvements increased employment opportunities and encouraged nonfarmers to move to the West. Wealth promised by engagement with the new economy was hard to reject. However, roads were expensive to build and maintain, and some Americans strongly opposed spending money on these improvements.

The use of steamboats grew quickly throughout the 1810s and into the 1820s. As water trade and travel grew in popularity, local, state, and federal funds helped connect rivers and streams. Hundreds of miles of new canals cut through the eastern landscape. The most notable of these early projects was the Erie Canal. That project, completed in 1825, linked the Great Lakes to New York City. The profitability of the canal helped New York outpace its East Coast rivals to become the center for commercial import and export in the United States.[26]

Early railroads like the Baltimore and Ohio line hoped to link mid-Atlantic cities with lucrative western trade routes. Railroad boosters encouraged the rapid growth of towns and cities along their routes. Not only did rail lines promise to move commerce faster, but the rails also encouraged the spreading of towns farther away from traditional waterway locations. Technological limitations, constant repairs, conflicts with American Indians, and political disagreements all hampered railroading and kept canals and steamboats as integral parts of the transportation system. Nonetheless, this early establishment of railroads enabled a rapid expansion after the Civil War.

Economic chains of interdependence stretched over hundreds of miles of land and through thousands of contracts and remittances. America's manifest destiny became wedded not only to territorial expansion but also to economic development.[27]

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12.4: Texas, Mexico, and America

The debate over slavery became one of the prime forces behind the Texas Revolution and the resulting republic's annexation to the United States. After gaining its independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico hoped to attract new settlers to its northern areas to create a buffer between it and the powerful Comanche. New immigrants, mostly from the southern United States, poured into Mexican Texas. Over the next twenty-five years, concerns over growing Anglo influence and possible American designs on the area produced great friction between Mexicans and the former Americans in the area. In 1829, Mexico, hoping to quell both anger and immigration, outlawed slavery and required all new immigrants to convert to Catholicism. American immigrants, eager to expand their agricultural fortunes, largely ignored these requirements. In response, Mexican authorities closed their territory to any new immigration in 1830—a prohibition ignored by Americans who often squatted on public lands.[28]

In 1834, an internal conflict between federalists and centralists in the Mexican government led to the political ascendency of General Antonio López de Santa Anna. Santa Anna, governing as a dictator, repudiated the federalist Constitution of 1824, pursued a policy of authoritarian central control, and crushed several revolts throughout Mexico. Anglo settlers in Mexican Texas, or Texians as they called themselves, opposed Santa Anna's centralizing policies and met in November. They issued a statement of purpose that emphasized their commitment to the Constitution of 1824 and declared Texas to be a separate state within Mexico. After the Mexican government angrily rejected the offer, Texian leaders soon abandoned their fight for the Constitution of 1824 and declared independence on March 2, 1836.[29] The Texas Revolution of 1835–1836 was a successful secessionist movement in the northern district of the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas that resulted in an independent Republic of Texas.

At the Alamo and Goliad, Santa Anna crushed smaller rebel forces and massacred hundreds of Texian prisoners. The Mexican army pursued the retreating Texian army deep into East Texas, spurring a mass panic and evacuation by American civilians known as the Runaway Scrape. The confident Santa Anna consistently failed to make adequate defensive preparations, an oversight that eventually led to a surprise attack from the outnumbered Texian army led by Sam Houston on April 21, 1836. The battle of San Jacinto lasted only eighteen minutes and resulted in a decisive victory for the Texians, who retaliated for previous Mexican atrocities by killing fleeing and surrendering Mexican soldiers for hours after the initial assault. Santa Anna was captured in the aftermath and compelled to sign the Treaty of Velasco on May 14, 1836, by which he agreed to withdraw his army from Texas and acknowledged Texas independence. Although a new Mexican government never recognized the Republic of Texas, the United States and several other nations gave the new country diplomatic recognition.[30]

Texas annexation had remained a political landmine since the Republic declared independence from Mexico in 1836. American politicians feared that adding Texas to the Union would provoke a war with Mexico and reignite sectional tensions by throwing off the balance between free and slave states. However, after his expulsion from the Whig party, President John Tyler saw Texas statehood as the key to saving his political career. In 1842, he began work on opening annexation to national debate. Harnessing public outcry over the issue, Democrat James K. Polk rose from virtual obscurity to win the presidential election of 1844. Polk and his party campaigned on promises of westward expansion, with eyes toward Texas, Oregon, and California. In the final days of his presidency, Tyler at last extended an official offer to Texas on March 3, 1845. The republic accepted on July 4, becoming the twenty-eighth state.

Mexico denounced annexation as "an act of aggression, the most unjust which can be found recorded in the annals of modern history."[31] Beyond the anger produced by annexation, the two nations both laid claim over a narrow strip of land between two rivers. Mexico drew the southwestern border of Texas at the Nueces River, but Texans claimed that the border lay roughly 150 miles farther west at the Rio Grande. Neither claim was realistic since the sparsely populated area, known as the Nueces strip, was in fact controlled by Native Americans.

In November 1845, President Polk secretly dispatched John Slidell to Mexico City to purchase the Nueces strip along with large sections of New Mexico and California. The mission was an empty gesture, designed largely to pacify those in Washington who insisted on diplomacy before war. Predictably, officials in Mexico City refused to receive Slidell. In preparation for the assumed failure of the negotiations, Polk preemptively sent a four-thousand-man army under General Zachary Taylor to Corpus Christi, Texas, just northeast of the Nueces River. Upon word of Slidell's rebuff in January 1846, Polk ordered Taylor to cross into the disputed territory. The president hoped that this show of force would push the lands of California onto the bargaining table as well. Unfortunately, he badly misread the situation. After losing Texas, the Mexican public strongly opposed surrendering any more ground to the United States. Popular opinion left the shaky government in Mexico City without room to negotiate. On April 24, Mexican cavalrymen attacked a detachment of Taylor's troops in the disputed territory just north of the Rio Grande, killing eleven U.S. soldiers.

It took two weeks for the news to reach Washington. Polk sent a message to Congress on May 11 that summed up the assumptions and intentions of the United States.

> *Instead of this, however, we have been exerting our best efforts to propitiate her good will. Upon the pretext that Texas, a nation as independent as herself, thought proper to unite its destinies with our own, she has affected to believe that we have severed her rightful territory, and in official proclamations and manifestoes has repeatedly threatened to make war upon us for the purpose of reconquering Texas. In the meantime we have tried every effort at reconciliation. The cup of forbearance had been exhausted even before the recent information from the frontier of the Del Norte. But now, after reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war.*[32]

The cagey Polk knew that since hostilities already existed, political dissent would be dangerous—a vote against war became a vote against supporting American soldiers under fire. Congress passed a declaration of war on May 13. Only a few members of both parties, notably John Quincy Adams and John C. Calhoun, opposed the measure. Upon declaring war in 1846, Congress issued a call for fifty thousand volunteer soldiers. Spurred by promises of adventure and conquest abroad, thousands of eager men flocked to assembly points across the country.[33]However, opposition to “Mr. Polk’s War” soon grew.

In the early fall of 1846, the U.S. Army invaded Mexico on multiple fronts and within a year’s time General Winfield Scott’s men took control of Mexico City. However, the city’s fall did not bring an end to the war. Scott’s men occupied Mexico’s capital for over four months while the two countries negotiated. In the United States, the war had been controversial from the beginning. Embedded journalists sent back detailed reports from the front lines, and a divided press viciously debated the news. Volunteers found that war was not as they expected. Disease killed seven times as many American soldiers as combat.[34] Harsh discipline, conflict within the ranks, and violent clashes with civilians led soldiers to desert in huge numbers. Peace finally came on February 2, 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

The United States gained lands that would become the future states of California, Utah, and Nevada; most of Arizona; and parts of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. Mexican officials would also have to surrender their claims to Texas and recognize the Rio Grande as its southern boundary. The United States offered $15 million for all of it. With American soldiers occupying their capital, Mexican leaders had no choice but to sign.



Figure 12.4.1: “General Scott’s entrance into Mexico.” Lithograph. 1851. Originally published in George Wilkins Kendall & Carl Nebel, The War between the United States and Mexico Illustrated, Embracing Pictorial Drawings of all the Principal Conflicts (New York: D. Appleton), 1851. *Wikimedia Commons*

The new American Southwest attracted a diverse group of entrepreneurs and settlers to the commercial towns of New Mexico, the fertile lands of eastern Texas, the famed gold deposits of California, and the Rocky Mountains. This postwar migration built earlier paths dating back to the 1820s, when the lucrative Santa Fe trade enticed merchants to New Mexico and generous land grants brought numerous settlers to Texas. The Gadsden Purchase of 1854 further added to American gains north of Mexico.

The U.S.-Mexican War had an enormous impact on both countries. The American victory helped set the United States on the path to becoming a world power. It elevated Zachary Taylor to the presidency and served as a training ground for many of the Civil War's future commanders. Most significantly, however, Mexico lost roughly half of its territory. Yet the United States' victory was not without danger. Ralph Waldo Emerson, an outspoken critic, predicted ominously at the beginning of the conflict, "We will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man who swallows the arsenic which will bring him down in turn. Mexico will poison us."[35] Indeed, the conflict over whether to extend slavery into the newly won territory pushed the nation ever closer to disunion and civil war.

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12.5: Manifest Destiny and the Gold Rush

California, belonging to Mexico prior to the war, was at least three arduous months' travel from the nearest American settlements. There was some sparse settlement in the Sacramento Valley, and missionaries made the trip occasionally. The fertile farmland of Oregon, like the black dirt lands of the Mississippi Valley, attracted more settlers than California. Dramatized stories of Indian attacks filled migrants with a sense of foreboding, although most settlers encountered no violence and often no Indians at all. The slow progress, disease, human and oxen starvation, poor trails, terrible geographic preparations, lack of guidebooks, threatening wildlife, vagaries of weather, and general confusion were all more formidable and frequent than Indian attacks. Despite the harshness of the journey, by 1848 approximately twenty thousand Americans were living west of the Rockies, with about three fourths of that number in Oregon.



Figure 12.5.1: The great environmental and economic potential of the Oregon Territory led many to pack up their families and head west along the Oregon Trail. The Trail represented the hopes of many for a better life, represented and reinforced by images like Bierstadt's idealistic Oregon Trail. Albert Bierstadt, Oregon Trail (Campfire), 1863. *Wikimedia*.

Many who moved nurtured a romantic vision of life, attracting more Americans who sought more than agricultural life and familial responsibilities. The rugged individualism and military prowess of the West, encapsulated for some by service in the Mexican war, drew a growing new breed west of the Sierra Nevada to meet with the Californians already there: a breed of migrants different from the modest agricultural communities of the near West.

If the great draw of the West served as manifest destiny's kindling, then the discovery of gold in California was the spark that set the fire ablaze. Most western settlers sought land ownership, but the lure of getting rich quick drew younger single men (with some women) to gold towns throughout the West. These adventurers and fortune-seekers then served as magnets for the arrival of others providing services associated with the gold rush. Towns and cities grew rapidly throughout the West, notably San Francisco, whose population grew from about five hundred in 1848 to almost fifty thousand by 1853. Lawlessness, predictable failure of most fortune seekers, racial conflicts, and the slavery question all threatened manifest destiny's promises.

On January 24, 1848, James W. Marshall, a contractor hired by John Sutter, discovered gold on Sutter's sawmill land in the Sacramento Valley area of the California Territory. Throughout the 1850s, Californians beseeched Congress for a transcontinental railroad to provide service for both passengers and goods from the Midwest and the East Coast. The potential economic benefits for communities along proposed railroads made the debate over the route rancorous. Growing dissent over the slavery issue also heightened tensions.

The great influx of diverse people clashed in a combative and aggrandizing atmosphere of individualistic pursuit of fortune.[36] Linguistic, cultural, economic, and racial conflict roiled both urban and rural areas. By the end of the 1850s, Chinese and Mexican immigrants made up one fifth of the mining population in California. The ethnic patchwork of these frontier towns belied a clearly defined socioeconomic arrangement that saw whites on top as landowners and managers, with poor whites and ethnic minorities

working the mines and assorted jobs. The competition for land, resources, and riches furthered individual and collective abuses, particularly against Indians and older Mexican communities. California's towns, as well as those dotting the landscape throughout the West, such as Coeur D'Alene in Idaho and Tombstone in Arizona, struggled to balance security with economic development and the protection of civil rights and liberties.



Figure 12.5.2: This cartoon depicts a highly racialized image of a Chinese immigrant and Irish immigrant "swallowing" the United States–in the form of Uncle Sam. Networks of railroads and the promise of American expansion can be seen in the background. "The great fear of the period That Uncle Sam may be swallowed by foreigners : The problem solved," 1860-1869. *Library of Congress*.

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12.6: The Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny

The expansion of influence and territory off the continent became an important corollary to westward expansion. The U.S. government sought to keep European countries out of the Western Hemisphere and applied the principles of manifest destiny to the rest of the hemisphere. As secretary of state for President James Monroe, John Quincy Adams held the responsibility for the satisfactory resolution of ongoing border disputes between the United States, England, Spain, and Russia. Adams's view of American foreign policy was put into clearest practice in the Monroe Doctrine, which he had great influence in crafting.

Increasingly aggressive incursions from Russians in the Northwest, ongoing border disputes with the British in Canada, the remote possibility of Spanish reconquest of South America, and British abolitionism in the Caribbean all triggered an American response. In a speech before the U.S. House of Representatives on July 4, 1821, Secretary of State Adams acknowledged the American need for a robust foreign policy that simultaneously protected and encouraged the nation's growing and increasingly dynamic economy.

> *America . . . in the lapse of nearly half a century, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations while asserting and maintaining her own. . . . She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. . . . She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. The frontlet on her brows would no longer beam with the ineffable splendor of freedom and independence; but in its stead would soon be substituted an imperial diadem, flashing in false and tarnished lustre the murky radiance of dominion and power. She might become the dictatress of the world; she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit. . . . Her glory is not dominion, but liberty. Her march is the march of the mind. She has a spear and a shield: but the motto upon her shield is, Freedom, Independence, Peace. This has been her Declaration: this has been, as far as her necessary intercourse with the rest of mankind would permit, her practice.*[37]

Adams's great fear was not territorial loss. He had no doubt that Russian and British interests in North America could be arrested. Adams held no reason to antagonize the Russians with grand pronouncements, nor was he generally called upon to do so. He enjoyed a good relationship with the Russian ambassador and stewarded through Congress most-favored trade status for the Russians in 1824. Rather, Adams worried gravely about the ability of the United States to compete commercially with the British in Latin America and the Caribbean. This concern deepened with the valid concern that America's chief Latin American trading partner, Cuba, dangled perilously close to outstretched British claws. Cabinet debates surrounding establishment of the Monroe Doctrine and geopolitical events in the Caribbean focused attention on that part of the world as key to the future defense of U.S. military and commercial interests, the main threat to those interests being the British. Expansion of economic opportunity and protection from foreign pressures became the overriding goals of U.S. foreign policy.[38] But despite the philosophical confidence present in the Monroe administration's decree, the reality of limited military power kept the Monroe Doctrine as an aspirational assertion.

Bitter disagreements over the expansion of slavery into the new lands won from Mexico began even before the war ended. Many northern businessmen and southern slave owners supported the idea of expanding slavery into the Caribbean as a useful alternative to continental expansion, since slavery already existed in these areas. Some were critical of these attempts, seeing them as evidence of a growing slave-power conspiracy. Many others supported attempts at expansion, like those previously seen in eastern Florida, even if these attempts were not exactly legal. Filibustering, as it was called, involved privately financed schemes directed at capturing and occupying foreign territory without the approval of the U.S. government.

Filibustering took greatest hold in the imagination of Americans as they looked toward Cuba. Fears of racialized revolution in Cuba (as in Haiti and Florida before it) as well as the presence of an aggressive British abolitionist influence in the Caribbean energized the movement to annex Cuba and encouraged filibustering as expedient alternatives to lethargic official negotiations. Despite filibustering's seemingly chaotic planning and destabilizing repercussions, those intellectually and economically guiding the effort imagined a willing and receptive Cuban population and expected an agreeable American business class. In Cuba, manifest destiny for the first time sought territory off the continent and hoped to put a unique spin on the story of success in Mexico. Yet the annexation of Cuba, despite great popularity and some military attempts led by Narciso López, a Cuban dissident, never succeeded.[39]

Other filibustering expeditions were launched elsewhere, including two by William Walker, a former American soldier. Walker seized portions of the Baja peninsula in Mexico and then later took power and established a slaving regime in Nicaragua. Eventually Walker was executed in Honduras.[40] These missions violated the laws of the United States, but wealthy Americans financed various filibusters, and less-wealthy adventurers were all too happy to sign up. Filibustering enjoyed its brief popularity into the late 1850s, at which point slavery and concerns over secession came to the fore. By the opening of the Civil War, most saw these attempts as simply territorial theft.

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12.7: Conclusion

Debates over expansion, economics, diplomacy, and manifest destiny exposed some of the weaknesses of the American system. The chauvinism of policies like Native American removal, the Mexican War, and filibustering existed alongside growing anxiety. Manifest destiny attempted to make a virtue of America's lack of history and turn it into the very basis of nationhood. To locate such origins, John O'Sullivan and other champions of manifest destiny grafted biological and territorial imperatives—common among European definitions of nationalism—onto American political culture. The United States was the embodiment of the democratic ideal, they said. Democracy had to be timeless, boundless, and portable. New methods of transportation and communication, the rapidity of the railroad and the telegraph, the rise of the international market economy, and the growth of the American frontier provided shared platforms to help Americans think across local identities and reaffirm a national character.

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12.8: Primary Sources

Cherokee Petition Protesting Removal, 1836

Native Americans responded differently to the constant encroachments and attacks of American settlers. Some resisted violently. Others worked to adapt to American culture and defend themselves using particularly American weapons like lawsuits and petitions. The Cherokee did more to adapt than perhaps any other Native American group, creating a written constitution modeled off the American constitution and adopting American culture in dress, speech, religion and economic activity. In this document, Cherokee leaders protested the loss of their territory using a very American tactic: petitioning.

John O'Sullivan Declares America's Manifest Destiny, 1845

John Louis O'Sullivan, a popular editor and columnist, articulated the long-standing American belief in the God-given mission of the United States to lead the world in the transition to democracy. He called this America's "manifest destiny." This idea motivated wars of American expansion. He explained this idea in the following essay where he advocated adding Texas to the United States.

Diary of a Woman Migrating to Oregon, 1853

The experience of migrating west into territory still controlled by Native Americans was difficult and dangerous. In these diary excerpts we find the experience of Amelia Stewart Knight who traveled with her husband and seven children from Iowa to Oregon. She was pregnant the entire trip and gave birth to her eighth child on the side of the road near the journey's end.

Chinese Merchant Complains of Racist Abuse, 1860

The California Gold Rush of 1849 brought a major influx of Asian immigrants to the new state. This number only grew after railroad companies turned to Chinese laborers to build western railroads. Life for these immigrants was particularly difficult, as even financially successful Chinese immigrants faced considerable discrimination. In 1860, the Chinese merchant Pun Chi drafted this petition to congress, calling on the legislature to do more to protect Chinese immigrants.

President Monroe Outlines the Monroe Doctrine, 1823

The spirit of Manifest Destiny had its corollary in an earlier piece of American foreign policy. Americans sought to remove colonizing Europeans from the western hemisphere. As Secretary of State for President James Monroe, John Quincy Adams crafted what came to be called the Monroe Doctrine. President Monroe outlined the principles of this policy in his seventh annual message to Congress, excerpted here.

Manifest Destiny Painting, 1872

Columbia, the female figure of America, leads Americans into the West and into the future by carrying the values of republicanism (as seen through her Roman garb) and progress (shown through the inclusion of technological innovations like the telegraph) and clearing native peoples and animals, seen being pushed into the darkness.

Anti-Immigrant Cartoon, 1860

Many white Americans responded to increasing numbers of immigrants in the 1800s with great fear and xenophobic hatred, seeing immigrants as threats to their vision of manifest destiny. This cartoon depicts a highly racialized image of a Chinese immigrant and Irish immigrant "swallowing" the United States–in the form of Uncle Sam. In the second image the Chinese immigrant, swallows the Irish immigrant. Networks of railroads and the promise of American expansion can be seen in the background.

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12.9: Reference Material

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13: THE SECTIONAL CRISIS



This mural, created over eighty years after Brown's death, captures the violence and religious fervor of the man and his era. John Steuart Curry, Tragic Prelude, 1938-1940, Kansas State Capitol.

13.1: Introduction

13.2: Sectionalism in the Early Republic

13.3: The Crisis Joined

13.4: Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men

13.5: From Sectional Crisis to National Crisis

13.6: Conclusion

13.7: Primary Sources

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13.1: Introduction

Slavery's western expansion created problems for the United States from the very start. Battles emerged over the westward expansion of slavery and over the role of the federal government in protecting the interests of slaveholders. Northern workers felt that slavery suppressed wages and stole land that could have been used by poor white Americans to achieve economic independence. Southerners feared that without slavery's expansion, the abolitionist faction would come to dominate national politics and an increasingly dense population of slaves would lead to bloody insurrection and race war. Constant resistance from enslaved men and women required a strong pro-slavery government to maintain order. As the North gradually abolished human bondage, enslaved men and women headed north on an underground railroad of hideaways and safe houses. Northerners and southerners came to disagree sharply on the role of the federal government in capturing and returning these freedom seekers. While northerners appealed to their states' rights to refuse capturing runaway slaves, white southerners demanded a national commitment to slavery. Enslaved laborers meanwhile remained vitally important to the nation's economy, fueling not only the southern plantation economy but also providing raw materials for the industrial North. Differences over the fate of slavery remained at the heart of American politics, especially as the United States expanded. After decades of conflict, Americans north and south began to fear that the opposite section of the country had seized control of the government. By November 1860, an opponent of slavery's expansion arose from within the Republican Party. During the secession crisis that followed, fears nearly a century in the making at last devolved into bloody war.

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13.2: Sectionalism in the Early Republic

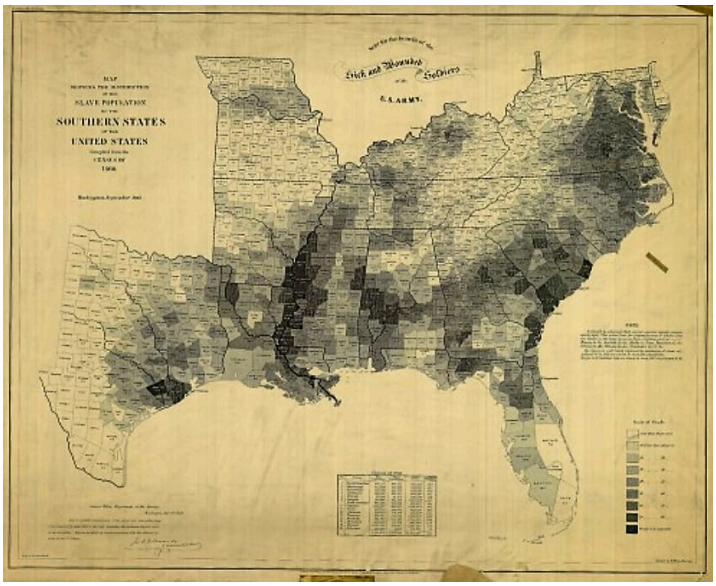


Figure 13.2.1: This map, published by the US Coast Guard, shows the percentage of slaves in the population in each county of the slave-holding states in 1860. The highest percentages lie along the Mississippi River, in the "Black Belt" of Alabama, and coastal South Carolina, all of which were centers of agricultural production (cotton and rice) in the United States. *E. Hergesheimer (cartographer), Th. Leonhardt (engraver), Map Showing the Distribution of the Slave Population of the Southern States of the United States Compiled from the Census of 1860, c. 1861. Wikimedia.*

Slavery's history stretched back to antiquity. Prior to the American Revolution, nearly everyone in the world accepted it as a natural part of life.[1]English colonies north and south relied on enslaved workers who grew tobacco, harvested indigo and sugar, and worked in ports. They generated tremendous wealth for the British crown. That wealth and luxury fostered seemingly limitless opportunities and inspired seemingly boundless imaginations. Enslaved workers also helped give rise to revolutionary new ideals that in time became the ideological foundations of the sectional crisis. English political theorists, in particular, began to rethink natural-law justifications for slavery. They rejected the long-standing idea that slavery was a condition that naturally suited some people. A new transatlantic antislavery movement began to argue that freedom was the natural condition of humankind.[2]

Revolutionaries seized onto these ideas to stunning effect in the late eighteenth century. In the United States, France, and Haiti, revolutionaries began the work of splintering the old order. Each revolution seemed to radicalize the next. Bolder and more expansive declarations of equality and freedom followed one after the other. Revolutionaries in the United States declared, "All men are created equal," in the 1770s. French visionaries issued the "Declaration of Rights and Man and Citizen" by 1789. But the most startling development came in 1803. A revolution led by the island's rebellious slaves turned France's most valuable sugar colony into an independent country administered by the formerly enslaved.

The Haitian Revolution marked an early origin of the sectional crisis. It helped splinter the Atlantic basin into clear zones of freedom and unfreedom, shattering the long-standing assumption that African-descended slaves could not also be rulers. Despite the clear limitations of the American Revolution in attacking slavery, the era marked a powerful break in slavery's history. Military service on behalf of both the English and the American army freed thousands of slaves. Many others simply used the turmoil of war to make their escape. As a result, free black communities emerged—communities that would continually reignite the antislavery struggle. For nearly a century, most white Americans were content to compromise over the issue of slavery, but the constant agitation of black Americans, both enslaved and free, kept the issue alive.[3]

The national breakdown over slavery occurred over a long timeline and across a broad geography. Debates over slavery in the American West proved especially important. As the United States pressed westward, new questions arose as to whether those lands ought to be slave or free. The framers of the Constitution did a little, but not much, to help resolve these early questions. Article VI of the 1787 Northwest Ordinance banned slavery north and west of the Ohio River.[4] Many took it to mean that the founders intended for slavery to die out, as why else would they prohibit its spread across such a huge swath of territory?

Debates over the framers' intentions often led to confusion and bitter debate, but the actions of the new government left better clues as to what the new nation intended for slavery. Congress authorized the admission of Vermont (1791) and Kentucky (1792), with Vermont coming into the Union as a free state and Kentucky coming in as a slave state. Though Americans at the time made relatively little of the balancing act suggested by the admission of a slave state and a free state, the pattern became increasingly important. By 1820, preserving the balance of free states and slave states would be seen as an issue of national security.

New pressures challenging the delicate balance again arose in the West. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 more than doubled the size of the United States. Questions immediately arose as to whether these lands would be made slave or free. Complicating matters further was the rapid expansion of plantation slavery fueled by the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. Yet even with the booming cotton economy, many Americans, including Thomas Jefferson, believed that slavery was a temporary institution and would soon die out. Tensions rose with the Louisiana Purchase, but a truly sectional national debate remained mostly dormant.

That debate, however, came quickly. Sectional differences tied to the expansion of plantation slavery in the West were especially important after 1803. The Ohio River Valley became an early fault line in the coming sectional struggle. Kentucky and Tennessee emerged as slave states, while free states Ohio, Indiana (1816), and Illinois (1818) gained admission along the river's northern banks. Borderland negotiations and accommodations along the Ohio River fostered a distinctive kind of white supremacy, as laws tried to keep blacks out of the West entirely. Ohio's so-called Black Laws of 1803 foreshadowed the exclusionary cultures of Indiana, Illinois, and several subsequent states of the Old Northwest and later, the Far West.[5] These laws often banned African American voting, denied black Americans access to public schools, and made it impossible for nonwhites to serve on juries and in local militias, among a host of other restrictions and obstacles.

The Missouri Territory, by far the largest section of the Louisiana Territory, marked a turning point in the sectional crisis. St. Louis, a bustling Mississippi River town filled with powerful slave owners, loomed large as an important trade headquarters for networks in the northern Mississippi Valley and the Greater West. In 1817, eager to put questions of whether this territory would be slave or free to rest, Congress opened its debate over Missouri's admission to the Union. Congressman James Tallmadge of New York proposed laws that would gradually abolish slavery in the new state. Southern states responded with unanimous outrage, and the nation shuddered at an undeniable sectional controversy.[6]

Congress reached a "compromise" on Missouri's admission, largely through the work of Kentuckian Henry Clay. Maine would be admitted to the Union as a free state. In exchange, Missouri would come into the Union as a slave state. Legislators sought to prevent future conflicts by making Missouri's southern border at 36°30′ the new dividing line between slavery and freedom in the Louisiana Purchase lands. South of that line, running east from Missouri to the western edge of the Louisiana Purchase lands (near the present-day Texas panhandle), slavery could expand. North of it, encompassing what in 1820 was still "unorganized territory," there would be no slavery.[7]

The Missouri Compromise marked a major turning point in America's sectional crisis because it exposed to the public just how divisive the slavery issue had grown. The debate filled newspapers, speeches, and congressional records. Antislavery and pro-slavery positions from that point forward repeatedly returned to points made during the Missouri debates. Legislators battled for weeks over whether the Constitutional framers intended slavery's expansion, and these contests left deep scars. Even seemingly simple and straightforward phrases like "all men are created equal" were hotly contested all over again. Questions over the expansion of slavery remained open, but nearly all Americans concluded that the Constitution protected slavery where it already existed.

Southerners were not yet advancing arguments that said slavery was a positive good, but they did insist during the Missouri Debate that the framers supported slavery and wanted to see it expand. In Article I, Section 2, for example, the Constitution enabled representation in the South to be based on rules defining an enslaved person as three fifths of a voter, meaning southern white men would be overrepresented in Congress. The Constitution also stipulated that Congress could not interfere with the slave trade before 1808 and enabled Congress to draft fugitive slave laws.

Antislavery participants in the Missouri debate argued that the framers never intended slavery to survive the Revolution and in fact hoped it would disappear through peaceful means. The framers of the Constitution never used the word *slave*. Slaves were referred to as "persons held in service," perhaps referring to English common law precedents that questioned the legitimacy of "property in man." Antislavery activists also pointed out that while Congress could not pass a law limiting the slave trade before 1808, the framers had also recognized the flip side of the debate and had thus opened the door to legislating the slave trade's end once the deadline arrived. Language in the Tenth Amendment, they claimed, also said slavery could be banned in the territories. Finally, they pointed to the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment, which said that property could be seized through appropriate legislation.[8] The bruising Missouri debates ultimately transcended arguments about the Constitution. They became an all-encompassing referendum on the American past, present, and future.

Despite the furor, the Missouri crisis did not yet inspire hardened defenses of either slave or free labor as positive good. Those would come in the coming decades. In the meantime, the uneasy consensus forged by the Missouri debate managed to bring a measure of calm.

The Missouri debate had also deeply troubled the nation's African Americans and Native Americans. By the time of the Missouri Compromise debate, both groups saw that whites never intended them to be citizens of the United States. In fact, the debates over Missouri's admission had offered the first sustained debate on the question of black citizenship, as Missouri's state constitution wanted to impose a hard ban on any future black migrants. Legislators ultimately agreed that this hard ban violated the U.S. Constitution but reaffirmed Missouri's ability to deny citizenship to African Americans. Americans by 1820 had endured a broad challenge, not only to their cherished ideals but also more fundamentally to their conceptions of self.

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13.3: The Crisis Joined

Missouri's admission to the Union in 1821 exposed deep fault lines in American society. But the compromise created a new sectional consensus that most white Americans, at least, hoped would ensure a lasting peace. Through sustained debates and arguments, white Americans agreed that the Constitution could do little about slavery where it already existed and that slavery, with the State of Missouri as the key exception, would never expand north of the 36°30′ line.

Once again westward expansion challenged this consensus, and this time the results proved even more damaging. Tellingly, enslaved southerners were among the first to signal their discontent. A rebellion led by Denmark Vesey in 1822 threatened lives and property throughout the Carolinas. The nation's religious leaders also expressed a rising discontent with the new status quo.[9] The Second Great Awakening further sharpened political differences by promoting schisms within the major Protestant churches, schisms that also became increasingly sectional in nature. Between 1820 and 1846, sectionalism drew on new political parties, new religious organizations, and new reform movements.

As politics grew more democratic, leaders attacked old inequalities of wealth and power, but in doing so many pandered to a unity under white supremacy. Slavery briefly receded from the nation's attention in the early 1820s, but that would change quickly. By the last half of the decade, slavery was back, and this time it appeared even more threatening.

Inspired by the social change of Jacksonian democracy, white men regardless of status would gain not only land and jobs but also the right to vote, the right to serve on juries, the right to attend public schools, and the right to serve in the militia and armed forces. In this post-Missouri context, leaders arose to push the country's new expansionist desires in aggressive new directions. As they did so, however, the sectional crisis again deepened.

The Democratic Party initially seemed to offer a compelling answer to the problems of sectionalism by promising benefits to white working men of the North, South, and West, while also uniting rural, small-town, and urban residents. Indeed, huge numbers of western, southern, and northern workingmen rallied behind Andrew Jackson during the 1828 presidential election. The Democratic Party tried to avoid the issue of slavery and instead sought to unite Americans around shared commitments to white supremacy and desires to expand the nation.

Democrats were not without their critics. Northerners seen as especially friendly to the South had become known as "Doughfaces" during the Missouri debates, and as the 1830s wore on, more and more Doughfaced Democrats became vulnerable to the charge that they served the southern slave oligarchs better than they served their own northern communities. Whites discontented with the direction of the country used the slur and other critiques to help chip away at Democratic Party majorities. The accusation that northern Democrats were lapdogs for southern slaveholders had real power.[10]

The Whigs offered an organized major-party challenge to the Democrats. Whig strongholds often mirrored the patterns of westward migrations out of New England. Whigs drew from an odd coalition of wealthy merchants, middle- and upper-class farmers, planters in the Upland South, and settlers in the Great Lakes. Because of this motley coalition, the party struggled to bring a cohesive message to voters in the 1830s. Their strongest support came from places like Ohio's Western Reserve, the rural and Protestant-dominated areas of Michigan, and similar parts of Protestant and small-town Illinois, particularly the fast-growing towns and cities of the state's northern half.[11]

Whig leaders stressed Protestant culture and federal-sponsored internal improvements and courted the support of a variety of reform movements, including temperance, nativism, and even antislavery, though few Whigs believed in racial equality. These positions attracted a wide range of figures, including a young convert to politics named Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln admired Whig leader Henry Clay of Kentucky, and by the early 1830s, Lincoln certainly fit the image of a developing Whig. A veteran of the Black Hawk War, Lincoln had relocated to New Salem, Illinois, where he worked a variety of odd jobs, living a life of thrift, self-discipline, and sobriety as he educated himself in preparation for a professional life in law and politics.

The Whig Party blamed Democrats for defending slavery at the expense of the American people, but antislavery was never a core component of the Whig platform. Several abolitionists grew so disgusted with the Whigs that they formed their own party, a true antislavery party. Activists in Warsaw, New York, organized the antislavery Liberty Party in 1839. Liberty leaders demanded the end of slavery in the District of Columbia, the end of the interstate slave trade, and the prohibition of slavery's expansion into the West. But the Liberty Party also shunned women's participation in the movement and distanced themselves from visions of true racial egalitarianism. Few Americans voted for the party. The Democrats and Whigs continued to dominate American politics.

Democrats and Whigs fostered a moment of relative calm on the slavery debate, partially aided by gag rules prohibiting discussion of antislavery petitions. Arkansas (1836) and Michigan (1837) became the newest states admitted to the Union, with Arkansas coming in as a slave state, and Michigan coming in as a free state. Michigan gained admission through provisions established in the Northwest Ordinance, while Arkansas came in under the Missouri Compromise. Since its lands were below the line at 36°30′, the admission of Arkansas did not threaten the Missouri consensus. The balancing act between slavery and freedom continued.

Events in Texas would shatter the balance. Independent Texas soon gained recognition from a supportive Andrew Jackson administration in 1837. But Jackson's successor, President Martin Van Buren, also a Democrat, soon had reasons to worry about the Republic of Texas. Texas struggled with ongoing conflicts with Mexico and Indian raids from the powerful Comanche. The 1844 democratic presidential candidate James K. Polk sought to bridge the sectional divide by promising new lands to whites north and south. Polk cited the annexation of Texas and the Oregon Territory as campaign cornerstones.[12] Yet as Polk championed the acquisition of these vast new lands, northern Democrats grew annoyed by their southern colleagues, especially when it came to Texas.

For many observers, the debates over Texas statehood illustrated that the federal government was clearly pro-slavery. Texas president Sam Houston managed to secure a deal with Polk and gained admission to the Union for Texas in 1845. Antislavery northerners also worried about the admission of Florida, which entered the Union as a slave state in 1845. The year 1845 became a pivotal year in the memory of antislavery leaders. As Americans embraced calls to pursue their manifest destiny, antislavery voices looked at developments in Florida and Texas as signs that the sectional crisis had taken an ominous and perhaps irredeemable turn.

The 1840s opened with a number of disturbing developments for antislavery leaders. The 1842 Supreme Court case *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* ruled that the federal government's Fugitive Slave Act trumped Pennsylvania's personal liberty law.[13] Antislavery activists believed that the federal government only served southern slaveholders and were trouncing the states' rights of the North. A number of northern states reacted by passing new personal liberty laws in protest in 1843.

The rising controversy over the status of fugitive slaves swelled partly through the influence of escaped former slaves, including Frederick Douglass. Douglass's entrance into northern politics marked an important new development in the nation's coming sectional crisis. Born into slavery in 1818 at Talbot County, Maryland, Douglass grew up, like many enslaved people, barely having known his own mother or date of birth. And yet because of a range of unique privileges afforded him by the circumstances of his upbringing, as well as his own genius and determination, Douglass managed to learn how to read and write. He used these skills to escape from slavery in 1837, when he was just nineteen. By 1845, Douglass put the finishing touches on his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.[14] The book launched his lifelong career as an advocate for the enslaved and helped further raise the visibility of black politics. Other former slaves, including Sojourner Truth, joined Douglass in rousing support for antislavery, as did free black Americans like Maria Stewart, James McCune Smith, Martin Delaney, and numerous others.[15] But black activists did more than deliver speeches. They also attacked fugitive slave laws by helping thousands to escape. The incredible career of Harriet Tubman is one of the more dramatic examples. But the forces of slavery had powerful allies at every level of government.

The year 1846 signaled new reversals to the antislavery cause and the beginnings of a dark new era in American politics. President Polk and his Democratic allies were eager to see western lands brought into the Union and were especially anxious to see the borders of the nation extended to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Critics of the administration blasted these efforts as little more than land grabs on behalf of slaveholders. Events in early 1846 seemed to justify antislavery complaints. Since Mexico had never recognized independent Texas, it continued to lay claim to its lands, even after the United States admitted it to the Union. In January 1846, Polk ordered troops to Texas to enforce claims stemming from its border dispute along the Rio Grande. Polk asked for war on May 11, 1846, and by September 1847, the United States had invaded Mexico City. Whigs, like Abraham Lincoln, found their protests sidelined, but antislavery voices were becoming more vocal and more powerful.

After 1846, the sectional crisis raged throughout North America. Debates swirled over whether the new lands would be slave or free. The South began defending slavery as a positive good. At the same time, Congressman David Wilmot submitted his Wilmot Proviso late in 1846, banning the expansion of slavery into the territories won from Mexico. The proviso gained widespread northern support and even passed the House with bipartisan support, but it failed in the Senate.

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13.4: Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men

The conclusion of the Mexican War led to the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty infuriated antislavery leaders in the United States. The spoils of war were impressive, but it was clear they would help expand slavery. Antislavery activists, who already judged the Mexican War a slaveholders' plot, vowed that no new territories would be opened to slavery. But knowing that the Liberty Party was also not likely to provide a home to many moderate voters, leaders fostered a new and more competitive party, which they called the Free Soil Party. Antislavery leaders had thought that their vision of a federal government divorced from slavery might be represented by the major parties in that year's presidential election, but both the Whigs and the Democrats nominated candidates hostile to the antislavery cause. Left unrepresented, antislavery Free Soil leaders swung into action.



Figure 13.4.1: Questions about the balance of free and slave states in the Union became even more fierce after the US acquired these territories from Mexico by the 1848 in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Map of the Mexican Cession, 2008. *Wikimedia.*

Demanding an alternative to the pro-slavery status quo, Free Soil leaders assembled so-called Conscience Whigs. The new coalition called for a national convention in August 1848 at Buffalo, New York. A number of ex-Democrats committed to the party right away, including an important group of New Yorkers loyal to Martin Van Buren. The Free Soil Party's platform bridged the eastern and western leadership together and called for an end to slavery in Washington, D.C., and a halt on slavery's expansion in the territories.[16] The Free Soil movement hardly made a dent in the 1848 presidential election, but it drew more than four times the popular vote won by the Liberty Party earlier. It was a promising start. In 1848, Free Soil leaders claimed just 10 percent of the popular vote but won over a dozen House seats and even managed to win one Senate seat in Ohio, which went to Salmon P. Chase.[17] In Congress, Free Soil members had enough votes to swing power to either the Whigs or the Democrats.

The admission of Wisconsin as a free state in May 1848 helped cool tensions after the Texas and Florida admissions. Meanwhile, news from a number of failed European revolutions alarmed American reformers, but as exiled radicals filtered into the United States, a strengthening women's rights movement also flexed its muscle at Seneca Falls, New York. Led by figures such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, women with deep ties to the abolitionist cause, it represented the first of such meetings ever held in U.S. history.[18] Frederick Douglass also appeared at the convention and took part in the proceedings, where participants debated the Declaration of Sentiments, Grievances, and Resolutions.[19] By August 1848, it seemed plausible that the Free Soil Movement might tap into these reforms and build a broader coalition. In some ways that is precisely what it did. But come November, the spirit of reform failed to yield much at the polls. Whig candidate Zachary Taylor bested Democrat Lewis Cass of Michigan.

The upheavals of 1848 came to a quick end. Taylor remained in office only a brief time until his unexpected death from a stomach ailment in 1850. During Taylor's brief time in office, the fruits of the Mexican War began to spoil. While Taylor was alive, his administration struggled to find a good remedy. Increased clamoring for the admission of California, New Mexico, and Utah pushed the country closer to the edge. Gold had been discovered in California, and as thousands continued to pour onto the West

Coast and through the trans-Mississippi West, the admission of new states loomed. In Utah, Mormons were also making claims to an independent state they called Deseret. By 1850, California wanted admission as a free state. With so many competing dynamics under way, and with the president dead and replaced by Whig Millard Fillmore, the 1850s were off to a troubling start.

Congressional leaders like Henry Clay and newer legislators like Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois were asked to broker a compromise, but this time it was clear no compromise could bridge all the diverging interests at play in the country. Clay eventually left Washington disheartened by affairs. It fell to young Stephen Douglas, then, to shepherd the bills through Congress, which he in fact did. Legislators rallied behind the Compromise of 1850, an assemblage of bills passed late in 1850, which managed to keep the promises of the Missouri Compromise alive.



Figure 13.4.2: Henry Clay ("The Great Compromiser") addresses the U.S. Senate during the debates over the Compromise of 1850. The print shows a number of incendiary personalities, like John C. Calhoun, whose increasingly sectional beliefs were pacified for a time by the Compromise. P. F. Rothermel (artist), c. 1855. *Wikimedia*.

The Compromise of 1850 tried to offer something to everyone, but in the end it only worsened the sectional crisis. For southerners, the package offered a tough new fugitive slave law that empowered the federal government to deputize regular citizens in arresting runaways. The New Mexico Territory and the Utah Territory would be allowed to determine their own fates as slave or free states based on popular sovereignty. The compromise also allowed territories to submit suits directly to the Supreme Court over the status of fugitive slaves within their bounds.

The admission of California as the newest free state in the Union cheered many northerners, but even the admission of a vast new state full of resources and rich agricultural lands was not enough. In addition to California, northerners also gained a ban on the slave trade in Washington, D.C., but not the full emancipation abolitionists had long advocated. Texas, which had already come into the Union as a slave state, was asked to give some of its land to New Mexico in return for the federal government absorbing some of the former republic's debt. But the compromise debates soon grew ugly.

After the Compromise of 1850, antislavery critics became increasingly certain that slaveholders had co-opted the federal government, and that a southern Slave Power secretly held sway in Washington, where it hoped to make slavery a national institution. These northern complaints pointed back to how the three-fifths compromise of the Constitution gave southerners proportionally more representatives in Congress. In the 1850s, antislavery leaders increasingly argued that Washington worked on behalf of slaveholders while ignoring the interests of white working men.

None of the individual measures in the Compromise of 1850 proved more troubling to antislavery Americans than the Fugitive Slave Act. In a clear bid to extend slavery's influence throughout the country, the act created special federal commissioners to determine the fate of alleged fugitives without benefit of a jury trial or even court testimony. Under its provisions, local authorities in the North could not interfere with the capture of fugitives. Northern citizens, moreover, had to assist in the arrest of fugitive slaves when called upon by federal agents. The Fugitive Slave Act created the foundation for a massive expansion of federal power, including an alarming increase in the nation's policing powers. Many northerners were also troubled by the way the bill undermined local and state laws. The law itself fostered corruption and the enslavement of free black northerners. The federal commissioners who heard these cases were paid $10 if they determined that the defendant was a slave and only $5 if they

determined he or she was free.[20] Many black northerners responded to the new law by heading farther north to Canada.

The 1852 presidential election gave the Whigs their most stunning defeat and effectively ended their existence as a national political party. Whigs captured just 42 of the 254 electoral votes needed to win. With the Compromise of 1850 and plenty of new lands, peaceful consensus seemed to be on the horizon. Antislavery feelings continued to run deep, however, and their depth revealed that with a Democratic Party misstep, a coalition united against the Democrats might yet emerge and bring them to defeat. One measure of the popularity of antislavery ideas came in 1852 when Harriet Beecher Stowe published her best-selling antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Sales for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were astronomical, eclipsed only by sales of the Bible.[21] The book became a sensation and helped move antislavery into everyday conversation for many northerners. Despite the powerful antislavery message, Stowe's book also reinforced many racist stereotypes. Even abolitionists struggled with the deeply ingrained racism that plagued American society. While the major success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* bolstered the abolitionist cause, the terms outlined by the Compromise of 1850 appeared strong enough to keep the peace.



Figure 13.4.3: Uncle Tom's Cabin intensified an already hot debate over slavery throughout the United States. The book revolves around Eliza (the woman holding the young boy) and Tom (standing with his wife Chloe), each of whom takes a very different path: Eliza escapes slavery using her own two feet, but Tom endures his chains only to die by the whip of a brutish master. The horrific violence that both endured melted the hearts of many northerners and pressed some to join in the fight against slavery. Full-page illustration by Hammatt Billings for Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852. *Wikimedia*.

Democrats by 1853 were badly splintered along sectional lines over slavery, but they also had reasons to act with confidence. Voters had returned them to office in 1852 following the bitter fights over the Compromise of 1850. Emboldened, Illinois senator Stephen A. Douglas introduced a set of additional amendments to a bill drafted in late 1853 to help organize the Nebraska Territory, the last of the Louisiana Purchase lands. In 1853, the Nebraska Territory was huge, extending from the northern end of Texas to the Canadian border. Altogether, it encompassed present-day Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Colorado, and Montana. Douglas's efforts to amend and introduce the bill in 1854 opened dynamics that would break the Democratic Party in two and, in the process, rip the country apart.

Douglas proposed a bold plan in 1854 to cut off a large southern chunk of Nebraska and create it separately as the Kansas Territory. Douglas had a number of goals in mind. The expansionist Democrat from Illinois wanted to organize the territory to facilitate the completion of a national railroad that would flow through Chicago. But before he had even finished introducing the bill, opposition had already mobilized. Salmon P. Chase drafted a response in northern newspapers that exposed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill as a measure to overturn the Missouri Compromise and open western lands for slavery. Kansas-Nebraska protests emerged in 1854 throughout the North, with key meetings in Wisconsin and Michigan. Kansas would become slave or free depending on the result of local elections, elections that would be greatly influenced by migrants flooding to the state to either protect or stop the spread of slavery.

Ordinary Americans in the North increasingly resisted what they believed to be a pro-slavery federal government on their own terms. The rescues and arrests of fugitive slaves Anthony Burns in Boston and Joshua Glover in Milwaukee, for example, both signaled the rising vehemence of resistance to the nation's 1850 fugitive slave law. The case of Anthony Burns illustrates how the Fugitive Slave Law radicalized many northerners. On May 24, 1854, twenty-year-old Burns, a preacher who worked in a Boston

clothing shop, was clubbed and dragged to jail. One year earlier, Burns had escaped slavery in Virginia, and a group of slave catchers had come to return him to Richmond. Word of Burns's capture spread rapidly through Boston, and a mob gathered outside the courthouse demanding Burns's release. Two days after the arrest, the crowd stormed the courthouse and shot a deputy U.S. Marshal to death. News reached Washington, and the federal government sent soldiers. Boston was placed under martial law. Federal troops lined the streets of Boston as Burns was marched to a ship, where he was sent back to slavery in Virginia. After spending over $40,000, the U.S. government had successfully reenslaved Anthony Burns.[22] A short time later, Burns was redeemed by abolitionists who paid $1,300 to return him to freedom, but the outrage among Bostonians only grew. And Anthony Burns was only one of hundreds of highly publicized episodes of the federal government imposing the Fugitive Slave Law on rebellious northern populations. In the words of Amos Adams Lawrence, "We went to bed one night old-fashioned, conservative, compromise Union Whigs & woke up stark mad Abolitionists."[23]



Figure 13.4.4: Anthony Burns, the fugitive slave, appears in a portrait at the center of this 1855. Burns' arrest and trial, possible because of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, became a rallying cry. As a symbol of the injustice of the slave system, Burns' treatment spurred riots and protests by abolitionists and citizens of Boston in the spring of 1854. John Andrews (engraver), "Anthony Burns," c. 1855. *Library of Congress*.

As northerners radicalized, organizations like the New England Emigrant Aid Company provided guns and other goods for pioneers willing to go to Kansas and establish the territory as antislavery through popular sovereignty. On all sides of the slavery issue, politics became increasingly militarized.

The year 1855 nearly derailed the northern antislavery coalition. A resurgent anti-immigrant movement briefly took advantage of the Whig collapse and nearly stole the energy of the anti-administration forces by channeling its frustrations into fights against the large number of mostly Catholic German and Irish immigrants in American cities. Calling themselves Know-Nothings, on account of their tendency to pretend ignorance when asked about their activities, the Know-Nothing or American Party made impressive gains in 1854 and 1855, particularly in New England and the Middle Atlantic. But the anti-immigrant movement simply could not capture the nation's attention in ways the antislavery movement already had.[24]

The antislavery political movements that started in 1854 coalesced with the formation of a new political party. Harking back to the founding fathers, its organizers named it the Republican Party. Republicans moved forward into a highly charged summer.

Following an explosive speech before Congress on May 19–20, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts was violently beaten with a cane by Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina on the floor of the Senate chamber. Among other accusations, Sumner accused Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina, Brooks's cousin, of defending slavery so he could have sexual access to black women.[25] Brooks felt that he had to defend his relative's honor and nearly killed Sumner as a result.



Figure 13.4.5: The Caning of Charles Sumner, 1856. *Wikimedia*.

The violence in Washington pales before the many murders occurring in Kansas.[26] Pro-slavery raiders attacked Lawrence, Kansas. Radical abolitionist John Brown retaliated, murdering several pro-slavery Kansans in retribution. As all of this played out, the House failed to expel Brooks. Brooks resigned his seat anyway, only to be reelected by his constituents later in the year. He received new canes emblazoned with the words "Hit him again!"[27]

With sectional tensions at a breaking point, both parties readied for the coming presidential election. In June 1856, the newly named Republican Party held its nominating convention at Philadelphia and selected Californian John Charles Frémont. Frémont's antislavery credentials may not have pleased many abolitionists, but his dynamic and talented wife, Jessie Benton Frémont, appealed to more radical members of the coalition. The Kansas-Nebraska debate, the organization of the Republican Party, and the 1856 presidential campaign all energized a new generation of political leaders, including Abraham Lincoln. Beginning with his speech at Peoria, Illinois, in 1854, Lincoln carved out a message that encapsulated better than anyone else the main ideas and visions of the Republican Party.[28] Lincoln himself was slow to join the coalition, yet by the summer of 1856, Lincoln had fully committed to the Frémont campaign.

Frémont lost, but Republicans celebrated that he won eleven of the sixteen free states. This showing, they urged, was truly impressive for any party making its first run at the presidency. Yet northern Democrats in crucial swing states remained unmoved by the Republican Party's appeals. Ulysses S. Grant of Missouri, for example, worried that Frémont and Republicans signaled trouble for the Union itself. Grant voted for the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, believing a Republican victory might bring about disunion. In abolitionist and especially black American circles, Frémont's defeat was more than a disappointment. Believing their fate had been sealed as permanent noncitizens, some African Americans would consider foreign emigration and colonization. Others began to explore the option of more radical and direct action against the Slave Power.

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13.5: From Sectional Crisis to National Crisis

White antislavery leaders hailed Frémont's defeat as a "glorious" one and looked ahead to the party's future successes. For those still in slavery or hoping to see loved ones freed, the news was of course much harder to take. The Republican Party had promised the rise of an antislavery coalition, but voters rebuked it. The lessons seemed clear enough.

Kansas loomed large over the 1856 election, darkening the national mood. The story of voter fraud in Kansas had begun years before in 1854, when nearby Missourians first started crossing the border to tamper with the Kansas elections. Noting this, critics at the time attacked the Pierce administration for not living up to the ideals of popular sovereignty by ensuring fair elections. From there, the crisis only deepened. Kansas voted to come into the Union as a free state, but the federal government refused to recognize their votes and instead recognized a sham pro-slavery legislature.

The sectional crisis had at last become a national crisis. "Bleeding Kansas" was the first place to demonstrate that the sectional crisis could easily be, and in fact already was, exploding into a full-blown national crisis. As the national mood grew increasingly grim, Kansas attracted militants representing the extreme sides of the slavery debate.

In the days after the 1856 presidential election, Buchanan made his plans for his time in office clear. He talked with Chief Justice Roger Taney on inauguration day about a court decision he hoped to see handled during his time in office. Indeed, not long after the inauguration, the Supreme Court handed down a decision that would come to define Buchanan's presidency. The Dred Scott decision, *Scott v. Sandford*, ruled that black Americans could not be citizens of the United States.[29] This gave the Buchanan administration and its southern allies a direct repudiation of the Missouri Compromise. The court ruled that Scott, a Missouri slave, had no right to sue in United States courts. The Dred Scott decision signaled that the federal government was now fully committed to extending slavery as far and as wide as it might want.

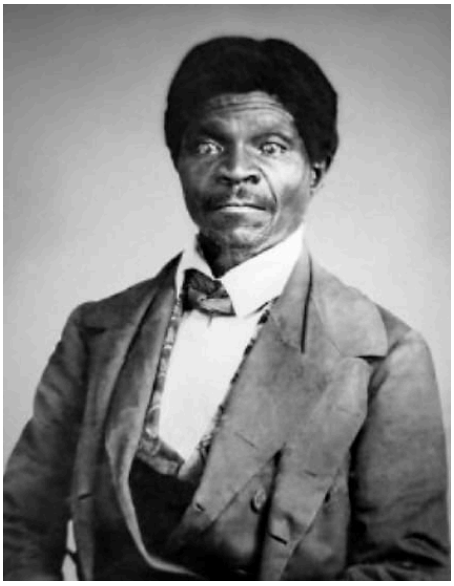


Figure 13.5.1: Dred Scott's Supreme Court case made clear that the federal government was no longer able or willing to ignore the issue of slavery. More than that, all black Americans, Justice Taney declared, could never be citizens of the United States. Though seemingly a disastrous decision for abolitionists, this controversial ruling actually increased the ranks of the abolitionist movement. Photograph of Dred Scott, 1857. *Wikimedia*.

The Dred Scott decision seemed to settle the sectional crisis by making slavery fully national, but in reality it just exacerbated sectional tensions further. In 1857, Buchanan sent U.S. military forces to Utah, hoping to subdue Utah's Mormon communities. This action, however, led to renewed charges, many of them leveled from within his own party, that the administration was abusing its powers. Far more important than the Utah invasion, however, were the ongoing events in Kansas. It was Kansas that at last proved to many northerners that the sectional crisis would not go away unless slavery also went away.

The Illinois Senate race in 1858 put the scope of the sectional crisis on full display. Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln challenged the greatly influential Democrat Stephen Douglas. Pandering to appeals to white supremacy, Douglas hammered the

Republican opposition as a “Black Republican” party bent on racial equality.[30] The Republicans, including Lincoln, were thrown on the defensive. Democrats hung on as best they could, but the Republicans won the House of Representatives and picked up seats in the Senate. Lincoln actually lost his contest with Stephen Douglas but in the process firmly established himself as a leading national Republican. After the 1858 elections, all eyes turned to 1860. Given the Republican Party’s successes since 1854, it was expected that the 1860 presidential election might produce the nation’s first antislavery president.

In the troubled decades since the Missouri Compromise, the nation slowly tore itself apart. Congressmen clubbed each other nearly to death on the floor of Congress, and by the middle of the 1850s Americans were already at war on the Kansas and Missouri plains. Across the country, cities and towns were in various stages of revolt against federal authority. Fighting spread even farther against Indians in the Far West and against Mormons in Utah. The nation’s militants anticipated a coming breakdown and worked to exploit it. John Brown, fresh from his actions in Kansas, moved east and planned more violence. Assembling a team from across the West, including black radicals from Oberlin, Ohio, and throughout communities in western Canada, Brown hatched a plan to attack Harper’s Ferry, a federal weapons arsenal in Virginia (now West Virginia). He would use the weapons to lead a slave revolt. Brown approached Frederick Douglass, though Douglass refused to join.

Brown’s raid embarked on October 16. By October 18, a command under Robert E. Lee had crushed the revolt. Many of Brown’s men, including his own sons, were killed, but Brown himself lived and was imprisoned. Brown prophesied while in prison that the nation’s crimes would only be purged with blood. He went to the gallows in December 1859. Northerners made a stunning display of sympathy on the day of his execution. Southerners took their reactions to mean that the coming 1860 election would be, in many ways, a referendum on secession and disunion.



Figure 13.5.2: The execution of John Brown made him a martyr in abolitionist circles and a confirmed traitor in southern crowds. Both of these images continued to pervade public memory after the Civil War, but in the North especially (where so many soldiers had died to help end slavery) his name was admired. Over two decades after Brown’s death, Thomas Hovenden portrayed Brown as a saint. As he is lead to his execution for attempting to destroy slavery, Brown poignantly leans over a rail to kiss a black baby. Thomas Hovenden, The Last Moments of John Brown, c. 1882-1884. *Wikimedia.*

Republicans wanted little to do with Brown and instead tried to portray themselves as moderates opposed to both abolitionists and pro-slavery expansionists. In this climate, the parties opened their contest for the 1860 presidential election. The Democratic Party fared poorly as its southern delegates bolted its national convention at Charleston and ran their own candidate, Vice President John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky. Hoping to field a candidate who might nonetheless manage to bridge the broken party’s factions, the Democrats decided to meet again at Baltimore and nominated Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois.

The Republicans, meanwhile, held their boisterous convention in Chicago. The Republican platform made the party’s antislavery commitments clear, also making wide promises to its white constituents, particularly westerners, with the promise of new land, transcontinental railroads, and broad support of public schools.[31] Abraham Lincoln, a candidate few outside Illinois truly expected to win, nonetheless proved far less polarizing than the other names on the ballot. Lincoln won the nomination, and with the Democrats in disarray, Republicans knew their candidate Lincoln had a good chance of winning.

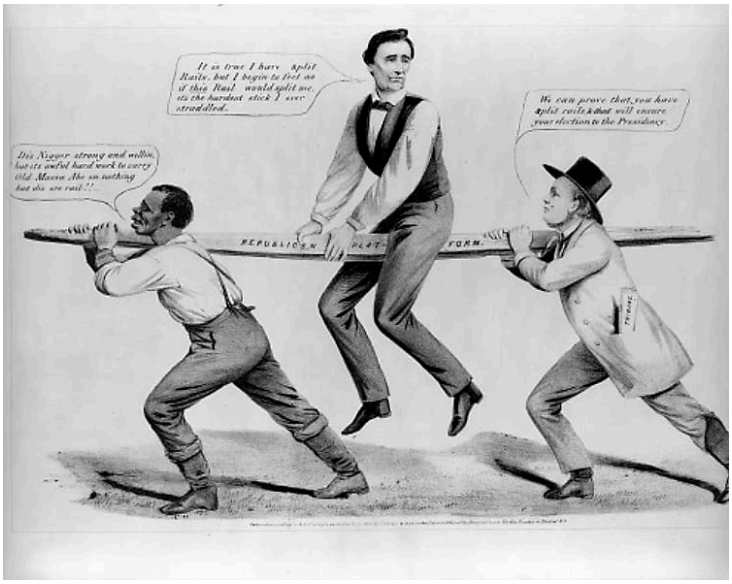


Figure 13.5.1: In this political cartoon, Abraham Lincoln uncomfortably straddles a rail supported by a black man and Horace Greeley (editor of the New York "Tribune"). The wood board is a dual reference to the antislavery plank of the 1860 Republican platform — which Lincoln seemed to uneasily defend — and Lincoln's backwoods origins. Louis Maurer, "The Rail Candidate," Currier & Ives, c. 1860. *Library of Congress*.

Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 contest on November 6, gaining just 40 percent of the popular vote and not a single southern vote in the Electoral College. Within days, southern states were organizing secession conventions. John J. Crittenden of Kentucky proposed a series of compromises, but a clear pro-southern bias meant they had little chance of gaining Republican acceptance. Crittenden's plan promised renewed enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law and offered a plan to keep slavery in the nation's capital.[32] Republicans by late 1860 knew that the voters who had just placed them in power did not want them to cave on these points, and southern states proceeded with their plans to leave the Union. On December 20, South Carolina voted to secede and issued its Declaration of the Immediate Causes."[33] The declaration highlighted failure of the federal government to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act over competing personal liberty laws in northern states. After the war many southerners claimed that secession was primarily motivated by a concern to preserve states' rights, but the primary complaint of the very first ordinance of secession listed the federal government's failure to exert its authority over the northern states.

The year 1861, then, saw the culmination of the secession crisis. Before he left for Washington, Lincoln told those who had gathered in Springfield to wish him well and that he faced a "task greater than Washington's" in the years to come. Southerners were also learning the challenges of forming a new nation. The seceded states grappled with internal divisions right away, as states with slaveholders sometimes did not support the newly seceded states. In January, for example, Delaware rejected secession. But states in the Lower South adopted a different course. The state of Mississippi seceded. Later in the month, the states of Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana also all left the Union. By early February, Texas had also joined the newly seceded states. In February, southerners drafted a constitution protecting slavery and named Jefferson Davis of Mississippi their president. Weeks after Abraham Lincoln's inauguration, rebels in the newly formed Confederate States of America opened fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. Within days, Abraham Lincoln would demand seventy-five thousand volunteers from the North to crush the rebellion. The American Civil War had begun.

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13.6: Conclusion

Slavery had long divided the politics of the United States. In time, these divisions became both sectional and irreconcilable. The first and most ominous sign of a coming sectional storm occurred over debates surrounding the admission of the state of Missouri in 1821. As westward expansion continued, these fault lines grew even more ominous, particularly as the United States managed to seize even more lands from its war with Mexico. The country seemed to teeter ever closer to a full-throated endorsement of slavery. But an antislavery coalition arose in the middle 1850s calling itself the Republican Party. Eager to cordon off slavery and confine it to where it already existed, the Republicans won the presidential election of 1860 and threw the nation on the path to war.

Throughout this period, the mainstream of the antislavery movement remained committed to a peaceful resolution of the slavery issue through efforts understood to foster the “ultimate extinction” of slavery in due time. But as the secession crisis revealed, the South could not tolerate a federal government working against the interests of slavery’s expansion and decided to take a gamble on war with the United States. Secession, in the end, raised the possibility of emancipation through war, a possibility most Republicans knew, of course, had always been an option, but one they nonetheless hoped would never be necessary. By 1861 all bets were off, and the fate of slavery, and of the nation, depended on war.

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13.7: Primary Sources

Prigg v. Pennsylvania, 1842

Conflicts between the power of the federal government and states' rights strained American politics throughout the antebellum era. During the 1840s and 1850s, the most consistent source of tension on the issue stemmed from northerners refusing to comply with fugitive slave laws. As early as the 1780s, Pennsylvania passed laws that made it illegal to take a black person from the state for the purpose of enslaving them. In the majority opinion, excerpted here, Supreme Court justice Joseph Story decided that the national fugitive slave act overruled Pennsylvania's law.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852

In 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe published her bestselling antislavery novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin. *Sales for* Uncle Tom's Cabin *were astronomical, eclipsed only by sales of the Bible. The book became a sensation and helped move antislavery into everyday conversation for many northerners. In this passage, a senator and his wife debate the Fugitive Slave Law.*

Margaraetta Mason and Lydia Maria Child Discuss John Brown, 1860

After John Brown was arrested for his raid on Harpers Ferry, Lydia Maria Child wrote to the governor of Virginia requesting to visit Brown. Margaretta Mason of Virginia wrote a searing letter to Child attacking her for supporting a murder. Child responded, and the exchange of letters was published by the American Antislavery Society.

1860 Republican Party Platform

The 1860 Republican Party convention in Chicago created a platform that clearly opposed the expansion of slavery in the West and the reopening of the slave trade. However, nothing in the document claimed that the government had the power to eliminate slavery where it already existed. Controversies over slavery suffuse the platform, but maybe even more noticeable is the importance of the West to the Republican Party.

South Carolina Declaration of Secession, 1860

Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 contest on November 6 with just 40% of the popular vote and not a single southern vote in the Electoral College. Within days, southern states were organizing secession conventions. On December 20, South Carolina voted to secede, and issued its "Declaration of the Immediate Causes."

Effects of the Fugitive Slave Law Lithograph, 1850

This lithograph imagines the consequences of the Fugitive Slave Act, part of the Compromise of 1850. Four well-dressed black men are being hunted by a party of white men, seen in the background. There are a number of ambiguities in the image – are the black men slaves or free? Are they trying to escape or not? Where exactly are they? These ambiguities speak to the concerns many abolitionists had about the law, which required free citizens to return escaped slaves to their masters.

Sectional Crisis Map, 1856

This piece of Republican propaganda from the 1856 election makes clear distinctions between free states, slave states, and territories. Featured at the top of the page are engravings of John C. Fremont and his running mate, William C. Dayton. A vibrant red sets off the free states. The chart, "Freedom vs. Slavery," demonstrates the North's economic and cultural superiority over slave states in terms of everything from population per square mile, capital in manufactures, miles of railroad, the number of newspapers and public libraries, and value of churches.

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13.8: Reference Material

This chapter was edited by Jesse Gant, with content contributions by Jeffrey Bain-Conkin, Matthew A. Byron, Christopher Childers, Jesse Gant, Christopher Null, Ryan Poe, Michael Robinson, Nicholas Wood, Michael Woods, and Ben Wright.

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14: THE CIVIL WAR



Collecting the Dead. Cold Harbor, Virginia. April, 1865. Library of Congress.

14.1: Introduction

14.2: The Election of 1860 and Secession

14.3: A War for Union 1861-1863

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14.1: Introduction

The American Civil War, the bloodiest in the nation's history, resulted in approximately 750,000 deaths.[1] The war touched the life of nearly every American as military mobilization reached levels never seen before or since. Most northern soldiers went to war to preserve the Union, but the war ultimately transformed into a struggle to eradicate slavery. African Americans, both enslaved and free, pressed the issue of emancipation and nurtured this transformation. Simultaneously, women thrust themselves into critical wartime roles while navigating a world without many men of military age. The Civil War was a defining event in the history of the United States and, for the Americans thrust into it, a wrenching one.

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14.2: The Election of 1860 and Secession

The 1860 presidential election was chaotic. In April, the Democratic Party convened in Charleston, South Carolina, the bastion of secessionist thought in the South. The goal was to nominate a candidate for the party ticket, but the party was deeply divided. Northern Democrats pulled for Senator Stephen Douglas, a pro-slavery moderate championing popular sovereignty, while southern Democrats were intent on endorsing someone *other* than Douglas. The parties leaders' refusal to include a pro-slavery platform resulted in southern delegates walking out of the convention, preventing Douglas from gaining the two-thirds majority required for a nomination. The Democrats ended up with two presidential candidates. A subsequent convention in Baltimore nominated Douglas, while southerners nominated the current vice president, John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, as their presidential candidate. The nation's oldest party had split over differences in policy toward slavery.[2]

Initially, the Republicans were hardly unified around a single candidate themselves. Several leading Republican men vied for their party's nomination. A consensus emerged at the May 1860 convention that the party's nominee would need to carry all the free states—for only in that situation could a Republican nominee potentially win. New York Senator William Seward, a leading contender, was passed over. Seward's pro-immigrant position posed a potential obstacle, particularly in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, as a relatively unknown but likable politician, rose from a pool of potential candidates and was selected by the delegates on the third ballot. The electoral landscape was further complicated through the emergence of a fourth candidate, Tennessee's John Bell, heading the Constitutional Union Party. The Constitutional Unionists, composed of former Whigs who teamed up with some southern Democrats, made it their mission to avoid the specter of secession while doing little else to address the issues tearing the country apart.

Abraham Lincoln's nomination proved a great windfall for the Republican Party. Lincoln carried all free states with the exception of New Jersey (which he split with Douglas). Of the voting electorate, 81.2 percent came out to vote—at that point the highest ever for a presidential election. Lincoln received less than 40 percent of the popular vote, but with the field so split, that percentage yielded 180 electoral votes. Lincoln was trailed by Breckinridge with his 72 electoral votes, carrying eleven of the fifteen slave states; Bell came in third with 39 electoral votes; and Douglas came in last, only able to garner 12 electoral votes despite carrying almost 30 percent of the popular vote. Since the Republican platform prohibited the expansion of slavery in future western states, all future Confederate states, with the exception of Virginia, excluded Lincoln's name from their ballots.[3]

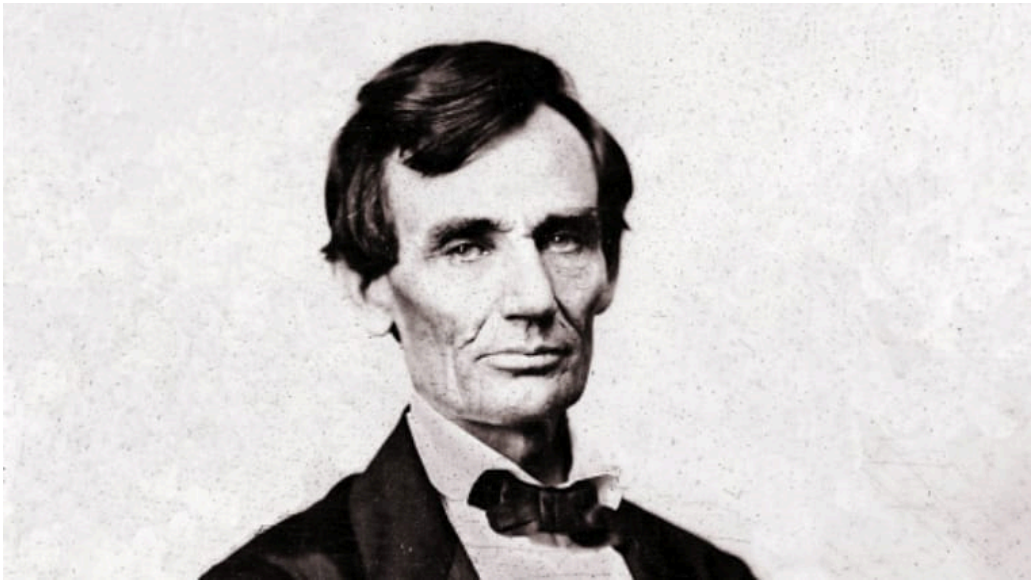


Figure 14.2.1: Abraham Lincoln, August 13, 1860. *Library of Congress*.

The election of Lincoln and the perceived threat to the institution of slavery proved too much for the deep southern states. South Carolina acted almost immediately, calling a convention to declare secession. On December 20, 1860, the South Carolina convention voted unanimously 169–0 to dissolve their union with the United States.[4] The other states across the Deep South quickly followed suit. Mississippi adopted their own resolution on January 9, 1861, Florida followed on January 10, Alabama on January 11, Georgia on January 19, Louisiana on January 26, and Texas on February 1. Texas was the only state to put the issue up

for a popular vote, but secession was widely popular throughout the South.

Confederates quickly shed their American identity and adopted a new Confederate nationalism. Confederate nationalism was based on several ideals, foremost among these being slavery. As Confederate vice president Alexander Stephens stated, the Confederacy's "foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery . . . is his natural and normal condition."[5] The election of Lincoln in 1860 demonstrated that the South was politically overwhelmed. Slavery was omnipresent in the prewar South, and it served as the most common frame of reference for unequal power. To a southern man, there was no fate more terrifying than the thought of being reduced to the level of a slave. Religion likewise shaped Confederate nationalism, as southerners believed that the Confederacy was fulfilling God's will. The Confederacy even veered from the American constitution by explicitly invoking Christianity in their founding document. Yet in every case, all rationale for secession could be thoroughly tied to slavery. "Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery—the greatest material interest of the world," proclaimed the Mississippi statement of secession.[6] Thus for the original seven Confederate states (and the four that would subsequently join), slavery's existence was the essential core of the fledging Confederacy.



Figure 14.2.2: The emblems of nationalism on this currency reveal much about the ideology underpinning the Confederacy: George Washington standing stately in a Roman toga indicates the belief in the South's honorable and aristocratic past; John C. Calhoun's portrait emphasizes the Confederate argument of the importance of states' rights; and, most importantly, the image of African Americans working in fields demonstrates slavery's position as foundational to the Confederacy. A five and one hundred dollar Confederate States of America interest bearing banknote, c. 1861 and 1862. *Wikimedia*.

Not all southerners participated in Confederate nationalism. Unionist southerners, most common in the upcountry where slavery was weakest, retained their loyalty to the Union. These southerners joined the Union army, that is, the army of the United States of America, and worked to defeat the Confederacy.[7] Black southerners, most of whom were slaves, overwhelmingly supported the Union, often running away from plantations and forcing the Union army to reckon with slavery.[8]

President James Buchanan would not directly address the issue of secession prior to his term's end in early March. Any effort to try to solve the issue therefore fell upon Congress, specifically a Committee of Thirteen including prominent men such as Stephen Douglas, William Seward, Robert Toombs, and John Crittenden. In what became known as "Crittenden's Compromise," Senator Crittenden proposed a series of Constitutional amendments that guaranteed slavery in southern states and territories, denied the federal government interstate slave trade regulatory power, and offered to compensate owners of unrecovered fugitive slaves. The Committee of Thirteen ultimately voted down the measure, and it likewise failed in the full Senate vote (25–23). Reconciliation appeared impossible.[9]

The seven seceding states met in Montgomery, Alabama on February 4 to organize a new nation. The delegates selected Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as president and established a capital in Montgomery, Alabama (it would move to Richmond in May). Whether other states of the Upper South would join the Confederacy remained uncertain. By the early spring of 1861, North Carolina and Tennessee had not held secession conventions, while voters in Virginia, Missouri, and Arkansas initially voted down secession. Despite this temporary boost to the Union, it became abundantly clear that these acts of loyalty in the Upper South

were highly conditional and relied on a clear lack of intervention on the part of the federal government. This was the precarious political situation facing Abraham Lincoln following his inauguration on March 4, 1861.

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14.3: A War for Union 1861-1863

In his inaugural address, Lincoln declared secession "legally void."[10] While he did not intend to invade southern states, he would use force to maintain possession of federal property within seceded states. Attention quickly shifted to the federal installation of Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. The fort was in need of supplies, and Lincoln intended to resupply it. South Carolina called for U.S. soldiers to evacuate the fort. Commanding officer Major Robert Anderson refused. On April 12, 1861, Confederate Brigadier General P. G. T. Beauregard fired on the fort. Anderson surrendered on April 13 and the Union troops evacuated. In response to the attack, President Abraham Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand volunteers to serve three months to suppress the rebellion. The American Civil War had begun.

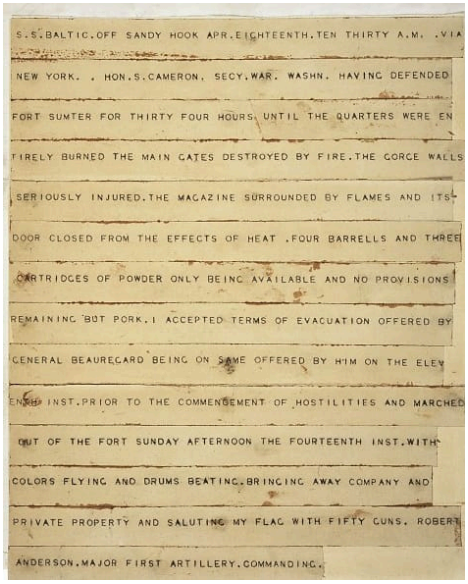

S.S.BALTIC.OFF SANDY HOOK APR.EIGHTEENTH.TEN THIRTY A.M. .VIA
NEW YORK. . HON.S.CAMERON. SECY.WAR. WASHN. HAVING DEFENDED
FORT SUMTER FOR THIRTY FOUR HOURS UNTIL THE QUARTERS WERE EN
TIRELY BURNED THE MAIN GATES DESTROYED BY FIRE.THE GORGE WALLS
SERIOUSLY INJURED.THE MAGAZINE SURROUNDED BY FLAMES AND ITS
DOOR CLOSED FROM THE EFFECTS OF HEAT .FOUR BARRELLS AND THREE
CARTRIDGES OF POWDER ONLY BEING AVAILABLE AND NO PROVISIONS
REMAINING BUT PORK.I ACCEPTED TERMS OF EVACUATION OFFERED BY
GENERAL BEAUREGARD BEING ON SAME OFFERED BY HIM ON THE ELEV
ENTH INST.PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES AND MARCHED
OUT OF THE FORT SUNDAY AFTERNOON THE FOURTEENTH INST.WITH
COLORS FLYING AND DRUMS BEATING.BRINGING AWAY COMPANY AND
PRIVATE PROPERTY AND SALUTING MY FLAG WITH FIFTY GUNS. ROBERT
ANDERSON.MAJOR FIRST ARTILLERY.COMMANDING.

Figure 14.3.1: Sent to then Secretary of War Simon Cameron on April 13, 1861, this telegraph announced that after "thirty hours of defending Fort Sumter, Major Robert Anderson had accepted the evacuation offered by Confederate General Beauregard. The Union had surrendered Fort Sumter, and the Civil War had officially begun. "Telegram from Maj. Robert Anderson to Hon. Simon Cameron, Secretary, announcing his withdrawal from Fort Sumter," April 18, 1861; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917; Record Group 94. *National Archives*

The assault on Fort Sumter and subsequent call for troops provoked several Upper South states to join the Confederacy. In total, eleven states renounced their allegiance to the United States. The new Confederate nation was predicated on the institution of slavery and the promotion of any and all interests that reinforced that objective. Some southerners couched their defense of slavery as a preservation of states' rights. But in order to protect slavery, the Confederate constitution left even less power to the states than the U.S. Constitution, an irony not lost on many.

Shortly after Lincoln's call for troops, the Union adopted General-in-Chief Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan to suppress the rebellion. This strategy intended to strangle the Confederacy by cutting off access to coastal ports and inland waterways via a naval blockade. Ground troops would enter the interior. Like an anaconda snake, they planned to surround and squeeze the Confederacy.



FIgure 14.3.2***:*** *Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan meant to slowly squeeze the South dry of its resources, blocking all coastal ports and inland waterways to prevent the importation of goods or the export of cotton. This print, while poorly drawn, does a great job of making clear the Union's plan. J.B. Elliott, Scott's great snake. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1861, 1861. Library of Congress.*

The border states of Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky maintained geographic, social, political, and economic connections to both the North and the South. All four were immediately critical to the outcome of the conflict. Abraham Lincoln famously quipped, "I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game."[11] Lincoln and his military advisors realized that the loss of the border states could mean a significant decrease in Union resources and threaten the capital in Washington. Consequently, Lincoln hoped to foster loyalty among their citizens, so Union forces could minimize their occupation. In spite of terrible guerrilla warfare in Missouri and Kentucky, the four border states remained loyal to the Union throughout the war.

Foreign countries, primarily in Europe, also watched the unfolding war with deep interest. The United States represented the greatest example of democratic thought at the time, and individuals from as far afield as Britain, France, Spain, Russia, and beyond closely followed events across the Atlantic Ocean. If the democratic experiment within the United States failed, many democratic activists in Europe wondered what hope might exist for such experiments elsewhere. Conversely, those with close ties to the cotton industry watched with other concerns. War meant the possibility of disrupting the cotton supply, and disruption could have catastrophic ramifications in commercial and financial markets abroad.

While Lincoln, his cabinet, and the War Department devised strategies to defeat the rebel insurrection, black Americans quickly forced the issue of slavery as a primary issue in the debate. As early as 1861, black Americans implored the Lincoln administration to serve in the army and navy.[12]Lincoln initially waged a conservative, limited war. He believed that the presence of African American troops would threaten the loyalty of slaveholding border states, and white volunteers might refuse to serve alongside black men. However, army commanders could not ignore the growing populations of formerly enslaved people who escaped to freedom behind Union army lines. These former enslaved people took a proactive stance early in the war and forced the federal government to act. As the number of refugees ballooned, Lincoln and Congress found it harder to avoid the issue.[13]

In May 1861, General Benjamin F. Butler went over his superiors' heads and began accepting fugitive slaves who came to Fort Monroe in Virginia. In order to avoid the issue of the slaves' freedom, Butler reasoned that runaway slaves were "contraband of war," and he had as much a right to seize them as he did to seize enemy horses or cannons.[14] Later that summer Congress affirmed Butler's policy in the First Confiscation Act. The act left "contrabands," as these runaways were called, in a state of limbo. Once a slave escaped to Union lines, her master's claim was nullified. She was not, however, a free citizen of the United States. Runaways lived in "contraband camps," where disease and malnutrition were rampant. Women and men were required to perform the drudge work of war: raising fortifications, cooking meals, and laying railroad tracks. Still, life as a contraband offered a potential path to freedom, and thousands of slaves seized the opportunity.



Figure 14.3.3: Enslaved African Americans who took freedom into their own hands and ran to Union lines congregated in what were called contraband camps, which existed alongside Union army camps. As is evident in the photograph, these were crude, disorganized, and dirty places. But they were still centers of freedom for those fleeing slavery. Contraband camp, Richmond, Va, 1865. The Camp of the Contrabands on the Banks of the Mississippi, Fort Pickering, Memphis, Tenn, 1862. Courtesy *American Antiquarian Society*.

Fugitive slaves posed a dilemma for the Union military. Soldiers were forbidden to interfere with slavery or assist runaways, but many soldiers found such a policy unchristian. Even those indifferent to slavery were reluctant to turn away potential laborers or help the enemy by returning his property. Also, fugitive slaves could provide useful information on the local terrain and the movements of Confederate troops. Union officers became particularly reluctant to turn away fugitive slaves when Confederate commanders began forcing slaves to work on fortifications. Every slave who escaped to Union lines was a loss to the Confederate war effort.

Any hopes for a brief conflict were eradicated when Union and Confederate forces met at the Battle of Bull Run, near Manassas, Virginia. While not particularly deadly, the Confederate victory proved that the Civil War would be long and costly. Furthermore, in response to the embarrassing Union rout, Lincoln removed Brigadier General Irvin McDowell and promoted Major General George B. McClellan to commander of the newly formed Army of the Potomac. For nearly a year after the First Battle of Bull Run, the Eastern Theater remained relatively silent. Smaller engagements only resulted in a bloody stalemate.



Figure 14.3.4: Photography captured the horrors of war as never before. Some Civil War photographers arranged the actors in their frames to capture the best picture, even repositioning bodies of dead soldiers for battlefield photos. Alexander Gardner, *[Antietam, Md. Confederate dead by a fence on the Hagerstown road], September 1862*. *Library of Congress*.

But while the military remained quiet, the same could not be said of Republicans in Washington. The absence of fractious, stalling southerners in Congress allowed Republicans to finally pass the Whig economic package, including the Homestead Act, the Land-Grant College Act (aka the Morrill Act), and the Pacific Railroad Act.[15] The federal government also began moving toward a more nationally controlled currency system (the greenback) and the creation of banks with national characteristics. Such acts proved instrumental in the expansion of the federal government and industry.



Figure 14.3.5: New and more destructive warfare technology emerged during this time that utilized discoveries and innovations in other areas of life, like transportation. This photograph shows Robert E. Lee's railroad gun and crew used in the main eastern theater of war at the siege of Petersburg, June 1864-April 1865. "Petersburg, Va. Railroad gun and crew," between 1864 and 1865. *Library of Congress*.

The Democratic Party, absent its southern leaders, divided into two camps. War Democrats largely stood behind President Lincoln. Peace Democrats—also known as Copperheads—clashed frequently with both War Democrats and Republicans. Copperheads were sympathetic to the Confederacy; they exploited public antiwar sentiment (often the result of a lost battle or mounting casualties) and tried to push President Lincoln to negotiate an immediate peace, regardless of political leverage or bargaining power. Had the Copperheads succeeded in bringing about immediate peace, the Union would have been forced to recognize the Confederacy as a separate and legitimate government and the institution of slavery would have remained intact.

While Washington buzzed with political activity, military life consisted of relative monotony punctuated by brief periods of horror. Daily life for a Civil War soldier was one of routine. A typical day began around six in the morning and involved drill, marching, lunch break, and more drilling followed by policing the camp. Weapon inspection and cleaning followed, perhaps one final drill, dinner, and taps around nine or nine thirty in the evening. Soldiers in both armies grew weary of the routine. Picketing or foraging afforded welcome distractions to the monotony.

Soldiers devised clever ways of dealing with the boredom of camp life. The most common was writing. These were highly literate armies; nine out of every ten Federals and eight out of every ten Confederates could read and write.[16] Letters home served as a tether linking soldiers to their loved ones. Soldiers also read; newspapers were in high demand. News of battles, events in Europe, politics in Washington and Richmond, and local concerns were voraciously sought and traded.

While there were nurses, camp followers, and some women who disguised themselves as men, camp life was overwhelmingly male. Soldiers drank liquor, smoked tobacco, gambled, and swore. Social commentators feared that when these men returned home, with their hard-drinking and irreligious ways, all decency, faith, and temperance would depart. But not all methods of distraction were detrimental. Soldiers also organized debate societies, composed music, sang songs, wrestled, raced horses, boxed, and played sports.

Neither side could consistently provide supplies for their soldiers, so it was not uncommon, though officially forbidden, for common soldiers to trade with the enemy. Confederate soldiers prized northern newspapers and coffee. Northerners were glad to exchange these for southern tobacco. Supply shortages and poor sanitation were synonymous with Civil War armies. The close proximity of thousands of men bred disease. Lice were soldiers' daily companions.

Music was popular among the soldiers of both armies, creating a diversion from the boredom and horror of the war. As a result,

soldiers often sang on fatigue duty and while in camp. Favorite songs often reminded the soldiers of home, including “Lorena,” “Home, Sweet Home,” and “Just Before the Battle, Mother.” Dances held in camp offered another way to enjoy music. Since there were often few women nearby, soldiers would dance with one another.

When the Civil War broke out, one of the most popular songs among soldiers and civilians was “John Brown’s Body,” which began “John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave.” Started as a Union anthem praising John Brown’s actions at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, then used by Confederates to vilify Brown, both sides’ version of the song stressed that they were on the right side. Eventually the words to Julia Ward Howe’s poem “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” were set to the melody, further implying Union success. The themes of popular songs changed over the course of the war, as feelings of inevitable success alternated with feelings of terror and despair.[17]

After an extensive delay on the part of Union commander George McClellan, his 120,000-man Army of the Potomac moved via ship to the peninsula between the York and James Rivers in Virginia. Rather than crossing overland via the former battlefield at Manassas Junction, McClellan attempted to swing around the rebel forces and enter the capital of Richmond before they knew what hit them. McClellan, however, was an overly cautious man who consistently overestimated his adversaries’ numbers. This cautious approach played into the Confederates’ favor on the outskirts of Richmond. Confederate General Robert E. Lee, recently appointed commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, forced McClellan to retreat from Richmond, and his Peninsular Campaign became a tremendous failure.[18]

Union forces met with little success in the East, but the Western Theater provided hope for the United States. In February 1862, men under Union general Ulysses S. Grant captured Forts Henry and Donelson along the Tennessee River. Fighting in the West greatly differed from that in the East. At the First Battle of Bull Run, for example, two large armies fought for control of the nations’ capitals, while in the West, Union and Confederate forces fought for control of the rivers, since the Mississippi River and its tributaries were key components of the Union’s Anaconda Plan. One of the deadliest of these clashes occurred along the Tennessee River at the Battle of Shiloh on April 6–7, 1862. This battle, lasting only two days, was the costliest single battle in American history up to that time. The Union victory shocked both the Union and the Confederacy with approximately twenty-three thousand casualties, a number that exceeded casualties from all of the United States’ previous wars combined.[19] The subsequent capture of New Orleans by Union forces proved a heavy blow to the Confederacy and capped an 1862 spring of success in the Western Theater.

The Union and Confederate navies helped or hindered army movements around the many marine environments of the southern United States. Each navy employed the latest technology to outmatch the other. The Confederate navy, led by Stephen Russell Mallory, had the unenviable task of constructing a fleet from scratch and trying to fend off a vastly better equipped Union navy. Led by Gideon Welles of Connecticut, the Union navy successfully implemented General-in-Chief Winfield Scott’s Anaconda Plan. The future of naval warfare also emerged in the spring of 1862 as two “ironclad” warships fought a duel at Hampton Roads, Virginia. The age of the wooden sail was gone and naval warfare would be fundamentally altered. While advances in naval technology ruled the seas, African Americans on the ground were complicating Union war aims to an even greater degree.

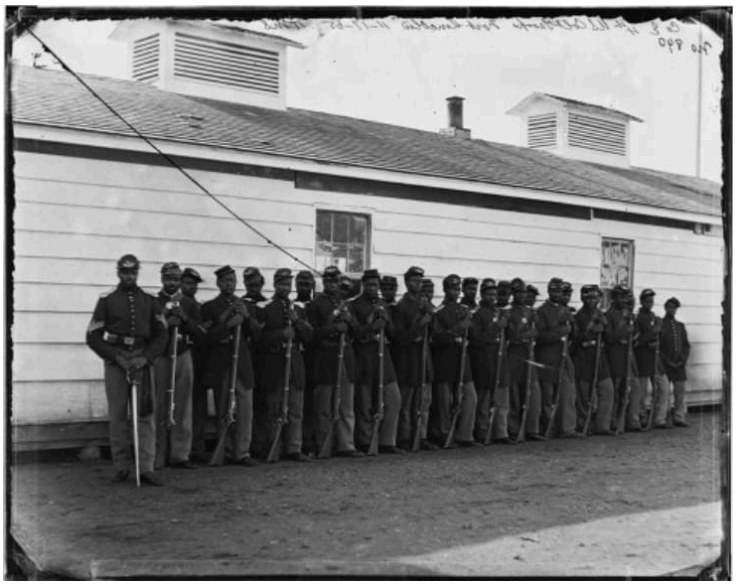


Figure 14.3.6: The creation of black regiments was another kind of innovation during the Civil War. Northern free blacks and newly freed slaves joined together under the leadership of white officers to fight for the Union cause. This novelty was not only beneficial for the Union war effort; it also showed the Confederacy that the Union sought to destroy the foundational institution (slavery) upon which their nation was built. William Morris Smith, *[District of Columbia. Company E, 4th U.S. Colored Infantry, at Fort Lincoln], between 1863 and 1866.* Library of Congress.

By the summer of 1862, the actions of black Americans were pushing the Union toward a full-blown war of emancipation.[20] Following the First Confiscation Act, in April 1862, Congress abolished the institution of slavery in the District of Columbia. In July 1862, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act, effectively emancipating slaves that came under Union control. Word traveled fast among enslaved people, and this legislation led to even more runaways making their way into Union lines. Abraham Lincoln's thinking began to evolve. By the summer of 1862, Lincoln first floated the idea of an Emancipation Proclamation to members of his cabinet. By August 1862, he proposed the first iteration of the Emancipation Proclamation. While his cabinet supported such an idea, secretary of state William Seward insisted that Lincoln wait for a "decisive" Union victory so the proclamation would not appear too desperate a measure on the part of a failing government.



Figure 14.3.7: This African American family dressed in their finest clothes (including a USCT uniform) for this photograph, projecting respectability and dignity that was at odds with the southern perception of black Americans. *[Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters], between 1863 and 1865.* Library of Congress.

This decisive moment that prompted the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation occurred in the fall of 1862 along Antietam Creek in Maryland. Emboldened by their success in the previous spring and summer, Lee and Confederate president Jefferson

Davis planned to win a decisive victory in Union territory and end the war. On September 17, 1862, McClellan's and Lee's forces collided at the Battle of Antietam near the town of Sharpsburg. This battle was the first major battle of the Civil War to occur on Union soil. It remains the bloodiest single day in American history: over twenty thousand soldiers were killed, wounded, or missing.

Despite the Confederate withdrawal and the high death toll, the Battle of Antietam was not a decisive Union victory. It did, however, result in enough of a victory for Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed slaves in areas under Confederate control. There were significant exemptions to the Emancipation Proclamation, including the border states and parts of other states in the Confederacy. A far cry from a universal end to slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation nevertheless proved vital, shifting the war's aims from simple union to emancipation. Framing it as a war measure, Lincoln and his cabinet hoped that stripping the Confederacy of its labor force would not only debilitate the southern economy but also weaken Confederate morale. Furthermore, the Battle of Antietam and the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation all but ensured that the Confederacy would not be recognized by European powers. Nevertheless, Confederates continued fighting. Union and Confederate forces clashed again at Fredericksburg, Virginia, in December 1862. This Confederate victory resulted in staggering Union casualties.

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14.4: War for Emancipation 1863-1865

As Union armies penetrated deeper into the Confederacy, politicians and generals came to understand the necessity and benefit of enlisting black men in the army and navy. Although a few commanders began forming black units in 1862, such as Massachusetts abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson's First South Carolina Volunteers (the first regiment of black soldiers), widespread enlistment did not occur until the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863. "And I further declare and make known," Lincoln's proclamation read, "that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service."[21]

The language describing black enlistment indicated Lincoln's implicit desire to segregate African American troops from the main campaigning armies of white soldiers. "I believe it is a resource which, if vigorously applied now, will soon close the contest. It works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us," Lincoln remarked in August 1863 about black soldiering.[22] Although more than 180,000 black men (10 percent of the Union army) served during the war, the majority of United States Colored Troops (USCT) remained stationed behind the lines as garrison forces, often laboring and performing noncombat roles.

Black soldiers in the Union army endured rampant discrimination and earned less pay than white soldiers, while also facing the possibility of being murdered or sold into slavery if captured. James Henry Gooding, a black corporal in the famed 54th Massachusetts Volunteers, wrote to Abraham Lincoln in September 1863, questioning why he and his fellow volunteers were paid less than white men. Gooding argued that because he and his brethren were born in the United States and selflessly left their private lives to enter the army, they should be treated "as American SOLDIERS, not as menial hirelings."[23]

African American soldiers defied the inequality of military service and used their positions in the army to reshape society, North and South. The majority of the USCT had once been enslaved, and their presence as armed, blue-clad soldiers sent shock waves throughout the Confederacy. To their friends and families, African American soldiers symbolized the embodiment of liberation and the destruction of slavery. To white southerners, they represented the utter disruption of the Old South's racial and social hierarchy. As members of armies of occupation, black soldiers wielded martial authority in towns and plantations. At the end of the war, as a black soldier marched by a cluster of Confederate prisoners, he noticed his former master among the group. "Hello, massa," the soldier exclaimed, "bottom rail on top dis time!"[24]



Figure 14.4.1: "Two Brothers in Arms." *The Library of Congress*.

The majority of the USCT occupied the South by performing garrison duty; other black soldiers performed admirably on the battlefield, shattering white myths that docile, cowardly black men would fold in the maelstrom of war. Black troops fought in more than four hundred battles and skirmishes, including Milliken's Bend and Port Hudson, Louisiana; Fort Wagner, South Carolina; Nashville; and the final campaigns to capture Richmond, Virginia. Fifteen black soldiers received the Medal of Honor, the highest

honor bestowed for military heroism. Through their voluntarism, service, battlefield contributions, and even death, black soldiers laid their claims for citizenship. “Once let a black man get upon his person the brass letters U.S.” Frederick Douglass, the great black abolitionist, proclaimed, “and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship.”[25]

Many slaves accompanied their masters in the Confederate army. They served their masters as “camp servants,” cooking their meals, raising their tents, and carrying their supplies. The Confederacy also impressed slaves to perform manual labor. There are three important points to make about these “Confederate” slaves. First, their labor was almost always coerced. Second, people are complicated and have varying, often contradictory loyalties. A slave could hope in general that the Confederacy would lose but at the same time be concerned for the safety of his master and the Confederate soldiers he saw on a daily basis.

Finally, white Confederates did not see African Americans as their equals, much less as soldiers. There was never any doubt that black laborers and camp servants were property. Though historians disagree on the matter, it is a stretch to claim that not a single African American ever fired a gun for the Confederacy; a camp servant whose master died in battle might well pick up his dead master’s gun and continue firing, if for no other reason than to protect himself. But this was always on an informal basis. The Confederate government did, in an act of desperation, pass a law in March 1865 allowing for the enlistment of black soldiers, but only a few dozen African Americans (mostly Richmond hospital workers) had enlisted by the war’s end.

As 1863 dawned, Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia continued its offensive strategy in the East. One of the war’s major battles occurred near the village of Chancellorsville, Virginia, between April 30 and May 6, 1863. While the Battle of Chancellorsville was an outstanding Confederate victory, it also resulted in heavy casualties and the mortal wounding of Confederate major general “Stonewall” Jackson, who was killed by friendly fire.

In spite of Jackson’s death, Lee continued his offensive against federal forces and invaded Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863. During the three-day battle (July 1–3) at Gettysburg, heavy casualties crippled both sides. Yet the devastating July 3 infantry assault on the Union center, also known as Pickett’s Charge, caused Lee to retreat from Pennsylvania. The Gettysburg Campaign was Lee’s final northern incursion and the Battle of Gettysburg remains the bloodiest battle of the war, and in American history, with fifty-one thousand casualties.

Concurrently in the West, Union forces continued their movement along the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Grant launched his campaign against Vicksburg, Mississippi, in the winter of 1862. Known as the “Gibraltar of the West,” Vicksburg was the last holdout in the West, and its seizure would enable uninhibited travel for Union forces along the Mississippi River. Grant’s Vicksburg Campaign, which lasted until July 4, 1863, ended with the city’s surrender. The fall of Vicksburg split the Confederacy in two.

Despite Union success in the summer of 1863, discontent over the war simmered across the North. This was particularly true in the wake of the Enrollment Act—the first effort at a draft among the northern populace during the Civil War. Working-class northerners were especially angry that the wealthy could pay $300 for substitutes, sparing themselves from the carnage of war. “A rich man’s war, but a poor man’s fight,” was a popular refrain.[26] The Emancipation Proclamation convinced many immigrants in northern cities that freed people would soon take their jobs. These economic and racial anxieties culminated in the New York City Draft Riots in July 1863. Over the span of four days, white rioters killed some 120 citizens, including the lynching of at least eleven black New Yorkers. Property damage was in the millions, including the complete destruction of more than fifty properties—most notably that of the Colored Orphan Asylum. It was the largest civil disturbance to date in the United States (aside from the war itself) and was only stopped by the deployment of Union soldiers, some of whom came directly from the battlefield at Gettysburg.

Elsewhere, the North produced widespread displays of unity. Sanitary fairs originated in the Old Northwest and raised millions of dollars for Union soldiers. Indeed, many women rose to take pivotal leadership roles in the sanitary fairs—a clear contribution to the northern war effort. The fairs also encouraged national unity within the North—something that became more important as the war dragged on and casualties continued to mount. The northern homefront was complicated: overt displays of loyalty contrasted with violent dissent.



Figure 14.4.2: Thomas Nast, “Our Heroines, United States Sanitary Commission,” in Harper’s Weekly, April 9, 1864. *Cushing/Whitney Medical Library at Yale University*.

A similar situation played out in the Confederacy. The Confederate Congress passed its first conscription act in the spring of 1862, a full year before its northern counterpart. Military service was required from all able-bodied males between ages eighteen and thirty-five (eventually extended to forty-five). Notable class exemptions likewise existed in the Confederacy: those who owned twenty or more slaves could escape the draft. Popular discontent reached a boiling point in 1863. Through the spring of 1863 consistent food shortages led to “bread riots” in several Confederate cities, most notably Richmond, Virginia, and the Georgia cities of Augusta, Macon, and Columbus. Confederate women led these mobs to protest food shortages and rampant inflation within the Confederate South. Exerting their own political control, women dramatically impacted the war through violent actions in these cases, as well as constant petitions to governors for aid and the release of husbands from military service. One of these women wrote a letter to North Carolina governor Zebulon Vance, saying, “Especially for the sake of suffering women and children, do try and stop this cruel war.”[27] Confederates waged a multifront struggle against Union incursion and internal dissent.

For some women, the best way to support their cause was spying on the enemy. When the war broke out, Rose O’Neal Greenhow was living in Washington, D.C., where she traveled in high social circles, gathering information for her Confederate contact. Suspecting Greenhow of espionage, Allan Pinkerton placed her under surveillance, instigated a raid on her house to gather evidence, and then placed her under house arrest, after which she was incarcerated in Old Capitol Prison. Upon her release, she was sent, under guard, to Baltimore, Maryland. From there Greenhow went to Europe to attempt to bring support to the Confederacy. Failing in her efforts, Greenhow decided to return to America, boarding the blockade runner *Condor*, which ran aground near Wilmington, North Carolina. Subsequently, she drowned after her lifeboat capsized in a storm. Greenhow gave her life for the Confederate cause, while Elizabeth “Crazy Bet” Van Lew sacrificed her social standing for the Union. Van Lew was from a prominent Richmond, Virginia, family and spied on the Confederacy, leading to her being “held in contempt & scorn by the narrow minded men and women of my city for my loyalty.”[28] Indeed, when General Ulysses Grant took control of Richmond, he placed a special guard on Van Lew. In addition to her espionage activities, Van Lew also acted as a nurse to Union prisoners in Libby Prison. For pro-Confederate southern women, there were more opportunities to show their scorn for the enemy. Some women in New Orleans took these demonstrations to the level of dumping their chamber pots onto the heads of unsuspecting federal soldiers who stood underneath their balconies, leading to Benjamin Butler’s infamous General Order Number 28, which arrested all rebellious women as prostitutes.



Figure 14.4.3: Pauline Cushman was an American actress and a wartime spy. Using her guile to fraternize with Confederate officers, Cushman snuck military plans and drawings to Union officials in her shoes. She was caught, tried, and sentenced to death, but was apparently saved days before her execution by the occupation of her native New Orleans by Union forces. Whether as spies, nurses, or textile workers, women were essential to the Union war effort. "Pauline Cushman," between 1855 and 1865. *Library of Congress*.

Military strategy shifted in 1864. The new tactics of "hard war" evolved slowly, as restraint toward southern civilians and property ultimately gave way to a concerted effort to demoralize southern civilians and destroy the southern economy. Grant's successes at Vicksburg and Chattanooga, Tennessee (November 1863), and Meade's cautious pursuit of Lee after Gettysburg prompted Lincoln to promote Grant to general-in-chief of the Union army in early 1864. This change in command resulted in some of the bloodiest battles of the Eastern Theater. Grant's Overland Campaign, including the Battle of the Wilderness, the Battle of Cold Harbor, and the siege of Petersburg, demonstrated Grant's willingness to tirelessly attack the ever-dwindling Army of Northern Virginia. By June 1864, Grant's army surrounded the Confederate city of Petersburg, Virginia. Siege operations cut off Confederate forces and supplies from the capital of Richmond. Meanwhile out west, Union armies under the command of William Tecumseh Sherman implemented hard war strategies and slowly made their way through central Tennessee and northern Georgia, capturing the vital rail hub of Atlanta in September 1864.

Action in both theaters during 1864 caused even more casualties and furthered the devastation of disease. Disease haunted both armies, and accounted for over half of all Civil War casualties. Sometimes as many as half of the men in a company could be sick. The overwhelming majority of Civil War soldiers came from rural areas, where less exposure to diseases meant soldiers lacked immunities. Vaccines for diseases such as smallpox were largely unavailable to those outside cities or towns. Despite the common nineteenth-century tendency to see city men as weak or soft, soldiers from urban environments tended to succumb to fewer diseases than their rural counterparts. Tuberculosis, measles, rheumatism, typhoid, malaria, and smallpox spread almost unchecked among the armies.



Figure 14.4.4: Pennsylvania Light Artillery, Battery B, Petersburg, Virginia. Photograph by Timothy H. O'Sullivan, 1864. The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Civil War medicine focused almost exclusively on curing the patient rather than preventing disease. Many soldiers attempted to cure themselves by concocting elixirs and medicines themselves. These ineffective home remedies were often made from various plants the men found in woods or fields. There was no understanding of germ theory, so many soldiers did things that we would consider unsanitary today.[29] They ate food that was improperly cooked and handled, and they practiced what we would consider poor personal hygiene. They did not take appropriate steps to ensure that drinking water was free from bacteria. Diarrhea and dysentery were common. These diseases were especially dangerous, as Civil War soldiers did not understand the value of replacing fluids as they were lost. As such, men affected by these conditions would weaken and become unable to fight or march, and as they became dehydrated their immune system became less effective, inviting other infections to attack the body. Through trial and error soldiers began to protect themselves from some of the more preventable sources of infection. Around 1862 both armies began to dig latrines rather than rely on the local waterways. Burying human and animal waste also cut down on exposure to diseases considerably.

Medical surgery was limited and brutal. If a soldier was wounded in the torso, throat, or head, there was little surgeons could do. Invasive procedures to repair damaged organs or stem blood loss invariably resulted in death. Luckily for soldiers, only approximately one in six combat wounds were to one of those parts. The remaining were to limbs, which was treatable by amputation. Soldiers had the highest chance of survival if the limb was removed within forty-eight hours of injury. A skilled surgeon could amputate a limb in three to five minutes from start to finish. While the lack of germ theory again caused several unsafe practices, such as using the same tools on multiple patients, wiping hands on filthy gowns, or placing hands in communal buckets of water, there is evidence that amputation offered the best chance of survival.



Figure 14.4.5: Amputations were a common form of treatment during the war. While it saved the lives of some soldiers, it was extremely painful and resulted in death in many cases. It also produced the first community of war veterans without limbs in American history. "Amputation being performed in a hospital tent, Gettysburg," July 1863. *National Archives and Records Administration*.

It is a common misconception that amputation was done without anesthesia and against a patient's wishes. Since the 1830s, Americans understood the benefits of nitrous oxide and ether in easing pain. Chloroform and opium were also used to either render patients unconscious or dull pain during the procedure. Also, surgeons would not amputate without the patient's consent.

In the Union army alone, 2.8 million ounces of opium and over 5.2 million opium pills were administered. In 1862, William Alexander Hammon was appointed Surgeon General for the United States. He sought to regulate dosages and manage supplies of available medicines, both to prevent overdosing and to ensure that an ample supply remained for the next engagement. However, his guidelines tended to apply only to the regular federal army. Most Union soldiers were in volunteer units and organized at the state level. Their surgeons often ignored posted limits on medicines, or worse, experimented with their own concoctions made from local flora.

In the North, the conditions in hospitals were somewhat superior. This was partly due to the organizational skills of women like Dorothea Dix, who was the Union's Superintendent for Army Nurses. Additionally, many women were members of the United States Sanitary Commission and helped to staff and supply hospitals in the North.

Women took on key roles within hospitals both North and South. The publisher's notice for *Nurse and Spy in the Union Army* states, "In the opinion of many, it is the privilege of woman to minister to the sick and soothe the sorrowing—and in the present crisis of our country's history, to aid our brothers to the extent of her capacity."[30] Mary Chesnut wrote, "Every woman in the house is ready to rush into the Florence Nightingale business."[31] However, she indicated that after she visited the hospital, "I can never again shut out of view the sights that I saw there of human misery. I sit thinking, shut my eyes, and see it all."[32] Hospital conditions were often so bad that many volunteer nurses quit soon after beginning. Kate Cumming volunteered as a nurse shortly after the war began. She, and other volunteers, traveled with the Army of Tennessee. However, all but one of the women who volunteered with Cumming quit within a week.

Death came in many forms; disease, prisons, bullets, even lightning and bee stings took men slowly or suddenly. Their deaths, however, affected more than their regiments. Before the war, a wife expected to sit at her husband's bed, holding his hand, and ministering to him after a long, fulfilling life. This type of death, "the Good Death," changed during the Civil War as men died often far from home among strangers.[33] Casualty reporting was inconsistent, so a woman was often at the mercy of the men who fought alongside her husband to learn not only the details of his death but even that the death had occurred.

"Now I'm a widow. Ah! That mournful word. Little the world think of the agony it contains!" wrote Sally Randle Perry in her diary.[34] After her husband's death at Sharpsburg, Sally received the label she would share with more than two hundred thousand other women. The death of a husband and loss of financial, physical, and emotional support could shatter lives. It also had the perverse power to free women from bad marriages and open doors to financial and psychological independence.

Widows had an important role to play in the conflict. The ideal widow wore black, mourned for a minimum of two and a half years, resigned herself to God's will, focused on her children, devoted herself to her husband's memory, and brought his body home for burial. Many tried, but not all widows were able to live up to the ideal. Many were unable to purchase proper mourning garb. Black silk dresses, heavy veils, and other features of antebellum mourning were expensive and in short supply. Because most of these women were in their childbearing years, the war created an unprecedented number of widows who were pregnant or still nursing infants. In a time when the average woman gave birth to eight to ten children in her lifetime, it is perhaps not surprising that the Civil War created so many widows who were also young mothers with little free time for formal mourning. Widowhood permeated American society. But in the end, it was up to each widow to navigate her own mourning. She joined the ranks of sisters, mothers, cousins, girlfriends, and communities in mourning men.[35]

By the fall of 1864, military and social events played against the backdrop of the presidential election of 1864. While the war raged on, the presidential contest featured a transformed electorate. Three new states (West Virginia, Nevada, and Kansas) had been added since 1860, while the eleven states of the Confederacy did not participate. Lincoln and his vice presidential nominee, Andrew Johnson (Tennessee), ran on the National Union Party ticket. The main competition came from his former commander, General George B. McClellan. Though McClellan himself was a "War Democrat," the official platform of the Democratic Party in 1864 revolved around negotiating an immediate end to the Civil War. McClellan's vice presidential nominee was George H. Pendleton of Ohio—a well-known Peace Democrat."

On Election Day—November 8, 1864—Lincoln and McClellan each needed 117 electoral votes (out of a possible 233) to win the presidency. For much of the 1864 campaign season, Lincoln downplayed his chances of reelection and McClellan assumed that large numbers of Union soldiers would grant him support. However, thanks in great part to William Sherman's capture of Atlanta on September 2, 1864, and overwhelming support from Union troops, Lincoln won the election easily. Additionally, Lincoln received support from more radical Republican factions and members of the Radical Democracy Party that demanded the end of slavery.

In the popular vote, Lincoln defeated McClellan, 55.1 percent to 44.9 percent. In the Electoral College, Lincoln's victory was even more pronounced: 212 to 21. Lincoln won twenty-two states, and McClellan only carried three: New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky.[36]



Figure 14.4.6: With crowds of people filling every inch of ground around the U.S. Capitol, President Lincoln delivered his inaugural address on March 4, 1865. Alexander Gardner, "Lincoln's Second Inaugural," between 1910 and 1920 from a photograph taken in 1865. *Wikimedia*

In the wake of his reelection, Abraham Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address on March 4, 1865, in which he concluded:

> *With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.*[37]

The years 1864 and 1865 were the very definition of hard war. Incredibly deadly for both sides, the Union campaigns in both the West and the East destroyed Confederate infrastructure and demonstrated the efficacy of the Union's strategy. Following up on the successful capture of Atlanta, William Sherman conducted his March to the Sea in the fall of 1864, arriving in Savannah with time to capture it and deliver it as a Christmas present for Abraham Lincoln. Sherman's path of destruction took on an even more destructive tone as he moved into the heart of the Confederacy in South Carolina in early 1865. The burning of Columbia, South Carolina, and subsequent capture of Charleston brought the hard hand of war to the birthplace of secession. With Grant's dogged pursuit of the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, effectively ending major Confederate military operations.



Figure 14.4.7: Unions soldiers pose in front of the Appomattox Court House after Lee's surrender in April 1865. *Wikimedia*.

To ensure the permanent legal end of slavery, Republicans drafted the Thirteenth Amendment during the war. Yet the end of legal slavery did not mean the end of racial injustice. During the war, ex-slaves were often segregated into disease-ridden contraband camps. After the war, the Republican Reconstruction program of guaranteeing black rights succumbed to persistent racism and southern white violence. Long after 1865, most black southerners continued to labor on plantations, albeit as nominally free tenants or sharecroppers, while facing public segregation and voting discrimination. The effects of slavery endured long after emancipation.

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14.5: Conclusion

As battlefields fell silent in 1865, the question of secession had been answered, slavery had been eradicated, and America was once again territorially united. But in many ways, the conclusion of the Civil War created more questions than answers. How would the nation become one again? Who was responsible for rebuilding the South? What role would African Americans occupy in this society? Northern and southern soldiers returned home with broken bodies, broken spirits, and broken minds. Plantation owners had land but not labor. Recently freed African Americans had their labor but no land. Former slaves faced a world of possibilities—legal marriage, family reunions, employment, and fresh starts—but also a racist world of bitterness, violence, and limited opportunity. The war may have been over, but the battles for the peace were just beginning.

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14.6: Primary Sources

Alexander Stephens on Slavery and the Confederate Constitution, 1861

Confederates had to quickly create not only a government, but also a nation, including all of the cultural values required to foster patriotism. In this speech Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy, proclaims that slavery and white supremacy were not only the cause for secession, but also the "cornerstone" of the Confederate nation.

General Benjamin F. Butler Reacts to Self-Emancipating Slaves, 1861

Fugitive slaves posed a dilemma for the Union military. Soldiers were forbidden to interfere with slavery or assist runaways, but many soldiers disobeyed the policy. In May 1861, General Benjamin F. Butler went over his superiors' heads and began accepting fugitive slaves who came to Fortress Monroe in Virginia. In order to avoid the issue of the slaves' freedom, Butler reasoned that runaway slaves were "contraband of war," and he had as much a right to seize them as he did to seize enemy horses or cannons. Later that summer Congress affirmed Butler's policy in the First Confiscation Act.

Poem about Civil War Nurses, 1866

The massive casualty rates of the Civil War meant that nurses were always needed. Women, North and South, left the comforts of home to care for the wounded. Hospital conditions were often so bad that many volunteer nurses quit soon after beginning. After the war, Kate Cumming, a nurse who travelled with the Army of Tennessee, published an account of her experience. She included a poem, written by an unknown author about nursing in the war.

Ambrose Bierce Recalls his Experience at the Battle of Shiloh, 1881

Civil War soldiers described the experience of combat as both terrifying and confusing. The American writer, Ambrose Bierce, captures both the confusion and terror of the Battle of Shiloh in the below excerpt of his 1881 recollections of the battle.

Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, 1865

Abraham Lincoln offered a first draft of history in his second inaugural address, casting the Civil Was as a war for union that later became a spiritual process of national penance for two hundred and fifty years of slaveholding. Lincoln also looked to the future, envisioning a harmonious and speedy Reconstruction that would take place "with malice toward none" and "with charity for all."

Civil War Nurses Illustration, 1864

The Civil War ultimately opened a variety of arenas for Union and Confederate women's participation. In the North, the United States Sanitary Commission in particular centralized women's opportunities to volunteer as nurses, donate supplies, and toraise funds at Sanitary fairs. This 1864 image from popular periodical Harper's Weekly celebrates women's contributions on the battlefield, in the hospital, in the parlor, and at the fair.

Burying the Dead Photograph, 1865

Death pervaded every aspect of life during the years of the Civil War. This gruesome photograph, taken after the battle of Cold Harbor, shows the hasty burial procedures used to reckon with unprecedented death. Dirty jobs like this were often left to black soldiers or freedpeople in Contraband Camps.

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14.7: Reference Material

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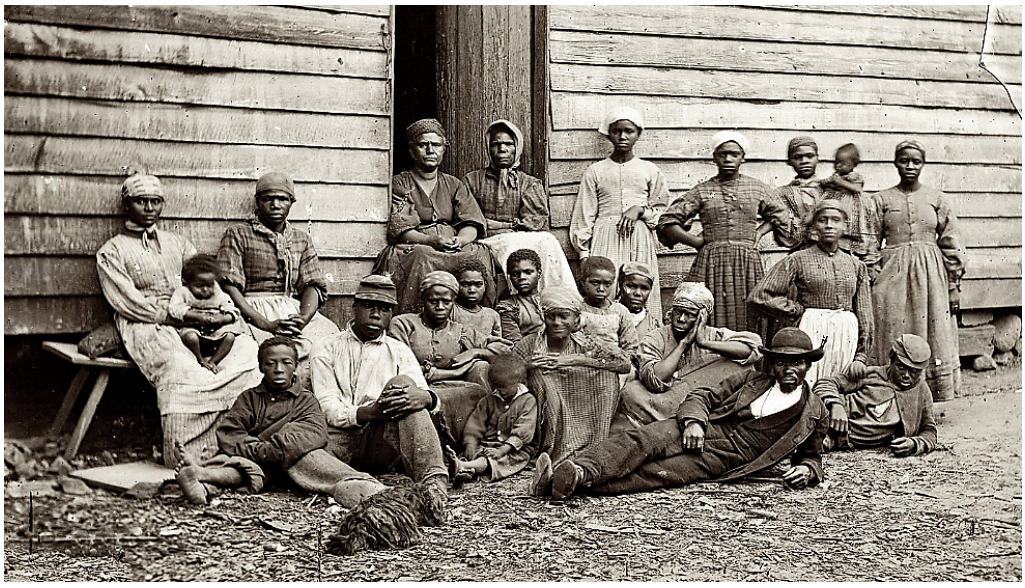
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15: RECONSTRUCTION



“Contrabands,” Cumberland Landing, Virginia, 1862. Library of Congress.

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15.1: Reference Material

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15.2: Introduction

After the Civil War, much of the South lay in ruins. “It passes my comprehension to tell what became of our railroads,” one South Carolinian told a northern reporter. “We had passably good roads, on which we could reach almost any part of the State, and the next week they were all gone—not simply broken up, but gone. Some of the material was burned, I know, but miles and miles of iron have actually disappeared, gone out of existence.”[1] He might as well have been talking about the entire antebellum way of life. The future of the South was uncertain. How would these states be brought back into the Union? Would they be conquered territories or equal states? How would they rebuild their governments, economies, and social systems? What rights did freedom confer on formerly enslaved people?

The answers to many of Reconstruction’s questions hinged on the concepts of citizenship and equality. The era witnessed perhaps the most open and widespread discussions of citizenship since the nation’s founding. It was a moment of revolutionary possibility and violent backlash. African Americans and Radical Republicans pushed the nation to finally realize the Declaration of Independence’s promises that “all men are created equal” and have “certain unalienable rights.” White Democrats granted African Americans legal freedom but little more. When black Americans and their radical allies succeeded in securing citizenship for freedpeople, a new fight commenced to determine the legal, political, and social implications of American citizenship. Resistance continued, and Reconstruction eventually collapsed. In the South, limits on human freedom endured and would stand for nearly a century more.

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15.3: Politics of Reconstruction



Figure 15.3.1: With the war coming to an end, the question of how to reunite the former Confederate states with the Union was a divisive one. Lincoln's Presidential Reconstruction plans were seen by many, including Radical Republicans in Congress, to be too tolerant towards what they considered to be traitors. This political cartoon reflects this viewpoint, showing Lincoln and Johnson happily stitching the Union back together with little anger towards the South. Joseph E. Baker, *The 'Rail Splitter' at Work Repairing the Union, 1865*. Library of Congress.

Reconstruction—the effort to restore southern states to the Union and to redefine African Americans' place in American society—began before the Civil War ended. President Abraham Lincoln began planning for the reunification of the United States in the fall of 1863.[2] With a sense that Union victory was imminent and that he could turn the tide of the war by stoking Unionist support in the Confederate states, Lincoln issued a proclamation allowing southerners to take an oath of allegiance. When just 10 percent of a state's voting population had taken such an oath, loyal Unionists could then establish governments.[3] These so-called Lincoln governments sprang up in pockets where Union support existed like Louisiana, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Unsurprisingly, these were also the places that were exempted from the liberating effects of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Initially proposed as a war aim, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation committed the United States to the abolition of slavery. However, the proclamation freed only slaves in areas of rebellion and left more than seven hundred thousand in bondage in Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri as well as in Union-occupied areas of Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia.

To cement the abolition of slavery, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment on January 31, 1865. The amendment legally abolished slavery "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." Section Two of the amendment granted Congress the "power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." State ratification followed, and by the end of the year the requisite three fourths of the states had approved the amendment, and four million people were forever free from the slavery that had existed in North America for 250 years.[4]

Lincoln's policy was lenient, conservative, and short-lived. Reconstruction changed when John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln on April 14, 1865, during a performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theater. Treated rapidly and with all possible care, Lincoln nevertheless succumbed to his wounds the following morning, leaving a somber pall over the North and especially among African Americans.

The assassination of Abraham Lincoln propelled Vice President Andrew Johnson into the executive office in April 1865. Johnson, a states'-rights, strict-constructionist, and unapologetic racist from Tennessee, offered southern states a quick restoration into the Union. His Reconstruction plan required provisional southern governments to void their ordinances of secession, repudiate their Confederate debts, and ratify the Thirteenth Amendment. On all other matters, the conventions could do what they wanted with no federal interference. He pardoned all southerners engaged in the rebellion with the exception of wealthy planters who possessed more than $20,000 in property.[5] The southern aristocracy would have to appeal to Johnson for individual pardons. In

the meantime, Johnson hoped that a new class of southerners would replace the extremely wealthy in leadership positions.

Many southern governments enacted legislation that reestablished antebellum power relationships. South Carolina and Mississippi passed laws known as Black Codes to regulate black behavior and impose social and economic control. These laws granted some rights to African Americans, like the right to own property, to marry, or to make contracts. But they also denied fundamental rights. White lawmakers forbade black men from serving on juries or in state militias, refused to recognize black testimony against white people, apprenticed orphaned children to their former masters, and established severe vagrancy laws. Mississippi's vagrant law required all freedmen to carry papers proving they had means of employment.[6] If they had no proof, they could be arrested and fined. If they could not pay the fine, the sheriff had the right to hire out his prisoner to anyone who was willing to pay the tax. Similar ambiguous vagrancy laws throughout the South reasserted control over black labor in what one scholar has called "slavery by another name."[7] Black codes effectively criminalized black people's leisure, limited their mobility, and locked many into exploitative farming contracts. Attempts to restore the antebellum economic order largely succeeded.

These laws and outrageous mob violence against black southerners led Republicans to call for a more dramatic Reconstruction. So when Johnson announced that the southern states had been restored, congressional Republicans refused to seat delegates from the newly reconstructed states.

Republicans in Congress responded with a spate of legislation aimed at protecting freedmen and restructuring political relations in the South. Many Republicans were keen to grant voting rights for freedmen in order to build a new powerful voting bloc. Some Republicans, like U.S. congressman Thaddeus Stevens, believed in racial equality, but the majority were motivated primarily by the interest of their political party. The only way to protect Republican interests in the South was to give the vote to the hundreds of thousands of black men. Republicans in Congress responded to the codes with the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the first federal attempt to constitutionally define all American-born residents (except Native peoples) as citizens. The law also prohibited any curtailment of citizens' "fundamental rights."[8]



Figure 15.3.2: While no one could agree on what the best plan for reconstructing the nation would be, Americans understood the moment as critical and perhaps revolutionary. In this magnificent visual metaphor for the reconciliation of the North and South, John Lawrence postulates what might result from reunion. Reconstruction, the print seems to argue, will form a more perfect Union that upholds the ideals of the American Revolution, most importantly (as seen on a streaming banner near the top) that "All men are born free and equal." John Giles Lawrence, *Reconstruction, 1867*. *Library of Congress*.

The Fourteenth Amendment developed concurrently with the Civil Rights Act to ensure its constitutionality. The House of Representatives approved the Fourteenth Amendment on June 13, 1866. Section One granted citizenship and repealed the Taney Court's infamous *Dred Scott*(1857) decision. Moreover, it ensured that state laws could not deny due process or discriminate against particular groups of people. The Fourteenth Amendment signaled the federal government's willingness to enforce the Bill of Rights over the authority of the states.

Because he did not believe African Americans deserved equal rights, President Johnson opposed the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment and vetoed the Civil Rights Act. But after winning a two-thirds majority in the 1866 midterm elections, Republicans

overrode the veto, and in 1867, they passed the first Reconstruction Act, dissolving state governments and dividing the South into five military districts. Under these new terms, states would have to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, write new constitutions enfranchising African Americans, and abolish repressive "black codes" before rejoining the union. In the face of President Johnson's repeated obstructionism, the House of Representatives issued articles of impeachment against the president. Although Johnson narrowly escaped conviction in the Senate, Congress won the power to direct a new phase of Reconstruction. Six weeks later, on July 9, 1868, the states ratified the Fourteenth Amendment, guaranteeing birthright citizenship and "equal protection of the laws.

In the 1868 presidential election, former Union General Ulysses S. Grant ran on a platform that proclaimed, "Let Us Have Peace," in which he promised to protect the new status quo. On the other hand, the Democratic candidate, Horatio Seymour, promised to repeal Reconstruction. Black southern voters helped Grant win most of the former Confederacy.



Figure 15.3.3: With the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, droves of African American men went to the polls to exercise their newly recognized right to vote. In this Harper's Weekly print, black men of various occupations wait patiently for their turn as the first voter submits his ballot. Unlike other contemporary images that depicted African Americans as ignorant, unkempt, and lazy, this print shows these black men as active citizens. Alfred R. Waud, *The First Vote, November 1867*. *Library of Congress*.

Reconstruction brought the first moment of mass democratic participation for African Americans. In 1860, only five states in the North allowed African Americans to vote on equal terms with whites. Yet after 1867, when Congress ordered southern states to eliminate racial discrimination in voting, African Americans began to win elections across the South. In a short time, the South was transformed from an all-white, pro-slavery, Democratic stronghold to a collection of Republican-led states with African Americans in positions of power for the first time in American history.[9]

Through the provisions of the congressional Reconstruction Acts, black men voted in large numbers and also served as delegates to the state constitutional conventions in 1868. Black delegates actively participated in revising state constitutions. One of the most significant accomplishments of these conventions was the establishment of a public school system. While public schools were virtually nonexistent in the antebellum period, by the end of Reconstruction, every southern state had established a public school system.[10] Republican officials opened state institutions like mental asylums, hospitals, orphanages, and prisons to white and black residents, though often on a segregated basis. They actively sought industrial development, northern investment, and internal improvements.

African Americans served at every level of government during Reconstruction. At the federal level, Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce were chosen as U.S. senators from Mississippi. Fourteen men served in the House of Representatives. At least 270 other African American men served in patronage positions as postmasters, customs officials, assessors, and ambassadors. At the state level, more than 1,000 African American men held offices in the South. P. B. S. Pinchback served as Louisiana's governor for thirty-four days after the previous governor was suspended during impeachment proceedings and was the only African American state governor until Virginia elected L. Douglas Wilder in 1989. Almost 800 African American men served as state legislators around the South, with African Americans at one time making up a majority in the South Carolina House of Representatives.[11]



Figure 15.3.4: The era of Reconstruction witnessed a few moments of true progress. One of those was the election of African Americans to local, state, and national offices, including both houses of Congress. Pictured here are Hiram Revels (the first African American Senator) alongside six black representatives, all from the former Confederate states. Currier & Ives, First Colored Senator and Representatives in the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States, *1872*. *Library of Congress*.

African American officeholders came from diverse backgrounds. Many had been born free or had gained their freedom before the Civil War. Many free African Americans, particularly those in South Carolina, Virginia, and Louisiana, were wealthy and well educated, two facts that distinguished them from much of the white population both before and after the Civil War. Some, like Antoine Dubuclet of Louisiana and William Breedlove from Virginia, owned slaves before the Civil War. Others had helped slaves escape or taught them to read, like Georgia's James D. Porter.

Most African American officeholders, however, gained their freedom during the war. Among them were skilled craftsmen like Emanuel Fortune, a shoemaker from Florida; ministers such as James D. Lynch from Mississippi; and teachers like William V. Turner from Alabama. Moving into political office was a natural continuation of the leadership roles they had held in their former slave communities.

By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, more than two thousand African American men had served in offices ranging from local levee commissioner to U.S. senator.[12] When the end of Reconstruction returned white Democrats to power in the South, all but a few African American officeholders lost their positions. After Reconstruction, African Americans did not enter the political arena again in large numbers until well into the twentieth century.

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15.4: The Meaning of Black Freedom

Land was one of the major desires of the freed people. Frustrated by responsibility for the growing numbers of freed people following his troops, General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15, in which land in Georgia and South Carolina was to be set aside as a homestead for the freedpeople. Sherman lacked the authority to confiscate and distribute land, so this plan never fully took effect.[13] One of the main purposes of the Freedmen's Bureau, however, was to redistribute lands to former slaves that had been abandoned and confiscated by the federal government. Even these land grants were short-lived. In 1866, land that ex-Confederates had left behind was reinstated to them.

Freedpeople's hopes of land reform were unceremoniously dashed as Freedmen's Bureau agents held meetings with the freedmen throughout the South, telling them the promise of land was not going to be honored and that instead they should plan to go back to work for their former owners as wage laborers. The policy reversal came as quite a shock. In one instance, Freedmen's Bureau commissioner General Oliver O. Howard went to Edisto Island to inform the black population there of the policy change. The black commission's response was that "we were promised Homesteads by the government. . . . You ask us to forgive the land owners of our island. . . .The man who tied me to a tree and gave me 39 lashes and who stripped and flogged my mother and my sister . . . that man I cannot well forgive. Does it look as if he has forgiven me, seeing how he tries to keep me in a condition of helplessness?"[14]

In working to ensure that crops would be harvested, agents sometimes coerced former slaves into signing contracts with their former masters. However, the bureau also instituted courts where African Americans could seek redress if their employers were abusing them or not paying them. The last ember of hope for land redistribution was extinguished when Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner's proposed land reform bills were tabled in Congress. Radicalism had its limits, and the Republican Party's commitment to economic stability eclipsed their interest in racial justice.

Another aspect of the pursuit of freedom was the reconstitution of families. Many freedpeople immediately left plantations in search of family members who had been sold away. Newspaper ads sought information about long-lost relatives. People placed these ads until the turn of the twentieth century, demonstrating the enduring pursuit of family reunification. Freedpeople sought to gain control over their own children or other children who had been apprenticed to white masters either during the war or as a result of the Black Codes. Above all, freedpeople wanted freedom to control their families.[15]

Many freedpeople rushed to solemnize unions with formal wedding ceremonies. Black people's desires to marry fit the government's goal to make free black men responsible for their own households and to prevent black women and children from becoming dependent on the government.

Freedpeople placed a great emphasis on education for their children and themselves. For many, the ability to finally read the Bible for themselves induced work-weary men and women to spend all evening or Sunday attending night school or Sunday school classes. It was not uncommon to find a one-room school with more than fifty students ranging in age from three to eighty. As Booker T. Washington famously described the situation, "it was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn."[16]

Many churches served as schoolhouses and as a result became central to the freedom struggle. Free and freed black southerners carried well-formed political and organizational skills into freedom. They developed anti-racist politics and organizational skills through antislavery organizations turned church associations. Liberated from white-controlled churches, black Americans remade their religious worlds according to their own social and spiritual desires.[17]

One of the more marked transformations that took place after emancipation was the proliferation of independent black churches and church associations. In the 1930s, nearly 40 percent of 663 black churches surveyed had their organizational roots in the post-emancipation era.[18] Many independent black churches emerged in the rural areas, and most of them had never been affiliated with white churches.

Many of these independent churches were quickly organized into regional, state, and even national associations, often by brigades of northern and midwestern free blacks who went to the South to help the freedmen. Through associations like the Virginia Baptist State Convention and the Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention, Baptists became the fastest growing post-emancipation denomination, building on their antislavery associational roots and carrying on the struggle for black

political participation.[19]

Tensions between northerners and southerners over styles of worship and educational requirements strained these associations. Southern, rural black churches preferred worship services with more emphasis on inspired preaching, while northern urban blacks favored more orderly worship and an educated ministry.

Perhaps the most significant internal transformation in churches had to do with the role of women—a situation that eventually would lead to the development of independent women's conventions in Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches. Women like Nannie Helen Burroughs and Virginia Broughton, leaders of the Baptist Woman's Convention, worked to protect black women from sexual violence from white men. Black representatives repeatedly articulated this concern in state constitutional conventions early in the Reconstruction era. In churches, women continued to fight for equal treatment and access to the pulpit as preachers, even though they were able to vote in church meetings.[20]

Black churches provided centralized leadership and organization in post-emancipation communities. Many political leaders and officeholders were ministers. Churches were often the largest building in town and served as community centers. Access to pulpits and growing congregations provided a foundation for ministers' political leadership. Groups like the Union League, militias, and fraternal organizations all used the regalia, ritual, and even hymns of churches to inform and shape their practice.

Black churches provided space for conflict over gender roles, cultural values, practices, norms, and political engagement. With the rise of Jim Crow, black churches would enter a new phase of negotiating relationships within the community and the wider world.

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15.5: Reconstruction and Women



Figure 15.5.1: Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton maintained a strong and productive relationship for nearly half a century as they sought to secure political rights for women. While the fight for women's rights stalled during the war, it sprung back to life as Anthony, Stanton, and others formed the American Equal Rights Association. *[Elizabeth Cady Stanton, seated, and Susan B. Anthony, standing, three-quarter length portrait], between 1880 and 1902. Library of Congress.*

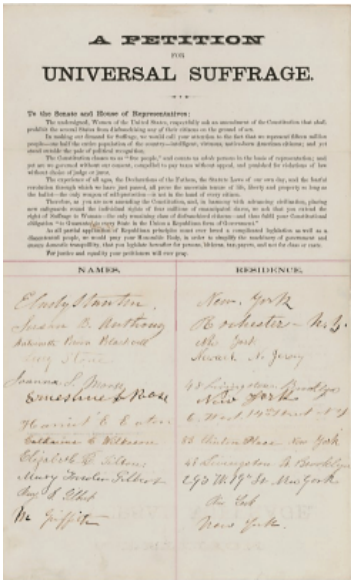
Reconstruction involved more than the meaning of emancipation. Women also sought to redefine their roles within the nation and in their local communities. The abolitionist and women's rights movements simultaneously converged and began to clash. In the South, both black and white women struggled to make sense of a world of death and change. In Reconstruction, leading women's rights advocate Elizabeth Cady Stanton saw an unprecedented opportunity for disenfranchised groups. Women as well as black Americans, North and South, could seize political rights. Stanton formed the Women's Loyal National League in 1863, which petitioned Congress for a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery.[21] The Thirteenth Amendment marked a victory not only for the antislavery cause but also for the Loyal League, proving women's political efficacy and the possibility for radical change. Now, as Congress debated the meanings of freedom, equality, and citizenship for former slaves, women's rights leaders saw an opening to advance transformations in women's status, too. On May 10, 1866, just one year after the war, the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention met in New York City to discuss what many agreed was an extraordinary moment, full of promise for fundamental social change. Elizabeth Cady Stanton presided over the meeting. Also in attendance were prominent abolitionists with whom Stanton and other women's rights leaders had joined forces in the years leading up to the war. Addressing this crowd of social reformers, Stanton captured the radical spirit of the hour: "now in the reconstruction," she declared, "is the opportunity, perhaps for the century, to base our government on the broad principle of equal rights for all."[22] Stanton chose her universal language—"equal rights *for all*"—with intention, setting an agenda of universal suffrage. Thus, in 1866, the National Women's Rights Convention officially merged with the American Anti-Slavery Society to form the American Equal Rights Association (AERA). This union marked the culmination of the long-standing partnership between abolitionists and women's rights advocates.

The AERA was split over whether black male suffrage should take precedence over universal suffrage, given the political climate of the South. Some worried that political support for freedmen would be undermined by the pursuit of women's suffrage. For example, AERA member Frederick Douglass insisted that the ballot was literally a "question of life and death" for southern black men, but not for women.[23] Some African American women challenged white suffragists in other ways. Frances Harper, for example, a freeborn black woman living in Ohio, urged them to consider their own privilege as white and middle class. Universal suffrage, she argued, would not so clearly address the complex difficulties posed by racial, economic, and gender inequality.[24]

These divisions came to a head early in 1867, as the AERA organized a campaign in Kansas to determine the fate of black and woman suffrage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her partner in the movement, Susan B. Anthony, made the journey to advocate universal suffrage. Yet they soon realized that their allies were distancing themselves from women's suffrage in order to advance black enfranchisement. Disheartened, Stanton and Anthony allied instead with white supremacists who supported women's

equality. Many fellow activists were dismayed by Stanton's and Anthony's willingness to appeal to racism to advance their cause.[25]

These tensions finally erupted over conflicting views of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Women's rights leaders vigorously protested the Fourteenth Amendment. Although it established national citizenship for all persons born or naturalized in the United States, the amendment also introduced the word *male* into the Constitution for the first time. After the Fifteenth Amendment ignored sex as an unlawful barrier to suffrage, an omission that appalled Stanton, the AERA officially dissolved. Stanton and Anthony formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), while suffragists who supported the Fifteenth Amendment, regardless of its limitations, founded the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA).


A PETITION
FOR
UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

NAMES. RESIDENCE.

Figure 15.5.2: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the great women's rights and abolition activist, was one of the strongest forces in the universal suffrage movement. Her name can be seen at the top of this petition to extend suffrage to all regardless of sex, which was present to Congress on January 29, 1866. It did not pass, and women would not gain the vote for more than half a century after Stanton and others signed this petition. *Petition of E. Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, and Others Asking for an Amendment of the Constitution that Shall Prohibit the Several States from Disfranchising Any of Their Citizens on the Ground of Sex, 1865. National Archives and Records Administration.*

The NWSA soon rallied around a new strategy: the New Departure. This new approach interpreted the Constitution as *already* guaranteeing women the right to vote. They argued that by nationalizing citizenship for all people and protecting all rights of citizens—including the right to vote—the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments guaranteed women's suffrage. Broadcasting the New Departure, the NWSA encouraged women to register to vote, which roughly seven hundred did between 1868 and 1872. Susan B. Anthony was one of them and was arrested but then acquitted in trial. In 1875, the Supreme Court addressed this constitutional argument: acknowledging women's citizenship but arguing that suffrage was not a right guaranteed to all citizens. This ruling not only defeated the New Departure but also coincided with the Court's broader reactionary interpretation of the Reconstruction amendments that significantly limited freedmen's rights. Following this defeat, many suffragists like Stanton increasingly replaced the ideal of universal suffrage with arguments about the virtue that white women would bring to the polls. These new arguments often hinged on racism and declared the necessity of white women voters to keep black men in check.[26]

Advocates for women's suffrage were largely confined to the North, but southern women were experiencing social transformations as well. The lines between refined white womanhood and degraded enslaved black femaleness were no longer so clearly defined. Moreover, during the war, southern white women had been called on to do traditional men's work, chopping wood and managing businesses. While white southern women decided whether and how to return to their prior status, African American women embraced new freedoms and a redefinition of womanhood.

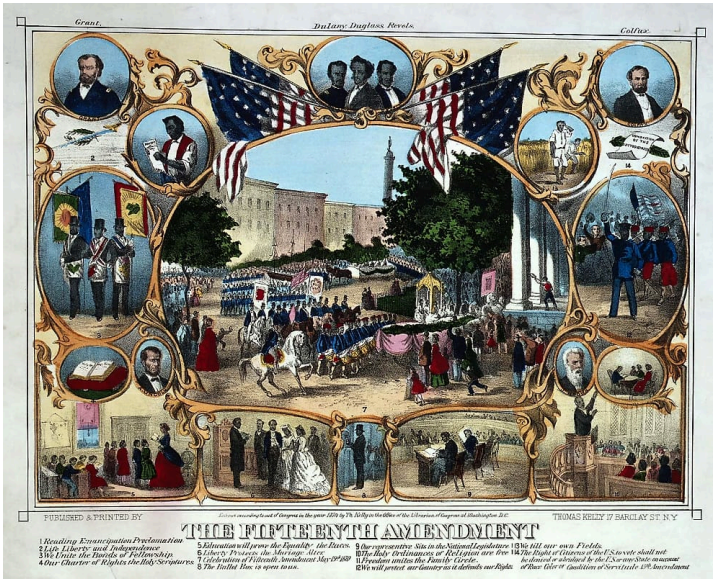


Figure 15.5.3: The Fifteenth Amendment prohibited discrimination in voting rights on the basis of race, color, or previous status (i.e. slavery). While the amendment was not all encompassing in that women were not included, it was an extremely significant ruling in affirming the liberties of African American men. This print depicts a huge parade held in Baltimore, Maryland, on May 19, 1870, surrounded by portraits of abolitionists and scenes of African Americans exercising their rights. Thomas Kelly after James C. Beard, The 15th Amendment. Celebrated May 19th 1870, 1870. *Library of Congress*.

The Civil War showed white women, especially upper-class women, life without their husbands' protection. Many did not like what they saw, especially given the possibility of racial equality. Formerly wealthy women hoped to maintain their social status by rebuilding the prewar social hierarchy. Through Ladies' Memorial Associations and other civic groups, southern women led the efforts to bury and memorialize the dead, praising and bolstering their men's masculinity through nationalist speeches and memorials. Ladies' Memorial Associations (LMAs) grew out of the Soldiers' Aid Society and became the precursor and custodian of the Lost Cause narrative. Proponents of the Lost Cause tried to rewrite the history of the antebellum South to deemphasize the brutality of slavery. They also created the myth that the Civil War was fought over states' rights instead of slavery, which was the actual cause. LMAs and their ceremonies created new holidays during which white southerners could reaffirm their allegiance to the Confederacy and express their opposition to black rights. For instance, some LMAs celebrated the anniversary of Stonewall Jackson's death on May 10.[27] Through these activities, southern women took on political roles in the South.

Southern black women also sought to redefine their public and private lives. Their efforts to control their labor met the immediate opposition of southern white women. Gertrude Clanton, a plantation mistress before the war, disliked cooking and washing dishes, so she hired an African American woman to do the washing. A misunderstanding quickly developed. The laundress, nameless in Gertrude's records, performed her job and returned home. Gertrude believed that her money had purchased a day's labor, not just the load of washing, and she became quite frustrated. Meanwhile, this washerwoman and others like her set wages and hours for themselves, and in many cases began to take washing into their own homes in order to avoid the surveillance of white women and the sexual threat posed by white men.[28]

Similar conflicts raged across the South. White southerners demanded that African American women work in the plantation home and instituted apprenticeship systems to place African American children in unpaid labor positions. African American women combated these attempts by refusing to work at jobs without fair pay or fair conditions and by clinging tightly to their children.

Like white LMA members, African American women formed clubs to bury their dead, to celebrate African American masculinity, and to provide aid to their communities. On May 1, 1865, African Americans in Charleston created the precursor to the modern Memorial Day by mourning the Union dead buried hastily on a race track turned prison.[29] Like their white counterparts, the three hundred African American women who participated had been members of the local Patriotic Association, which aided freedpeople during the war. African American women continued participating in federal Decoration Day ceremonies and, later, formed their own club organizations. Racial violence, whether city riots or rural vigilantes, continued to threaten these vulnerable households. Nevertheless, the formation and preservation of African American households became a paramount goal for African American women.

For all of their differences, white and black southern women faced a similar challenge during Reconstruction. Southern women

celebrated the return of their brothers, husbands, and sons, but couples separated for many years struggled to adjust. To make matters worse, many of these former soldiers returned with physical or mental wounds. For white families, suicide and divorce became more acceptable, while the opposite occurred for black families. Since the entire South suffered from economic devastation, many families were impoverished and sank into debt. All southern women faced economic devastation, lasting wartime trauma, and enduring racial tensions.

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15.6: Racial Violence in Reconstruction

Violence shattered the dream of biracial democracy. Still steeped in the violence of slavery, white southerners could scarcely imagine black free labor. Congressional investigator Carl Schurz reported that in the summer of 1865, southerners shared a near unanimous sentiment that "You cannot make the negro work, without physical compulsion."[30] Violence had been used in the antebellum period to enforce slave labor and to define racial difference. In the post-emancipation period it was used to stifle black advancement and return to the old order.

Much of life in the antebellum South had been premised on slavery. The social order rested on a subjugated underclass, and the labor system required unfree laborers. A notion of white supremacy and black inferiority undergirded it all. Whites were understood as fit for freedom and citizenship, blacks for chattel slave labor. The Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House and the subsequent adoption by the U.S. Congress of the Thirteenth Amendment destroyed the institution of American slavery and threw southern society into disarray. The foundation of southern society had been shaken, but southern whites used black codes and racial terrorism to reassert control of former slaves.



Figure 15.6.1: The Ku Klux Klan was just one of a number of vigilante groups that arose after the war to terrorize African Americans and Republicans throughout the South. The KKK brought violence into the voting polls, the workplace, and — as seen in this Harper's Weekly print — the homes of black Americans. Frank Bellew, Visit of the Ku-Klux,"1872. *Wikimedia*.

Racial violence in the Reconstruction period took three major forms: riots against black political authority, interpersonal fights, and organized vigilante groups. There were riots in southern cities several times during Reconstruction. The most notable were the riots in Memphis and New Orleans in 1866, but other large-scale urban conflicts erupted in places including Laurens, South Carolina, in 1870; Colfax, Louisiana, in 1873; another in New Orleans in 1874; Yazoo City, Mississippi, in 1875; and Hamburg, South Carolina, in 1876. Southern cities grew rapidly after the war as migrants from the countryside—particularly freed slaves—flocked to urban centers. Cities became centers of Republican control. But white conservatives chafed at the influx of black residents and the establishment of biracial politics. In nearly every conflict, white conservatives initiated violence in reaction to Republican rallies or conventions or elections in which black men were to vote. The death tolls of these conflicts remain incalculable, and victims were overwhelmingly black.

Even everyday violence between individuals disproportionally targeted African Americans during Reconstruction. African Americans gained citizenship rights like the ability to serve on juries as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment. But southern white men were almost never prosecuted for violence against black victims. White men beat or shot black men with relative impunity, and did so over minor squabbles, labor disputes, long-standing grudges, and crimes of passion. These incidents sometimes were reported to local federal authorities like the army or the Freedmen's Bureau, but more often than not such violence was unreported and unprosecuted.[31]

The violence committed by organized vigilante groups, sometimes called nightriders or bushwhackers, was more often

premeditated. Groups of nightriders operated under cover of darkness and wore disguises to curtail black political involvement. Nightriders harassed and killed black candidates and officeholders and frightened voters away from the polls. They also aimed to limit black economic mobility by terrorizing freedpeople who tried to purchase land or otherwise become too independent from the white masters they used to rely on. They were terrorists and vigilantes, determined to stop the erosion of the antebellum South, and they were widespread and numerous, operating throughout the South. The Ku Klux Klan emerged in the late 1860s as the most infamous of these groups.

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was organized in 1866 in Pulaski, Tennessee, and had spread to nearly every state of the former Confederacy by 1868. The Klan drew heavily from the antebellum southern elite, but Klan groups sometimes overlapped with criminal gangs or former Confederate guerrilla groups. The Klan's reputation became so potent, and its violence so widespread, that many groups not formally associated with it were called Ku Kluxers, and to "Ku Klux" meant to commit vigilante violence. While it is difficult to differentiate Klan actions from those of similar groups, such as the White Line, the Knights of the White Camellia, and the White Brotherhood, the distinctions hardly matter. All such groups were part of a web of terror that spread throughout the South during Reconstruction. In Panola County, Mississippi, between August 1870 and December 1872, twenty-four Klan-style murders occurred. And nearby, in Lafayette County, Klansmen drowned thirty black Mississippians in a single mass murder. Sometimes the violence was aimed at black men or women who had tried to buy land or dared to be insolent toward a white southerner. Other times, as with the beating of Republican sheriff and tax collector Allen Huggins, the Klan targeted white politicians who supported freedpeople's civil rights. Numerous Republican politicians, perhaps dozens, were killed, either while in office or while campaigning. Thousands of individual citizens, men and women, white and black, had their homes raided and were whipped, raped, or murdered.[32]

The federal government responded to southern paramilitary tactics by passing the Enforcement Acts between 1870 and 1871. The acts made it criminal to deprive African Americans of their civil rights. The acts also deemed violent Klan behavior as acts of rebellion against the United States and allowed for the use of U.S. troops to protect freedpeople. For a time, the federal government, its courts, and its troops, sought to put an end to the KKK and related groups. But the violence continued. By 1876, as southern Democrats reestablished "home rule" and "redeemed" the South from Republicans, federal opposition to the KKK weakened. National attention shifted away from the South and the activities of the Klan, but African Americans remained trapped in a world of white supremacy that restricted their economic, social, and political rights.

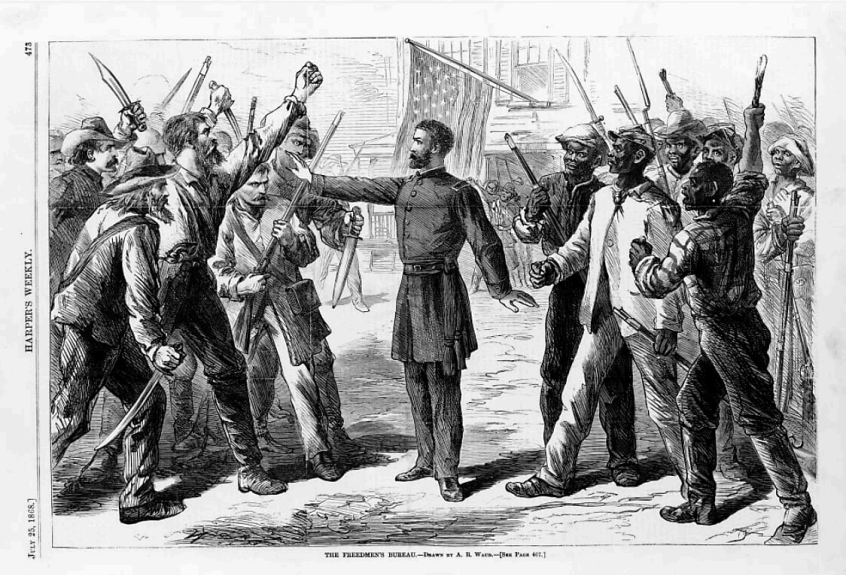


Figure 15.6.2: The federal government created the Freedmen's Bureau to assist freed people in securing their rights and their livelihoods. In this Harper's Weekly print, The Freedmen's Bureau official protecting the black men and women from the angry and riotous mob of white Americans stood as a representation of the entire Bureau. Soon the Bureau and the federal government would recognize that they could not accomplish a fraction of what they set out to do, including keeping African Americans safe and free in the South. Alfred R. Waud, The Freedmen's Bureau, 1868. *Library of Congress*

White conservatives would assert that Republicans, in denouncing violence, were "waving a bloody shirt" for political opportunity. The violence, according to many white conservatives, was fabricated, or not as bad as it was claimed, or an unavoidable consequence of the enfranchisement of African Americans. On December 22, 1871, R. Latham of Yorkville, South Carolina, wrote to the *New York Tribune*, voicing the beliefs of many white southerners as he declared that "the same principle that prompted the white men at Boston, disguised as Indians, to board, during the darkness of night, a vessel with tea, and throw her cargo into the

Bay, clothed some of our people in Ku Klux gowns, and sent them out on missions technically illegal. Did the Ku Klux do wrong? You are ready to say they did and we will not argue the point with you. . . . Under the peculiar circumstances what could the people of South Carolina do but resort to Ku Kluxing?"[33]

Victims and witnesses to the violence told a different story. Sallie Adkins of Warren County, Georgia, was traveling with her husband, Joseph, a Georgia state senator, when he was assassinated by Klansmen on May 10, 1869. She wrote President Ulysses S. Grant, asking for both physical protection and justice. "I am no Statesman," she disclaimed; "I am only a poor woman whose husband has been murdered for his devotion to his country. I may have very foolish ideas of Government, States & Constitutions. But I feel that I have claims upon my country. The Rebels imprisoned my Husband. Pardoned Rebels murdered him. There is no law for the punishment of them who do deeds of this sort. . . . I demand that you, President Grant, keep the pledge you made the nation—make it safe for any man to utter boldly and openly his devotion to the United States."[34]

The political and social consequences of the violence were as lasting as the physical and mental trauma suffered by victims and witnesses. Terrorism worked to end federal involvement in Reconstruction and helped to usher in a new era of racial repression.

African Americans actively sought ways to shed the vestiges of slavery. Many discarded the names their former masters had chosen for them and adopted new names like "Freeman" and "Lincoln" that affirmed their new identities as free citizens. Others resettled far from their former plantations, hoping to eventually farm their own land or run their own businesses. By the end of Reconstruction, the desire for self-definition, economic independence, and racial pride coalesced in the founding of dozens of black towns across the South. Perhaps the most well-known of these towns was Mound Bayou, Mississippi, a Delta town established in 1887 by Isaiah Montgomery and Ben Green, former slaves of Joseph and Jefferson Davis. Residents of the town took pride in the fact that African Americans owned all of the property in town, including banks, insurance companies, shops, and the surrounding farms. The town celebrated African American cultural and economic achievements during their annual festival, Mound Bayou Days. These tight-knit communities provided African Americans with spaces where they could live free from the indignities of segregation and the exploitation of sharecropping on white-owned plantations.[35]

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15.7: Economic Development during the Civil War and Reconstruction



Figure 15.7.1: George N. Barnard, City of Atlanta, Ga., no. 1, c. 1866. *Library of Congress*.

The Civil War destroyed and then transformed the American economy. In 1859 and 1860, wealthy southern planters were flush after producing record cotton crops. Southern prosperity relied on over four million African American slaves to grow cotton, along with a number of other staple crops across the region. Cotton fed the textile mills of America and Europe and brought great wealth to the region. On the eve of war, the American South enjoyed more per capita wealth than any other slave economy in the New World. To their masters, slaves constituted their most valuable assets, worth roughly $3 billion.[36] Yet this wealth obscured the gains in infrastructure, industrial production, and financial markets that occurred north of the Mason-Dixon Line, a fact that the war would unmask for all to see.

In contrast to the slave South, northerners praised their region as a land of free labor, populated by farmers, merchants, and wage laborers. It was also home to a robust market economy. By 1860, northerners could buy clothing made in a New England factory, or light their homes with kerosene oil from Pennsylvania. The Midwest produced seas of grain that fed the country, with enough left over for export to Europe. Farther west, mining and agriculture were the mainstays of life. Along with the textile mills, shoe factories, and iron foundries, the firms that produced McCormick's wheat harvesters and Colt's firearms displayed the technical advances of northern manufacturers. Their goods crisscrossed the country on the North's growing railroad network. An extensive network of banks and financial markets helped aggregate capital that could be reinvested into further growth.

The Civil War, like all wars, interrupted the rhythms of commercial life by destroying lives and property. This was especially true in the South. From 1861 onward, the Confederate government struggled to find the guns, food, and supplies needed to field an army. Southerners did make astonishing gains in industrial production during this time, but it was never enough. The Union's blockade of the Atlantic prevented the Confederacy from financing the war with cotton sales to Europe. To pay their troops and keep the economy alive, the Confederate Congress turned to printing paper money that quickly sank in value and led to rapid inflation. In many cases, Confederate officials dispensed with taxes paid in cash and simply impressed the food and materials needed from their citizens. Perhaps most striking of all, in the vast agricultural wealth of the South, many southerners struggled to find enough to eat.

The war also pushed the U.S. government to take unprecedented steps. Congress raised tariffs and passed the first national income tax in 1862. In late 1861, Congress created the nation's first fiat currency, called *greenbacks*. At first, the expansion of the currency and the rapid rise in government spending created an uptick in business in 1862–1863. As the war dragged on, inflation also hit the North. Workers demanded higher wages to pay rents and buy necessities, while the business community groaned under their growing tax burden. The United States, however, never embarked on a policy of impressment for food and supplies. The factories and farms of the North successfully supplied Union troops, while the federal government, with some adjustments,

found the means to pay for war. None of this is to suggest that the North's superior ability to supply its war machine made the outcome of the war inevitable. Any account of the war must consider the tangled web of politics, battles, and economics that occurred between 1861 and 1865. But the aftermath of the war left portions of the Confederacy in ruins. State governments were mired in debt. White planters had most of their capital tied up in slaves, and so lost most of their wealth. Cotton remained the most significant crop, but the war changed how it was grown and sold. Planters broke up large farms into smaller plots tended by single families in exchange for a portion of the crop, a system called sharecropping. Once cotton production resumed, Americans found that their cotton now competed with new cotton plantations around the world. For the South as a whole, the war and Reconstruction marked the start of a period of deep poverty that would last until at least the New Deal of the 1930s.



Figure 15.7.2: War brought destruction across the South. Governmental and private buildings, communication systems, the economy, and transportation infrastructure were all debilitated. [Richmond, Va. Crippled locomotive, Richmond & Petersburg Railroad depot], c. 1865. *Library of Congress*.

Emancipation was the single most important economic, social, and political outcome of the war. Freedom empowered African Americans in the South to rebuild families, make contracts, hold property, and move freely for the first time. Republicans in the South attempted to transform the region into a free-labor economy like the North. Yet the transition from slave labor to free labor was never so clear. Well into the twentieth century, white southerners used a combination of legal coercion and extralegal violence to maintain systems of bound labor. Vagrancy laws enabled law enforcement to justify the arrest of innocent black men and women, and the convict-lease system meant that arbitrary arrests often resulted in decades of forced, uncompensated labor. But this new form of servitude, which continued until World War II, was only the most extreme example of an array of economic injustices. In the later nineteenth century, poor whites would form mobs and go "white-capping" to scare away black job seekers.[37] Lacking the means to buy their own farms, black farmers often turned to sharecropping. Sharecropping often led to cycles of debt that kept families bound to the land.[38]

Victory did not produce a sudden economic boom for the rest of the United States, either. The North would not regain its prewar pace of industrial and commodity output until the 1870s. But the war did prove beneficial to wealthy northern farmers who could afford new technologies. Wartime labor shortages promoted the use of mechanical reapers, reducing demand for labor, boosting farm yields, and sowing the seeds of inequality.



Figure 15.7.3: Massachusetts Agricultural College (now known as University of Massachusetts Amherst) was one of many colleges founded through the Federal Morrill-Land Grant Colleges Act. Massachusetts Agricultural College, Amherst, Mass. 1879, 1880. *Wikimedia*.

Wartime laws also transformed the relationship between the federal government and the American economy. New tariff laws sheltered northern industry from European competition. The Morrill Land Grant helped create colleges such as the University of California, the University of Illinois, and the University of Wisconsin. With the creation of the national banking system and greenbacks, Congress replaced hundreds of state bank notes with a system of federal currency that accelerated trade and exchange. This was not to say that Republican policy worked for everyone. The Homestead Act, meant to open the West to small farmers, was often frustrated by railroad corporations and speculators. The Transcontinental Railroad, launched during the war, failed to produce substantial economic gains for years.

The war years forged a close relationship between government and the business elite, a relationship that sometimes resulted in corruption and catastrophe, as it did when markets crashed on Black Friday, September 24, 1869. This new relationship created a political backlash, especially in the West and South, against Washington's perceived eastern and industrial bias. Conflicts over emancipation and civil rights quickly gave way to long political conflict over the direction of American economic development.

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15.8: The End of Reconstruction

Reconstruction ended when northerners abandoned the cause of former slaves and Democrats recaptured southern politics. Between 1868 and 1877, and especially after the Depression of 1873, economic issues supplanted Reconstruction as the foremost issue on the national agenda. The biggest threat to Republican power in the South had been the violence and intimidation of white Democrats. Only the presence of federal troops in key southern cities prevented Reconstruction's quick collapse. But the United States never committed the personnel required to restore order and guarantee black southerners the rights promised by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Republicans and Democrats responded to economic uncertainty by retreating from Reconstruction. War-weary from a decade of military and political strife, so-called Stalwart Republicans turned from the idealism of civil rights to the practicality of economics and party politics. They won particular influence during Ulysses S. Grant's first term as president (1868–1872). By the early 1870s, Stalwart Republicans assumed control of Republican Party politics.

Meanwhile, New Departure Democrats—who focused on business, economics, political corruption, and trade—gained strength by distancing themselves from pro-slavery Democrats and Copperheads. In the South, they were called Redeemers. White southerners initially opposed the Redeemers and instead clung tightly to white supremacy and the Confederacy, but between 1869 and 1871, the Redeemers won support from white southerners by promising local rule by white Democrats, rather than black or white Republicans. By 1871, Redeemers won political control and ended Reconstruction in three important states: Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia.

In September 1873, Jay Cooke and Company declared bankruptcy, resulting in a bank run that spiraled into a six-year depression. The Depression of 1873 crushed the nation's already suffering laboring class and destroyed whatever remaining idealism northerners had about Reconstruction. In the South, where many farms were capitalized entirely through loans, sources of credit vanished, many landowners defaulted, and farmers entered an already oversaturated labor market. Wages plummeted and a growing system of debt peonage trapped workers in endless cycles of poverty. The economic turmoil enabled the Democrats to take control of the House of Representatives after the 1874 elections, blunting the legislature's capacity to any longer direct Reconstruction.



Figure 15.8.1: During the Panic of 1873, workers began demanding that the federal government help alleviate the strain on Americans. In January 1874, over 7,000 protesters congregated in New York City's Tompkins Square to insist the government make job creation a priority. They were met with brutality as police dispersed the crowd, and consequently the unemployment movement lost much of its steam. Matt Morgen, Print of a crowd driven from Tompkins Square by the mounted police, in the Tompkins Square Riot of 1874, January 1874. *Wikimedia*.

On the eve of the 1876 presidential election, the nation still reeled from depression. Scandals sapped trust in the Grant Administration. By 1875, Democrats in Mississippi hatched the Mississippi Plan, a wave of violence designed to intimidate black activists and suppress black voters.[39] The state's Republican governor pleaded for federal intervention, but national Republicans

ignored the plea. Meanwhile, Rutherford B. Hayes, a Republican, won a landslide victory in the Ohio gubernatorial election without mentioning Reconstruction, focusing instead on fighting corruption and alcohol abuse and promoting economic recovery. His success made him a potential presidential candidate. The stage was set for an election that would end Reconstruction as a national issue.

Republicans chose Rutherford B. Hayes as their nominee; Democrats chose Samuel J. Tilden, who ran on honest politics and home rule in the South. Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina would determine the president. Despite the enduring presence of Reconstruction in those states, white conservatives organized violence and fraud with impunity. With the election results contested, a federal special electoral commission voted along party lines—eight Republicans for, seven Democrats against—in favor of Hayes.

Democrats threatened to boycott Hayes's inauguration. Rival governments arose claiming to recognize Tilden as the rightfully elected president. Republicans, fearing another sectional crisis, reached out to Democrats. In what became known as the Compromise of 1877, Democrats conceded the presidency to Hayes on the condition that all remaining troops would be removed from the South and the South would receive special economic favors. Hayes was inaugurated in March 1877. In April, the remaining troops were ordered out of the South. The compromise allowed southern Democrats, no longer fearing reprisal from federal troops or northern politicians for their flagrant violence and intimidation of black voters, to return to power.

After 1877, Republicans no longer had the political capital—or political will—to intervene in the South in cases of violence and electoral fraud. In certain locations with large populations of African Americans, such as South Carolina, freedpeople continued to hold some local offices for several years. Yet, with its most revolutionary aims thwarted by 1868, and economic depression and political turmoil taking even its most modest promises off the table by the early 1870s, most of the promises of Reconstruction were unmet.

Military District	State	Readmission	Conservative Takeover
District 1	Virginia	1870	1870
District 2	North Carolina	1868	1870
	South Carolina	1868	1877
District 3	Alabama	1868	1874
	Florida	1868	1877
	Georgia	1870	1871
District 4	Arkansas	1868	1874
	Mississippi	1870	1876
District 5	Texas	1870	1873
	Louisiana	1868	1877
None	Tennessee	1866	1869

Table 15.8.1***:*** *This table shows the military districts of the seceded states of the South, the date the state was readmitted into the Union, and the date when conservatives recaptured the state house.*

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15.9: Conclusion

Reconstruction in the United States achieved Abraham Lincoln's paramount desire: the restoration of the Union. The war and its aftermath forever ended legal slavery in the United States, but African Americans remained second-class citizens and women still struggled for full participation in the public life of the United States. The closing of Reconstruction saw North and South reunited behind the imperatives of economic growth and territorial expansion, rather than ensuring the full rights of its citizens. From the ashes of civil war, a new nation faced fresh possibilities while enduring old problems.

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15.10: Primary Sources

Charlotte Forten Teaches Freed Children in South Carolina, 1864

Charlotte Forten was born into a wealthy black family in Philadelphia. After receiving an education in Salem, Massachusetts, Forten became the first black American hired to teach white students. She lent her educational expertise to the war effort by relocating to South Carolina in 1862 with the goal of educating former slaves. This excerpt from her diary explains her experiences during this time.

Jourdon Anderson Writes His Former Master, 1865

Black Americans hoped that the end of the Civil War would create an entirely new world, while white southerners tried to restore the antebellum order as much as they could. Most slave-owners sought to maintain control over their former slaves through sharecropping contracts. P.H. Anderson of Tennessee was one such former slave-owner. After the war, he contacted his former slave Jourdon Anderson, offering him a job opportunity. The following is Jourdon Anderson's reply.

Mississippi Black Code, 1865

Many southern governments enacted legislation that reestablished antebellum power relationships. South Carolina and Mississippi passed laws known as Black Codes to regulate black behavior and impose social and economic control. While they granted some rights to African Americans – like the right to own property, to marry or to make contracts – they also denied other fundamental rights. Mississippi's vagrant law, excerpted here, required all freedmen to carry papers proving they had means of employment. If they had no proof, they could be arrested, fined, or even re-enslaved and leased out to their former master.

General Reynolds Describes Lawlessness in Texas, 1868

Most histories of the Civil War claim that the war ended in the summer of 1865 when Confederate armies surrendered. However, violent resistance and terrorism continued in the South for over a decade. In this report, General J.J. Reynolds describes the lawlessness of Texas during Reconstruction.

Frederick Douglass on Remembering the Civil War, 1877

Americans came together after the Civil War largely by collectively forgetting what the war was about. Celebrations honored the bravery of both armies, and the meaning of the war faded. Frederick Douglass and other black leaders engaged with Confederate sympathizers in a battle of historical memory. In this speech, Douglass calls on Americans to remember the war for what it was—a struggle between an army fighting to protect slavery and a nation reluctantly transformed into a force for liberation.

Johnson and Reconstruction Cartoon, 1866

This print mocks Reconstruction by making several allusions to Shakespeare. The center illustration shows a black soldier as Othello and President Andrew Johnson as Iago. Johnson's slogans "Treason is a crime and must be made odious" and "I am your Moses" are on the wall. The top left shows a riot in Memphis and at the top a riot in New Orleans. At the bottom, Johnson is trying to charm a Confederate Copperhead. General Benjamin Butler is at the bottom left, accepting the Confederate surrender of New Orleans in 1862. This scene is contrasted to the bottom right where General Philips Sheridan bows to Louisiana Attorney General Andrew Herron in 1866, implying a defeat for Reconstruction. Click on the image for more information.

Fifteenth Amendment Print, 1870

This 1870 print celebrated the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Here we see several of the themes most important to black Americans during Reconstruction: The print celebrates the military achievements of black veterans, the voting rights protected by the amendment, the right to marry and establish families, the creation and protection of black churches, and the right to own and improve land. Unfortunately, many of these freedoms would be short-lived as the United States retreated from Reconstruction.

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16: CAPITAL AND LABOR



A Maryland National Guard unit fires upon strikers during the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. Harper's Weekly, via Wikimedia

16.1: Reference Material

16.2: Introduction

16.3: The March of Capital

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16.2: Introduction

The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 heralded a new era of labor conflict in the United States. That year, mired in the stagnant economy that followed the bursting of the railroads' financial bubble in 1873, rail lines slashed workers' wages (even, workers complained, as they reaped enormous government subsidies and paid shareholders lucrative stock dividends). Workers struck from Baltimore to St. Louis, shutting down railroad traffic—the nation's economic lifeblood—across the country.

Panicked business leaders and friendly political officials reacted quickly. When local police forces would not or could not suppress the strikes, governors called out state militias to break them and restore rail service. Many strikers destroyed rail property rather than allow militias to reopen the rails. The protests approached a class war. The governor of Maryland deployed the state's militia. In Baltimore, the militia fired into a crowd of striking workers, killing eleven and wounding many more. Strikes convulsed towns and cities across Pennsylvania. The head of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Thomas Andrew Scott, suggested that if workers were unhappy with their wages, they should be given "a rifle diet for a few days and see how they like that kind of bread."[1] Law enforcement in Pittsburgh refused to put down the protests, so the governor called out the state militia, who killed twenty strikers with bayonets and rifle fire. A month of chaos erupted. Strikers set fire to the city, destroying dozens of buildings, over a hundred engines, and over a thousand cars. In Reading, strikers destroyed rail property and an angry crowd bombarded militiamen with rocks and bottles. The militia fired into the crowd, killing ten. A general strike erupted in St. Louis, and strikers seized rail depots and declared for the eight-hour day and the abolition of child labor. Federal troops and vigilantes fought their way into the depot, killing eighteen and breaking the strike. Rail lines were shut down all across neighboring Illinois, where coal miners struck in sympathy, tens of thousands gathered to protest under the aegis of the Workingmen's Party, and twenty protesters were killed in Chicago by special police and militiamen.

Courts, police, and state militias suppressed the strikes, but it was federal troops that finally defeated them. When Pennsylvania militiamen were unable to contain the strikes, federal troops stepped in. When militia in West Virginia refused to break the strike, federal troops broke it instead. On the orders of the president, American soldiers were deployed all across northern rail lines. Soldiers moved from town to town, suppressing protests and reopening rail lines. Six weeks after it had begun, the strike had been crushed. Nearly 100 Americans died in "The Great Upheaval." Workers destroyed nearly $40 million worth of property. The strike galvanized the country. It convinced laborers of the need for institutionalized unions, persuaded businesses of the need for even greater political influence and government aid, and foretold a half century of labor conflict in the United States.[2]

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16.3: The March of Capital

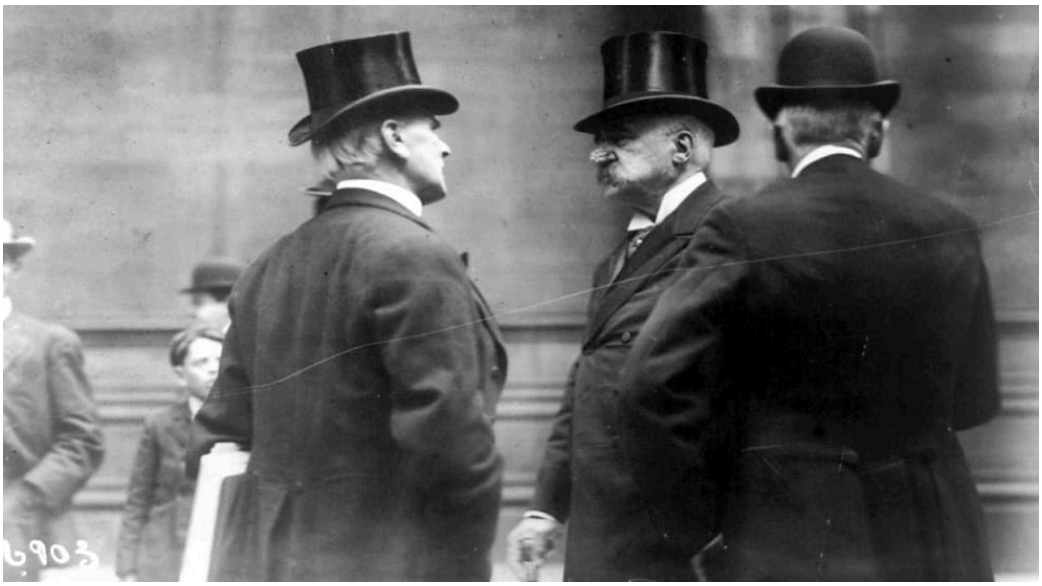


Figure 16.3.1: John Pierpont Morgan with two friends, ca.1907. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-92327

Growing labor unrest accompanied industrialization. The greatest strikes first hit the railroads only because no other industry had so effectively marshaled together capital, government support, and bureaucratic management. Many workers perceived their new powerlessness in the coming industrial order. Skills mattered less and less in an industrialized, mass-producing economy, and their strength as individuals seemed ever smaller and more insignificant when companies grew in size and power and managers grew flush with wealth and influence. Long hours, dangerous working conditions, and the difficulty of supporting a family on meager and unpredictable wages compelled armies of labor to organize and battle against the power of capital.

The post–Civil War era saw revolutions in American industry. Technological innovations and national investments slashed the costs of production and distribution. New administrative frameworks sustained the weight of vast firms. National credit agencies eased the uncertainties surrounding rapid movement of capital between investors, manufacturers, and retailers. Plummeting transportation and communication costs opened new national media, which advertising agencies used to nationalize various products.

By the turn of the century, corporate leaders and wealthy industrialists embraced the new principles of scientific management, or Taylorism, after its noted proponent, Frederick Taylor. The precision of steel parts, the harnessing of electricity, the innovations of machine tools, and the mass markets wrought by the railroads offered new avenues for efficiency. To match the demands of the machine age, Taylor said, firms needed a scientific organization of production. He urged all manufacturers to increase efficiency by subdividing tasks. Rather than having thirty mechanics individually making thirty machines, for instance, a manufacturer could assign thirty laborers to perform thirty distinct tasks. Such a shift would not only make workers as interchangeable as the parts they were using, it would also dramatically speed up the process of production. If managed by trained experts, specific tasks could be done quicker and more efficiently. Taylorism increased the scale and scope of manufacturing and allowed for the flowering of mass production. Building on the use of interchangeable parts in Civil War–era weapons manufacturing, American firms advanced mass production techniques and technologies. Singer sewing machines, Chicago packers' "disassembly" lines, McCormick grain reapers, Duke cigarette rollers: all realized unprecedented efficiencies and achieved unheard-of levels of production that propelled their companies into the forefront of American business. Henry Ford made the assembly line famous, allowing the production of automobiles to skyrocket as their cost plummeted, but various American firms had been paving the way for decades.[3]



Figure 16.3.2: Glazier Stove Company, moulding room, Chelsea, Michigan, ca1900-1910. *Library of Congress*, *LC-D4-4278*

Cyrus McCormick had overseen the construction of mechanical reapers (used for harvesting wheat) for decades. He had relied on skilled blacksmiths, skilled machinists, and skilled woodworkers to handcraft horse-drawn machines. But production was slow and the machines were expensive. The reapers still enabled massive efficiency gains in grain farming, but their high cost and slow production times put them out of reach of most American wheat farmers. But then, in 1880, McCormick hired a production manager who had overseen the manufacturing of Colt firearms to transform his system of production. The Chicago plant introduced new jigs, steel gauges, and pattern machines that could make precise duplicates of new, interchangeable parts. The company had produced twenty-one thousand machines in 1880. It made twice as many in 1885, and by 1889, less than a decade later, it was producing over one hundred thousand a year.[4]

Industrialization and mass production pushed the United States into the forefront of the world. The American economy had lagged behind Britain, Germany, and France as recently as the 1860s, but by 1900 the United States was the world's leading manufacturing nation. Thirteen years later, by 1913, the United States produced one third of the world's industrial output—more than Britain, France, and Germany combined.[5]

Firms such as McCormick's realized massive economies of scale: after accounting for their initial massive investments in machines and marketing, each additional product lost the company relatively little in production costs. The bigger the production, then, the bigger the profits. New industrial companies therefore hungered for markets to keep their high-volume production facilities operating. Retailers and advertisers sustained the massive markets needed for mass production, and corporate bureaucracies meanwhile allowed for the management of giant new firms. A new class of managers—comprising what one prominent economic historian called the "visible hand"—operated between the worlds of workers and owners and ensured the efficient operation and administration of mass production and mass distribution. Even more important to the growth and maintenance of these new companies, however, were the legal creations used to protect investors and sustain the power of massed capital.[6]

The costs of mass production were prohibitive for all but the very wealthiest individuals, and, even then, the risks would be too great to bear individually. The corporation itself was ages old, but the actual right to incorporate had generally been reserved for public works projects or government-sponsored monopolies. After the Civil War, however, the corporation, using new state incorporation laws passed during the Market Revolution of the early nineteenth century, became a legal mechanism for nearly any enterprise to marshal vast amounts of capital while limiting the liability of shareholders. By washing their hands of legal and financial obligations while still retaining the right to profit massively, investors flooded corporations with the capital needed to industrialize.

But a competitive marketplace threatened the promise of investments. Once the efficiency gains of mass production were realized, profit margins could be undone by cutthroat competition, which kept costs low as price cutting sank into profits. Companies rose and fell—and investors suffered losses—as manufacturing firms struggled to maintain supremacy in their particular industries. Economies of scale were a double-edged sword: while additional production provided immense profits, the high fixed costs of operating expensive factories dictated that even modest losses from selling underpriced goods were

preferable to not selling profitably priced goods at all. And as market share was won and lost, profits proved unstable. American industrial firms tried everything to avoid competition: they formed informal pools and trusts, they entered price-fixing agreements, they divided markets, and, when blocked by antitrust laws and renegade price cutting, merged into consolidations. Rather than suffer from ruinous competition, firms combined and bypassed it altogether.

Between 1895 and 1904, and particularly in the four years between 1898 and 1902, a wave of mergers rocked the American economy. Competition melted away in what is known as "the great merger movement." In nine years, four thousand companies—nearly 20 percent of the American economy—were folded into rival firms. In nearly every major industry, newly consolidated firms such as General Electric and DuPont utterly dominated their market. Forty-one separate consolidations each controlled over 70 percent of the market in their respective industries. In 1901, financier J. P. Morgan oversaw the formation of United States Steel, built from eight leading steel companies. Industrialization was built on steel, and one firm—the world's first billion-dollar company—controlled the market. Monopoly had arrived.[7]

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16.4: The Rise of Inequality



Figure 16.4.1: The Breakers, Vanderbilt residence, Newport, R.I., ca.1904. *Library of Congress, LC-D4-16955.*

Industrial capitalism realized the greatest advances in efficiency and productivity that the world had ever seen. Massive new companies marshaled capital on an unprecedented scale and provided enormous profits that created unheard-of fortunes. But it also created millions of low-paid, unskilled, unreliable jobs with long hours and dangerous working conditions. Industrial capitalism confronted Gilded Age Americans with unprecedented inequalities. The sudden appearance of the extreme wealth of industrial and financial leaders alongside the crippling squalor of the urban and rural poor shocked Americans. "This association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times," economist Henry George wrote in his 1879 bestseller, Progress and Poverty.[8]

The great financial and industrial titans, the so-called robber barons, including railroad operators such as Cornelius Vanderbilt, oilmen such as J. D. Rockefeller, steel magnates such as Andrew Carnegie, and bankers such as J. P. Morgan, won fortunes that, adjusted for inflation, are still among the largest the nation has ever seen. According to various measurements, in 1890 the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans owned one fourth of the nation's assets; the top 10 percent owned over 70 percent. And inequality only accelerated. By 1900, the richest 10 percent controlled perhaps 90 percent of the nation's wealth.[9]

As these vast and unprecedented new fortunes accumulated among a small number of wealthy Americans, new ideas arose to bestow moral legitimacy upon them. In 1859, British naturalist Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution through natural selection in his *On the Origin of Species*. It was not until the 1870s, however, that those theories gained widespread traction among biologists, naturalists, and other scientists in the United States and, in turn, challenged the social, political, and religious beliefs of many Americans. One of Darwin's greatest popularizers, the British sociologist and biologist Herbert Spencer, applied Darwin's theories to society and popularized the phrase *survival of the fittest*. The fittest, Spencer said, would demonstrate their superiority through economic success, while state welfare and private charity would lead to social degeneration—it would encourage the survival of the weak.[10]



FIgure 16.4.2***:*** *"Five Cents a Spot," unauthorized immigration lodgings in a Bayard Street tenement, New York City, ca.1890. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-16348*

"There must be complete surrender to the law of natural selection," the *Baltimore Sun* journalist H. L. Mencken wrote in 1907. "All growth must occur at the top. The strong must grow stronger, and that they may do so, they must waste no strength in the vain task of trying to uplift the weak."[11] By the time Mencken wrote those words, the ideas of social Darwinism had spread among wealthy Americans and their defenders. Social Darwinism identified a natural order that extended from the laws of the cosmos to the workings of industrial society. All species and all societies, including modern humans, the theory went, were governed by a relentless competitive struggle for survival. The inequality of outcomes was to be not merely tolerated but encouraged and celebrated. It signified the progress of species and societies. Spencer's major work, *Synthetic Philosophy*, sold nearly four hundred thousand copies in the United States by the time of his death in 1903. Gilded Age industrial elites, such as steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, inventor Thomas Edison, and Standard Oil's John D. Rockefeller, were among Spencer's prominent followers. Other American thinkers, such as Yale's William Graham Sumner, echoed his ideas. Sumner said, "Before the tribunal of nature a man has no more right to life than a rattlesnake; he has no more right to liberty than any wild beast; his right to pursuit of happiness is nothing but a license to maintain the struggle for existence."[12]

But not all so eagerly welcomed inequalities. The spectacular growth of the U.S. economy and the ensuing inequalities in living conditions and incomes confounded many Americans. But as industrial capitalism overtook the nation, it achieved political protections. Although both major political parties facilitated the rise of big business and used state power to support the interests of capital against labor, big business looked primarily to the Republican Party.

The Republican Party had risen as an antislavery faction committed to "free labor," but it was also an ardent supporter of American business. Abraham Lincoln had been a corporate lawyer who defended railroads, and during the Civil War the Republican national government took advantage of the wartime absence of southern Democrats to push through a pro-business agenda. The Republican congress gave millions of acres and dollars to railroad companies. Republicans became the party of business, and they dominated American politics throughout the Gilded Age and the first several decades of the twentieth century. Of the sixteen presidential elections between the Civil War and the Great Depression, Republican candidates won all but four. Republicans controlled the Senate in twenty-seven out of thirty-two sessions in the same period. Republican dominance maintained a high protective tariff, an import tax designed to shield American businesses from foreign competition; southern planters had vehemently opposed this policy before the war but now could do nothing to prevent. It provided the protective foundation for a new American industrial order, while Spencer's social Darwinism provided moral justification for national policies that minimized government interference in the economy for anything other than the protection and support of business.

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16.5: The Labor Movement



Figure 16.5.1: Lawrence Textile Strike, 1912. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-23725.

The ideas of social Darwinism attracted little support among the mass of American industrial laborers. American workers toiled in difficult jobs for long hours and little pay. Mechanization and mass production threw skilled laborers into unskilled positions. Industrial work ebbed and flowed with the economy. The typical industrial laborer could expect to be unemployed one month out of the year. They labored sixty hours a week and could still expect their annual income to fall below the poverty line. Among the working poor, wives and children were forced into the labor market to compensate. Crowded cities, meanwhile, failed to accommodate growing urban populations and skyrocketing rents trapped families in crowded slums.

Strikes ruptured American industry throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Workers seeking higher wages, shorter hours, and safer working conditions had struck throughout the antebellum era, but organized unions were fleeting and transitory. The Civil War and Reconstruction seemed to briefly distract the nation from the plight of labor, but the end of the sectional crisis and the explosive growth of big business, unprecedented fortunes, and a vast industrial workforce in the last quarter of the nineteenth century sparked the rise of a vast American labor movement.

The failure of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 convinced workers of the need to organize. Union memberships began to climb. The Knights of Labor enjoyed considerable success in the early 1880s, due in part to its efforts to unite skilled and unskilled workers. It welcomed all laborers, including women (the Knights only barred lawyers, bankers, and liquor dealers). By 1886, the Knights had over seven hundred thousand members. The Knights envisioned a cooperative producer-centered society that rewarded labor, not capital, but, despite their sweeping vision, the Knights focused on practical gains that could be won through the organization of workers into local unions.[13]

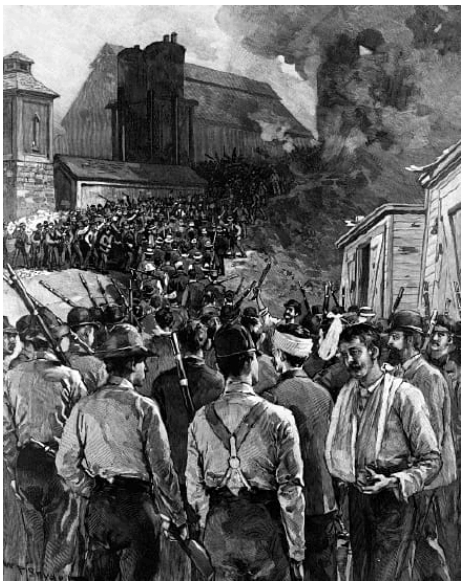


Figure 16.5.2: An 1892 cover of Harper's Weekly depicting the Homestead Riot, showed Pinkerton men who had surrendered to the steel mill workers navigating a gauntlet of violent strikers. W.P. Synder (artist) after a photograph by Dabbs, "The Homestead Riot," 1892. *Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-126046*.

In Marshall, Texas, in the spring of 1886, one of Jay Gould's rail companies fired a Knights of Labor member for attending a union meeting. His local union walked off the job, and soon others joined. From Texas and Arkansas into Missouri, Kansas, and Illinois, nearly two hundred thousand workers struck against Gould's rail lines. Gould hired strikebreakers and the Pinkerton Detective Agency, a kind of private security contractor, to suppress the strikes and get the rails moving again. Political leaders helped him, and state militias were called in support of Gould's companies. The Texas governor called out the Texas Rangers. Workers countered by destroying property, only winning them negative headlines and for many justifying the use of strikebreakers and militiamen. The strike broke, briefly undermining the Knights of Labor, but the organization regrouped and set its eyes on a national campaign for the eight-hour day.[14]

In the summer of 1886, the campaign for an eight-hour day, long a rallying cry that united American laborers, culminated in a national strike on May 1, 1886. Somewhere between three hundred thousand and five hundred thousand workers struck across the country.

In Chicago, police forces killed several workers while breaking up protesters at the McCormick reaper works. Labor leaders and radicals called for a protest at Haymarket Square the following day, which police also proceeded to break up. But as they did, a bomb exploded and killed seven policemen. Police fired into the crowd, killing four. The deaths of the Chicago policemen sparked outrage across the nation, and the sensationalization of the Haymarket Riot helped many Americans to associate unionism with radicalism. Eight Chicago anarchists were arrested and, despite no direct evidence implicating them in the bombing, were charged and found guilty of conspiracy. Four were hanged (and one committed suicide before he could be executed). Membership in the Knights had peaked earlier that year but fell rapidly after Haymarket; the group became associated with violence and radicalism. The national movement for an eight-hour day collapsed.[15]

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) emerged as a conservative alternative to the vision of the Knights of Labor. An alliance of craft unions (unions composed of skilled workers), the AFL rejected the Knights' expansive vision of a "producerist" economy and advocated "pure and simple trade unionism," a program that aimed for practical gains (higher wages, fewer hours, and safer conditions) through a conservative approach that tried to avoid strikes. But workers continued to strike.

In 1892, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers struck at one of Carnegie's steel mills in Homestead, Pennsylvania. After repeated wage cuts, workers shut the plant down and occupied the mill. The plant's operator, Henry Clay Frick, immediately called in hundreds of Pinkerton detectives, but the steel workers fought back. The Pinkertons tried to land by river and were besieged by the striking steel workers. After several hours of pitched battle, the Pinkertons surrendered, ran a bloody gauntlet of workers, and were kicked out of the mill grounds. But the Pennsylvania governor called the state militia, broke the strike, and reopened the mill. The union was essentially destroyed in the aftermath.[16]

Still, despite repeated failure, strikes continued to roll across the industrial landscape. In 1894, workers in George Pullman's

Pullman car factories struck when he cut wages by a quarter but kept rents and utilities in his company town constant. The American Railway Union (ARU), led by Eugene Debs, launched a sympathy strike: the ARU would refuse to handle any Pullman cars on any rail line anywhere in the country. Thousands of workers struck and national railroad traffic ground to a halt. Unlike in nearly every other major strike, the governor of Illinois sympathized with workers and refused to dispatch the state militia. It didn't matter. In July, President Grover Cleveland dispatched thousands of American soldiers to break the strike, and a federal court issued a preemptive injunction against Debs and the union's leadership. The strike violated the injunction, and Debs was arrested and imprisoned. The strike evaporated without its leadership. Jail radicalized Debs, proving to him that political and judicial leaders were merely tools for capital in its struggle against labor.[17] But it wasn't just Debs. In 1905, the degrading conditions of industrial labor sparked strikes across the country. The final two decades of the nineteenth century saw over twenty thousand strikes and lockouts in the United States. Industrial laborers struggled to carve for themselves a piece of the prosperity lifting investors and a rapidly expanding middle class into unprecedented standards of living. But workers were not the only ones struggling to stay afloat in industrial America. American farmers also lashed out against the inequalities of the Gilded Age and denounced political corruption for enabling economic theft.



Figure 16.5.3: Two women strikers on picket line during the "Uprising of the 20,000", garment workers strike, New York City, 1910. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-49516.

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16.6: The Populist Movement

"Wall Street owns the country," the Populist leader Mary Elizabeth Lease told dispossessed farmers around 1890. "It is no longer a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street, and for Wall Street." Farmers, who remained a majority of the American population through the first decade of the twentieth century, were hit especially hard by industrialization. The expanding markets and technological improvements that increased efficiency also decreased commodity prices. Commercialization of agriculture put farmers in the hands of bankers, railroads, and various economic intermediaries. As the decades passed, more and more farmers fell ever further into debt, lost their land, and were forced to enter the industrial workforce or, especially in the South, became landless farmworkers.

The rise of industrial giants reshaped the American countryside and the Americans who called it home. Railroad spur lines, telegraph lines, and credit crept into farming communities and linked rural Americans, who still made up a majority of the country's population, with towns, regional cities, American financial centers in Chicago and New York, and, eventually, London and the world's financial markets. Meanwhile, improved farm machinery, easy credit, and the latest consumer goods flooded the countryside. But new connections and new conveniences came at a price.

Farmers had always been dependent on the whims of the weather and local markets. But now they staked their financial security on a national economic system subject to rapid price swings, rampant speculation, and limited regulation. Frustrated American farmers attempted to reshape the fundamental structures of the nation's political and economic systems, systems they believed enriched parasitic bankers and industrial monopolists at the expense of the many laboring farmers who fed the nation by producing its many crops and farm goods. Their dissatisfaction with an erratic and impersonal system put many of them at the forefront of what would become perhaps the most serious challenge to the established political economy of Gilded Age America. Farmers organized and launched their challenge first through the cooperatives of the Farmers' Alliance and later through the politics of the People's (or Populist) Party.

Mass production and business consolidations spawned giant corporations that monopolized nearly every sector of the U.S. economy in the decades after the Civil War. In contrast, the economic power of the individual farmer sank into oblivion. Threatened by ever-plummeting commodity prices and ever-rising indebtedness, Texas agrarians met in Lampasas, Texas, in 1877 and organized the first Farmers' Alliance to restore some economic power to farmers as they dealt with railroads, merchants, and bankers. If big business relied on its numerical strength to exert its economic will, why shouldn't farmers unite to counter that power? They could share machinery, bargain from wholesalers, and negotiate higher prices for their crops. Over the following years, organizers spread from town to town across the former Confederacy, the Midwest, and the Great Plains, holding evangelical-style camp meetings, distributing pamphlets, and establishing over one thousand alliance newspapers. As the alliance spread, so too did its near-religious vision of the nation's future as a "cooperative commonwealth" that would protect the interests of the many from the predatory greed of the few. At its peak, the Farmers' Alliance claimed 1,500,000 members meeting in 40,000 local sub-alliances.[18]

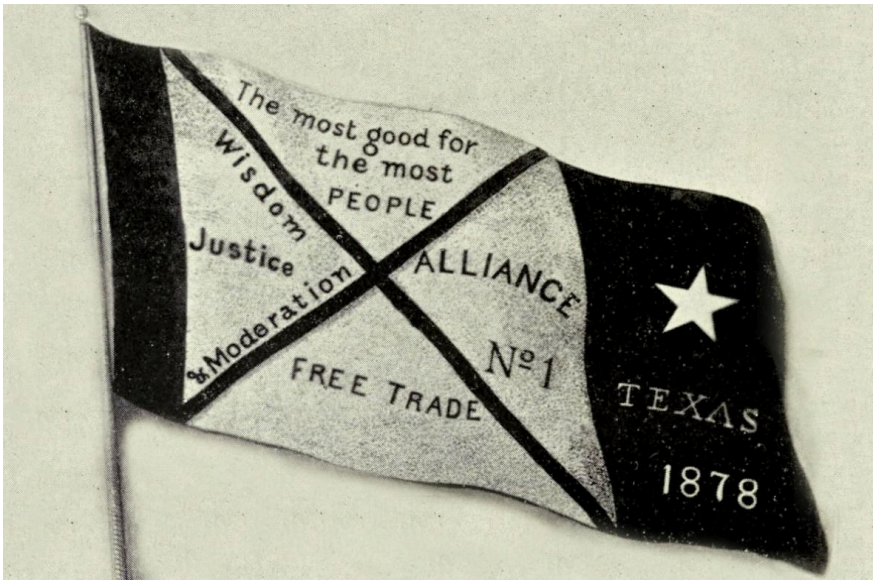


Figure 16.6.1: The banner of the first Texas Farmers' Alliance. Source: N. A. Dunning (ed.), Farmers' Alliance History and Agricultural Digest (Washington D.C.: Alliance Publishing Co., 1891), iv.

The alliance's most innovative programs were a series of farmers' cooperatives that enabled farmers to negotiate higher prices for their crops and lower prices for the goods they purchased. These cooperatives spread across the South between 1886 and 1892 and claimed more than a million members at their high point. While most failed financially, these "philanthropic monopolies," as one alliance speaker termed them, inspired farmers to look to large-scale organization to cope with their economic difficulties.[19] But cooperation was only part of the alliance message.

In the South, alliance-backed Democratic candidates won four governorships and forty-eight congressional seats in 1890.[20] But at a time when falling prices and rising debts conspired against the survival of family farmers, the two political parties seemed incapable of representing the needs of poor farmers. And so alliance members organized a political party—the People's Party, or the Populists, as they came to be known. The Populists attracted supporters across the nation by appealing to those convinced that there were deep flaws in the political economy of Gilded Age America, flaws that both political parties refused to address. Veterans of earlier fights for currency reform, disaffected industrial laborers, proponents of the benevolent socialism of Edward Bellamy's popular *Looking Backward*, and the champions of Henry George's farmer-friendly "single-tax" proposal joined alliance members in the new party. The Populists nominated former Civil War general James B. Weaver as their presidential candidate at the party's first national convention in Omaha, Nebraska, on July 4, 1892.[21]

At that meeting the party adopted a platform that crystallized the alliance's cooperate program into a coherent political vision. The platform's preamble, written by longtime political iconoclast and Minnesota populist Ignatius Donnelly, warned that "the fruits of the toil of millions [had been] boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few."[22] Taken as a whole, the Omaha Platform and the larger Populist movement sought to counter the scale and power of monopolistic capitalism with a strong, engaged, and modern federal government. The platform proposed an unprecedented expansion of federal power. It advocated nationalizing the country's railroad and telegraph systems to ensure that essential services would be run in the best interests of the people. In an attempt to deal with the lack of currency available to farmers, it advocated postal savings banks to protect depositors and extend credit. It called for the establishment of a network of federally managed warehouses—called subtreasuries—which would extend government loans to farmers who stored crops in the warehouses as they awaited higher market prices. To save debtors it promoted an inflationary monetary policy by monetizing silver. Direct election of senators and the secret ballot would ensure that this federal government would serve the interest of the people rather than entrenched partisan interests, and a graduated income tax would protect Americans from the establishment of an American aristocracy. Combined, these efforts would, Populists believed, help shift economic and political power back toward the nation's producing classes.

In the Populists' first national election campaign in 1892, Weaver received over one million votes (and twenty-two electoral votes), a truly startling performance that signaled a bright future for the Populists. And when the Panic of 1893 sparked the worst economic depression the nation had ever yet seen, the Populist movement won further credibility and gained even more ground. Kansas Populist Mary Lease, one of the movement's most fervent speakers, famously, and perhaps apocryphally, called on farmers to "raise less corn and more Hell." Populist stump speakers crossed the country, speaking with righteous indignation, blaming the greed of business elites and corrupt party politicians for causing the crisis fueling America's widening inequality.

Southern orators like Texas's James "Cyclone" Davis and Georgian firebrand Tom Watson stumped across the South decrying the abuses of northern capitalists and the Democratic Party. Pamphlets such as W. H. Harvey's *Coin's Financial School* and Henry D. Lloyd's *Wealth Against Commonwealth* provided Populist answers to the age's many perceived problems. The faltering economy combined with the Populist's extensive organizing. In the 1894 elections, Populists elected six senators and seven representatives to Congress. The third party seemed destined to conquer American politics.[23]

The movement, however, still faced substantial obstacles, especially in the South. The failure of alliance-backed Democrats to live up to their campaign promises drove some southerners to break with the party of their forefathers and join the Populists. Many, however, were unwilling to take what was, for southerners, a radical step. Southern Democrats, for their part, responded to the Populist challenge with electoral fraud and racial demagoguery. Both severely limited Populist gains. The alliance struggled to balance the pervasive white supremacy of the American South with their call for a grand union of the producing class. American racial attitudes—and their virulent southern strain—simply proved too formidable. Democrats race-baited Populists, and Populists capitulated. The Colored Farmers' Alliance, which had formed as a segregated sister organization to the southern alliance and had as many as 250,000 members at its peak, fell prey to racial and class-based hostility. The group went into rapid decline in 1891 when faced with the violent white repression of a number of Colored Farmers' Alliance–sponsored cotton picker strikes. Racial mistrust and division remained the rule, even among Populists, and even in North Carolina, where a political marriage of convenience between Populists and Republicans resulted in the election of Populist Marion Butler to the Senate. Populists opposed Democratic corruption, but this did not necessarily make them champions of interracial democracy. As Butler explained to an audience in Edgecombe County, "We are in favor of white supremacy, but we are not in favor of cheating and fraud to get it."[24] In fact, across much of the South, Populists and Farmers' Alliance members were often at the forefront of the movement for disfranchisement and segregation.

Populism exploded in popularity. The first major political force to tap into the vast discomfort of many Americans with the disruptions wrought by industrial capitalism, the Populist Party seemed poise to capture political victory. And yet, even as Populism gained national traction, the movement was stumbling. The party's often divided leadership found it difficult to shepherd what remained a diverse and loosely organized coalition of reformers toward unified political action. The Omaha platform was a radical document, and some state party leaders selectively embraced its reforms. More importantly, the institutionalized parties were still too strong, and the Democrats loomed, ready to swallow Populist frustrations and inaugurate a new era of American politics.

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16.7: William Jennings Bryan and the Politics of Gold



Figure 16.7.1: William Jennings Bryan, 1896. Library of Congress, LC-USZC2-6259.

William Jennings Bryan (March 19, 1860–July 26, 1925) accomplished many different things in his life: he was a skilled orator, a Nebraska congressman, a three-time presidential candidate, U.S. secretary of state under Woodrow Wilson, and a lawyer who supported prohibition and opposed Darwinism (most notably in the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial). In terms of his political career, he won national renown for his attack on the gold standard and his tireless promotion of free silver and policies for the benefit of the average American. Although Bryan was unsuccessful in winning the presidency, he forever altered the course of American political history.[25]

Bryan was born in Salem, Illinois, in 1860 to a devout family with a strong passion for law, politics, and public speaking. At twenty, he attended Union Law College in Chicago and passed the bar shortly thereafter. After his marriage to Mary Baird in Illinois, Bryan and his young family relocated to Nebraska, where he won a reputation among the state's Democratic Party leaders as an extraordinary orator. Bryan later won recognition as one of the greatest speakers in American history.

When economic depressions struck the Midwest in the late 1880s, despairing farmers faced low crop prices and found few politicians on their side. While many rallied to the Populist cause, Bryan worked from within the Democratic Party, using the strength of his oratory. After delivering one speech, he told his wife, "Last night I found that I had a power over the audience. I could move them as I chose. I have more than usual power as a speaker. . . . God grant that I may use it wisely."[26]He soon won election to the Nebraska House of Representatives, where he served for two terms. Although he lost a bid to join the Nebraska Senate, Bryan refocused on a much higher political position: the presidency of the United States. There, he believed he could change the country by defending farmers and urban laborers against the corruptions of big business.

In 1895–1896, Bryan launched a national speaking tour in which he promoted the free coinage of silver. He believed that bimetallism, by inflating American currency, could alleviate farmers' debts. In contrast, Republicans championed the gold standard and a flat money supply. American monetary standards became a leading campaign issue. Then, in July 1896, the Democratic Party's national convention met to choose their presidential nominee in the upcoming election. The party platform asserted that the gold standard was "not only un-American but anti-American." Bryan spoke last at the convention. He astounded his listeners. At the conclusion of his stirring speech, he declared, "Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."[27] After a few seconds of stunned silence, the convention went wild. Some wept, many shouted, and the band began to play "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Bryan received the 1896 Democratic presidential nomination.

The Republicans ran William McKinley, an economic conservative who championed business interests and the gold standard.

Bryan crisscrossed the country spreading the silver gospel. The election drew enormous attention and much emotion. According to Bryan's wife, he received two thousand letters of support every day that year, an enormous amount for any politician, let alone one not currently in office. Yet Bryan could not defeat McKinley. The pro-business Republicans outspent Bryan's campaign fivefold. A notably high 79.3 percent of eligible American voters cast ballots, and turnout averaged 90 percent in areas supportive of Bryan, but Republicans swayed the population-dense Northeast and Great Lakes region and stymied the Democrats.[28]

In early 1900, Congress passed the Gold Standard Act, which put the country on the gold standard, effectively ending the debate over the nation's monetary policy. Bryan sought the presidency again in 1900 but was again defeated, as he would be yet again in 1908.

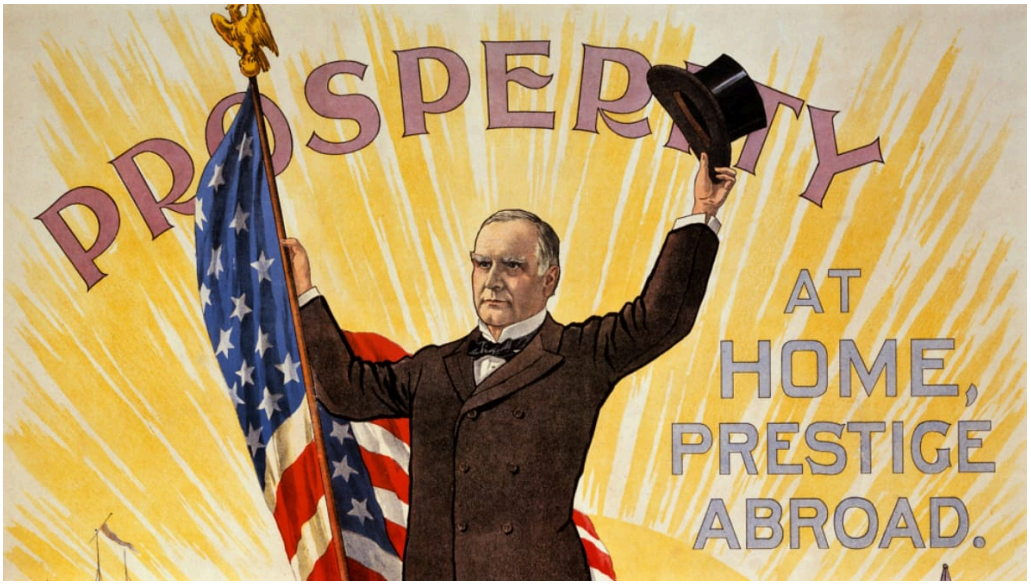


Figure 16.7.2: Conservative William McKinley promised prosperity to ordinary Americans through his "sound money" initiative, a policy he ran on during his election campaigns in 1896 and again in 1900. This election poster touts McKinley's gold standard policy as bringing "Prosperity at Home, Prestige Abroad." "Prosperity at home, prestige abroad," [between 1895 and 1900]. *Library of Congress*,.

Bryan was among the most influential losers in American political history. When the agrarian wing of the Democratic Party nominated the Nebraska congressman in 1896, Bryan's fiery condemnation of northeastern financial interests and his impassioned calls for "free and unlimited coinage of silver" co-opted popular Populist issues. The Democrats stood ready to siphon off a large proportion of the Populists' political support. When the People's Party held its own convention two weeks later, the party's moderate wing, in a fiercely contested move, overrode the objections of more ideologically pure Populists and nominated Bryan as the Populist candidate as well. This strategy of temporary "fusion" movement fatally fractured the movement and the party. Populist energy moved from the radical-yet-still-weak People's Party to the more moderate-yet-powerful Democratic Party. And although at first glance the Populist movement appears to have been a failure—its minor electoral gains were short-lived, it did little to dislodge the entrenched two-party system, and the Populist dream of a cooperative commonwealth never took shape—in terms of lasting impact, the Populist Party proved the most significant third-party movement in American history. The agrarian revolt established the roots of later reform, and the majority of policies outlined within the Omaha Platform would eventually be put into law over the following decades under the management of middle-class reformers. In large measure, the Populist vision laid the intellectual groundwork for the coming progressive movement.[29]



Figure 16.7.3: William Jennings Bryan espoused Populist politics while working within the two-party system as a Democrat. Republicans characterized this as a kind hijacking by Bryan, arguing that the Democratic Party was now a party of a radical faction of Populists. The pro-Republican magazine Judge rendered this perspective in a political cartoon showing Bryan (representing Populism writ large) as huge serpent swallowing a bucking mule (representing the Democratic party). Political Cartoon, Judge, 1896. *Wikimedia.*

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16.8: The Socialists

American socialists carried on the Populists' radical tradition by uniting farmers and workers in a sustained, decades-long political struggle to reorder American economic life. Socialists argued that wealth and power were consolidated in the hands of too few individuals, that monopolies and trusts controlled too much of the economy, and that owners and investors grew rich while the workers who produced their wealth, despite massive productivity gains and rising national wealth, still suffered from low pay, long hours, and unsafe working conditions. Karl Marx had described the new industrial economy as a worldwide class struggle between the wealthy bourgeoisie, who owned the means of production, such as factories and farms, and the proletariat, factory workers and tenant farmers who worked only for the wealth of others. According to Eugene Debs, socialists sought "the overthrow of the capitalist system and the emancipation of the working class from wage slavery."[30] Under an imagined socialist cooperative commonwealth, the means of production would be owned collectively, ensuring that all men and women received a fair wage for their labor. According to socialist organizer and newspaper editor Oscar Ameringer, socialists wanted "ownership of the trust by the government, and the ownership of the government by the people."[31]

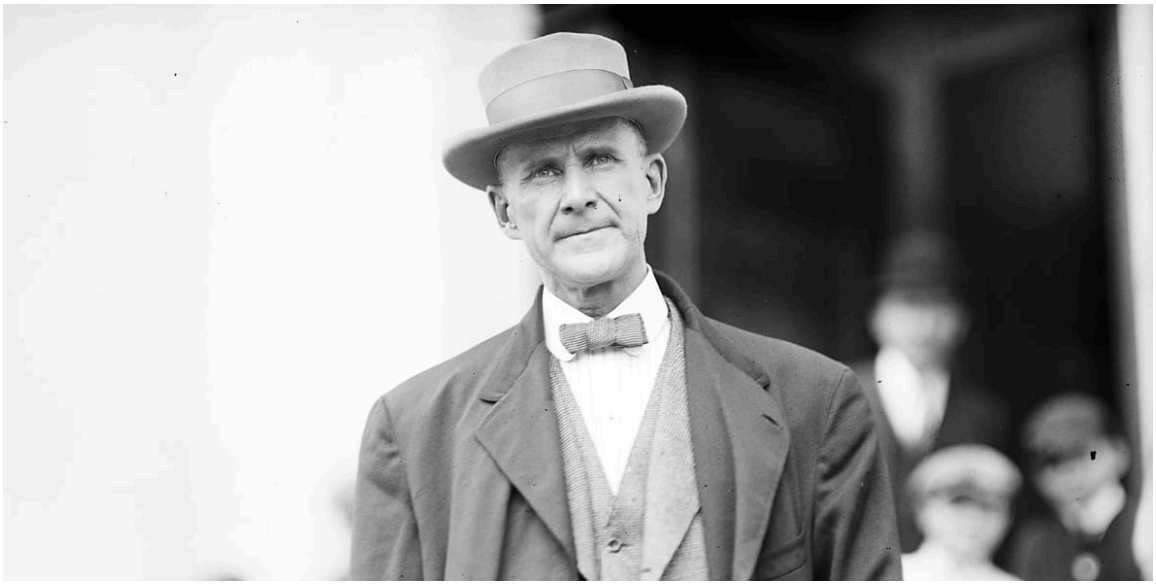


Figure 16.8.1: American socialist leader Eugene Victor Debs, 1912. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-hec-01584.

The socialist movement drew from a diverse constituency. Party membership was open to all regardless of race, gender, class, ethnicity, or religion. Many prominent Americans, such as Helen Keller, Upton Sinclair, and Jack London, became socialists. They were joined by masses of American laborers from across the United States: factory workers, miners, railroad builders, tenant farmers, and small farmers all united under the red flag of socialism. Many united with labor leader William D. "Big Bill" Haywood and other radicals in 1905 to form the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the "Wobblies," a radical and confrontational union that welcomed all workers, regardless of race or gender.[32]) Others turned to politics.

The Socialist Party of America (SPA), founded in 1901, carried on the American third-party political tradition. Socialist mayors were elected in thirty-three cities and towns, from Berkeley, California, to Schenectady, New York, and two socialists—Victor Berger from Wisconsin and Meyer London from New York—won congressional seats. All told, over one thousand socialist candidates won various American political offices. Julius A. Wayland, editor of the socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason*, proclaimed that "socialism is coming. It's coming like a prairie fire and nothing can stop it . . . you can feel it in the air."[33] By 1913 there were 150,000 members of the Socialist Party and, in 1912, Eugene V. Debs, the Indiana-born Socialist Party candidate for president, received almost one million votes, or 6 percent of the total.[34]

Over the following years, however, the embrace of many socialist policies by progressive reformers, internal ideological and tactical disagreements, a failure to dissuade most Americans of the perceived incompatibility between socialism and American values, and, especially, government oppression and censorship, particularly during and after World War I, ultimately sank the party. Like the Populists, however, socialists had tapped into a deep well of discontent, and their energy and organizing filtered out into American culture and American politics.

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16.9: Conclusion

The march of capital transformed patterns of American life. While some enjoyed unprecedented levels of wealth, and an ever-growing slice of middle-class workers won an ever more comfortable standard of living, vast numbers of farmers lost their land and a growing industrial working class struggled to earn wages sufficient to support themselves and their families. Industrial capitalism brought wealth and it brought poverty; it created owners and investors and it created employees. But whether winners or losers in the new economy, all Americans reckoned in some way with their new industrial world.

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16.10: Primary Sources

William Graham Sumner on Social Darwnism (ca.1880s)

William Graham Sumner, a sociologist at Yale University, penned several pieces associated with the philosophy of Social Darwinism. In the following, Sumner explains his vision of nature and liberty in a just society.

Henry George, *Progress and Poverty,* Selections (1879)

In 1879, the economist Henry George penned a massive bestseller exploring the contradictory rise of both rapid economic growth and crippling poverty.

Andrew Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth (1889)

Andrew Carnegie, the American steel titan, explains his vision for the proper role of wealth in American society.

Grover Cleveland's Veto of the Texas Seed Bill (1887)

Amid a crushing drought that devastated many Texas farmers, Grover Cleveland vetoed a bill designed to help farmers recover by supplying them with seed. In his veto message, Cleveland explained his vision of proper government.

The "Omaha Platform" of the People's Party (1892)

In 1892, the People's, or Populist, Party crafted a platform that indicted the corruptions of the Gilded Age and promised government policies to aid "the people."

"The Tournament of Today" (1883)

"Print shows a jousting tournament between an oversized knight riding horse-shaped armor labeled "Monopoly" over a locomotive, with a long plume labeled "Arrogance", and carrying a shield labeled "Corruption of the Legislature" and a lance labeled "Subsidized Press", and a barefoot man labeled "Labor" riding an emaciated horse labeled "Poverty", and carrying a sledgehammer labeled "Strike". On the left is seating "Reserved for Capitalists" where Cyrus W. Field, William H. Vanderbilt, John Roach, Jay Gould, and Russell Sage are sitting. On the right, behind the labor section, are telegraph lines flying monopoly banners that are labeled "Wall St., W.U.T. Co., [and] N.Y.C. RR"."

Lawrence Textile Strike (1912)

In 1912, The International Workers of the World (the IWW, or the "Wobblies") organized textile workers in Lawrence and Lowell, Massachusetts. This photo shows strikers, carrying American flags, confronting strikebreakers and militia bayonets.

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17: CONQUERING THE WEST



Edward S. Curtis, Navajo Riders in Canyon de Chelly, c1904. Library of Congress.

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17.1: Reference Material

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17.2: Introduction

Native Americans long dominated the vastness of the American West. Linked culturally and geographically by trade, travel, and warfare, various indigenous groups controlled most of the continent west of the Mississippi River deep into the nineteenth century. Spanish, French, British, and later American traders had integrated themselves into many regional economies, and American emigrants pushed ever westward, but no imperial power had yet achieved anything approximating political or military control over the great bulk of the continent. But then the Civil War came and went and decoupled the West from the question of slavery just as the United States industrialized and laid down rails and pushed its ever-expanding population ever farther west.

Indigenous Americans had lived in North America for over ten millennia and, into the late nineteenth century, perhaps as many as 250,000 Natives still inhabited the American West.[1] But then unending waves of American settlers, the American military, and the unstoppable onrush of American capital conquered all. The United States removed Native groups to ever-shrinking reservations, incorporated the West first as territories and then as states, and, for the first time in its history, controlled the enormity of land between the two oceans.

The history of the late-nineteenth-century West is many-sided. Tragedy for some, triumph for others, the many intertwined histories of the American West marked a pivotal transformation in the history of the United States.

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17.3: Post-Civil War Westward Migration

n the decades after the Civil War, Americans poured across the Mississippi River in record numbers. No longer simply crossing over the continent for new imagined Edens in California or Oregon, they settled now in the vast heart of the continent.

Many of the first American migrants had come to the West in search of quick profits during the midcentury gold and silver rushes. As in the California rush of 1848–1849, droves of prospectors poured in after precious-metal strikes in Colorado in 1858, Nevada in 1859, Idaho in 1860, Montana in 1863, and the Black Hills in 1874. While women often performed housework that allowed mining families to subsist in often difficult conditions, a significant portion of the mining workforce were single men without families dependent on service industries in nearby towns and cities. There, working-class women worked in shops, saloons, boardinghouses, and brothels. Many of these ancillary operations profited from the mining boom: as failed prospectors found, the rush itself often generated more wealth than the mines. The gold that left Colorado in the first seven years after the Pikes Peak gold strike—estimated at $25.5 million—was, for instance, less than half of what outside parties had invested in the fever. The 100,000-plus migrants who settled in the Rocky Mountains were ultimately more valuable to the region's development than the gold they came to find.[2]

Others came to the Plains to extract the hides of the great bison herds. Millions of animals had roamed the Plains, but their tough leather supplied industrial belting in eastern factories and raw material for the booming clothing industry. Specialized teams took down and skinned the herds. The infamous American bison slaughter peaked in the early 1870s. The number of American bison plummeted from over ten million at midcentury to only a few hundred by the early 1880s. The expansion of the railroads allowed ranching to replace the bison with cattle on the American grasslands.[3]



Figure 17.3.1: While bison supplied leather for America's booming clothing industry, the skulls of the animals also provided a key ingredient in fertilizer. This 1870s photograph illustrates the massive number of bison killed for these and other reasons (including sport) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Photograph of a pile of American bison skulls waiting to be ground for fertilizer, 1870s. *Wikimedia*.

The nearly seventy thousand members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (more commonly called Mormons) who migrated west between 1846 and 1868 were similar to other Americans traveling west on the overland trails. They faced many of the same problems, but unlike most other American migrants, Mormons were fleeing from religious persecution.

Many historians view Mormonism as a "uniquely American faith," not just because it was founded by Joseph Smith in New York in the 1830s, but because of its optimistic and future-oriented tenets. Mormons believed that Americans were exceptional—chosen by God to spread truth across the world and to build utopia, a New Jerusalem in North America. However, many Americans were suspicious of the Latter-Day Saint movement and its unusual rituals, especially the practice of polygamy, and most Mormons found it difficult to practice their faith in the eastern United States. Thus began a series of migrations in the midnineteenth century, first to Illinois, then Missouri and Nebraska, and finally into Utah Territory.

Once in the west, Mormon settlements served as important supply points for other emigrants heading on to California and Oregon. Brigham Young, the leader of the Church after the death of Joseph Smith, was appointed governor of the Utah Territory by the federal government in 1850. He encouraged Mormon residents of the territory to engage in agricultural pursuits and be cautious of the outsiders who arrived as the mining and railroad industries developed in the region.[4]

It was land, ultimately, that drew the most migrants to the West. Family farms were the backbone of the agricultural economy that expanded in the West after the Civil War. In 1862, northerners in Congress passed the Homestead Act, which allowed male citizens (or those who declared their intent to become citizens) to claim federally owned lands in the West. Settlers could head west, choose a 160-acre surveyed section of land, file a claim, and begin "improving" the land by plowing fields, building houses and barns, or digging wells, and, after five years of living on the land, could apply for the official title deed to the land. Hundreds of thousands of Americans used the Homestead Act to acquire land. The treeless plains that had been considered unfit for settlement became the new agricultural mecca for land-hungry Americans.[5]

The Homestead Act excluded married women from filing claims because they were considered the legal dependents of their husbands. Some unmarried women filed claims on their own, but single farmers (male or female) were hard-pressed to run a farm and they were a small minority. Most farm households adopted traditional divisions of labor: men worked in the fields and women managed the home and kept the family fed. Both were essential.[6]

Migrants sometimes found in homesteads a self-sufficiency denied at home. Second or third sons who did not inherit land in Scandinavia, for instance, founded farm communities in Minnesota, Dakota, and other Midwestern territories in the 1860s. Boosters encouraged emigration by advertising the semiarid Plains as, for instance, "a flowery meadow of great fertility clothed in nutritious grasses, and watered by numerous streams."[7] Western populations exploded. The Plains were transformed. In 1860, for example, Kansas had about 10,000 farms; in 1880 it had 239,000. Texas saw enormous population growth. The federal government counted 200,000 people in Texas in 1850, 1,600,000 in 1880, and 3,000,000 in 1900, making it the sixth most populous state in the nation.

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17.4: The Indian Wars and Federal Peace Policies

The “Indian wars,” so mythologized in western folklore, were a series of sporadic, localized, and often brief engagements between U.S. military forces and various Native American groups. The more sustained and more impactful conflict, meanwhile, was economic and cultural. The vast and cyclical movement across the Great Plains to hunt buffalo, raid enemies, and trade goods was incompatible with new patterns of American settlement and railroad construction. Thomas Jefferson’s old dream that Indian groups might live isolated in the West was, in the face of American expansion, no longer a viable reality. Political, economic, and even humanitarian concerns intensified American efforts to isolate Indians on reservations. Although Indian removal had long been a part of federal Indian policy, following the Civil War the U.S. government redoubled its efforts. If treaties and other forms of persistent coercion would not work, more drastic measures were deemed necessary. Against the threat of confinement and the extinction of traditional ways of life, Native Americans battled the American army and the encroaching lines of American settlement.

In one of the earliest western engagements, in 1862, while the Civil War still consumed the nation, tensions erupted between Dakota Sioux and white settlers in Minnesota and the Dakota Territory. The 1850 U.S. census recorded a white population of about 6,000 in Minnesota; eight years later, when it became a state, it was more than 150,000.[8] The influx of American farmers pushed the Sioux to the breaking point. Hunting became unsustainable and those Sioux who had taken up farming found only poverty. Starvation wracked many. Then, on August 17, 1862, four young men of the Santees, a Sioux tribe, killed five white settlers near the Redwood Agency, an American administrative office. In the face of an inevitable American retaliation, and over the protests of many members, the tribe chose war. On the following day, Sioux warriors attacked settlements near the Agency. They killed thirty-one men, women, and children. They then ambushed a U.S. military detachment at Redwood Ferry, killing twenty-three. The governor of Minnesota called up militia and several thousand Americans waged war against the Sioux insurgents. Fighting broke out at New Ulm, Fort Ridgely, and Birch Coulee, but the Americans broke the Indian resistance at the Battle of Wood Lake on September 23, ending the so-called Dakota War, also known as the Sioux Uprising.[9]



Figure 17.4.1: Buffalo Soldiers, the nickname given to African-American cavalrymen by the native Americans they fought, were the first peacetime all-black regiments in the regular United States army. These soldiers regularly confronted racial prejudice from other Army members and civilians, but were an essential part of American victories during the Indian Wars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. “[Buffalo soldiers of the 25th Infantry, some wearing buffalo robes, Ft. Keogh, Montana] / Chr. Barthelmess, photographer, Fort Keogh, Montana,” 1890. *Library of Congress*.

More than two thousand Sioux had been taken prisoner during the fighting. Many were tried at federal forts for murder, rape, and other atrocities. Military tribunals convicted 303 Sioux and sentenced them to hang. At the last minute, President Lincoln commuted all but thirty eight of the sentences. Terrified Minnesota settlers and government officials insisted not only that the Sioux lose much of their reservation lands and be removed farther west, but that those who had fled be hunted down and placed on reservations as well. The American military gave chase and, on September 3, 1863, after a year of attrition, American military units surrounded a large encampment of Dakota Sioux. American troops killed an estimated three hundred men, women, and

children. Dozens more were taken prisoner. Troops spent the next two days burning winter food and supply stores to starve out the Sioux resistance, which would continue to smolder.Farther south, tensions flared in Colorado. In 1851, the Treaty of Fort Laramie had secured right-of-way access for Americans passing through on their way to California and Oregon. But a gold rush in 1858 drew approximately 100,000 white gold seekers, and they demanded new treaties be made with local Indian groups to secure land rights in the newly created Colorado Territory. Cheyenne bands splintered over the possibility of signing a new treaty that would confine them to a reservation. Settlers, already wary of raids by powerful groups of Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Comanches, meanwhile read in their local newspapers sensationalist accounts of the Sioux uprising in Minnesota. Militia leader John M. Chivington warned settlers in the summer of 1864 that the Cheyenne were dangerous savages, urged war, and promised a swift military victory. Sporadic fighting broke out. Although Chivington warned of Cheyenne savagery, the aged Cheyenne chief Black Kettle, believing that a peace treaty would be best for his people, traveled to Denver to arrange for peace talks. He and his followers traveled toward Fort Lyon in accordance with government instructions, but on November 29, 1864, Chivington ordered his seven hundred militiamen to move on the Cheyenne camp near Fort Lyon at Sand Creek. The Cheyenne tried to declare their peaceful intentions but Chivington's militia cut them down. It was a slaughter. About two hundred men, women, and children were killed.[10]

The Sand Creek Massacre was a national scandal, alternately condemned and applauded. News of the massacre reached other Native groups and the American frontier erupted into conflict. Americans pushed for a new "peace policy." Congress, confronted with these tragedies and further violence, authorized in 1868 the creation of an Indian Peace Commission. The commission's study of American Indians decried prior American policy and galvanized support for reformers. After the inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant the following spring, Congress allied with prominent philanthropists to create the Board of Indian Commissioners, a permanent advisory body to oversee Indian affairs and prevent the further outbreak of violence. The board effectively Christianized American Indian policy. Much of the reservation system was handed over to Protestant churches, which were tasked with finding agents and missionaries to manage reservation life. Congress hoped that religiously minded men might fare better at creating just assimilation policies and persuading Indians to accept them. Historian Francis Paul Prucha believed that this attempt at a new "peace policy . . . might just have properly been labelled the 'religious policy.'"[11]



Figure 17.4.2: Tom Torlino, a member of the Navajo Nation, entered the Carlisle Indian School, a Native American boarding school founded by the United States government in 1879, on October 21, 1882 and departed on August 28, 1886. Torlino's student file contained photographs from 1882 and 1885. *Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center*

Many female Christian missionaries played a central role in cultural reeducation programs that attempted to not only instill Protestant religion but also impose traditional American gender roles and family structures. They endeavored to replace Indians' tribal social units with small, patriarchal households. Women's labor became a contentious issue because few tribes divided labor according to the gender norms of middle- and upper-class Americans. Fieldwork, the traditional domain of white males, was primarily performed by Native women, who also usually controlled the products of their labor, if not the land that was worked, giving them status in society as laborers and food providers. For missionaries, the goal was to get Native women to leave the fields and engage in more proper "women's" work—housework. Christian missionaries performed much as secular federal agents had. Few American agents could meet Native Americans on their own terms. Most viewed reservation Indians as lazy and thought of Native cultures as inferior to their own. The views of J. L. Broaddus, appointed to oversee several small Indian tribes on the

Hoopa Valley reservation in California, are illustrative: in his annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1875, he wrote, “The great majority of them are idle, listless, careless, and improvident. They seem to take no thought about provision for the future, and many of them would not work at all if they were not compelled to do so. They would rather live upon the roots and acorns gathered by their women than to work for flour and beef.”[12]

If the Indians could not be forced through kindness to change their ways, most agreed that it was acceptable to use force, which Native groups resisted. In Texas and the Southern Plains, the Comanche, the Kiowa, and their allies had wielded enormous influence. The Comanche in particular controlled huge swaths of territory and raided vast areas, inspiring terror from the Rocky Mountains to the interior of northern Mexico to the Texas Gulf Coast. But after the Civil War, the U.S. military refocused its attention on the Southern Plains.

The American military first sent messengers to the Plains to find the elusive Comanche bands and ask them to come to peace negotiations at Medicine Lodge Creek in the fall of 1867. But terms were muddled: American officials believed that Comanche bands had accepted reservation life, while Comanche leaders believed they were guaranteed vast lands for buffalo hunting. Comanche bands used designated reservation lands as a base from which to collect supplies and federal annuity goods while continuing to hunt, trade, and raid American settlements in Texas.

Confronted with renewed Comanche raiding, particularly by the famed war leader Quanah Parker, the U.S. military finally proclaimed that all Indians who were not settled on the reservation by the fall of 1874 would be considered “hostile.” The Red River War began when many Comanche bands refused to resettle and the American military launched expeditions into the Plains to subdue them, culminating in the defeat of the remaining roaming bands in the canyonlands of the Texas Panhandle. Cold and hungry, with their way of life already decimated by soldiers, settlers, cattlemen, and railroads, the last free Comanche bands were moved to the reservation at Fort Sill, in what is now southwestern Oklahoma.[13]

On the northern Plains, the Sioux people had yet to fully surrender. Following the troubles of 1862, many bands had signed treaties with the United States and drifted into the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies to collect rations and annuities, but many continued to resist American encroachment, particularly during Red Cloud’s War, a rare victory for the Plains people that resulted in the Treaty of 1868 and created the Great Sioux Reservation. Then, in 1874, an American expedition to the Black Hills of South Dakota discovered gold. White prospectors flooded the territory. Caring very little about Indian rights and very much about getting rich, they brought the Sioux situation again to its breaking point. Aware that U.S. citizens were violating treaty provisions, but unwilling to prevent them from searching for gold, federal officials pressured the western Sioux to sign a new treaty that would transfer control of the Black Hills to the United States while General Philip Sheridan quietly moved U.S. troops into the region. Initial clashes between U.S. troops and Sioux warriors resulted in several Sioux victories that, combined with the visions of Sitting Bull, who had dreamed of an even more triumphant victory, attracted Sioux bands who had already signed treaties but now joined to fight.[14]

In late June 1876, a division of the 7th Cavalry Regiment led by Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer was sent up a trail into the Black Hills as an advance guard for a larger force. Custer’s men approached a camp along a river known to the Sioux as Greasy Grass but marked on Custer’s map as Little Bighorn, and they found that the influx of “treaty” Sioux as well as aggrieved Cheyenne and other allies had swelled the population of the village far beyond Custer’s estimation. Custer’s 7th Cavalry was vastly outnumbered, and he and 268 of his men were killed.[15]

Custer’s fall shocked the nation. Cries for a swift American response filled the public sphere, and military expeditions were sent out to crush Native resistance. The Sioux splintered off into the wilderness and began a campaign of intermittent resistance but, outnumbered and suffering after a long, hungry winter, Crazy Horse led a band of Oglala Sioux to surrender in May 1877. Other bands gradually followed until finally, in July 1881, Sitting Bull and his followers at last laid down their weapons and came to the reservation. Indigenous powers had been defeated. The Plains, it seemed, had been pacified.

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17.5: Beyond the Plains

Plains peoples were not the only ones who suffered as a result of American expansion. Groups like the Utes and Paiutes were pushed out of the Rocky Mountains by U.S. expansion into Colorado and away from the northern Great Basin by the expanding Mormon population in Utah Territory in the 1850s and 1860s. Faced with a shrinking territorial base, members of these two groups often joined the U.S. military in its campaigns in the southwest against other powerful Native groups like the Hopi, the Zuni, the Jicarilla Apache, and especially the Navajo, whose population of at least ten thousand engaged in both farming and sheep herding on some of the most valuable lands acquired by the United States after the Mexican War.

Conflicts between the U.S. military, American settlers, and Native populations increased throughout the 1850s. By 1862, General James Carleton began searching for a reservation where he could remove the Navajo and end their threat to U.S. expansion in the Southwest. Carleton selected a dry, almost treeless site in the Bosque Redondo Valley, three hundred miles from the Navajo homeland.

In April 1863, Carleton gave orders to Colonel Kit Carson to round up the entire Navajo population and escort them to Bosque Redondo. Those who resisted would be shot. Thus began a period of Navajo history called the Long Walk, which remains deeply important to Navajo people today. The Long Walk was not a single event but a series of forced marches to the reservation at Bosque Redondo between August 1863 and December 1866. Conditions at Bosque Redondo were horrible. Provisions provided by the U.S. Army were not only inadequate but often spoiled; disease was rampant, and thousands of Navajos died.

By 1868, it had become clear that life at the reservation was unsustainable. General William Tecumseh Sherman visited the reservation and wrote of the inhumane situation in which the Navajo were essentially kept as prisoners, but lack of cost-effectiveness was the main reason Sherman recommended that the Navajo be returned to their homeland in the West. On June 1, 1868, the Navajo signed the Treaty of Bosque Redondo, an unprecedented treaty in the history of U.S.-Indian relations in which the Navajo were able to return from the reservation to their homeland.

The destruction of Indian nations in California and the Pacific Northwest received significantly less attention than the dramatic conquest of the Plains, but Native peoples in these regions also experienced violence, population decline, and territorial loss. For example, in 1872, the California/Oregon border erupted in violence when the Modoc people left the reservation of their historic enemies, the Klamath Indians, and returned to an area known as Lost River. Americans had settled the region after Modoc removal several years before, and they complained bitterly of the Natives' return. The U.S. military arrived when fifty-two remaining Modoc warriors, led by a man called Captain Jack, refused to return to the reservation and holed up in defensive positions along the state border. They fought a guerrilla war for eleven months in which at least two hundred U.S. troops were killed before they were finally forced to surrender.[16] Four years later, in the Pacific Northwest, a branch of the Nez Percé (who, generations earlier, had aided Lewis and Clark in their famous journey to the Pacific Ocean) refused to be moved to a reservation and, under the leadership of Chief Joseph, attempted to flee to Canada but were pursued by the U.S. Cavalry. The outnumbered Nez Percé battled across a thousand miles and were attacked nearly two dozen times before they succumbed to hunger and exhaustion, surrendered, and were forced to return. The flight of the Nez Percé captured the attention of the nation, and a transcript of Chief Joseph's surrender, as recorded by a U.S. Army officer, became a landmark of American rhetoric. "Hear me, my chiefs," Joseph was supposed to have said, "I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."[17]

The history of Indian-American relations in California typified the decline of the western Indians. The treaties that had been signed with numerous Native nations in California in the 1850s were never ratified by the Senate. Over one hundred distinct Native groups had lived in California before the Spanish and American conquests, but by 1880, the Native population of California had collapsed from about 150,000 on the eve of the gold rush to a little less than 20,000. A few reservation areas were eventually set up by the U.S. government to collect what remained of the Native population, but most were dispersed throughout California. This was partly the result of state laws from the 1850s that allowed white Californians to obtain both Native children and adults as "apprentice" laborers by merely bringing the desired laborer before a judge and promising to feed, clothe, and eventually release them after a period of "service" that ranged from ten to twenty years. Thousands of California's Natives were thus pressed into a form of slave labor that supported the growing mining, agricultural, railroad, and cattle industries.

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17.6: Western Economic Expansion- Railroads and Cattle

As Native peoples were pushed out, American settlers poured in. Aside from agriculture and the extraction of natural resources—such as timber and precious metals—two major industries fueled the new western economy: ranching and railroads. Both developed in connection with each other and both shaped the collective American memory of the post–Civil War "Wild West."

As one booster put it, "the West is purely a railroad enterprise." No economic enterprise rivaled the railroads in scale, scope, or sheer impact. No other businesses had attracted such enormous sums of capital, and no other ventures ever received such lavish government subsidies (business historian Alfred Chandler called the railroads the "first modern business enterprise").[18] By "annihilating time and space"—by connecting the vastness of the continent—the railroads transformed the United States and made the American West.



Figure 17.6.1: Railroads made the settlement and growth of the West possible. By the late nineteenth century, maps of the Midwest were filled with advertisements touting how quickly a traveler could traverse the country. The Environment and Society Portal, a digital project from the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, a joint initiative of LMU Munich and the Deutsches Museum.

No railroad enterprise so captured the American imagination—or federal support—as the transcontinental railroad. The transcontinental railroad crossed western plains and mountains and linked the West Coast with the rail networks of the eastern United States. Constructed from the west by the Central Pacific and from the east by the Union Pacific, the two roads were linked in Utah in 1869 to great national fanfare. But such a herculean task was not easy, and national legislators threw enormous subsidies at railroad companies, a part of the Republican Party platform since 1856. The 1862 Pacific Railroad Act gave bonds of between $16,000 and $48,000 for each mile of construction and provided vast land grants to railroad companies. Between 1850 and 1871 alone, railroad companies received more than 175,000,000 acres of public land, an area larger than the state of Texas. Investors reaped enormous profits. As one congressional opponent put it in the 1870s, "If there be profit, the corporations may take it; if there be loss, the Government must bear it."[19]

If railroads attracted unparalleled subsidies and investments, they also created enormous labor demands. By 1880, approximately four hundred thousand men—or nearly 2.5 percent of the nation's entire workforce—labored in the railroad industry. Much of the work was dangerous and low-paying, and companies relied heavily on immigrant labor to build tracks. Companies employed Irish workers in the early nineteenth century and Chinese workers in the late nineteenth century. By 1880, over two hundred thousand Chinese migrants lived in the United States. Once the rails were laid, companies still needed a large workforce to keep the trains running. Much railroad work was dangerous, but perhaps the most hazardous work was done by brakemen. Before the advent of automatic braking, an engineer would blow the "down brake" whistle and brakemen would scramble to the top of the moving train, regardless of the weather conditions, and run from car to car manually turning brakes. Speed was necessary, and any slip could be fatal. Brakemen were also responsible for coupling the cars, attaching them together with a large pin. It was easy to lose a hand or finger and even a slight mistake could cause cars to collide.[20]

The railroads boomed. In 1850, there were 9,000 miles of railroads in the United States. In 1900 there were 190,000, including several transcontinental lines.[21] To manage these vast networks of freight and passenger lines, companies converged rails at hub cities. Of all the Midwestern and western cities that blossomed from the bridging of western resources and eastern capital in the late nineteenth century, Chicago was the most spectacular. It grew from two hundred inhabitants in 1833 to over a million by 1890. By 1893 it and the region from which it drew were completely transformed. The World's Columbian Exposition that year trumpeted the city's progress and broader technological progress, with typical Gilded Age ostentation. A huge, gleaming (but temporary) "White City" was built in neoclassical style to house all the features of the fair and cater to the needs of the visitors who arrived from all over the world. Highlighted in the title of this world's fair were the changes that had overtaken North America since Columbus made landfall four centuries earlier. Chicago became the most important western hub and served as the gateway between the farm and ranch country of the Great Plains and eastern markets. Railroads brought cattle from Texas to Chicago for slaughter, where they were then processed into packaged meats and shipped by refrigerated rail to New York City and other eastern cities. Such hubs became the central nodes in a rapid-transit economy that increasingly spread across the entire continent linking goods and people together in a new national network.

This national network created the fabled cattle drives of the 1860s and 1870s. The first cattle drives across the central Plains began soon after the Civil War. Railroads created the market for ranching, and for the few years after the war that railroads connected eastern markets with important market hubs such as Chicago, but had yet to reach Texas ranchlands, ranchers began driving cattle north, out of the Lone Star state, to major railroad terminuses in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. Ranchers used well-worn trails, such as the Chisholm Trail, for drives, but conflicts arose with Native Americans in the Indian Territory and farmers in Kansas who disliked the intrusion of large and environmentally destructive herds onto their own hunting, ranching, and farming lands. Other trails, such as the Western Trail, the Goodnight-Loving Trail, and the Shawnee Trail, were therefore blazed.



Figure 17.6.2: This photochrom print (a new technology in the late nineteenth century that colorized images from a black-and-white negative) depicts a cattle round up in Cimarron, a crossroads of the late-nineteenth-century cattle drives. Detroit Photographic Co., "Colorado. 'Round up' on the Cimarron," c. 1898. *Library of Congress*.

Cattle drives were difficult tasks for the crews of men who managed the herds. Historians estimate the number of men who worked as cowboys in the late-nineteenth century to be between twelve thousand and forty thousand. Perhaps a fourth were African American, and more were likely Mexican or Mexican American. Much about the American cowboys evolved from Mexican *vaqueros*: cowboys adopted Mexican practices, gear, and terms such as *rodeo*, *bronco*, and *lasso*."

While most cattle drivers were men, there are at least sixteen verifiable accounts of women participating in the drives. Some, like Molly Dyer Goodnight, accompanied their husbands. Others, like Lizzie Johnson Williams, helped drive their own herds. Williams made at least three known trips with her herds up the Chisholm Trail.

Many cowboys hoped one day to become ranch owners themselves, but employment was insecure and wages were low. Beginners could expect to earn around $20–$25 per month, and those with years of experience might earn $40–$45. Trail bosses could earn over $50 per month. And it was tough work. On a cattle drive, cowboys worked long hours and faced extremes of heat and cold and intense blowing dust. They subsisted on limited diets with irregular supplies.[22]



Figure 17.6.1: Cowboys like the one pictured here worked the drives that supplied Chicago and other mid-western cities with the necessary cattle to supply and help grow the meat-packing industry. Their work was obsolete by the turn of the century, yet their image lived on through vaudeville shows and films that romanticized life in the West. John C.H. Grabill, "The Cow Boy," c. 1888. *Library of Congress*.

But if workers of cattle earned low wages, owners and investors could receive riches. At the end of the Civil War, a steer worth $4 in Texas could fetch $40 in Kansas. Although profits slowly leveled off, large profits could still be made. And yet, by the 1880s, the great cattle drives were largely done. The railroads had created them, and the railroads ended them: railroad lines pushed into Texas and made the great drives obsolete. But ranching still brought profits and the Plains were better suited for grazing than for agriculture, and western ranchers continued supplying beef for national markets.

Ranching was just one of many western industries that depended on the railroads. By linking the Plains with national markets and rapidly moving people and goods, the railroads made the modern American West.

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17.7: The Allotment Era and Resistance in the Native West

As the rails moved into the West, and more and more Americans followed, the situation for Native groups deteriorated even further. Treaties negotiated between the United States and Native groups had typically promised that if tribes agreed to move to specific reservation lands, they would hold those lands collectively. But as American westward migration mounted and open lands closed, white settlers began to argue that Indians had more than their fair share of land, that the reservations were too big, that Indians were using the land "inefficiently," and that they still preferred nomadic hunting instead of intensive farming and ranching.

By the 1880s, Americans increasingly championed legislation to allow the transfer of Indian lands to farmers and ranchers, while many argued that allotting Indian lands to individual Native Americans, rather than to tribes, would encourage American-style agriculture and finally put Indians who had previously resisted the efforts of missionaries and federal officials on the path to "civilization."

Passed by Congress on February 8, 1887, the Dawes General Allotment Act splintered Native American reservations into individual family homesteads. Each head of a Native family was to be allotted 160 acres, the typical size of a claim that any settler could establish on federal lands under the provisions of the Homestead Act. Single individuals over age eighteen would receive an eighty-acre allotment, and orphaned children received forty acres. A four-year timeline was established for Indian peoples to make their allotment selections. If at the end of that time no selection had been made, the act authorized the secretary of the interior to appoint an agent to make selections for the remaining tribal members. To protect Indians from being swindled by unscrupulous land speculators, all allotments were to be held in trust—they could not be sold by allottees—for twenty-five years. Lands that remained unclaimed by tribal members after allotment would revert to federal control and be sold to American settlers.[23]



Figure 17.7.1: Red Cloud and American Horse – two of the most renowned Ogala chiefs – are seen clasping hands in front of a tipi on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Both men served as delegates to Washington, D.C., after years of actively fighting the American government. John C. Grabill, "'Red Cloud and American Horse.' The two most noted chiefs now living," 1891. Library of Congress.

Americans touted the Dawes Act as an uplifting humanitarian reform, but it upended Indian lifestyles and left Indian groups without sovereignty over their lands. The act claimed that to protect Indian property rights, it was necessary to extend "the protection of the laws of the United States . . . over the Indians." Tribal governments and legal principles could be superseded, or dissolved and replaced, by U.S. laws. Under the terms of the Dawes Act, Native groups struggled to hold on to some measure of tribal sovereignty.

The stresses of conquest unsettled generations of Native Americans. Many took comfort from the words of prophets and holy men. In Nevada, on January 1, 1889, Northern Paiute prophet Wovoka experienced a great revelation. He had traveled, he said, from his earthly home in western Nevada to heaven and returned during a solar eclipse to prophesy to his people. "You must not hurt anybody or do harm to anyone. You must not fight. Do right always," he exhorted. And they must, he said, participate in a

religious ceremony that came to be known as the Ghost Dance. If the people lived justly and danced the Ghost Dance, Wovoka said, their ancestors would rise from the dead, droughts would dissipate, the whites in the West would vanish, and the buffalo would once again roam the Plains.

Native American prophets had often confronted American imperial power. Some prophets, including Wovoka, incorporated Christian elements like heaven and a Messiah figure into indigenous spiritual traditions. And so, though it was far from unique, Wovoka's prophecy nevertheless caught on quickly and spread beyond the Paiutes. From across the West, members of the Arapaho, Bannock, Cheyenne, and Shoshone nations, among others, adopted the Ghost Dance religion. Perhaps the most avid Ghost Dancers—and certainly the most famous—were the Lakota Sioux.

The Lakota Sioux were in dire straits. South Dakota, formed out of land that had once belonged by treaty to the Lakotas, became a state in 1889. White homesteaders had poured in, reservations were carved up and diminished, starvation set in, corrupt federal agents cut food rations, and drought hit the Plains. Many Lakotas feared a future as the landless subjects of a growing American empire when a delegation of eleven men, led by Kicking Bear, joined Ghost Dance pilgrims on the rails westward to Nevada and returned to spread the revival in the Dakotas.

The energy and message of the revivals frightened Indian agents, who began arresting Indian leaders. Then Chief Sitting Bull and with several other whites and Indians, were killed in December 1890 during a botched arrest, convincing many bands to flee the reservations to join the fugitive bands farther west, where Lakota adherents of the Ghost Dance were preaching that the Ghost Dancers would be immune to bullets.

Two weeks later, an American cavalry unit intercepted a band of 350 Lakotas, including over 100 women and children, under Chief Spotted Elk (later known as Bigfoot). They were escorted to Wounded Knee Creek, where they camped for the night. The following morning, December 29, the American cavalrymen entered the camp to disarm Spotted Elk's band. Tensions flared, a shot was fired, and a skirmish became a massacre. The Americans fired their heavy weaponry indiscriminately into the camp. Two dozen cavalrymen had been killed by the Lakotas' concealed weapons or by friendly fire, but when the guns went silent, between 150 and 300 Native men, women, and children were dead.[24]



Figure 17.7.2: Burial of the dead after the massacre of Wounded Knee. U.S. Soldiers putting Indians in common grave; some corpses are frozen in different positions. South Dakota. 1891. *Library of Congress*.

Wounded Knee marked the end of sustained, armed Native American resistance in the West. Individuals continued to resist the pressures of assimilation and preserve traditional cultural practices, but sustained military defeats, the loss of sovereignty over land and resources, and the onset of crippling poverty on the reservations marked the final decades of the nineteenth century as a particularly dark era for America's western tribes. But for Americans, it became mythical.

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17.8: Rodeos, Wild West Shows, and the Mythic American West

“The American West” conjures visions of tipis, cabins, cowboys, Indians, farm wives in sunbonnets, and outlaws with six-shooters. Such images pervade American culture, but they are as old as the West itself: novels, rodeos, and Wild West shows mythologized the American West throughout the post–Civil War era.



Figure 17.8.1: American frontierswoman and professional scout Martha Jane Canary was better known to America as Calamity Jane. A figure in western folklore during her life and after, Calamity Jane was a central character in many of the increasingly popular novels and films that romanticized western life in the twentieth century. “[Martha Canary, 1852-1903, (“Calamity Jane”), full-length portrait, seated with rifle as General Crook’s scout],” c. 1895. *Library of Congress*.

In the 1860s, Americans devoured dime novels that embellished the lives of real-life individuals such as Calamity Jane and Billy the Kid. Owen Wister’s novels, especially *The Virginian*, established the character of the cowboy as a gritty stoic with a rough exterior but the courage and heroism needed to rescue people from train robbers, Indians, and cattle rustlers. Such images were later reinforced when the emergence of rodeo added to popular conceptions of the American West. Rodeos began as small roping and riding contests among cowboys in towns near ranches or at camps at the end of the cattle trails. In Pecos, Texas, on July 4, 1883, cowboys from two ranches, the Hash Knife and the W Ranch, competed in roping and riding contests as a way to settle an argument; this event is recognized by historians of the West as the first real rodeo. Casual contests evolved into planned celebrations. Many were scheduled around national holidays, such as Independence Day, or during traditional roundup times in the spring and fall. Early rodeos took place in open grassy areas—not arenas—and included calf and steer roping and roughstock events such as bronc riding. They gained popularity and soon dedicated rodeo circuits developed. Although about 90 percent of rodeo contestants were men, women helped popularize the rodeo and several popular female bronc riders, such as Bertha Kaepernick, entered men’s events, until around 1916 when women’s competitive participation was curtailed. Americans also experienced the “Wild West”—the mythical West imagined in so many dime novels—by attending traveling Wild West shows, arguably the unofficial national entertainment of the United States from the 1880s to the 1910s. Wildly popular across the country, the shows traveled throughout the eastern United States and even across Europe and showcased what was already a mythic frontier life. William Frederick “Buffalo Bill” Cody was the first to recognize the broad national appeal of the stock “characters” of the American West—cowboys, Indians, sharpshooters, cavalrymen, and rangers—and put them all together into a single massive traveling extravaganza. Operating out of Omaha, Nebraska, Buffalo Bill launched his touring show in 1883. Cody himself shunned the word *show*, fearing that it implied an exaggeration or misrepresentation of the West. He instead called his production “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West.” He employed real cowboys and Indians in his productions. But it was still, of course, a show. It was entertainment, little different in its broad outlines from contemporary theater. Storylines depicted westward migration, life on the Plains, and Indian attacks, all punctuated by “cowboy fun”: bucking broncos, roping cattle, and sharpshooting contests.[25]



Figure 17.8.2: William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody helped commercialize the cowboy lifestyle, building a mythology around life in the Old West that produced big bucks for men like Cody. Courier Lithography Company, "'Buffalo Bill' Cody," 1900. *Wikimedia*

Buffalo Bill, joined by shrewd business partners skilled in marketing, turned his shows into a sensation. But he was not alone. Gordon William "Pawnee Bill" Lillie, another popular Wild West showman, got his start in 1886 when Cody employed him as an interpreter for Pawnee members of the show. Lillie went on to create his own production in 1888, "Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West." He was Cody's only real competitor in the business until 1908, when the two men combined their shows to create a new extravaganza, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Great Far East" (most people called it the "Two Bills Show"). It was an unparalleled spectacle. The cast included American cowboys, Mexican *vaqueros*, Native Americans, Russian Cossacks, Japanese acrobats, and an Australian aboriginal.

Cody and Lillie knew that Native Americans fascinated audiences in the United States and Europe, and both featured them prominently in their Wild West shows. Most Americans believed that Native cultures were disappearing or had already, and felt a sense of urgency to see their dances, hear their song, and be captivated by their bareback riding skills and their elaborate buckskin and feather attire. The shows certainly veiled the true cultural and historic value of so many Native demonstrations, and the Indian performers were curiosities to white Americans, but the shows were one of the few ways for many Native Americans to make a living in the late nineteenth century.

In an attempt to appeal to women, Cody recruited Annie Oakley, a female sharpshooter who thrilled onlookers with her many stunts. Billed as "Little Sure Shot," she shot apples off her poodle's head and the ash from her husband's cigar, clenched trustingly between his teeth. Gordon Lillie's wife, May Manning Lillie, also became a skilled shot and performed as "World's Greatest Lady Horseback Shot." Female sharpshooters were Wild West show staples. As many as eighty toured the country at the shows' peak. But if such acts challenged expected Victorian gender roles, female performers were typically careful to blunt criticism by maintaining their feminine identity—for example, by riding sidesaddle and wearing full skirts and corsets—during their acts.

The western "cowboys and Indians" mystique, perpetuated in novels, rodeos, and Wild West shows, was rooted in romantic nostalgia and, perhaps, in the anxieties that many felt in the late nineteenth century's new seemingly "soft" industrial world of factory and office work. The mythical cowboy's "aggressive masculinity" was the seemingly perfect antidote for middle- and upper-class, city-dwelling Americans who feared they "had become over-civilized" and longed for what Theodore Roosevelt called the "strenuous life." Roosevelt himself, a scion of a wealthy New York family and later a popular American president, turned a brief tenure as a failed Dakota ranch owner into a potent part of his political image. Americans looked longingly to the West, whose romance would continue to pull at generations of Americans.

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17.9: The West as History- the Turner Thesis



Figure 17.9.1: American anthropologist and ethnographer Frances Densmore records the Blackfoot chief Mountain Chief in 1916 for the Bureau of American Ethnology. Library of Congress.

In 1893, the American Historical Association met during that year's World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The young Wisconsin historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented his "frontier thesis," one of the most influential theories of American history, in his essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."

Turner looked back at the historical changes in the West and saw, instead of a tsunami of war and plunder and industry, waves of "civilization" that washed across the continent. A frontier line "between savagery and civilization" had moved west from the earliest English settlements in Massachusetts and Virginia across the Appalachians to the Mississippi and finally across the Plains to California and Oregon. Turner invited his audience to "stand at Cumberland Gap [the famous pass through the Appalachian Mountains], and watch the procession of civilization, marching single file—the buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Indian, the fur trader and hunter, the cattle-raiser, the pioneer farmer—and the frontier has passed by."[26]

Americans, Turner said, had been forced by necessity to build a rough-hewn civilization out of the frontier, giving the nation its exceptional hustle and its democratic spirit and distinguishing North America from the stale monarchies of Europe. Moreover, the *style* of history Turner called for was democratic as well, arguing that the work of ordinary people (in this case, pioneers) deserved the same study as that of great statesmen. Such was a novel approach in 1893.

But Turner looked ominously to the future. The Census Bureau in 1890 had declared the frontier closed. There was no longer a discernible line running north to south that, Turner said, any longer divided civilization from savagery. Turner worried for the United States' future: what would become of the nation without the safety valve of the frontier? It was a common sentiment. Theodore Roosevelt wrote to Turner that his essay "put into shape a good deal of thought that has been floating around rather loosely."[27]

The history of the West was many-sided and it was made by many persons and peoples. Turner's thesis was rife with faults, not only in its bald Anglo-Saxon chauvinism—in which nonwhites fell before the march of "civilization" and Chinese and Mexican immigrants were invisible—but in its utter inability to appreciate the impact of technology and government subsidies and large-scale economic enterprises alongside the work of hardy pioneers. Still, Turner's thesis held an almost canonical position among historians for much of the twentieth century and, more importantly, captured Americans' enduring romanticization of the West and the simplification of a long and complicated story into a march of progress.

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17.10: Primary Sources

Chief Joseph on Indian Affairs (1877, 1879)

A branch of the Nez Percé tribe, from the Pacific Northwest, refused to be moved to a reservation and attempted to flee to Canada but were pursued by the U.S. Cavalry, attacked, and forced to return. The following is a transcript of Chief Joseph's surrender, as recorded by Lieutenant Wood, Twenty-first Infantry, acting aide-de-camp and acting adjutant-general to General Oliver O. Howard, in 1877.

William T. Hornady on the Extermination of the American Bison (1889)

William T. Hornady, Superintendent of the National Zoological Park, wrote a detailed account of the near-extinction of the American bison in the late-nineteenth century.

Chester A. Arthur on American Indian Policy (1881)

The following is extracted from President Chester A. Arthur's First Annual Message to Congress, delivered December 6, 1881.

Frederick Jackson Turner, "Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893)

Perhaps the most influential essay by an American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner's address to the American Historical Association on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" defined for many Americans the relationship between the frontier and American culture and contemplated what might follow "the closing of the frontier."

Tom Torlino (1882, 1885)

Tom Torlino, a member of the Navajo Nation, entered the Carlisle Indian School, a Native American boarding school founded by the United States government in 1879, on October 21, 1882 and departed on August 28, 1886. Torlino's student file contained photographs from 1882 and 1885.

Frances Densmore and Mountain Chief (1916)

American anthropologist and ethnographer Frances Densmore records the Blackfoot chief Mountain Chief in 1916 for the Bureau of American Ethnology.

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18: LIFE IN INDUSTRIAL AMERICA



Mulberry Street, New York City, c. 1900, Library of Congress

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18.1: Introduction

When British author Rudyard Kipling visited Chicago in 1889, he described a city captivated by technology and blinded by greed. He described a rushed and crowded city, a "huge wilderness" with "scores of miles of these terrible streets" and their "hundred thousand of these terrible people." "The show impressed me with a great horror," he wrote. "There was no color in the street and no beauty—only a maze of wire ropes overhead and dirty stone flagging under foot." He took a cab "and the cabman said that these things were the proof of progress." Kipling visited a "gilded and mirrored" hotel "crammed with people talking about money, and spitting about everywhere." He visited extravagant churches and spoke with their congregants. "I listened to people who said that the mere fact of spiking down strips of iron to wood, and getting a steam and iron thing to run along them was progress, that the telephone was progress, and the network of wires overhead was progress. They repeated their statements again and again." Kipling said American newspapers report "that the snarling together of telegraph-wires, the heaving up of houses, and the making of money is progress."[1]



Figure 18.1.1: Wabash Avenue, Chicago, c. 1907. Library of Congress, LC-D4-70163.

Chicago embodied the triumph of American industrialization. Its meatpacking industry typified the sweeping changes occurring in American life. The last decades of the nineteenth century, a new era for big business, saw the formation of large corporations, run by trained bureaucrats and salaried managers, doing national and international business. Chicago, for instance, became America's butcher. The Chicago meat processing industry, a cartel of five firms, produced four fifths of the meat bought by American consumers. Kipling described in intimate detail the Union Stock Yards, the nation's largest meat processing zone, a square mile just southwest of the city whose pens and slaughterhouses linked the city's vast agricultural hinterland to the nation's dinner tables. "Once having seen them," he concluded, "you will never forget the sight." Like other notable Chicago industries, such as agricultural machinery and steel production, the meatpacking industry was closely tied to urbanization and immigration. In 1850, Chicago had a population of about thirty thousand. Twenty years later, it had three hundred thousand. Nothing could stop the city's growth. The Great Chicago Fire leveled 3.5 square miles and left a third of its residents homeless in 1871, but the city quickly recovered and resumed its spectacular growth. By the turn of the twentieth century, the city was home to 1.7 million people.

Chicago's explosive growth reflected national trends. In 1870, a quarter of the nation's population lived in towns or cities with populations greater than 2,500. By 1920, a majority did. But if many who flocked to Chicago and other American cities came from rural America, many others emigrated from overseas. Mirroring national immigration patterns, Chicago's newcomers had at first come mostly from Germany, the British Isles, and Scandinavia, but, by 1890, Poles, Italians, Czechs, Hungarians, Lithuanians, and others from southern and eastern Europe made up a majority of new immigrants. Chicago, like many other American industrial cities, was also an immigrant city. In 1900, nearly 80 percent of Chicago's population was either foreign-born or the children of foreign-born immigrants.[2]

Kipling visited Chicago just as new industrial modes of production revolutionized the United States. The rise of cities, the evolution of American immigration, the transformation of American labor, the further making of a mass culture, the creation of great concentrated wealth, the growth of vast city slums, the conquest of the West, the emergence of a middle class, the problem of poverty, the triumph of big business, widening inequalities, battles between capital and labor, the final destruction of independent farming, breakthrough technologies, environmental destruction: industrialization created a new America.

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18.2: Industrial and Technological Innovation

The railroads created the first great concentrations of capital, spawned the first massive corporations, made the first of the vast fortunes that would define the Gilded Age, unleashed labor demands that united thousands of farmers and immigrants, and linked many towns and cities. National railroad mileage tripled in the twenty years after the outbreak of the Civil War, and tripled again over the four decades that followed. Railroads impelled the creation of uniform time zones across the country, gave industrialists access to remote markets, and opened the American West. Railroad companies were the nation's largest businesses. Their vast national operations demanded the creation of innovative new corporate organization, advanced management techniques, and vast sums of capital. Their huge expenditures spurred countless industries and attracted droves of laborers. And as they crisscrossed the nation, they created a national market, a truly national economy, and, seemingly, a new national culture.[3]

The railroads were not natural creations. Their vast capital requirements required the use of incorporation, a legal innovation that protected shareholders from losses. Enormous amounts of government support followed. Federal, state, and local governments offered unrivaled handouts to create the national rail networks. Lincoln's Republican Party—which dominated government policy during the Civil War and Reconstruction—passed legislation granting vast subsidies. Hundreds of millions of acres of land and millions of dollars' worth of government bonds were freely given to build the great transcontinental railroads and the innumerable trunk lines that quickly annihilated the vast geographic barriers that had so long sheltered American cities from one another.



Figure 18.2.1: This print shows the four stages of pork packing in nineteenth-century Cincinnati. This centralization of production made meat-packing an innovative industry, one of great interest to industrialists of all ilks. In fact, this chromo-lithograph was exhibited by the Cincinnati Pork Packers' Association at the International Exposition in Vienna, Austria. 1873. *Wikimedia*.

As railroad construction drove economic development, new means of production spawned new systems of labor. Many wage earners had traditionally seen factory work as a temporary stepping-stone to attaining their own small businesses or farms. After the war, however, new technology and greater mechanization meant fewer and fewer workers could legitimately aspire to economic independence. Stronger and more organized labor unions formed to fight for a growing, more-permanent working class. At the same time, the growing scale of economic enterprises increasingly disconnected owners from their employees and day-to-day business operations. To handle their vast new operations, owners turned to managers. Educated bureaucrats swelled the ranks of an emerging middle class.

Industrialization also remade much of American life outside the workplace. Rapidly growing industrialized cities knit together urban consumers and rural producers into a single, integrated national market. Food production and consumption, for instance, were utterly nationalized. Chicago's stockyards seemingly tied it all together. Between 1866 and 1886, ranchers drove a million head of cattle annually overland from Texas ranches to railroad depots in Kansas for shipment by rail to Chicago. After travelling through modern "disassembly lines," the animals left the adjoining slaughterhouses as slabs of meat to be packed into refrigerated rail cars and sent to butcher shops across the continent. By 1885, a handful of large-scale industrial meatpackers in Chicago were producing nearly five hundred million pounds of "dressed" beef annually.[4] The new scale of industrialized meat

production transformed the landscape. Buffalo herds, grasslands, and old-growth forests gave way to cattle, corn, and wheat. Chicago became the Gateway City, a crossroads connecting American agricultural goods, capital markets in New York and London, and consumers from all corners of the United States.

Technological innovation accompanied economic development. For April Fool's Day in 1878, the New York *Daily Graphic* published a fictitious interview with the celebrated inventor Thomas A. Edison. The piece described the "biggest invention of the age"—a new Edison machine that could create forty different kinds of food and drink out of only air, water, and dirt. "Meat will no longer be killed and vegetables no longer grown, except by savages," Edison promised. The machine would end "famine and pauperism." And all for $5 or $6 per machine! The story was a joke, of course, but Edison nevertheless received inquiries from readers wondering when the food machine would be ready for the market. Americans had apparently witnessed such startling technological advances—advances that would have seemed far-fetched mere years earlier—that the Edison food machine seemed entirely plausible.[5]

In September 1878, Edison announced a new and ambitious line of research and development—electric power and lighting. The scientific principles behind dynamos and electric motors—the conversion of mechanical energy to electrical power, and vice versa—were long known, but Edison applied the age's bureaucratic and commercial ethos to the problem. Far from a lone inventor gripped by inspiration toiling in isolation, Edison advanced the model of commercially minded management of research and development. Edison folded his two identities, business manager and inventor, together. He called his Menlo Park research laboratory an "invention factory" and promised to turn out "a minor invention every ten days and a big thing every six months or so." He brought his fully equipped Menlo Park research laboratory and the skilled machinists and scientists he employed to bear on the problem of building an electric power system—and commercializing it.

By late fall 1879, Edison exhibited his system of power generation and electrical light for reporters and investors. Then he scaled up production. He sold generators to businesses. By the middle of 1883, Edison had overseen construction of 330 plants powering over sixty thousand lamps in factories, offices, printing houses, hotels, and theaters around the world. He convinced municipal officials to build central power stations and run power lines. New York's Pearl Street central station opened in September 1882 and powered a square mile of downtown Manhattan. Electricity revolutionized the world. It not only illuminated the night, it powered the Second Industrial Revolution. Factories could operate anywhere at any hour. Electric rail cars allowed for cities to build out and electric elevators allowed for them to build up.

Economic advances, technological innovation, social and cultural evolution, demographic changes: the United States was a nation transformed. Industry boosted productivity, railroads connected the nation, more and more Americans labored for wages, new bureaucratic occupations created a vast "white collar" middle class, and unprecedented fortunes rewarded the owners of capital. These revolutionary changes, of course, would not occur without conflict or consequence (see Chapter 16), but they demonstrated the profound transformations remaking the nation. Change was not confined to economics alone. Change gripped the lives of everyday Americans and fundamentally reshaped American culture.[6]

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18.3: Immigration and Urbanization

Industry pulled ever more Americans into cities. Manufacturing needed the labor pool and the infrastructure. America's urban population increased sevenfold in the half century after the Civil War. Soon the United States had more large cities than any country in the world. The 1920 U.S. census revealed that, for the first time, a majority of Americans lived in urban areas. Much of that urban growth came from the millions of immigrants pouring into the nation. Between 1870 and 1920, over twenty-five million immigrants arrived in the United States.



Figure 18.3.1: State Street, south from Lake Street, Chicago, Ill, ca.1900-1910. Library of Congress, LC-D4-70158.

By the turn of the twentieth century, new immigrant groups such as Italians, Poles, and Eastern European Jews made up a larger percentage of arrivals than the Irish and Germans. The specific reasons that immigrants left their particular countries and the reasons they came to the United States (what historians call *push* and *pull factors*) varied. For example, a young husband and wife living in Sweden in the 1880s and unable to purchase farmland might read an advertisement for inexpensive land in the American Midwest and immigrate to the United States to begin a new life. A young Italian man might simply hope to labor in a steel factory long enough to save up enough money to return home and purchase land for a family. A Russian Jewish family persecuted in European pogroms might look to the United States as a sanctuary. Or perhaps a Japanese migrant might hear of fertile farming land on the West Coast and choose to sail for California. But if many factors pushed people away from their home countries, by far the most important factor drawing immigrants was economics. Immigrants came to the United States looking for work.

Industrial capitalism was the most important factor that drew immigrants to the United States between 1880 and 1920. Immigrant workers labored in large industrial complexes producing goods such as steel, textiles, and food products, replacing smaller and more local workshops. The influx of immigrants, alongside a large movement of Americans from the countryside to the city, helped propel the rapid growth of cities like New York, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and St. Louis. By 1890, immigrants and their children accounted for roughly 60 percent of the population in most large northern cities (and sometimes as high as 80 or 90 percent). Many immigrants, especially from Italy and the Balkans, always intended to return home with enough money to purchase land. But what about those who stayed? Did the new arrivals assimilate together in the American melting pot—becoming just like those already in the United States—or did they retain, and sometimes even strengthen, their traditional ethnic identities? The answer lies somewhere in between. Immigrants from specific countries—and often even specific communities—often clustered together in ethnic neighborhoods. They formed vibrant organizations and societies, such as Italian workmen's clubs, Eastern European Jewish mutual aid societies, and Polish Catholic churches, to ease the transition to their new American home. Immigrant communities published newspapers in dozens of languages and purchased spaces to maintain their arts, languages, and traditions alive. And from these foundations they facilitated even more immigration: after staking out a claim to some corner of American life, they wrote home and encouraged others to follow them (historians call this *chain migration*).

Many cities' politics adapted to immigrant populations. The infamous urban political machines often operated as a kind of mutual aid society. New York City's Democratic Party machine, popularly known as **Tammany Hall**, drew the greatest ire from critics and

seemed to embody all of the worst of city machines, but it also responded to immigrant needs. In 1903, journalist William Riordon published a book, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*, which chronicled the activities of ward heeler George Washington Plunkitt. Plunkitt elaborately explained to Riordon the difference between "honest graft" and "dishonest graft": "I made my pile in politics, but, at the same time, I served the organization and got more big improvements for New York City than any other livin' man." While exposing corruption, Riordon also revealed the hard work Plunkitt undertook on behalf of his largely immigrant constituency. On a typical day, Riordon wrote, Plunkitt was awakened at two a.m. to bail out a saloonkeeper who stayed open too late, was awakened again at six a.m. because of a fire in the neighborhood and spent time finding lodgings for the families displaced by the fire, and, after spending the rest of the morning in court to secure the release of several of his constituents, found jobs for four unemployed men, attended an Italian funeral, visited a church social, and dropped in on a Jewish wedding. He returned home at midnight.[7]

Tammany Hall's corruption, especially under the reign of William "Boss" Tweed, was legendary, but the public works projects that funded Tammany Hall's graft also provided essential infrastructure and public services for the city's rapidly expanding population. Water, sewer, and gas lines; schools, hospitals, civic buildings, and museums; police and fire departments; roads, parks (notably Central Park), and bridges (notably the Brooklyn Bridge): all could, in whole or in part, be credited to Tammany's reign. Still, machine politics could never be enough. As the urban population exploded, many immigrants found themselves trapped in crowded, crime-ridden slums. Americans eventually took notice of this urban crisis and proposed municipal reforms but also grew concerned about the declining quality of life in rural areas.

While cities boomed, rural worlds languished. Some Americans scoffed at rural backwardness and reveled in the countryside's decay, but many romanticized the countryside, celebrated rural life, and wondered what had been lost in the cities. Sociologist Kenyon Butterfield, concerned by the sprawling nature of industrial cities and suburbs, regretted the eroding social position of rural citizens and farmers: "Agriculture does not hold the same relative rank among our industries that it did in former years." Butterfield saw "the farm problem" as part of "the whole question of democratic civilization."[8] He and many others thought the rise of the cities and the fall of the countryside threatened traditional American values. Many proposed conservation. Liberty Hyde Bailey, a botanist and rural scholar selected by Theodore Roosevelt to chair a federal Commission on Country Life in 1907, believed that rural places and industrial cities were linked: "Every agricultural question is a city question."[9]

Many longed for a middle path between the cities and the country. New suburban communities on the outskirts of American cities defined themselves in opposition to urban crowding. Americans contemplated the complicated relationships between rural places, suburban living, and urban spaces. Los Angeles became a model for the suburban development of rural places. Dana Barlett, a social reformer in Los Angeles, noted that the city, stretching across dozens of small towns, was "a better city" because of its residential identity as a "city of homes."[10] This language was seized upon by many suburbs that hoped to avoid both urban sprawl and rural decay. In Glendora, one of these small towns on the outskirts of Los Angeles, local leaders were "loath as anyone to see it become cosmopolitan." Instead, in order to have Glendora "grow along the lines necessary to have it remain an enjoyable city of homes," they needed to "bestir ourselves to direct its growth" by encouraging not industry or agriculture but residential development.[11]

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18.4: The New South and the Problem of Race

"There was a South of slavery and secession," *Atlanta Constitution* editor Henry Grady proclaimed in an 1886 speech in New York. "That South is dead."[12] Grady captured the sentiment of many white southern business and political leaders who imagined a New South that could turn its back to the past by embracing industrialization and diversified agriculture. He promoted the region's economic possibilities and mutual future prosperity through an alliance of northern capital and southern labor. Grady and other New South boosters hoped to shape the region's economy in the North's image. They wanted industry and they wanted infrastructure. But the past could not be escaped. Economically and socially, the "New South" would still be much like the old.



Figure 18.4.1: The ambitions of Atlanta, seen in the construction of such grand buildings as the Kimball House Hotel, reflected the larger regional aspirations of the so-called New South. 1890. *Wikimedia*.

A "New South" seemed an obvious need. The Confederacy's failed insurrection wreaked havoc on the southern economy and crippled southern prestige. Property was destroyed. Lives were lost. Political power vanished. And four million enslaved Americans—representing the wealth and power of the antebellum white South—threw off their chains and walked proudly forward into freedom.

Emancipation unsettled the southern social order. When Reconstruction regimes attempted to grant freedpeople full citizenship rights, anxious whites struck back. From their fear, anger, and resentment they lashed out, not only in organized terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan but in political corruption, economic exploitation, and violent intimidation. White southerners took back control of state and local governments and used their reclaimed power to disenfranchise African Americans and pass "Jim Crow" laws segregating schools, transportation, employment, and various public and private facilities. The reestablishment of white supremacy after the "redemption" of the South from Reconstruction contradicted proclamations of a "New" South. Perhaps nothing harked so forcefully back to the barbaric southern past than the wave of lynchings—the extralegal murder of individuals by vigilantes—that washed across the South after Reconstruction. Whether for actual crimes or fabricated crimes or for no crimes at all, white mobs murdered roughly five thousand African Americans between the 1880s and the 1950s.

Lynching was not just murder, it was a ritual rich with symbolism. Victims were not simply hanged, they were mutilated, burned alive, and shot. Lynchings could become carnivals, public spectacles attended by thousands of eager spectators. Rail lines ran special cars to accommodate the rush of participants. Vendors sold goods and keepsakes. Perpetrators posed for photos and collected mementos. And it was increasingly common. One notorious example occurred in Georgia in 1899. Accused of killing his white employer and raping the man's wife, Sam Hose was captured by a mob and taken to the town of Newnan. Word of the impending lynching quickly spread, and specially chartered passenger trains brought some four thousand visitors from Atlanta to witness the gruesome affair. Members of the mob tortured Hose for about an hour. They sliced off pieces of his body as he screamed in agony. Then they poured a can of kerosene over his body and burned him alive.[13]

At the barbaric height of southern lynching, in the last years of the nineteenth century, southerners lynched two to three African

Americans every week. In general, lynchings were most frequent in the Cotton Belt of the Lower South, where southern blacks were most numerous and where the majority worked as tenant farmers and field hands on the cotton farms of white landowners. The states of Mississippi and Georgia had the greatest number of recorded lynchings: from 1880 to 1930, Mississippi lynch mobs killed over five hundred African Americans; Georgia mobs murdered more than four hundred.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of prominent southerners openly supported lynching, arguing that it was a necessary evil to punish black rapists and deter others. In the late 1890s, Georgia newspaper columnist and noted women's rights activist Rebecca Latimer Felton—who would later become the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate—endorsed such extrajudicial killings. She said, "If it takes lynching to protect women's dearest possession from drunken, ravening beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week."[14] When opponents argued that lynching violated victims' constitutional rights, South Carolina governor Coleman Blease angrily responded, "Whenever the Constitution comes between me and the virtue of the white women of South Carolina, I say to hell with the Constitution."[15]

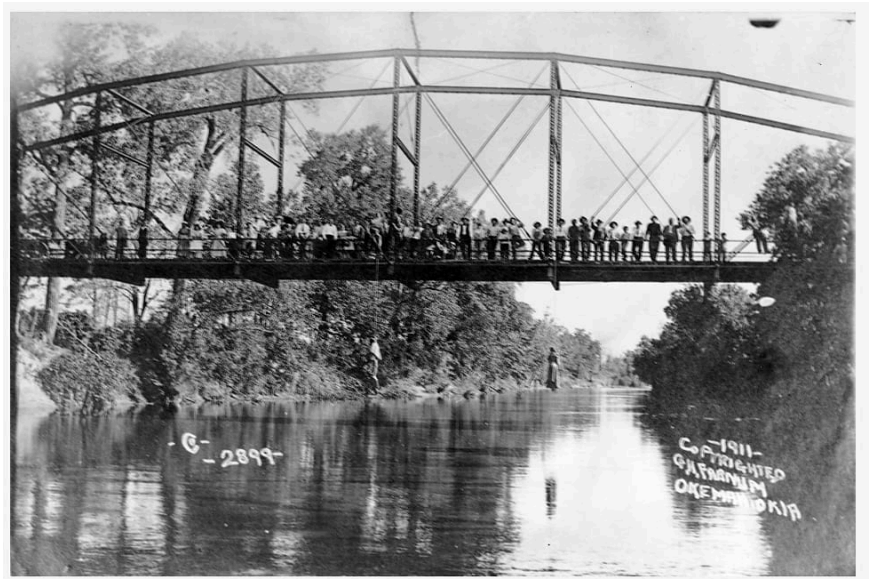


Figure 18.4.2: This photograph captures the lynching of Laura and Lawrence Nelson, a mother and son, on May 25, 1911, in Okemah, Oklahoma. In response to national attention, the local white newspaper in Okemah simply wrote, "While the general sentiment is adverse to the method, it is generally thought that the negroes got what would have been due them under due process of law." *Wikimedia*.

Black activists and white allies worked to outlaw lynching. Ida B. Wells, an African American woman born in the last years of slavery and a pioneering anti-lynching advocate, lost three friends to a lynch mob in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1892. That year, Wells published *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, a groundbreaking work that documented the South's lynching culture and exposed the myth of the black rapist.[16] The Tuskegee Institute and the NAACP both compiled and publicized lists of every reported lynching in the United States. In 1918, Representative Leonidas Dyer of Missouri introduced federal anti-lynching legislation that would have made local counties where lynchings took place legally liable for such killings. Throughout the early 1920s, the Dyer Bill was the subject of heated political debate, but, fiercely opposed by southern congressmen and unable to win enough northern champions, the proposed bill was never enacted.

Lynching was only the violent worst of the southern racial world. Discrimination in employment and housing and the legal segregation of public and private life reflected the rise of a new Jim Crow South. So-called Jim Crow laws legalized what custom had long dictated. Southern states and municipalities enforced racial segregation in public places and in private lives. Separate coach laws were some of the first such laws to appear, beginning in Tennessee in the 1880s. Soon schools, stores, theaters, restaurants, bathrooms, and nearly every other part of public life were segregated. So too were social lives. The sin of racial mixing, critics said, had to be heavily guarded against. Marriage laws regulated against interracial couples, and white men, ever anxious of relationships between black men and white women, passed miscegenation laws and justified lynching as an appropriate extralegal tool to police the racial divide.

In politics, de facto limitations of black voting had suppressed black voters since Reconstruction. Whites stuffed ballot boxes and intimidated black voters with physical and economic threats. And then, from roughly 1890 to 1908, southern states implemented de jure, or legal, disfranchisement. They passed laws requiring voters to pass literacy tests (which could be judged arbitrarily) and pay poll taxes (which hit poor whites and poor blacks alike), effectively denying black men the franchise that was supposed

to have been guaranteed by the Fifteenth Amendment. Those responsible for such laws posed as reformers and justified voting restrictions as for the public good, a way to clean up politics by purging corrupt African Americans from the voting rolls.

With white supremacy secured, prominent white southerners looked outward for support. New South boosters hoped to confront post-Reconstruction uncertainties by rebuilding the South's economy and convincing the nation that the South could be more than an economically backward, race-obsessed backwater. And as they did, they began to retell the history of the recent past. A kind of civic religion known as the "Lost Cause" glorified the Confederacy and romanticized the Old South. White southerners looked forward while simultaneously harking back to an imagined past inhabited by contented and loyal slaves, benevolent and generous masters, chivalric and honorable men, and pure and faithful southern belles. Secession, they said, had little to do with the institution of slavery, and soldiers fought only for home and honor, not the continued ownership of human beings. The New South, then, would be built physically with new technologies, new investments, and new industries, but undergirded by political and social custom.

Henry Grady might have declared the Confederate South dead, but its memory pervaded the thoughts and actions of white southerners. Lost Cause champions overtook the South. Women's groups, such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, joined with Confederate veterans to preserve a pro-Confederate past. They built Confederate monuments and celebrated Confederate veterans on Memorial Day. Across the South, towns erected statues of General Robert E. Lee and other Confederate figures. By the turn of the twentieth century, the idealized Lost Cause past was entrenched not only in the South but across the country. In 1905, for instance, North Carolinian Thomas F. Dixon published a novel, *The Clansman*, which depicted the Ku Klux Klan as heroic defenders of the South against the corruption of African American and northern "carpetbag" misrule during Reconstruction. In 1915, acclaimed film director David W. Griffith adapted Dixon's novel into the groundbreaking blockbuster film, *Birth of a Nation*. (The film almost singlehandedly rejuvenated the Ku Klux Klan.) The romanticized version of the antebellum South and the distorted version of Reconstruction dominated popular imagination.[17]

While Lost Cause defenders mythologized their past, New South boosters struggled to wrench the South into the modern world. The railroads became their focus. The region had lagged behind the North in the railroad building boom of the midnineteenth century, and postwar expansion facilitated connections between the most rural segments of the population and the region's rising urban areas. Boosters campaigned for the construction of new hard-surfaced roads as well, arguing that improved roads would further increase the flow of goods and people and entice northern businesses to relocate to the region. The rising popularity of the automobile after the turn of the century only increased pressure for the construction of reliable roads between cities, towns, county seats, and the vast farmlands of the South.

Along with new transportation networks, New South boosters continued to promote industrial growth. The region witnessed the rise of various manufacturing industries, predominantly textiles, tobacco, furniture, and steel. While agriculture—cotton in particular—remained the mainstay of the region's economy, these new industries provided new wealth for owners, new investments for the region, and new opportunities for the exploding number of landless farmers to finally flee the land. Industries offered low-paying jobs but also opportunity for rural poor who could no longer sustain themselves through subsistence farming. Men, women, and children all moved into wage work. At the turn of the twentieth century, nearly one fourth of southern mill workers were children aged six to sixteen.

In most cases, as in most aspects of life in the New South, new factory jobs were racially segregated. Better-paying jobs were reserved for whites, while the most dangerous, labor-intensive, dirtiest, and lowest-paying positions were relegated to African Americans. African American women, shut out of most industries, found employment most often as domestic help for white families. As poor as white southern mill workers were, southern blacks were poorer. Some white mill workers could even afford to pay for domestic help in caring for young children, cleaning houses, doing laundry, and cooking meals. Mill villages that grew up alongside factories were whites-only, and African American families were pushed to the outer perimeter of the settlements.

That a "New South" emerged in the decades between Reconstruction and World War I is debatable. If measured by industrial output and railroad construction, the New South was a reality but if measured relative to the rest of the nation, it was a limited one. If measured in terms of racial discrimination, however, the New South looked much like the Old. Boosters such as Henry Grady said the South was done with racial questions but lynching and segregation and the institutionalization of Jim Crow exposed the South's lingering racial obsessions. Meanwhile, most southerners still toiled in agriculture and still lived in poverty. Industrial development and expanding infrastructure, rather than re-creating the South, coexisted easily with white supremacy and an impoverished agricultural economy. The trains came, factories were built, and capital was invested, but the region remained mired in poverty and racial apartheid. Much of the "New South," then, was anything but new.

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18.5: Gender, Religion, and Culture



Figure 18.5.1: Visitors to the Columbian Exposition of 1893 took in the view of the Court of Honor from the roof of the Manufacturers Building. Art Institute of Chicago, via Wikimedia

In 1905, Standard Oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller donated $100,000 (about $2.5 million today) to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Rockefeller was the richest man in America but also one of the most hated and mistrusted. Even admirers conceded that he achieved his wealth through often illegal and usually immoral business practices. Journalist Ida Tarbell had made waves describing Standard Oil's long-standing ruthlessness and predilections for political corruption. Clergymen, led by reformer Washington Gladden, fiercely protested the donation. A decade earlier, Gladden had asked of such donations, "Is this clean money? Can any man, can any institution, knowing its origin, touch it without being defiled?" Gladden said, "In the cool brutality with which properties are wrecked, securities destroyed, and people by the hundreds robbed of their little all to build up the fortunes of the multi-millionaires, we have an appalling revelation of the kind of monster that a human being may become."[18]

Despite widespread criticism, the board accepted Rockefeller's donation. Board president Samuel Capen did not defend Rockefeller, arguing that the gift was charitable and the board could not assess the origin of every donation, but the dispute shook Capen. Was a corporate background incompatible with a religious organization? The "tainted money debate" reflected questions about the proper relationship between religion and capitalism. With rising income inequality, would religious groups be forced to support either the elite or the disempowered? What was moral in the new industrial United States? And what obligations did wealth bring? Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie popularized the idea of a "gospel of wealth" in an 1889 article, claiming that "the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth" was the moral obligation of the rich to give to charity.[19] Farmers and labor organizers, meanwhile, argued that God had blessed the weak and that new Gilded Age fortunes and corporate management were inherently immoral. As time passed, American churches increasingly adapted themselves to the new industrial order. Even Gladden came to accept donations from the so-called robber barons, such as the Baptist John D. Rockefeller, who increasingly touted the morality of business. Meanwhile, as many churches wondered about the compatibility of large fortunes with Christian values, others were concerned for the fate of traditional American masculinity.

The economic and social changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—including increased urbanization, immigration, advancements in science and technology, patterns of consumption and the new availability of goods, and new awareness of economic, racial, and gender inequalities—challenged traditional gender norms. At the same time, urban spaces and shifting cultural and social values presented new opportunities to challenge traditional gender and sexual norms. Many women, carrying on a campaign that stretched long into the past, vied for equal rights. They became activists: they targeted municipal reforms, launched labor rights campaigns, and, above all, bolstered the suffrage movement.

Urbanization and immigration fueled anxieties that old social mores were being subverted and that old forms of social and moral policing were increasingly inadequate. The anonymity of urban spaces presented an opportunity in particular for female sexuality

and for male and female sexual experimentation along a spectrum of orientations and gender identities. Anxiety over female sexuality reflected generational tensions and differences, as well as racial and class ones. As young women pushed back against social mores through premarital sexual exploration and expression, social welfare experts and moral reformers labeled such girls feeble-minded, believing even that such unfeminine behavior could be symptomatic of clinical insanity rather than free-willed expression. Generational differences exacerbated the social and familial tensions provoked by shifting gender norms. Youths challenged the norms of their parents' generations by donning new fashions and enjoying the delights of the city. Women's fashion loosed its physical constraints: corsets relaxed and hemlines rose. The newfound physical freedom enabled by looser dress was also mimicked in the pursuit of other freedoms.

While many women worked to liberate themselves, many, sometimes simultaneously, worked to uplift others. Women's work against alcohol propelled temperance into one of the foremost moral reforms of the period. Middle-class, typically Protestant women based their assault on alcohol on the basis of their feminine virtue, Christian sentiment, and their protective role in the family and home. Others, like Jane Addams and settlement house workers, sought to impart a middle-class education on immigrant and working-class women through the establishment of settlement homes. Other reformers touted a "scientific motherhood": the new science of hygiene was deployed as a method of both social uplift and moralizing, particularly of working-class and immigrant women.



Figure 18.5.2: Taken a few years after the publication of "The Yellow Wallpaper," this portrait photograph shows activist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's feminine poise and respectability even as she sought massive change for women's place in society. An outspoken supporter of women's rights, Gilman's works challenged the supposedly "natural" inferiority of women. *Wikimedia*.

Women vocalized new discontents through literature. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" attacked the "naturalness" of feminine domesticity and critiqued Victorian psychological remedies administered to women, such as the "rest cure." Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, set in the American South, likewise criticized the domestic and familial role ascribed to women by society and gave expression to feelings of malaise, desperation, and desire. Such literature directly challenged the status quo of the Victorian era's constructions of femininity and feminine virtue, as well as established feminine roles.

While many men worried about female activism, they worried too about their own masculinity. To anxious observers, industrial capitalism was withering American manhood. Rather than working on farms and in factories, where young men formed physical muscle and spiritual grit, new generations of workers labored behind desks, wore white collars, and, in the words of Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, appeared "black-coated, stiff-jointed, soft-muscled, [and] paste-complexioned."[20] Neurologist George Beard even coined a medical term, *neurasthenia*, for a new emasculated condition that was marked by depression, indigestion, hypochondria, and extreme nervousness. The philosopher William James called it "Americanitis." Academics increasingly warned that America had become a nation of emasculated men.

Churches too worried about feminization. Women had always comprised a clear majority of church memberships in the United States, but now the theologian Washington Gladden said, "A preponderance of female influence in the Church or anywhere else in society is unnatural and injurious." Many feared that the feminized church had feminized Christ himself. Rather than a rough-hewn carpenter, Jesus had been made "mushy" and "sweetly effeminate," in the words of Walter Rauschenbusch. Advocates of a so-called muscular Christianity sought to stiffen young men's backbones by putting them back in touch with their primal

manliness. Pulling from contemporary developmental theory, they believed that young men ought to evolve as civilization evolved, advancing from primitive nature-dwelling to modern industrial enlightenment. To facilitate “primitive” encounters with nature, muscular Christians founded summer camps and outdoor boys’ clubs like the Woodcraft Indians, the Sons of Daniel Boone, and the Boy Brigades—all precursors of the Boy Scouts. Other champions of muscular Christianity, such as the newly formed Young Men’s Christian Association, built gymnasiums, often attached to churches, where youths could strengthen their bodies as well as their spirits. It was a Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) leader who coined the term *bodybuilding*, and others invented the sports of basketball and volleyball.[21]

Muscular Christianity, though, was about even more than building strong bodies and minds. Many advocates also ardently championed Western imperialism, cheering on attempts to civilize non-Western peoples. Gilded Age men were encouraged to embrace a particular vision of masculinity connected intimately with the rising tides of nationalism, militarism, and imperialism. Contemporary ideals of American masculinity at the turn of the century developed in concert with the United States’ imperial and militaristic endeavors in the West and abroad. During the Spanish-American War in 1898, Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders embodied the idealized image of the tall, strong, virile, and fit American man that simultaneously epitomized the ideals of power that informed the United States’ imperial agenda. Roosevelt and others like him believed a reinvigorated masculinity would preserve the American race’s superiority against foreign foes and the effeminizing effects of overcivilization.



Figure 18.5.3: Amusement-hungry Americans flocked to new entertainments at the turn of the twentieth century. In this early-twentieth century photograph, visitors enjoy Luna Park, one of the original amusement parks on Brooklyn’s famous Coney Island. Visitors to Coney Island’s Luna Park, ca.1910-1915. Library of Congress (LC-B2- 2240-13).

But while many fretted about traditional American life, others lost themselves in new forms of mass culture. Vaudeville signaled new cultural worlds. A unique variety of popular entertainments, these traveling circuit shows first appeared during the Civil War and peaked between 1880 and 1920. Vaudeville shows featured comedians, musicians, actors, jugglers, and other talents that could captivate an audience. Unlike earlier rowdy acts meant for a male audience that included alcohol, vaudeville was considered family-friendly, “polite” entertainment, though the acts involved offensive ethnic and racial caricatures of African Americans and recent immigrants. Vaudeville performances were often small and quirky, though venues such as the renowned Palace Theatre in New York City signaled true stardom for many performers. Popular entertainers such as silent film star Charlie Chaplin and magician Harry Houdini made names for themselves on the vaudeville circuit. But if live entertainment still captivated audiences, others looked to entirely new technologies.

By the turn of the century, two technologies pioneered by Edison—the phonograph and motion pictures—stood ready to revolutionize leisure and help create the mass entertainment culture of the twentieth century. The phonograph was the first reliable device capable of recording and reproducing sound. But it was more than that. The phonograph could create multiple copies of recordings, sparking a great expansion of the market for popular music. Although the phonograph was a technical success, Edison at first had trouble developing commercial applications for it. He thought it might be used for dictation, recording audio letters, preserving speeches and dying words of great men, producing talking clocks, or teaching elocution. He did not anticipate that its greatest use would be in the field of mass entertainment, but Edison’s sales agents soon reported that many phonographs were being used for just that, especially in so-called phonograph parlors, where customers could pay a nickel to hear a piece of music. By the turn of the century, Americans were purchasing phonographs for home use. Entertainment became

the phonograph's major market.

Inspired by the success of the phonograph as an entertainment device, Edison decided in 1888 to develop "an instrument which does for the Eye what the phonograph does for the Ear." In 1888, he patented the concept of motion pictures. In 1889, he innovated the rolling of film. By 1891, he was exhibiting a motion-picture camera (a *kinetograph*) and a viewer (a *kinetoscope*). By 1894, the Edison Company had produced about seventy-five films suitable for sale and viewing. They could be viewed through a small eyepiece in an arcade or parlor. They were short, typically about three minutes long. Many of the early films depicted athletic feats and competitions. One 1894 film, for example, showed a six-round boxing match. The catalog description gave a sense of the appeal it had for male viewers: "Full of hard fighting, clever hits, punches, leads, dodges, body blows and some slugging." Other early kinetoscope subjects included Indian dances, nature and outdoor scenes, re-creations of historical events, and humorous skits. By 1896, the Edison Vitascope could project film, shifting audiences away from arcades and pulling them into theaters. Edison's film catalog meanwhile grew in sophistication. He sent filmmakers to distant and exotic locales like Japan and China. Long-form fictional films created a demand for "movie stars," such as the glamorous Mary Pickford, the swashbuckling Douglas Fairbanks, the acrobatic comedian Buster Keaton, who began to appear in the popular imagination beginning around 1910. Alongside professional boxing and baseball, the film industry was creating the modern culture of celebrity that would characterize twentieth-century mass entertainment.[22]

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18.6: Conclusion



Figure 18.6.1: Designers of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago built the White City in a neoclassical architectural style. The integrated design of buildings, walkways, and landscapes propelled the burgeoning City Beautiful movement. The Fair itself was a huge success, bringing more than twenty-seven million people to Chicago and helping to establish the ideology of American exceptionalism. *Wikimedia*.

After enduring four bloody years of warfare and a strained, decade-long effort to reconstruct the defeated South, the United States abandoned itself to industrial development. Businesses expanded in scale and scope. The nature of labor shifted. A middle class rose. Wealth concentrated. Immigrants crowded into the cities, which grew upward and outward. The Jim Crow South stripped away the vestiges of Reconstruction, and New South boosters papered over the scars. Industrialists hunted profits. Evangelists appealed to people's morals. Consumers lost themselves in new goods and new technologies. Women emerging into new urban spaces embraced new social possibilities. In all of its many facets, by the turn of the twentieth century, the United States had been radically transformed. And the transformations continued to ripple outward into the West and overseas, and inward into radical protest and progressive reforms. For Americans at the twilight of the nineteenth century and the dawn of the twentieth, a bold new world loomed.

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18.7: Primary Sources

Andrew Carnegie on “The Triumph of America” (1885)

Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie celebrated and explored American economic progress in this 1885 article, later reprinted in his 1886 book, Triumphant Democracy.

Henry Grady on the New South (1886)

Atlanta newspaperman and apostle of the “New South,” Henry Grady, won national recognition for his December 21, 1886 speech to the New England Society in New York City.

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, “Lynch Law in America” (1900)

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, born a slave in Mississippi, was a pioneering activist and journalist. She did much to expose the epidemic of lynching in the United States and her writing and research exploded many of the justifications—particularly the rape of white women by black men—commonly offered to justify the practice.

Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918)

Henry Adams, the great grandson of President John Adams, the grandson of President John Quincy Adams, the son of a major American diplomat, and an accomplished Harvard historian, writing in the third person, describes his experience at the Great Exposition in Paris in 1900 and writes of his encounter with “forces totally new.”

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “Why I Wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*” (1913)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman won much attention in 1892 for publishing “The Yellow Wallpaper,” a semi-autobiographical short story dealing with mental health and contemporary social expectations for women. In the following piece, Gilman reflected on writing and publishing the piece.

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)

Jacob Riis, a Danish immigrant, combined photography and journalism into a powerful indictment of poverty in America. His 1890, How the Other Half Lives *shocked Americans with its raw depictions of urban slums. Here, he describes poverty in New York.*

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18.8: Reference Material

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19: AMERICAN EMPIRE



A political cartoon in Puck magazine on January 25, 1899, captures the mind-set of American imperialists. Library of Congress.

19.1: Introduction

19.2: Patterns of American Interventions

19.3: 1898

19.4: Theodore Roosevelt and American Imperialism

19.5: Women and Imperialism

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19.8: Primary Sources

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19.1: Introduction

The word *empire* might conjure images of ancient Rome, the Persian Empire, or the British Empire—powers that depended variously on military conquest, colonization, occupation, or direct resource exploitation—but empires can take many forms and imperial processes can occur in many contexts. One hundred years after the United States won its independence from the British Empire, had it become an empire of its own?

In the decades after the American Civil War, the United States exerted itself in the service of American interests around the world. In the Pacific, Latin America, and the Middle East, and most explicitly in the Spanish-American War and under the foreign policy of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, the United States expanded on a long history of exploration, trade, and cultural exchange to practice something that looked remarkably like empire. The question of American imperialism, then, seeks to understand not only direct American interventions in such places as Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii, Guam, and Puerto Rico, but also the deeper history of American engagement with the wider world and the subsequent ways in which American economic, political, and cultural power has shaped the actions, choices, and possibilities of other groups and nations.

Meanwhile, as the United States asserted itself abroad, it acquired increasingly higher numbers of foreign peoples at home. European and Asian immigrants poured into the United States. In a sense, imperialism and immigration raised similar questions about American identity: Who was an "American," and who wasn't? What were the nation's obligations to foreign powers and foreign peoples? And how accessible—and how fluid—should American identity be for newcomers? All such questions confronted late-nineteenth-century Americans with unprecedented urgency.

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19.2: Patterns of American Interventions

American interventions in Mexico, China, and the Middle East reflected the United States' new eagerness to intervene in foreign governments to protect American economic interests abroad.

The United States had long been involved in Pacific commerce. American ships had been traveling to China, for instance, since 1784. As a percentage of total American foreign trade, Asian trade remained comparatively small, and yet the idea that Asian markets were vital to American commerce affected American policy and, when those markets were threatened, prompted interventions.[1] In 1899, secretary of state John Hay articulated the Open Door Policy, which called for all Western powers to have equal access to Chinese markets. Hay feared that other imperial powers—Japan, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and Russia—planned to carve China into spheres of influence. It was in the economic interest of American business to maintain China for free trade. The following year, in 1900, American troops joined a multinational force that intervened to prevent the closing of trade by putting down the Boxer Rebellion, a movement opposed to foreign businesses and missionaries operating in China. President McKinley sent the U.S. Army without consulting Congress, setting a precedent for U.S. presidents to order American troops to action around the world under their executive powers.[2]

The United States was not only ready to intervene in foreign affairs to preserve foreign markets, it was willing to take territory. The United States acquired its first Pacific territories with the Guano Islands Act of 1856. Guano—collected bird excrement—was a popular fertilizer integral to industrial farming. The act authorized and encouraged Americans to venture into the seas and claim islands with guano deposits for the United States. These acquisitions were the first insular, unincorporated territories of the United States: they were neither part of a state nor a federal district, and they were not on the path to ever attain such a status. The act, though little known, offered a precedent for future American acquisitions.[3]

Merchants, of course, weren't the only American travelers in the Pacific. Christian missionaries soon followed explorers and traders. The first American missionaries arrived in Hawaii in 1820 and China in 1830, for instance. Missionaries, though, often worked alongside business interests, and American missionaries in Hawaii, for instance, obtained large tracts of land and started lucrative sugar plantations. During the nineteenth century, Hawaii was ruled by an oligarchy based on the sugar companies, together known as the "Big Five." This white American (*haole*) elite was extremely powerful, but they still operated outside the formal expression of American state power.[4]

As many Americans looked for empire across the Pacific, others looked to Latin America. The United States, long a participant in an increasingly complex network of economic, social, and cultural interactions in Latin America, entered the late nineteenth century with a new aggressive and interventionist attitude toward its southern neighbors.

American capitalists invested enormous sums of money in Mexico during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during the long reign of the corrupt yet stable regime of the modernization-hungry president Porfirio Diaz. But in 1910 the Mexican people revolted against Díaz, ending his authoritarian regime but also his friendliness toward the business interests of the United States. In the midst of the terrible destruction wrought by the fighting, Americans with investment interests pleaded for governmental help. But the U.S. government tried to control events and politics that could not be controlled. More and more American businessmen called for military intervention. When the brutal strongman Victoriano Huerta executed the revolutionary, democratically elected president Francisco Madero in 1913, newly inaugurated American president Woodrow Wilson put pressure on Mexico's new regime. Wilson refused to recognize the new government and demanded that Huerta step aside and allow free elections to take place. Huerta refused.[5]

When Mexican forces mistakenly arrested American sailors in the port city of Tampico in April 1914, Wilson saw the opportunity to apply additional pressure on Huerta. Huerta refused to make amends, and Wilson therefore asked Congress for authority to use force against Mexico. But even before Congress could respond, Wilson invaded and took the port city of Veracruz to prevent, he said, a German shipment of arms from reaching Huerta's forces. The Huerta government fell in July 1914, and the American occupation lasted until November, when Venustiano Carranza, a rival of Huerta, took power. When Wilson threw American support behind Carranza, and not his more radical and now-rival Pancho Villa, Villa and several hundred supporters attacked American interests and raided the town of Columbus, New Mexico, in March 1916, and killed over a dozen soldiers and civilians. Wilson ordered a punitive expedition of several thousand soldiers led by General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing to enter northern Mexico and capture Villa. But Villa eluded Pershing for nearly a year and, in 1917, with war in Europe looming and great injury done to U.S.-Mexican relations, Pershing left Mexico.[6]

The United States' actions during the Mexican Revolution reflected long-standing American policy that justified interventionist actions in Latin American politics because of their potential bearing on the United States: on citizens, on shared territorial borders, and, perhaps most significantly, on economic investments. This example highlights the role of geography, or perhaps proximity, in the pursuit of imperial outcomes. But American interactions in more distant locations, in the Middle East, for instance, look quite different.

In 1867, Mark Twain traveled to the Middle East as part of a large tour group of Americans. In his satirical travelogue, *The Innocents Abroad*, he wrote, "The people [of the Middle East] stared at us everywhere, and we [Americans] stared at them. We generally made them feel rather small, too, before we got done with them, because we bore down on them with America's greatness until we crushed them."[7] When Americans later intervened in the Middle East, they would do so convinced of their own superiority.

The U.S. government had traditionally had little contact with the Middle East. Trade was limited, too limited for an economic relationship to be deemed vital to the national interest, but treaties were nevertheless signed between the U.S. and powers in the Middle East. Still, the majority of American involvement in the Middle East prior to World War I came not in the form of trade but in education, science, and humanitarian aid. American missionaries led the way. The first Protestant missionaries had arrived in 1819. Soon the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the boards of missions of the Reformed Church of America became dominant in missionary enterprises. Missions were established in almost every country of the Middle East, and even though their efforts resulted in relatively few converts, missionaries helped establish hospitals and schools, and their work laid the foundation for the establishment of Western-style universities, such as Robert College in Istanbul, Turkey (1863), the American University of Beirut (1866), and the American University of Cairo (1919).[8]

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19.3: 1898

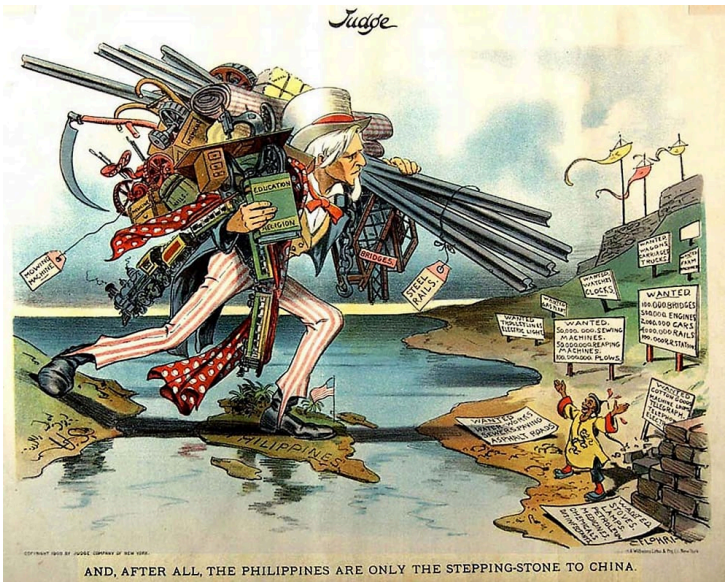


Figure 19.3.1: In this political cartoon, Uncle Sam, loaded with the implements of modern civilization, uses the Philippines as a stepping-stone to cross the Pacific to China, which excitedly awaits Sam's arrival. Such cartoons captured Americans' growing infatuation with imperialist and expansionist policies. C. 1900–1902. *Wikimedia*.

Although the United States had a long history of international economic, military, and cultural engagement that stretched back deep into the eighteenth century, the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars (1898–1902) marked a crucial turning point in American interventions abroad. In pursuing war with Spain, and then engaging in counterrevolutionary conflict in the Philippines, the United States expanded the scope and strength of its global reach. Over the next two decades, the United States would become increasingly involved in international politics, particularly in Latin America. These new conflicts and ensuing territorial problems forced Americans to confront the ideological elements of imperialism. Should the United States act as an empire? Or were foreign interventions and the taking of territory antithetical to its founding democratic ideals? What exactly would be the relationship between the United States and its territories? And could colonial subjects be successfully and safely incorporated into the body politic as American citizens? The Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars brought these questions, which had always lurked behind discussions of American expansion, out into the open.

In 1898, Americans began in earnest to turn their attention southward to problems plaguing their neighbor Cuba. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Cubans had tried unsuccessfully again and again to gain independence from Spain. The latest uprising, and the one that would prove fatal to Spain's colonial designs, began in 1895 and was still raging in the winter of 1898. By that time, in an attempt to crush the uprising, Spanish general Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau had been conducting a policy of reconcentration—forcing Cubans living in certain cities to relocate en masse to military camps—for about two years. Prominent newspaper publishers sensationalized Spanish atrocities. Cubans in the United States and their allies raised cries of *Cuba Libre!* And while the U.S. government proclaimed a wish to avoid armed conflict with Spain, President McKinley became increasingly concerned about the safety of American lives and property in Cuba. He ordered the battleship *Maine* to Havana harbor in January 1898.

The *Maine* sat undisturbed in the harbor for about two weeks. Then, on the evening of February 15, a titanic explosion tore open the ship and sent it to the bottom of the ocean. Three quarters of the ship's 354 occupants died. A naval board of inquiry immediately began an investigation to ascertain the cause of the explosion, but the loudest Americans had already decided that Spanish treachery was to blame. Capitalizing on the outrage, "yellow journals"—newspapers that promoted sensational stories, notoriously at the cost of accuracy—such as William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* called for war with Spain. When urgent negotiations failed to produce a mutually agreeable settlement, Congress officially declared war on April 25.

Although America's war effort began haphazardly, Spain's decaying military crumbled. Military victories for the United States came quickly. In the Pacific, on May 1, Commodore George Dewey engaged the Spanish fleet outside Manila, the capital of the Philippines (another Spanish colonial possession), destroyed it, and proceeded to blockade Manila harbor. Two months

later, American troops took Cuba's San Juan Heights in what would become the most well-known battle of the war, winning fame not for regular soldiers but for the irregular, especially Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders. Roosevelt had been the assistant secretary of the navy but had resigned his position in order to see action in the war. His actions in Cuba made him a national celebrity. As disease began to eat away at American troops, the Spanish suffered the loss of Santiago de Cuba on July 17, effectively ending the war. The two nations agreed to a cease-fire on August 12 and formally signed the Treaty of Paris in December. The terms of the treaty stipulated, among other things, that the United States would acquire Spain's former holdings of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

Secretary of state John Hay memorably referred to the conflict as a "splendid little war," and at the time it certainly appeared that way. Fewer than four hundred Americans died in battle in a war that lasted about fifteen weeks. Contemporaries celebrated American victories as the providential act of God. The influential Brooklyn minister Lyman Abbott, for instance, declared that Americans were "an elect people of God" and saw divine providence in Dewey's victory at Manila.[9] Some, such as Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana, took matters one step further, seeing in American victory an opportunity for imperialism. In Beveridge's view, America had a "mission to perform" and a "duty to discharge" around the world.[10]What Beveridge envisioned was nothing less than an American empire.



Figure 19.3.2: This 1914 political cartoon shows a before and after: the Spanish colonies before intervention by America and those same former colonies after. The differences are obvious and exaggerated, with the top figures described as "oppressed" by the weight of industrial slavery until America "rescued" them, turning them into the respectable and successful businessmen seen on the bottom half. Those who claimed that American imperialism brought civilization and prosperity to destitute peoples used such visuals to support their cause. Wikimedia.

But the question of whether the United States *should* become an empire was sharply debated across the nation in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War and the acquisition of Hawaii in July 1898. At the behest of American businessmen who had overthrown the Hawaiian monarchy, the United States annexed the Hawaiian Islands and their rich plantations. Between Hawaii and a number of former Spanish possessions, many Americans coveted the economic and political advantages that increased territory would bring. Those opposed to expansion, however, worried that imperial ambitions did not accord with the nation's founding ideals. American actions in the Philippines brought all of these discussions to a head.

The Philippines were an afterthought of the Spanish-American War, but when the smoke cleared, the United States found itself in possession of a key foothold in the Pacific. After Dewey's victory over the Spanish fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay, conversations about how to proceed occupied the attentions of President McKinley, political leaders from both parties, and the popular press. American and Philippine forces (under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo) were in communication: Would the Americans offer their support to the Filipinos and their ongoing efforts against the Spanish? Or would the Americans replace the Spanish as a colonial occupying force? American forces were instructed to secure Manila without allowing Philippine forces to enter the Walled City (the seat of the Spanish colonial government), hinting, perhaps, at things to come. Americans wondered what would happen next. Perhaps a good many ordinary Americans shared the bewildered sentiments of Mr. Dooley, the fictional Irish-American barkeeper whom humorist Finley Peter Dunne used to satirize American life: "I don't know what to do with th' Ph'lippeens anny more thin I did las' summer, befure I heerd tell iv thim. . . . We can't sell thim, we can't ate thim, an' we can't throw thim into the th' alley whin no wan is lookin'."[11]

As debates about American imperialism continued against the backdrop of an upcoming presidential election, tensions in the Philippines escalated. Emilio Aguinaldo was inaugurated as president of the First Philippine Republic (or Malolos Republic) in late January 1899; fighting between American and Philippine forces began in early February; and in April 1899, Congress ratified the 1898 Treaty of Paris, which concluded the Spanish-American War and gave Spain $20 million in exchange for the Philippine Islands.[12]

Like the Cubans, Filipinos had waged a long war against their Spanish colonizers. The United States could have given them the independence they had long fought for, but, instead, at the behest of President William McKinley, the United States occupied the islands and from 1899 to 1902 waged a bloody series of conflicts against Filipino insurrectionists that cost far more lives than the war with Spain. Under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo, Filipinos who had fought for freedom against the Spanish now fought for freedom against the very nation that had claimed to have liberated them from Spanish tyranny.[13]

The Philippine Insurrection, or the Philippine-American War, was a brutal conflict of occupation and insurgency. Contemporaries compared the guerrilla-style warfare in challenging and unfamiliar terrain to the American experiences in the Indian Wars of the late nineteenth century. Many commented on its brutality and the uncertain mission of American troops. An April 1899 dispatch from a *Harper's Weekly* correspondent began, "A week has passed—a week of fighting and marching, of jungles and rivers, of incident and adventure so varied and of so rapid transition that to sit down to write about it makes one feel as if he were trying to describe a dream where time, space, and all the logical sequences of ordinary life are upset in the unrelenting brutality of war."[14] John Bass described his experiences in detail, and his reportage, combined with accounts that came directly from soldiers, helped shape public knowledge about the war. Reports of cruelty on both sides and a few high-profile military investigations ensured continued public attention to events across the Pacific.

Amid fighting to secure the Philippine Islands, the federal government sent two Philippine Commissions to assess the situation in the islands and make recommendations for a civilian colonial government. A civilian administration, with William H. Taft as the first governor-general (1901–1903), was established with military support. Although President Theodore Roosevelt declared the war to be over in 1902, resistance and occasional fighting continued into the second decade of the twentieth century.[15]

Debates about American imperialism dominated headlines and tapped into core ideas about American identity and the proper role of the United States in the larger world. Should a former colony, established on the principles of freedom, liberty, and sovereignty, become a colonizer itself? What was imperialism, anyway? Many framed the Filipino conflict as a Protestant, civilizing mission. Others framed American imperialism in the Philippines as nothing new, as simply the extension of a never-ending westward American expansion. It was simply destiny. Some saw imperialism as a way to reenergize the nation by asserting national authority and power around the globe. Others baldly recognized the opportunities the Philippine Islands presented for access to Asian markets. But critics grew loud. The American Anti-Imperialist League, founded in 1899 and populated by such prominent Americans as Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, and Jane Addams, protested American imperial actions and articulated a platform that decried foreign subjugation and upheld the rights of all to self-governance. Still others embraced anti-imperialist stances because of concerns about immigration and American racial identity, afraid that American purity stood imperiled by contact with strange and foreign peoples. For whatever reason, however, the onset or acceleration of imperialism was a controversial and landmark moment in American history. America had become a preeminent force in the world.

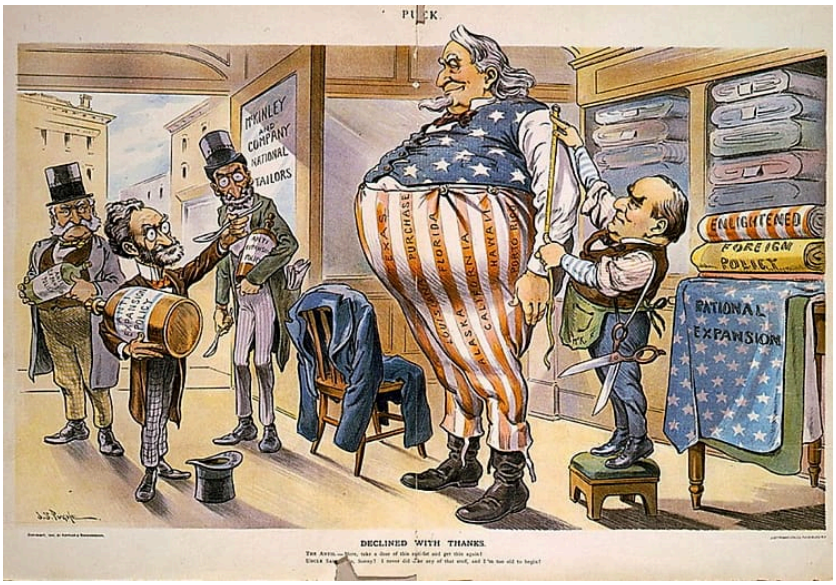


Figure 19.3.3: In this 1900 political cartoon, President McKinley measures an obese Uncle Sam for larger clothing, while anti-expansionists like Joseph Pulitzer unsuccessfully offer him a weight-loss elixir. As the nation increased its imperialistic presence and mission, many worried that America would grow too big for its own good. *Wikimedia*.

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19.4: Theodore Roosevelt and American Imperialism

Under the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt, the United States emerged from the nineteenth century with ambitious designs on global power through military might, territorial expansion, and economic influence. Though the Spanish-American War had begun under the administration of William McKinley, Roosevelt—the hero of San Juan Hill, assistant secretary of the navy, vice president, and president—was arguably the most visible and influential proponent of American imperialism at the turn of the century. Roosevelt's emphasis on developing the American navy, and on Latin America as a key strategic area of U.S. foreign policy, would have long-term consequences.

In return for Roosevelt's support of the Republican nominee, William McKinley, in the 1896 presidential election, McKinley appointed Roosevelt as assistant secretary of the navy. The head of the department, John Long, had a competent but lackadaisical managerial style that allowed Roosevelt a great deal of freedom that Roosevelt used to network with such luminaries as military theorists Alfred Thayer Mahan and naval officer George Dewey and politicians such as Henry Cabot Lodge and William Howard Taft. During his tenure he oversaw the construction of new battleships and the implementation of new technology and laid the groundwork for new shipyards, all with the goal of projecting America's power across the oceans. Roosevelt wanted to expand American influence. For instance, he advocated for the annexation of Hawaii for several reasons: it was within the American sphere of influence, it would deny Japanese expansion and limit potential threats to the West Coast, it had an excellent port for battleships at Pearl Harbor, and it would act as a fueling station on the way to pivotal markets in Asia.[16]



Figure 19.4.1: Teddy Roosevelt, a politician turned soldier, gained fame after he and his Rough Riders took San Juan Hill. Images like this poster praised Roosevelt and the battle as Americans celebrated a "splendid little war." 1899. *Wikimedia.*

Roosevelt, after winning headlines in the war, ran as vice president under McKinley and rose to the presidency after McKinley's assassination by the anarchist Leon Czolgosz in 1901. Among his many interventions in American life, Roosevelt acted with vigor to expand the military, bolstering naval power especially, to protect and promote American interests abroad. This included the construction of eleven battleships between 1904 and 1907. Alfred Thayer Mahan's naval theories, described in his *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, influenced Roosevelt a great deal. In contrast to theories that advocated for commerce raiding, coastal defense, and small "brown water" ships, the imperative to control the sea required battleships and a "blue water" navy that could engage and win decisive battles with rival fleets. As president, Roosevelt continued the policies he established as assistant secretary of the navy and expanded the U.S. fleet. The mission of the Great White Fleet, sixteen all-white battleships that sailed around the world between 1907 and 1909, exemplified America's new power.[17]

Roosevelt insisted that the "big stick" and the persuasive power of the U.S. military could ensure U.S. hegemony over strategically important regions in the Western Hemisphere. The United States used military intervention in various circumstances to further its objectives, but it did not have the ability or the inclination to militarily impose its will on the entirety of South and Central America. The United States therefore more often used informal methods of empire, such as so-called dollar diplomacy, to assert dominance over the hemisphere.

The United States actively intervened again and again in Latin America. Throughout his time in office, Roosevelt exerted U.S. control over Cuba (even after it gained formal independence in 1902) and Puerto Rico, and he deployed naval forces to ensure Panama's independence from Colombia in 1901 in order to acquire a U.S. Canal Zone. Furthermore, Roosevelt pronounced the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904, proclaiming U.S. police power in the Caribbean. As articulated by President James Monroe in his annual address to Congress in 1823, the United States would treat any military intervention in Latin America by a European power as a threat to American security. Roosevelt reaffirmed the Monroe Doctrine and expanded it by declaring that the United States had the right to preemptive action through intervention in any Latin American nation in order to correct administrative and fiscal deficiencies.[18]

Roosevelt's policy justified numerous and repeated police actions in "dysfunctional" Caribbean and Latin American countries by U.S. Marines and naval forces and enabled the founding of the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. This approach is sometimes referred to as gunboat diplomacy, wherein naval forces and Marines land in a national capital to protect American and Western personnel, temporarily seize control of the government, and dictate policies friendly to American business, such as the repayment of foreign loans. For example, in 1905 Roosevelt sent the Marines to occupy the Dominican Republic and established financial supervision over the Dominican government. Imperialists often framed such actions as almost humanitarian. They celebrated white Anglo-Saxon societies such as those found in the United States and the British Empire as advanced practitioners of nation-building and civilization, helping to uplift debtor nations in Latin America that lacked the manly qualities of discipline and self-control. Roosevelt, for instance, preached that it was the "manly duty" of the United States to exercise an international police power in the Caribbean and to spread the benefits of Anglo-Saxon civilization to inferior states populated by inferior peoples. The president's language, for instance, contrasted debtor nations' "impotence" with the United States' civilizing influence, belying new ideas that associated self-restraint and social stability with Anglo-Saxon manliness.[19]

Dollar diplomacy offered a less costly method of empire and avoided the troubles of military occupation. Washington worked with bankers to provide loans to Latin American nations in exchange for some level of control over their national fiscal affairs. Roosevelt first implemented dollar diplomacy on a vast scale, while Presidents Taft and Wilson continued the practice in various forms during their own administrations. All confronted instability in Latin America. Rising debts to European and American bankers allowed for the inroads of modern life but destabilized much of the region. Bankers, beginning with financial houses in London and New York, saw Latin America as an opportunity for investment. Lenders took advantage of the region's newly formed governments' need for cash and exacted punishing interest rates on massive loans, which were then sold off in pieces on the secondary bond market. American economic interests were now closely aligned with the region but also further undermined by the chronic instability of the region's newly formed governments, which were often plagued by mismanagement, civil wars, and military coups in the decades following their independence. Turnover in regimes interfered with the repayment of loans, as new governments often repudiated the national debt or forced a renegotiation with suddenly powerless lenders.[20]

Creditors could not force settlements of loans until they successfully lobbied their own governments to get involved and forcibly collect debts. The Roosevelt administration did not want to deny the Europeans' rightful demands of repayment of debt, but it also did not want to encourage European policies of conquest in the hemisphere as part of that debt collection. U.S. policy makers and military strategists within the Roosevelt administration determined that this European practice of military intervention posed a serious threat to American interests in the region. Roosevelt reasoned that the United States must create and maintain fiscal and political stability within strategically important nations in Latin America, particularly those affecting routes to and from the proposed Panama Canal. As a result, U.S. policy makers considered intervention in places like Cuba and the Dominican Republic a necessity to ensure security around the region.[21]

The Monroe Doctrine provided the Roosevelt administration with a diplomatic and international legal tradition through which it could assert a U.S. right and obligation to intervene in the hemisphere. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine asserted that the United States wished to promote stable, prosperous states in Latin America that could live up to their political and financial obligations. Roosevelt declared that "wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may finally require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the United States cannot ignore this duty."[22] President Monroe declared what Europeans could not do in the Western Hemisphere; Roosevelt inverted his doctrine to legitimize direct U.S. intervention in the region.[23]

Though aggressive and bellicose, Roosevelt did not necessarily advocate expansion by military force. In fact, the president insisted that in dealings with the Latin American nations, he did not seek national glory or expansion of territory and believed that war or intervention should be a last resort when resolving conflicts with problematic governments. According to Roosevelt, such actions were necessary to maintain "order and civilization."[24] Then again, Roosevelt certainly believed in using military power to protect national interests and spheres of influence when absolutely necessary. He also believed that the American sphere included not only Hawaii and the Caribbean but also much of the Pacific. When Japanese victories over Russia threatened the

regional balance of power, he sponsored peace talks between Russian and Japanese leaders, earning him a Nobel Peace Prize in 1906.

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19.5: Women and Imperialism



Figure 19.5.1: With much satisfaction, Columbia puts on her "Easter Bonnet," a hat shaped like a warship and labeled World Power. By 1901, when this political cartoon was published, Americans felt confident in their country's position as a world leader. *Wikimedia*.

Debates over American imperialism revolved around more than just politics and economics and national self-interest. They also included notions of humanitarianism, morality, religion, and ideas of "civilization." And they included significant participation by American women.

In the fall of 1903, Margaret McLeod, age twenty-one, originally of Boston, found herself in Australia on family business and in need of income. Fortuitously, she made the acquaintance of Alexander MacWillie, the top salesman for the H. J. Heinz Company, who happened to be looking for a young lady to serve as a "demonstrator" of Heinz products to potential consumers. McLeod proved to be such an attractive purveyor of India relish and baked beans that she accompanied MacWillie on the rest of his tour of Australia and continued on to South Africa, India, and Japan. Wherever she went, this "dainty young girl with golden hair in white cap and tucker" drew attention to Heinz's products, but, in a much larger sense, she was also projecting an image of middle-class American domesticity, of pure womanhood. Heinz saw itself not only as purveying economical and healthful foodstuffs—it was bringing the blessings of civilization to the world.[25]

When commentators, such as Theodore Roosevelt in his speech on "the strenuous life," spoke about America's overseas ventures, they generally gave the impression that this was a strictly masculine enterprise—the work of soldiers, sailors, government officials, explorers, businessmen, and scientists. But in fact, U.S. imperialism, which focused as much on economic and cultural influence as on military or political power, offered a range of opportunities for white, middle-class, Christian women. In addition to working as representatives of American business, women could serve as missionaries, teachers, and medical professionals, and as artists and writers they were inspired by and helped transmit ideas about imperialism.

Moreover, the rhetoric of civilization that underlay imperialism was itself a highly gendered concept. According to the racial theory of the day, humans progressed through hierarchical stages of civilization in an orderly, linear fashion. Only Europeans and Americans had attained the highest level of civilization, which was superficially marked by whiteness but also included an industrial economy and a gender division in which men and women had diverging but complementary roles. Social and technological progress had freed women of the burdens of physical labor and elevated them to a position of moral and spiritual authority. White women thus potentially had important roles to play in U.S. imperialism, both as symbols of the benefits of American civilization and as vehicles for the transmission of American values.[26]

Civilization, while often cloaked in the language of morality and Christianity, was very much an economic concept. The stages of civilization were primarily marked by their economic character (hunter-gatherer, agricultural, industrial), and the consumption of industrially produced commodities was seen as a key moment in the progress of "savages" toward civilized life. Over the course of the nineteenth century, women in the West, for instance, had become closely associated with consumption, particularly of those

commodities used in the domestic sphere. Thus it must have seemed natural for Alexander MacWillie to hire Margaret McLeod to "demonstrate" ketchup and chili sauce at the same time as she "demonstrated" white, middle-class domesticity. By adopting the use of such progressive products in their homes, consumers could potentially absorb even the virtues of American civilization.[27]

In some ways, women's work in support of imperialism can be seen as an extension of the kind of activities many of them were already engaged in among working-class, immigrant, and Native American communities in the United States. Many white women felt that they had a duty to spread the benefits of Christian civilization to those less fortunate than themselves. American overseas ventures, then, merely expanded the scope of these activities—literally, in that the geographical range of possibilities encompassed practically the entire globe, and figuratively, in that imperialism significantly raised the stakes of women's work. No longer only responsible for shaping the next generation of American citizens, white women now had a crucial role to play in the maintenance of civilization itself. They too would help determine whether civilization would continue to progress.

Of course, not all women were active supporters of U.S. imperialism. Many actively opposed it. Although the most prominent public voices against imperialism were male, women made up a large proportion of the membership of organizations like the Anti-Imperialist League. For white women like Jane Addams and Josephine Shaw Lowell, anti-imperialist activism was an outgrowth of their work in opposition to violence and in support of democracy. Black female activists, meanwhile, generally viewed imperialism as a form of racial antagonism and drew parallels between the treatments of African Americans at home and, for example, Filipinos abroad. Indeed, Ida B. Wells viewed her anti-lynching campaign as a kind of anti-imperialist activism.

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19.6: Immigration

For Americans at the turn of the century, imperialism and immigration were two sides of the same coin. The involvement of American women with imperialist and anti-imperialist activity demonstrates how foreign policy concerns were brought home and became, in a sense, domesticated. It is also no coincidence that many of the women involved in both imperialist and anti-imperialist organizations were also concerned with the plight of new arrivals to the United States. Industrialization, imperialism, and immigration were all linked. Imperialism had at its core a desire for markets for American goods, and those goods were increasingly manufactured by immigrant labor. This sense of growing dependence on "others" as producers and consumers, along with doubts about their capability of assimilation into the mainstream of white, Protestant American society, caused a great deal of anxiety among native-born Americans.

Between 1870 and 1920, over twenty-five million immigrants arrived in the United States. This migration was largely a continuation of a process begun before the Civil War, though by the turn of the twentieth century, new groups such as Italians, Poles, and Eastern European Jews made up a larger percentage of the arrivals while Irish and German numbers began to dwindle.

Although the growing U.S. economy needed large numbers of immigrant workers for its factories and mills, many Americans reacted negatively to the arrival of so many immigrants. Nativists opposed mass immigration for various reasons. Some felt that the new arrivals were unfit for American democracy, and that Irish or Italian immigrants used violence or bribery to corrupt municipal governments. Others (often earlier immigrants themselves) worried that the arrival of even more immigrants would result in fewer jobs and lower wages. Such fears combined and resulted in anti-Chinese protests on the West Coast in the 1870s. Still others worried that immigrants brought with them radical ideas such as socialism and communism. These fears multiplied after the Chicago Haymarket affair in 1886, in which immigrants were accused of killing police officers in a bomb blast.[28]



Figure 19.6.1:Nativist sentiment intensified in the late nineteenth century as immigrants streamed into American cities. Uncle Sam's Lodging House, published in 1882, conveys this anti-immigrant attitude, with caricatured representations of Europeans, Asians, and African Americans creating a chaotic scene. *Wikimedia*.

In September 1876, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, a member of the Massachusetts Board of State Charities, gave an address in support of the introduction of regulatory federal immigration legislation at an interstate conference of charity officials in Saratoga, New York. Immigration might bring some benefits, but "it also introduces disease, ignorance, crime, pauperism and idleness." Sanborn thus advocated federal action to stop "indiscriminate and unregulated immigration."[29]

Sanborn's address was aimed at restricting only the immigration of paupers from Europe to the East Coast, but the idea of immigration restrictions was common across the United States in the late nineteenth century, when many variously feared that the influx of foreigners would undermine the racial, economic, and moral integrity of American society. From the 1870s to the 1920s, the federal government passed a series of laws limiting or discontinuing the immigration of particular groups, and the United States remained committed to regulating the kind of immigrants who would join American society. To critics, regulations

legitimized racism, class bias, and ethnic prejudice as formal national policy.

The first move for federal immigration control came from California, where racial hostility toward Chinese immigrants had mounted since the midnineteenth century. In addition to accusing Chinese immigrants of racial inferiority and unfitness for American citizenship, opponents claimed that they were also economically and morally corrupting American society with cheap labor and immoral practices, such as prostitution. Immigration restriction was necessary for the "Caucasian race of California," as one anti-Chinese politician declared, and for European Americans to "preserve and maintain their homes, their business, and their high social and moral position." In 1875, the anti-Chinese crusade in California moved Congress to pass the Page Act, which banned the entry of convicted criminals, Asian laborers brought involuntarily, and women imported "for the purposes of prostitution," a stricture designed chiefly to exclude Chinese women. Then, in May 1882, Congress suspended the immigration of all Chinese laborers with the Chinese Exclusion Act, making the Chinese the first immigrant group subject to admission restrictions on the basis of race. They became the first illegal immigrants.[30]



Figure 19.6.1: The idea of America as a "melting pot," a metaphor common in today's parlance, was a way of arguing for the ethnic assimilation of all immigrants into a nebulous "American" identity at the turn of the 20th century. A play of the same name premiered in 1908 to great acclaim, causing even the former president Theodore Roosevelt to tell the playwright, "That's a great play, Mr. Zangwill, that's a great play." Cover of Theater Programme for Israel Zangwill's play "The Melting Pot", 1916. *Wikimedia*.

On the other side of the country, Atlantic Seaboard states also facilitated the formation of federal immigration policy. Since the colonial period, East Coast states had regulated immigration through their own passenger laws, which prohibited the landing of destitute foreigners unless shipmasters prepaid certain amounts of money in the support of those passengers. State-level control of pauper immigration developed into federal policy in the early 1880s. In August 1882, Congress passed the Immigration Act, denying admission to people who were not able to support themselves and those, such as paupers, people with mental illnesses, or convicted criminals, who might otherwise threaten the security of the nation.

The category of excludable people expanded continuously after 1882. In 1885, in response to American workers' complaints about cheap immigrant labor, Congress added foreign workers migrating under labor contracts with American employers to the list of excludable people. Six years later, the federal government included people who seemed likely to become wards of the state, people with contagious diseases, and polygamists, and made all groups of excludable people deportable. In 1903, those who would pose ideological threats to American republican democracy, such as anarchists and socialists, also became the subject of new immigration restrictions.

Many immigration critics were responding to the shifting demographics of American immigration. The center of immigrant-sending regions shifted from northern and western Europe to southern and eastern Europe and Asia. These "new immigrants" were poorer, spoke languages other than English, and were likely Catholic or Jewish. White Protestant Americans typically regarded them as inferior, and American immigration policy began to reflect more explicit prejudice than ever before. One restrictionist declared that these immigrants were "races with which the English-speaking people have never hitherto assimilated, and who are most alien to the great body of the people of the United States." The increased immigration of people from southern and eastern Europe, such as Italians, Jews, Slavs, and Greeks, led directly to calls for tighter restrictive measures. In 1907, the immigration of Japanese laborers was practically suspended when the American and Japanese governments reached the so-

called Gentlemen's Agreement, according to which Japan would stop issuing passports to working-class emigrants. In its forty-two-volume report of 1911, the U.S. Immigration Commission highlighted the impossibility of incorporating these new immigrants into American society. The report highlighted their supposed innate inferiority, asserting that they were the causes of rising social problems in America, such as poverty, crime, prostitution, and political radicalism.[31]

The assault against immigrants' Catholicism provides an excellent example of the challenges immigrant groups faced in the United States. By 1900, Catholicism in the United States had grown dramatically in size and diversity, from 1 percent of the population a century earlier to the largest religious denomination in America (though still outnumbered by Protestants as a whole). As a result, Catholics in America faced two intertwined challenges: one external, related to Protestant anti-Catholicism, and the other internal, having to do with the challenges of assimilation.

Externally, the Church and its members remained an "outsider" religion in a nation that continued to see itself as culturally and religiously Protestant. Torrents of anti-Catholic literature and scandalous rumors maligned Catholics. Many Protestants doubted whether Catholics could ever make loyal Americans because they supposedly owed primary allegiance to the pope.

Internally, Catholics in America faced the question every immigrant group has had to answer: to what extent should they become more like native-born Americans? This question was particularly acute, as Catholics encompassed a variety of languages and customs. Beginning in the 1830s, Catholic immigration to the United States had exploded with the increasing arrival of Irish and German immigrants. Subsequent Catholic arrivals from Italy, Poland, and other Eastern European countries chafed at Irish dominance over the Church hierarchy. Mexican and Mexican American Catholics, whether recent immigrants or incorporated into the nation after the Mexican-American War, expressed similar frustrations. Could all these different Catholics remain part of the same Church?

Catholic clergy approached this situation from a variety of perspectives. Some bishops advocated rapid assimilation into the English-speaking mainstream. These "Americanists" advocated an end to "ethnic parishes"—the unofficial practice of permitting separate congregations for Poles, Italians, Germans, and so on—in the belief that such isolation only delayed immigrants' entry into the American mainstream. They anticipated that the Catholic Church could thrive in a nation that espoused religious freedom, if only they assimilated. Meanwhile, however, more conservative clergy cautioned against assimilation. While they conceded that the United States had no official religion, they felt that Protestant notions of the separation of church and state and of licentious individual liberty posed a threat to the Catholic faith. They further saw ethnic parishes as an effective strategy protecting immigrant communities and worried that Protestants would use public schools to attack the Catholic faith. Eventually, the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Leo XIII, weighed in on the controversy. In 1899, he sent a special letter (an encyclical) to an archbishop in the United States. Leo reminded the Americanists that the Catholic Church was a unified global body and that American liberties did not give Catholics the freedom to alter church teachings. The Americanists denied any such intention, but the conservative clergy claimed that the pope had sided with them. Tension between Catholicism and American life, however, would continue well into the twentieth century.[32]

The American encounter with Catholicism—and Catholicism's encounter with America—testified to the tense relationship between native-born and foreign-born Americans, and to the larger ideas Americans used to situate themselves in a larger world, a world of empire and immigrants.

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19.7: Conclusion

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19.8: Primary Sources

William McKinley on American Expanionism (1903)

After the surrender of the Spanish in the Spanish-American War, the United States assumed control of the Philippines and struggled to contain an anti-American insurgency.

Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” (1899)

As the United States waged war against Filipino insurgents, the British writer and poet Rudyard Kipling urged the Americans to take up “the white man’s burden.”

James D. Phelan, “Why the Chinese Should Be Excluded” (1901)

James D. Phelan, the mayor of San Francisco, penned the following article to drum up support for the extension of laws prohibiting Chinese immigration.

William James on “The Philippine Question” (1903)

Many Americans opposed imperialist actions. Here, the philosopher William James explains his opposition in the light of history.

Mark Twain, “The War Prayer” (ca.1904-5)

The American writer Mark Twain wrote the following satire in the glow of America’s imperial interventions.

School Begins (1899)

In this 1899 cartoon published, Uncle Sam lectures his new students: The Philippines, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and, Cuba. Past and potentially future U.S. acquisitions fill the rest of the classroom.

“Declined With Thanks” (1900)

In this political cartoon, tailor President McKinley measures an obese Uncle Sam for larger clothing, while Anti-Expansionists like Joseph Pulitzer unsuccessfully offer Sam a weight-loss elixir. As the nation increased its imperialistic presence and mission, many like Pulitzer worried that America would grow too big for its own good.

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19.9: Reference Material

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20: THE PROGRESSIVE ERA



From an undated William Jennings Bryan campaign print, "Shall the People Rule?" Library of Congress.

20.1: Introduction
20.2: Mobilizing for Reform
20.3: Women's Movements
20.4: Targeting the Trusts
20.5: Progressive Environmentalism
20.6: Jim Crow and African American Life
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20.1: Introduction

"Never in the history of the world was society in so terrific flux as it is right now," Jack London wrote in *The Iron Heel*, his 1908 dystopian novel in which a corporate oligarchy comes to rule the United States. He wrote, "The swift changes in our industrial system are causing equally swift changes in our religious, political, and social structures. An unseen and fearful revolution is taking place in the fiber and structure of society. One can only dimly feel these things, but they are in the air, now, today."[1]

The many problems associated with the Gilded Age—the rise of unprecedented fortunes and unprecedented poverty, controversies over imperialism, urban squalor, a near-war between capital and labor, loosening social mores, unsanitary food production, the onrush of foreign immigration, environmental destruction, and the outbreak of political radicalism—confronted Americans. Terrible forces seemed out of control and the nation seemed imperiled. Farmers and workers had been waging political war against capitalists and political conservatives for decades, but then, slowly, toward the end of the nineteenth century a new generation of middle-class Americans interjected themselves into public life and advocated new reforms to tame the runaway world of the Gilded Age.

Widespread dissatisfaction with new trends in American society spurred the Progressive Era, named for the various progressive movements that attracted various constituencies around various reforms. Americans had many different ideas about how the country's development should be managed and whose interests required the greatest protection. Reformers sought to clean up politics; black Americans continued their long struggle for civil rights; women demanded the vote with greater intensity while also demanding a more equal role in society at large; and workers demanded higher wages, safer workplaces, and the union recognition that would guarantee these rights. Whatever their goals, *reform* became the word of the age, and the sum of their efforts, whatever their ultimate impact or original intentions, gave the era its name.

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20.2: Mobilizing for Reform

In 1911 the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Manhattan caught fire. The doors of the factory had been chained shut to prevent employees from taking unauthorized breaks (the managers who held the keys saved themselves, but left over two hundred women behind). A rickety fire ladder on the side of the building collapsed immediately. Women lined the rooftop and windows of the ten-story building and jumped, landing in a "mangled, bloody pulp." Life nets held by firemen tore at the impact of the falling bodies. Among the onlookers, "women were hysterical, scores fainted; men wept as, in paroxysms of frenzy, they hurled themselves against the police lines." By the time the fire burned itself out, 71 workers were injured and 146 had died.[2]

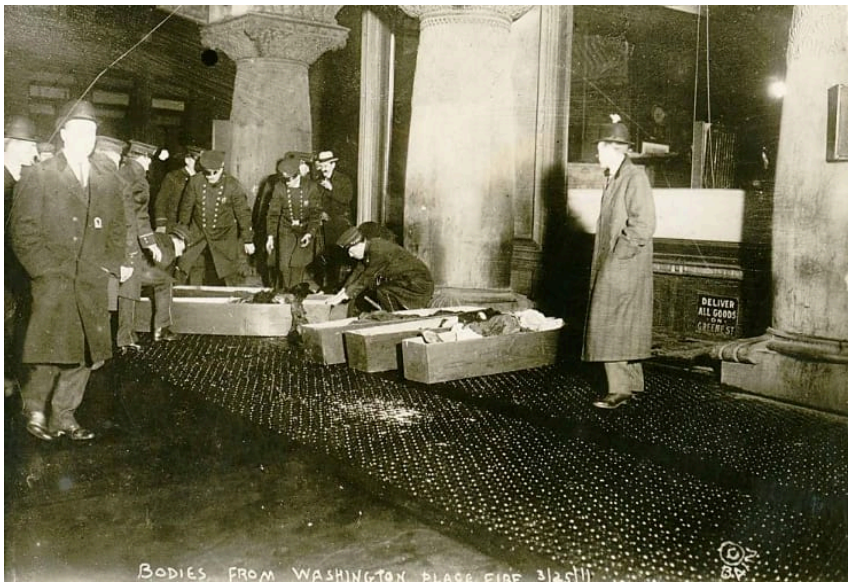


Figure 20.2.1: Policemen place the bodies of workers who were burned alive in the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire into coffins. Photographs like this made real the atrocities that could result from unsafe working conditions. March 25, 1911. *Library of Congress*.

A year before, the Triangle workers had gone on strike demanding union recognition, higher wages, and better safety conditions. Remembering their workers' "chief value," the owners of the factory decided that a viable fire escape and unlocked doors were too expensive and called in the city police to break up the strike. After the 1911 fire, reporter Bill Shepherd reflected, "I looked upon the heap of dead bodies and I remembered these girls were shirtwaist makers. I remembered their great strike last year in which the same girls had demanded more sanitary conditions and more safety precautions in the shops. These dead bodies were the answer."[3] Former Triangle worker and labor organizer Rose Schneiderman said, " "This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city. Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers . . . the life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred! There are so many of us for one job, it matters little if 140-odd are burned to death."[4]After the fire, Triangle owners Max Blanck and Isaac Harris were brought up on manslaughter charges. They were acquitted after less than two hours of deliberation. The outcome continued a trend in the industrializing economy that saw workers' deaths answered with little punishment of the business owners responsible for such dangerous conditions. But as such tragedies mounted and working and living conditions worsened and inequality grew, it became increasingly difficult to develop justifications for this new modern order.

Events such as the Triangle Shirtwaist fire convinced many Americans of the need for reform, but the energies of activists were needed to spread a new commitment to political activism and government interference in the economy. Politicians, journalists, novelists, religious leaders, and activists all raised their voices to push Americans toward reform.

Reformers turned to books and mass-circulation magazines to publicize the plight of the nation's poor and the many corruptions endemic to the new industrial order. Journalists who exposed business practices, poverty, and corruption—labeled by Theodore Roosevelt as "muckrakers"—aroused public demands for reform. Magazines such as *McClure's* detailed political corruption and economic malfeasance. The muckrakers confirmed Americans' suspicions about runaway wealth and political corruption. Ray Stannard Baker, a journalist whose reports on U.S. Steel exposed the underbelly of the new corporate capitalism, wrote, "I think I can understand now why these exposure articles took such a hold upon the American people. It was because the country, for

years, had been swept by the agitation of soap-box orators, prophets crying in the wilderness, and political campaigns based upon charges of corruption and privilege which everyone believed or suspected had some basis of truth, but which were largely unsubstantiated."[5]

Journalists shaped popular perceptions of Gilded Age injustice. In 1890, New York City journalist Jacob Riis published *How the Other Half Lives*, a scathing indictment of living and working conditions in the city's slums. Riis not only vividly described the squalor he saw, he documented it with photography, giving readers an unflinching view of urban poverty. Riis's book led to housing reform in New York and other cities and helped instill the idea that society bore at least some responsibility for alleviating poverty.[6] In 1906, Upton Sinclair published *The Jungle*, a novel dramatizing the experiences of a Lithuanian immigrant family who moved to Chicago to work in the stockyards. Although Sinclair intended the novel to reveal the brutal exploitation of labor in the meatpacking industry, and thus to build support for the socialist movement, its major impact was to lay bare the entire process of industrialized food production. The growing invisibility of slaughterhouses and livestock production for urban consumers had enabled unsanitary and unsafe conditions. "The slaughtering machine ran on, visitors or no visitors," wrote Sinclair, "like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory."[7] Sinclair's exposé led to the passage of the Meat Inspection Act and Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906.



Figure 20.2.2: Jacob Riis, "Home of an Italian Ragpicker." 1896. Wikimedia.

Of course, it was not only journalists who raised questions about American society. One of the most popular novels of the nineteenth century, Edward Bellamy's 1888 *Looking Backward,* was a national sensation. In it, a man falls asleep in Boston in 1887 and awakens in 2000 to find society radically altered. Poverty and disease and competition gave way as new industrial armies cooperated to build a utopia of social harmony and economic prosperity. Bellamy's vision of a reformed society enthralled readers, inspired hundreds of Bellamy clubs, and pushed many young readers onto the road to reform.[8] It led countless Americans to question the realities of American life in the nineteenth century:

> *"I am aware that you called yourselves free in the nineteenth century. The meaning of the word could not then, however, have been at all what it is at present, or you certainly would not have applied it to a society of which nearly every member was in a position of galling personal dependence upon others as to the very means of life, the poor upon the rich, or employed upon employer, women upon men, children upon parents."*[9]

But Americans were urged to action not only by books and magazines but by preachers and theologians, too. Confronted by both the benefits and the ravages of industrialization, many Americans asked themselves, "What Would Jesus Do?" In 1896, Charles Sheldon, a Congregational minister in Topeka, Kansas, published *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* The novel told the story of Henry Maxwell, a pastor in a small Midwestern town one day confronted by an unemployed migrant who criticized his congregation's lack of concern for the poor and downtrodden. Moved by the man's plight, Maxwell preached a series of sermons in which he asked his congregation: "Would it not be true, think you, that if every Christian in America did as Jesus would do, society itself, the business world, yes, the very political system under which our commercial and government activity is carried on, would be so changed that human suffering would be reduced to a minimum?"[10] Sheldon's novel became a best seller, not

only because of its story but because the book's plot connected with a new movement transforming American religion: the social gospel.

The social gospel emerged within Protestant Christianity at the end of the nineteenth century. It emphasized the need for Christians to be concerned for the salvation of society, and not simply individual souls. Instead of just caring for family or fellow church members, social gospel advocates encouraged Christians to engage society; challenge social, political, and economic structures; and help those less fortunate than themselves. Responding to the developments of the industrial revolution in America and the increasing concentration of people in urban spaces, with its attendant social and economic problems, some social gospelers went so far as to advocate a form of Christian socialism, but all urged Americans to confront the sins of their society.

One of the most notable advocates of the social gospel was Walter Rauschenbusch. After graduating from Rochester Theological Seminary, in 1886 Rauschenbusch accepted the pastorate of a German Baptist church in the Hell's Kitchen section of New York City, where he confronted rampant crime and stark poverty, problems not adequately addressed by the political leaders of the city. Rauschenbusch joined with fellow reformers to elect a new mayoral candidate, but he also realized that a new theological framework had to reflect his interest in society and its problems. He revived Jesus's phrase, "the Kingdom of God," claiming that it encompassed every aspect of life and made every part of society a purview of the proper Christian. Like Charles Sheldon's fictional Rev. Maxwell, Rauschenbusch believed that every Christian, whether they were a businessperson, a politician, or a stay-at-home parent, should ask themselves what they could to enact the kingdom of God on Earth.[11]

> *"The social gospel is the old message of salvation, but enlarged and intensified. The individualistic gospel has taught us to see the sinfulness of every human heart and has inspired us with faith in the willingness and power of God to save every soul that comes to him. But it has not given us an adequate understanding of the sinfulness of the social order and its share in the sins of all individuals within it. It has not evoked faith in the will and power of God to redeem the permanent institutions of human society from their inherited guilt of oppression and extortion. Both our sense of sin and our faith in salvation have fallen short of the realities under its teaching. The social gospel seeks to bring men under repentance for their collective sins and to create a more sensitive and more modern conscience. It calls on us for the faith of the old prophets who believed in the salvation of nations."*[12]

Glaring blind spots persisted within the proposals of most social gospel advocates. As men, they often ignored the plight of women, and thus most refused to support women's suffrage. Many were also silent on the plight of African Americans, Native Americans, and other oppressed minority groups. However, the writings of Rauschenbusch and other social gospel proponents a profound influence on twentieth-century American life. Most immediately, they fueled progressive reform. But they also inspired future activists, including Martin Luther King Jr., who envisioned a "beloved community" that resembled Rauschenbusch's "Kingdom of God."

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20.3: Women's Movements



Figure 20.3.1: Suffragists campaigned tirelessly for the vote in the first two decades of the twentieth century, taking to the streets in public displays like this 1915 pre-election parade in New York City. During this one event, 20,000 women defied the gender norms that tried to relegate them to the private sphere and deny them the vote. 1915. *Wikimedia*.

Reform opened new possibilities for women's activism in American public life and gave new impetus to the long campaign for women's suffrage. Much energy for women's work came from female "clubs," social organizations devoted to various purposes. Some focused on intellectual development; others emphasized philanthropic activities. Increasingly, these organizations looked outward, to their communities and to the place of women in the larger political sphere.

Women's clubs flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1890s women formed national women's club federations. Particularly significant in campaigns for suffrage and women's rights were the General Federation of Women's Clubs (formed in New York City in 1890) and the National Association of Colored Women (organized in Washington, D.C., in 1896), both of which were dominated by upper-middle-class, educated, northern women. Few of these organizations were biracial, a legacy of the sometimes uneasy midnineteenth-century relationship between socially active African Americans and white women. Rising American prejudice led many white female activists to ban inclusion of their African American sisters. The segregation of black women into distinct clubs nonetheless still produced vibrant organizations that could promise racial uplift and civil rights for all blacks as well as equal rights for women.

Other women worked through churches and moral reform organizations to clean up American life. And still others worked as moral vigilantes. The fearsome Carrie A. Nation, an imposing woman who believed she worked God's will, won headlines for destroying saloons. In Wichita, Kansas, on December 27, 1900, Nation took a hatchet and broke bottles and bars at the luxurious Carey Hotel. Arrested and charged with causing $3,000 in damages, Nation spent a month in jail before the county dismissed the charges on account of "a delusion to such an extent as to be practically irresponsible." But Nation's "hatchetation" drew national attention. Describing herself as "a bulldog running along at the feet of Jesus, barking at what He doesn't like," she continued her assaults, and days later she smashed two more Wichita bars.[13]

Few women followed in Nation's footsteps, and many more worked within more reputable organizations. Nation, for instance, had founded a chapter of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), but the organization's leaders described her as "unwomanly and unchristian." The WCTU was founded in 1874 as a modest temperance organization devoted to combating the evils of drunkenness. But then, from 1879 to 1898, Frances Willard invigorated the organization by transforming it into a national political organization, embracing a "do everything" policy that adopted any and all reasonable reforms that would improve social welfare and advance women's rights. Temperance, and then the full prohibition of alcohol, however, always loomed large.

Many American reformers associated alcohol with nearly every social ill. Alcohol was blamed for domestic abuse, poverty, crime, and disease. The 1912 Anti-Saloon League *Yearbook*, for instance, presented charts indicating comparable increases in alcohol

consumption alongside rising divorce rates. The WCTU called alcohol a “home wrecker.” More insidiously, perhaps, reformers also associated alcohol with cities and immigrants, necessarily maligning America’s immigrants, Catholics, and working classes in their crusade against liquor. Still, reformers believed that the abolition of “strong drink” would bring about social progress, obviate the need for prisons and insane asylums, save women and children from domestic abuse, and usher in a more just, progressive society.

Powerful female activists emerged out of the club movement and temperance campaigns. Perhaps no American reformer matched Jane Addams in fame, energy, and innovation. Born in Cedarville, Illinois, in 1860, Addams lost her mother by age two and lived under the attentive care of her father. At seventeen, she left home to attend Rockford Female Seminary. An idealist, Addams sought the means to make the world a better place. She believed that well-educated women of means, such as herself, lacked practical strategies for engaging everyday reform. After four years at Rockford, Addams embarked on a multiyear “grand tour” of Europe. She found herself drawn to English settlement houses, a kind of prototype for social work in which philanthropists embedded themselves among communities and offered services to disadvantaged populations. After visiting London’s Toynbee Hall in 1887, Addams returned to the United States and in 1889 founded Hull House in Chicago with her longtime confidant and companion Ellen Gates Starr.[14]

> *The Settlement … is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city. It insists that these problems are not confined to any one portion of the city. It is an attempt to relieve, at the same time, the overaccumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other … It must be grounded in a philosophy whose foundation is on the solidarity of the human race, a philosophy which will not waver when the race happens to be represented by a drunken woman or an idiot boy.*[15]

Hull House workers provided for their neighbors by running a nursery and a kindergarten, administering classes for parents and clubs for children, and organizing social and cultural events for the community. Reformer Florence Kelley, who stayed at Hull House from 1891 to 1899, convinced Addams to move into the realm of social reform.[16] Hull House began exposing conditions in local sweatshops and advocating for the organization of workers. She called the conditions caused by urban poverty and industrialization a “social crime.” Hull House workers surveyed their community and produced statistics on poverty, disease, and living conditions. Addams began pressuring politicians. Together Kelley and Addams petitioned legislators to pass antisweatshop legislation that limited the hours of work for women and children to eight per day. Yet Addams was an upper-class white Protestant woman who, like many reformers, refused to embrace more radical policies. While Addams called labor organizing a “social obligation,” she also warned the labor movement against the “constant temptation towards class warfare.” Addams, like many reformers, favored cooperation between rich and poor and bosses and workers, whether cooperation was a realistic possibility or not.[17]

Addams became a kind of celebrity. In 1912, she became the first woman to give a nominating speech at a major party convention when she seconded the nomination of Theodore Roosevelt as the Progressive Party’s candidate for president. Her campaigns for social reform and women’s rights won headlines and her voice became ubiquitous in progressive politics.[18]

Addams’s advocacy grew beyond domestic concerns. Beginning with her work in the Anti-Imperialist League during the Spanish-American War, Addams increasingly began to see militarism as a drain on resources better spent on social reform. In 1907 she wrote *Newer Ideals of Peace*, a book that would become for many a philosophical foundation of pacifism. Addams emerged as a prominent opponent of America’s entry into World War I. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.[19]

It would be suffrage, ultimately, that would mark the full emergence of women in American public life. Generations of women—and, occasionally, men—had pushed for women’s suffrage. Suffragists’ hard work resulted in slow but encouraging steps forward during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Notable victories were won in the West, where suffragists mobilized large numbers of women and male politicians were open to experimental forms of governance. By 1911, six western states had passed suffrage amendments to their constitutions.



Figure 20.3.2: Women protested silently in front of the White House for over two years before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Here, women represent their colleges as they picket the White House in support of women's suffrage. 1917. Library of Congress (LC-USZ62-31799).

Women's suffrage was typically entwined with a wide range of reform efforts. Many suffragists argued that women's votes were necessary to clean up politics and combat social evils. By the 1890s, for example, the WCTU, then the largest women's organization in America, endorsed suffrage. An alliance of working-class and middle- and upper-class women organized the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) in 1903 and campaigned for the vote alongside the National American Suffrage Association, a leading suffrage organization composed largely of middle- and upper-class women. WTUL members viewed the vote as a way to further their economic interests and to foster a new sense of respect for working-class women. "What the woman who labors wants is the right to live, not simply exist," said Ruth Schneiderman, a WTUL leader, during a 1912 speech. "The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too."[20]

Many suffragists adopted a much crueler message. Some, even outside the South, argued that white women's votes were necessary to maintain white supremacy. Many white American women argued that enfranchising white upper- and middle-class women would counteract black voters. These arguments even stretched into international politics. But whether the message advocated gender equality, class politics, or white supremacy, the suffrage campaign was winning.

The final push for women's suffrage came on the eve of World War I. Determined to win the vote; the National American Suffrage Association developed a dual strategy that focused on the passage of state voting rights laws and on the ratification of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Meanwhile, a new, more militant, suffrage organization emerged on the scene. Led by Alice Paul, the National Woman's Party took to the streets to demand voting rights, organizing marches and protests that mobilized thousands of women. Beginning in January 1917, National Woman's Party members also began to picket the White House, an action that led to the arrest and imprisonment of over 150 women.[21]

In January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson declared his support for the women's suffrage amendment, and two years later women's suffrage became a reality. After the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, women from all walks of life mobilized to vote. They were driven by the promise of change but also in some cases by their anxieties about the future. Much had changed since their campaign began; the United States was now more industrial than not, increasingly more urban than rural. The activism and activities of these new urban denizens also gave rise to a new American culture.

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20.4: Targeting the Trusts

In one of the defining books of the Progressive Era, *The Promise of American Life*, Herbert Croly argued that because "the corrupt politician has usurped too much of the power which should be exercised by the people," the "millionaire and the trust have appropriated too many of the economic opportunities formerly enjoyed by the people." Croly and other reformers believed that wealth inequality eroded democracy and reformers had to win back for the people the power usurped by the moneyed trusts. But what exactly were these "trusts," and why did it suddenly seem so important to reform them?[22]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a trust was a monopoly or cartel associated with the large corporations of the Gilded and Progressive Eras who entered into agreements—legal or otherwise—or consolidations to exercise exclusive control over a specific product or industry under the control of a single entity. Certain types of monopolies, specifically for intellectual property like copyrights, patents, trademarks, and trade secrets, are protected under the Constitution "to promote the progress of science and useful arts," but for powerful entities to control entire national markets was something wholly new, and, for many Americans, wholly unsettling.



Figure 20.4.1: Illustration shows a "Standard Oil" storage tank as an octopus with many tentacles wrapped around the steel, copper, and shipping industries, as well as a state house, the U.S. Capitol, and one tentacle reaching for the White House. The only building not yet within reach of the octopus is the White House—President Teddy Roosevelt had won a reputation as a trust buster. Udo Keppler, "Next!" 1904. Library of Congress (LC-USZCN4-122).

The rapid industrialization, technological advancement, and urban growth of the 1870s and 1880s triggered major changes in the way businesses structured themselves. The Second Industrial Revolution, made possible by available natural resources, growth in the labor supply through immigration, increasing capital, new legal economic entities, novel production strategies, and a growing national market, was commonly asserted to be the natural product of the federal government's laissez faire, or "hands off," economic policy. An unregulated business climate, the argument went, allowed for the growth of major trusts, most notably Andrew Carnegie's Carnegie Steel (later consolidated with other producers as U.S. Steel) and John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. Each displayed the vertical and horizontal integration strategies common to the new trusts: Carnegie first used vertical integration by controlling every phase of business (raw materials, transportation, manufacturing, distribution), and Rockefeller adhered to horizontal integration by buying out competing refineries. Once dominant in a market, critics alleged, the trusts could artificially inflate prices, bully rivals, and bribe politicians.

Between 1897 and 1904, over four thousand companies were consolidated down into 257 corporate firms. As one historian wrote, "By 1904 a total of 318 trusts held 40% of US manufacturing assets and boasted a capitalization of $7 billion, seven times bigger than the US national debt."[23] With the twentieth century came the age of monopoly. Mergers and the aggressive business policies of wealthy men such as Carnegie and Rockefeller earned them the epithet *robber barons*. Their cutthroat stifling of economic competition, mistreatment of workers, and corruption of politics sparked an opposition that pushed for regulations to rein in the power of monopolies. The great corporations became a major target of reformers.

Big business, whether in meatpacking, railroads, telegraph lines, oil, or steel, posed new problems for the American legal system. Before the Civil War, most businesses operated in a single state. They might ship goods across state lines or to other countries, but they typically had offices and factories in just one state. Individual states naturally regulated industry and commerce. But extensive railroad routes crossed several state lines and new mass-producing corporations operated across the nation, raising questions about where the authority to regulate such practices rested. During the 1870s, many states passed laws to check the growing power of vast new corporations. In the Midwest, farmers formed a network of organizations that were part political pressure group, part social club, and part mutual aid society. Together they pushed for so-called Granger laws that regulated railroads and other new companies. Railroads and others opposed these regulations because they restrained profits and because of the difficulty of meeting the standards of each state's separate regulatory laws. In 1877, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld these laws in a series of rulings, finding in cases such as *Munn v. Illinois* and *Stone v. Wisconsin* that railroads and other companies of such size necessarily affected the public interest and could thus be regulated by individual states. In *Munn*, the court declared, "Property does become clothed with a public interest when used in a manner to make it of public consequence, and affect the community at large. When, therefore, one devoted his property to a use in which the public has an interest, he, in effect, grants to the public an interest in that use, and must submit to be controlled by the public for the common good, to the extent of the interest he has thus created."[24]

Later rulings, however, conceded that only the federal government could constitutionally regulate interstate commerce and the new national businesses operating it. And as more and more power and capital and market share flowed to the great corporations, the onus of regulation passed to the federal government. In 1887, Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act, which established the Interstate Commerce Commission to stop discriminatory and predatory pricing practices. The Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 aimed to limit anticompetitive practices, such as those institutionalized in cartels and monopolistic corporations. It stated that a "trust . . . or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce . . . is declared to be illegal" and that those who "monopolize . . . any part of the trade or commerce . . . shall be deemed guilty."[25] The Sherman Anti-Trust Act declared that not all monopolies were illegal, only those that "unreasonably" stifled free trade. The courts seized on the law's vague language, however, and the act was turned against itself, manipulated and used, for instance, to limit the growing power of labor unions. Only in 1914, with the Clayton Anti-Trust Act, did Congress attempt to close loopholes in previous legislation.

Aggression against the trusts—and the progressive vogue for "trust busting"—took on new meaning under the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, a reform-minded Republican who ascended to the presidency after the death of William McKinley in 1901. Roosevelt's youthful energy and confrontational politics captivated the nation."[26] Roosevelt was by no means antibusiness. Instead, he envisioned his presidency as a mediator between opposing forces, such as between labor unions and corporate executives. Despite his own wealthy background, Roosevelt pushed for antitrust legislation and regulations, arguing that the courts could not be relied on to break up the trusts. Roosevelt also used his own moral judgment to determine which monopolies he would pursue. Roosevelt believed that there were good and bad trusts, necessary monopolies and corrupt ones. Although his reputation as a trust buster was wildly exaggerated, he was the first major national politician to go after the trusts. "The great corporations which we have grown to speak of rather loosely as trusts," he said, "are the creatures of the State, and the State not only has the right to control them, but it is in duty bound to control them wherever the need of such control is shown."[27]

His first target was the Northern Securities Company, a "holding" trust in which several wealthy bankers, most famously J. P. Morgan, used to hold controlling shares in all the major railroad companies in the American Northwest. Holding trusts had emerged as a way to circumvent the Sherman Anti-Trust Act: by controlling the majority of shares, rather than the principal, Morgan and his collaborators tried to claim that it was not a monopoly. Roosevelt's administration sued and won in court, and in 1904 the Northern Securities Company was ordered to disband into separate competitive companies. Two years later, in 1906, Roosevelt signed the Hepburn Act, allowing the Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate best practices and set reasonable rates for the railroads.

Roosevelt was more interested in regulating corporations than breaking them apart. Besides, the courts were slow and unpredictable. However, his successor after 1908, William Howard Taft, firmly believed in court-oriented trust busting and during his four years in office more than doubled the number of monopoly breakups that occurred during Roosevelt's seven years in office. Taft notably went after Carnegie's U.S. Steel, the world's first billion-dollar corporation formed from the consolidation of nearly every major American steel producer.

Trust busting and the handling of monopolies dominated the election of 1912. When the Republican Party spurned Roosevelt's return to politics and renominated the incumbent Taft, Roosevelt left and formed his own coalition, the Progressive or "Bull Moose" Party. Whereas Taft took an all-encompassing view on the illegality of monopolies, Roosevelt adopted a New Nationalism program, which once again emphasized the regulation of already existing corporations or the expansion of federal power over the economy. In contrast, Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic Party nominee, emphasized in his New Freedom agenda neither trust busting nor federal regulation but rather small-business incentives so that individual companies could increase their competitive

chances. Yet once he won the election, Wilson edged nearer to Roosevelt's position, signing the Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1914. The Clayton Anti-Trust Act substantially enhanced the Sherman Act, specifically regulating mergers and price discrimination and protecting labor's access to collective bargaining and related strategies of picketing, boycotting, and protesting. Congress further created the Federal Trade Commission to enforce the Clayton Act, ensuring at least some measure of implementation.[28]

While the three presidents—Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson—pushed the development and enforcement of antitrust law, their commitments were uneven, and trust busting itself manifested the political pressure put on politicians by the workers, farmers, and progressive writers who so strongly drew attention to the ramifications of trusts and corporate capital on the lives of everyday Americans.

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20.5: Progressive Environmentalism

The potential scope of environmental destruction wrought by industrial capitalism was unparalleled in human history. Professional bison hunting expeditions nearly eradicated an entire species, industrialized logging companies denuded whole forests, and chemical plants polluted an entire region's water supply. As American development and industrialization marched westward, reformers embraced environmental protections.

Historians often cite preservation and conservation as two competing strategies that dueled for supremacy among environmental reformers during the Progressive Era. The tensions between these two approaches crystalized in the debate over a proposed dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley in California. The fight revolved around the provision of water for San Francisco. Engineers identified the location where the Tuolumne River ran through Hetch Hetchy as an ideal site for a reservoir. The project had been suggested in the 1880s but picked up momentum in the early twentieth century. But the valley was located inside Yosemite National Park. (Yosemite was designated a national park in 1890, though the land had been set aside earlier in a grant approved by President Lincoln in 1864.) The debate over Hetch Hetchy revealed two distinct positions on the value of the valley and on the purpose of public lands.

John Muir, a naturalist, a writer, and founder of the Sierra Club, invoked the "God of the Mountains" in his defense of the valley in its supposedly pristine condition. Gifford Pinchot, arguably the father of American forestry and a key player in the federal management of national forests, meanwhile emphasized what he understood to be the purpose of conservation: "to take every part of the land and its resources and put it to that use in which it will serve the most people." Muir took a wider view of what the people needed, writing that "everybody needs beauty as well as bread."[29] These dueling arguments revealed the key differences in environmental thought: Muir, on the side of the preservationists, advocated setting aside pristine lands for their aesthetic and spiritual value, for those who could take his advice to "[get] in touch with the nerves of Mother Earth."[30] Pinchot, on the other hand, led the charge for conservation, a kind of environmental utilitarianism that emphasized the efficient use of available resources, through planning and control and "the prevention of waste."[31] In Hetch Hetchy, conservation won out. Congress approved the project in 1913. The dam was built and the valley flooded for the benefit of San Francisco residents.

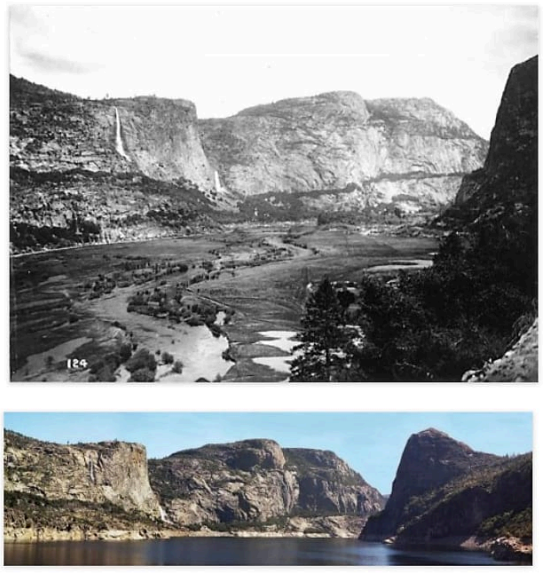


Figure 20.5.1: The image on the top shows the Hetch Hetchy Valley before it was dammed. The bottom photograph, taken almost a century later, shows the obvious difference after damming, with the submergence of the valley floor under the reservoir waters. Photograph of the Hetch Hetchy Valley before damming, from the Sierra Club Bulletin, January 1908. *Wikimedia; Daniel Mayer (photographer), May 2002. Wikimedia.*

While preservation was often articulated as an escape from an increasingly urbanized and industrialized way of life and as a welcome respite from the challenges of modernity (at least, for those who had the means to escape), the conservationists were more closely aligned with broader trends in American society. Although the "greatest good for the greatest number" was very nearly the catchphrase of conservation, conservationist policies most often benefited the nation's financial interests. For

example, many states instituted game laws to regulate hunting and protect wildlife, but laws could be entirely unbalanced. In Pennsylvania, local game laws included requiring firearm permits for noncitizens, barred hunting on Sundays, and banned the shooting of songbirds. These laws disproportionately affected Italian immigrants, critics said, as Italians often hunted songbirds for subsistence, worked in mines for low wages every day but Sunday, and were too poor to purchase permits or to pay the fines levied against them when game wardens caught them breaking these new laws. Other laws, for example, offered up resources to businesses at costs prohibitive to all but the wealthiest companies and individuals, or with regulatory requirements that could be met only by companies with extensive resources.

But Progressive Era environmentalism addressed more than the management of American public lands. After all, reformers addressing issues facing the urban poor were also doing environmental work. Settlement house workers like Jane Addams and Florence Kelley focused on questions of health and sanitation, while activists concerned with working conditions, most notably Dr. Alice Hamilton, investigated both worksite hazards and occupational and bodily harm. The progressives' commitment to the provision of public services at the municipal level meant more coordination and oversight in matters of public health, waste management, and even playgrounds and city parks. Their work focused on the intersection of communities and their material environments, highlighting the urgency of urban environmental concerns.

While reform movements focused their attention on the urban poor, other efforts targeted rural communities. The Country Life movement, spearheaded by Liberty Hyde Bailey, sought to support agrarian families and encourage young people to stay in their communities and run family farms. Early-twentieth-century educational reforms included a commitment to environmentalism at the elementary level. Led by Bailey and Anna Botsford Comstock, the nature study movement took students outside to experience natural processes and to help them develop observational skills and an appreciation for the natural world.

Other examples highlight the interconnectedness of urban and rural communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The extinction of the North American passenger pigeon reveals the complexity of Progressive Era relationships between people and nature. Passenger pigeons were actively hunted, prepared at New York's finest restaurants and in the humblest of farm kitchens. Some hunted them for pay; others shot them in competitions at sporting clubs. And then they were gone, their ubiquity giving way only to nostalgia. Many Americans took notice at the great extinction of a species that had perhaps numbered in the billions and then was eradicated. Women in Audubon Society chapters organized against the fashion of wearing feathers—even whole birds—on ladies' hats. Upper- and middle-class women made up the lion's share of the membership of these societies. They used their social standing to fight for birds. Pressure created national wildlife refuges and key laws and regulations that included the Lacey Act of 1900, banning the shipment of species killed illegally across state lines. Examining how women mobilized contemporary notions of womanhood in the service of protecting birds reveals a tangle of cultural and economic processes. Such examples also reveal the range of ideas, policies, and practices wrapped up in figuring out what—and who—American nature should be for.

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20.6: Jim Crow and African American Life

America's tragic racial history was not erased by the Progressive Era. In fact, in all too many ways, reform removed African Americans ever farther from American public life. In the South, electoral politics remained a parade of electoral fraud, voter intimidation, and race-baiting. Democratic Party candidates stirred southern whites into frenzies with warnings of "negro domination" and of black men violating white women. The region's culture of racial violence and the rise of lynching as a mass public spectacle accelerated. And as the remaining African American voters threatened the dominance of Democratic leadership in the South, southern Democrats turned to what many white southerners understood as a series of progressive electoral and social reforms—disenfranchisement and segregation. Just as reformers would clean up politics by taming city political machines, white southerners would "purify" the ballot box by restricting black voting, and they would prevent racial strife by legislating the social separation of the races. The strongest supporters of such measures in the South were progressive Democrats and former Populists, both of whom saw in these reforms a way to eliminate the racial demagoguery that conservative Democratic party leaders had so effectively wielded. Leaders in both the North and South embraced and proclaimed the reunion of the sections on the basis of white supremacy. As the nation took up the "white man's burden" to uplift the world's racially inferior peoples, the North looked to the South as an example of how to manage nonwhite populations. The South had become the nation's racial vanguard.[32]

The question was how to accomplish disfranchisement. The Fifteenth Amendment clearly prohibited states from denying any citizen the right to vote on the basis of race. In 1890, a Mississippi state newspaper called on politicians to devise "some legal defensible substitute for the abhorrent and evil methods on which white supremacy lies."[33] The state's Democratic Party responded with a new state constitution designed to purge corruption at the ballot box through disenfranchisement. African Americans hoping to vote in Mississippi would have to jump through a series of hurdles designed with the explicit purpose of excluding them from political power. The state first established a poll tax, which required voters to pay for the privilege of voting. Second, it stripped suffrage from those convicted of petty crimes most common among the state's African Americans. Next, the state required voters to pass a literacy test. Local voting officials, who were themselves part of the local party machine, were responsible for judging whether voters were able to read and understand a section of the Constitution. In order to protect illiterate whites from exclusion, the so-called "understanding clause" allowed a voter to qualify if they could adequately explain the meaning of a section that was read to them. In practice these rules were systematically abused to the point where local election officials effectively wielded the power to permit and deny suffrage at will. The disenfranchisement laws effectively moved electoral conflict from the ballot box, where public attention was greatest, to the voting registrar, where supposedly color-blind laws allowed local party officials to deny the ballot without the appearance of fraud.[34]

Between 1895 and 1908, the rest of the states in the South approved new constitutions including these disenfranchisement tools. Six southern states also added a grandfather clause, which bestowed suffrage on anyone whose grandfather was eligible to vote in 1867. This ensured that whites who would have been otherwise excluded through mechanisms such as poll taxes or literacy tests would still be eligible, at least until grandfather clauses were struck down by the Supreme Court in 1915. Finally, each southern state adopted an all-white primary and excluded blacks from the Democratic primary, the only political contests that mattered across much of the South.[35]

For all the legal double-talk, the purpose of these laws was plain. James Kimble Vardaman, later governor of Mississippi, boasted that "there is no use to equivocate or lie about the matter. Mississippi's constitutional convention was held for no other purpose than to eliminate the nigger from politics; not the ignorant—but the nigger."[36] These technically color-blind tools did their work well. In 1900 Alabama had 121,159 literate black men of voting age. Only 3,742 were registered to vote. Louisiana had 130,000 black voters in the contentious election of 1896. Only 5,320 voted in 1900. Blacks were clearly the target of these laws, but that did not prevent some whites from being disenfranchised as well. Louisiana dropped 80,000 white voters over the same period. Most politically engaged southern whites considered this a price worth paying to prevent the alleged fraud that plagued the region's elections.[37]

At the same time that the South's Democratic leaders were adopting the tools to disenfranchise the region's black voters, these same legislatures were constructing a system of racial segregation even more pernicious. While it built on earlier practice, segregation was primarily a modern and urban system of enforcing racial subordination and deference. In rural areas, white and black southerners negotiated the meaning of racial difference within the context of personal relationships of kinship and patronage. An African American who broke the local community's racial norms could expect swift personal sanction that often included violence. The crop lien and convict lease systems were the most important legal tools of racial control in the rural

South. Maintaining white supremacy there did not require segregation. Maintaining white supremacy within the city, however, was a different matter altogether. As the region's railroad networks and cities expanded, so too did the anonymity and therefore freedom of southern blacks. Southern cities were becoming a center of black middle-class life that was an implicit threat to racial hierarchies. White southerners created the system of segregation as a way to maintain white supremacy in restaurants, theaters, public restrooms, schools, water fountains, train cars, and hospitals. Segregation inscribed the superiority of whites and the deference of blacks into the very geography of public spaces.

As with disenfranchisement, segregation violated a plain reading of the Constitution—in this case the Fourteenth Amendment. Here the Supreme Court intervened, ruling in the *Civil Rights Cases* (1883) that the Fourteenth Amendment only prevented discrimination directly by states. It did not prevent discrimination by individuals, businesses, or other entities. Southern states exploited this interpretation with the first legal segregation of railroad cars in 1888. In a case that reached the Supreme Court in 1896, New Orleans resident Homer Plessy challenged the constitutionality of Louisiana's segregation of streetcars. The court ruled against Plessy and, in the process, established the legal principle of separate but equal. Racially segregated facilities were legal provided they were equivalent. In practice this was almost never the case. The court's majority defended its position with logic that reflected the racial assumptions of the day. "If one race be inferior to the other socially," the court explained, "the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane." Justice John Harlan, the lone dissenter, countered, "Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law." Harlan went on to warn that the court's decision would "permit the seeds of race hatred to be planted under the sanction of law."[38] In their rush to fulfill Harlan's prophecy, southern whites codified and enforced the segregation of public spaces.

Segregation was built on a fiction—that there could be a white South socially and culturally distinct from African Americans. Its legal basis rested on the constitutional fallacy of "separate but equal." Southern whites erected a bulwark of white supremacy that would last for nearly sixty years. Segregation and disenfranchisement in the South rejected black citizenship and relegated black social and cultural life to segregated spaces. African Americans lived divided lives, acting the part whites demanded of them in public, while maintaining their own world apart from whites. This segregated world provided a measure of independence for the region's growing black middle class, yet at the cost of poisoning the relationship between black and white. Segregation and disenfranchisement created entrenched structures of racism that completed the total rejection of the promises of Reconstruction.

And yet many black Americans of the Progressive Era fought back. Just as activists such as Ida Wells worked against southern lynching, Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois vied for leadership among African American activists, resulting in years of intense rivalry and debated strategies for the uplifting of black Americans.

Born into the world of bondage in Virginia in 1856, Booker Taliaferro Washington was subjected to the degradation and exploitation of slavery early in life. But Washington also developed an insatiable thirst to learn. Working against tremendous odds, Washington matriculated into Hampton University in Virginia and thereafter established a southern institution that would educate many black Americans, the Tuskegee Institute, located in Alabama. Washington envisioned that Tuskegee's contribution to black life would come through industrial education and vocational training. He believed that such skills would help African Americans accomplish economic independence while developing a sense of self-worth and pride of accomplishment, even while living within the putrid confines of Jim Crow. Washington poured his life into Tuskegee, and thereby connected with leading white philanthropic interests. Individuals such as Andrew Carnegie, for instance, financially assisted Washington and his educational ventures.



Figure 20.6.1: The strategies of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois differed, but their desire remained the same: better lives for African Americans. Harris & Ewing, "WASHINGTON BOOKER T," between 1905 and 1915. *Library of Congress*.

Washington became a leading spokesperson for black Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, particularly after Frederick Douglass's death in early 1895. Washington's famous "Atlanta Compromise" speech from that same year encouraged black Americans to "cast your bucket down" to improve life's lot under segregation. In the same speech, delivered one year before the Supreme Court's *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* decision that legalized segregation under the "separate but equal" doctrine, Washington said to white Americans, "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."[39] Washington was both praised as a race leader and pilloried as an accommodationist to America's unjust racial hierarchy; his public advocacy of a conciliatory posture toward white supremacy concealed the efforts to which he went to assist African Americans in the legal and economic quest for racial justice. In addition to founding Tuskegee, Washington also published a handful of influential books, including the autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901). Like Du Bois, Washington was also active in black journalism, working to fund and support black newspaper publications, most of which sought to counter Du Bois's growing influence. Washington died in 1915, during World War I, of ill health in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Speaking decades later, Du Bois said Washington had, in his 1895 "Compromise" speech, "implicitly abandoned all political and social rights. . . . I never thought Washington was a bad man . . . I believed him to be sincere, though wrong." Du Bois would directly attack Washington in his classic 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*, but at the turn of the century he could never escape the shadow of his longtime rival. "I admired much about him," Du Bois admitted. "Washington . . . died in 1915. A lot of people think I died at the same time."[40]

Du Bois's criticism reveals the politicized context of the black freedom struggle and exposes the many positions available to black activists. Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1868, Du Bois entered the world as a free person of color three years after the Civil War ended. He was raised by a hardworking and independent mother; his New England childhood alerted him to the reality of race even as it invested the emerging thinker with an abiding faith in the power of education. Du Bois graduated at the top of his high school class and attended Fisk University. Du Bois's sojourn to the South in 1880s left a distinct impression that would guide his life's work to study what he called the "Negro problem," the systemic racial and economic discrimination that Du Bois prophetically pronounced would be *the* problem of the twentieth century. After Fisk, Du Bois's educational path trended back North. He attended Harvard, earned his second degree, crossed the Atlantic for graduate work in Germany, and circulated back to Harvard, and in 1895, he became the first black American to receive a PhD there.

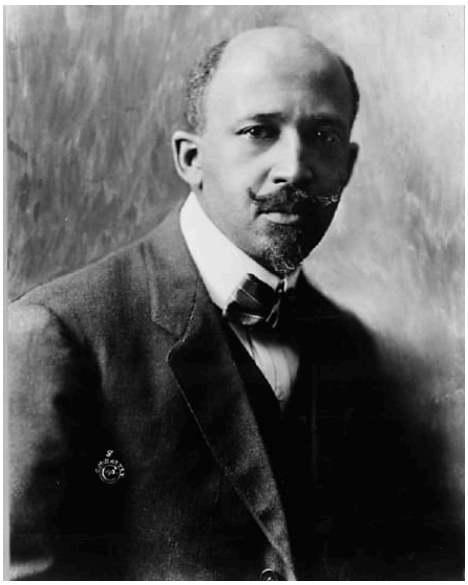


Figure 20.6.1: "W.E.B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois," 1919. *Library of Congress*.

Du Bois became one of America's foremost intellectual leaders on questions of social justice by producing scholarship that underscored the humanity of African Americans. Du Bois's work as an intellectual, scholar, and college professor began during the Progressive Era, a time in American history marked by rapid social and cultural change as well as complex global political conflicts and developments. Du Bois addressed these domestic and international concerns not only in his classrooms at Wilberforce University in Ohio and Atlanta University in Georgia but also in a number of his early publications on the history of the transatlantic slave trade and black life in urban Philadelphia. The most well-known of these early works included *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and *Darkwater* (1920). In these books, Du Bois combined incisive historical analysis with engaging literary drama to validate black personhood *and* attack the inhumanity of white supremacy, particularly in the lead-up to and during World War I. In addition to publications and teaching, Du Bois set his sights on political organizing for civil rights, first with the Niagara Movement and later with its offspring, the NAACP. Du Bois's main work with the NAACP lasted from 1909 to 1934 as editor of *The Crisis*, one of America's leading black publications. Du Bois attacked Washington and urged black Americans to concede to nothing, to make no compromises and advocate for equal rights under the law. Throughout his early career, he pushed for civil rights legislation, launched legal challenges against discrimination, organized protests against injustice, and applied his capacity for clear research and sharp prose to expose the racial sins of Progressive Era America.

> *"We refuse to allow the impression to remain that the Negro-American assents to inferiority, is submissive under oppression and apologetic before insults. . . . Any discrimination based simply on race or color is barbarous, we care not how hallowed it be by custom, expediency or prejudice . . . discriminations based simply and solely on physical peculiarities, place of birth, color of skin, are relics of that unreasoning human savagery of which the world is and ought to be thoroughly ashamed. . . . Persistent manly agitation is the way to liberty."*[41]

W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington made a tremendous historical impact and left a notable historical legacy. They were reared under markedly different circumstances, and thus their early life experiences and even personal temperaments oriented both leaders' lives and outlooks in decidedly different ways. Du Bois's confrontational voice boldly targeted white supremacy. He believed in the power of social science to arrest the reach of white supremacy. Washington advocated incremental change for longer-term gain. He contended that economic self-sufficiency would pay off at a future date. Four years after Du Bois directly spoke out against Washington in the chapter "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington" in *Souls of Black Folk*, the two men shared the same lectern at Philadelphia Divinity School to address matters of race, history, and culture in the American South. Although their philosophies often differed, both men inspired others to demand that America live up to its democratic creed.

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20.7: Conclusion

Industrial capitalism unleashed powerful forces in American life. Along with wealth, technological innovation, and rising standards of living, a host of social problems unsettled many who turned to reform politics to set the world right again. The Progressive Era signaled that a turning point had been reached for many Americans who were suddenly willing to confront the age's problems with national political solutions. Reformers sought to bring order to chaos, to bring efficiency to inefficiency, and to bring justice to injustice. Causes varied, constituencies shifted, and the tangible effects of so much energy was difficult to measure, but the Progressive Era signaled a bursting of long-simmering tensions and introduced new patterns in the relationship between American society, American culture, and American politics.

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20.8: Primary Sources

Booker T. Washington & W.E.B. DuBois on Black Progress (1895, 1903)

Booker T. Washington, born a slave in Virginia in 1856, founded the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in 1881 and became a leading advocate of African American progress. Introduced as "a representative of Negro enterprise and Negro civilization," Washington delivered the following remarks, sometimes called the "Atlanta Compromise" speech, at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta in 1895.

Jane Addams, "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements" (1892)

Hull House, Chicago's famed "settlement house," was designed to uplift urban populations. Here, Addams explains why she believes reformers must "add the social function to democracy." As Addams explained, Hull House "was opened on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal."

Eugene Debs, "How I Became a Socialist" (April, 1902)

A native of Terre Haute, Indiana, Eugene V. Debs began working as a locomotive fireman (tending the fires of a train's steam engine) as a youth in the 1870s. His experience in the American labor movement later led him to socialism. In the early-twentieth century, as the Socialist Party of America's candidate, he ran for the presidency five times and twice earned nearly one-million votes. He was America's most prominent socialist. In 1902, a New York paper asked Debs how he became a socialist. This is his answer.

Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907)

Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist minister and theologian, advocated for a "social gospel." Here, he explains why he believes Christianity must address social questions.

Alice Stone Blackwell, Answering Objections to Women's Suffrage (1917)

Alice Stone Blackwell was a feminist activist and writer. In an edited volume published in 1917, Blackwell responded to popular anti-women's-suffrage arguments.

Woodrow Wilson on the "New Freedom," 1912

Woodrow Wilson campaigned for the presidency in 1912 as a progressive democrat. Wilson argued that changing economic conditions demanded new and aggressive government policies–he called his political program "the New Freedom"– to preserve traditional American liberties.

"Next!" (1904)

Illustration shows a "Standard Oil" storage tank as an octopus with many tentacles wrapped around the steel, copper, and shipping industries, as well as a state house, the U.S. Capitol, and one tentacle reaching for the White House. The only building not yet within reach of the octopus is the White House—President Teddy Roosevelt had won a reputation as a "trust buster."

"College Day on the Picket Line" (1917)

Women protested silently in front of the White House for over two years before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Here, women represent their colleges as they picket the White House in support of women's suffrage. 1917.

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20.9: Reference Material

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21: WORLD WAR I AND ITS AFTERMATH



Striking steel mill workers holding bulletins in Chicago, Illinois, September 22, 1919. ExplorePAhistory.com

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21.11: The Fourteen Points and the League of Nations
21.12: Aftermath of World War I

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21.1: Conclusion

World War I decimated millions and profoundly altered the course of world history. Postwar instabilities led directly toward a global depression and a second world war. The war sparked the Bolshevik Revolution, which led to the Soviet Union and later the Cold War. It created Middle Eastern nations and aggravated ethnic tensions that the United States could never overcome. And the United States had fought on the European mainland as a major power. America's place in the world was never the same. By whipping up nationalist passions, American attitudes toward radicalism, dissent, and immigration were poisoned. Postwar disillusionment shattered Americans' hopes for the progress of the modern world. The war came and went, leaving in its place the bloody wreckage of an old world through which the United States traveled to a new and uncertain future.

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21.2: Primary Sources

Woodrow Wilson Requests War (April 2, 1917)

In this speech before Congress, President Woodrow Wilson made the case for America's entry into World War I.

Alan Seeger on World War I (1914; 1916)

The poet Alan Seeger, born in New York and educated at Harvard University, lived among artists and poets in Greenwich Village, New York and Paris, France. When the Great War engulfed Europe, and before the United State entered the fighting, Seeger joined the French Foreign Legion. He would be killed at the Battle of the Somme in 1916. His wartime experiences would anticipate those of his countrymen, a million of whom would be deployed to France. Seeger's writings were published posthumously. The first selection is excerpted from a letter Seeger wrote to the New York Sun *in 1914; the second is from his collection of poems, published in 1916.*

The Sedition Act of 1918 (1918)

Passed by Congress in May 1918 and signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson, the Sedition Act of 1918 amended the Espionage Act of 1917 to include greater limitations on war-time dissent.

Emma Goldman on Patriotism (July 9, 1917)

The Anarchist Emma Goldman was tried for conspiring to violate the Selective Service Act. The following is an excerpt from her speech to the court, in which she explains her views on patriotism.

W.E.B DuBois, "Returning Soldiers" (May, 1919)

In the aftermath of World War I, W.E.B. DuBois urged returning soldiers to continue fighting for democracy at home.

Boy Scout Charge (1917)

In this 1917 photograph, The Boy Scouts of America charge up Fifth Avenue in New York City in a "Wake Up, America" parade to support recruitment efforts. Nearly 60,000 people attended this single parade.

"I Want You" (1917)

In this war poster, Uncle Sam points his finger at the viewer and says, "I want you for U.S. Army." The poster was printed with a blank space to attach the address of the "nearest recruiting station." Click on the image to view the full poster.

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21.3: Reference Material

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21.4: Introduction

World War I (“The Great War”) toppled empires, created new nations, and sparked tensions that would explode across future years. On the battlefield, gruesome modern weaponry wrecked an entire generation of young men. The United States entered the conflict in 1917 and was never again the same. The war heralded to the world the United States’ potential as a global military power, and, domestically, it advanced but then beat back American progressivism by unleashing vicious waves of repression. The war simultaneously stoked national pride and fueled disenchantments that burst Progressive Era hopes for the modern world. And it laid the groundwork for a global depression, a second world war, and an entire history of national, religious, and cultural conflict around the globe.

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21.5: Prelude to War

As the German empire rose in power and influence at the end of the nineteenth century, skilled diplomats maneuvered this disruption of traditional powers and influences into several decades of European peace. In Germany, however, a new ambitious monarch would overshadow years of tactful diplomacy. Wilhelm II rose to the German throne in 1888. He admired the British Empire of his grandmother, Queen Victoria, and envied the Royal Navy of Great Britain so much that he attempted to build a rival German navy and plant colonies around the globe. The British viewed the prospect of a German navy as a strategic threat, but, jealous of what he perceived as a lack of prestige in the world, Wilhelm II pressed Germany's case for access to colonies and symbols of status suitable for a world power. Wilhelm's maneuvers and Germany's rise spawned a new system of alliances as rival nations warily watched Germany's expansion.

In 1892, German posturing worried the leaders of Russia and France and prompted a defensive alliance to counter the existing triple threat between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. Britain's Queen Victoria remained unassociated with the alliances until a series of diplomatic crises and an emerging German naval threat led to British agreements with Tsar Nicholas II and French President Émile Loubet in the early twentieth century. (The alliance between Great Britain, France, and Russia became known as the Triple Entente.)

The other great threat to European peace was the Ottoman Empire, in Turkey. While the leaders of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire showed little interest in colonies elsewhere, Turkish lands on its southern border appealed to their strategic goals. However, Austrian-Hungarian expansion in Europe worried Tsar Nicholas II, who saw Russia as both the historic guarantor of the Slavic nations in the Balkans and the competitor for territories governed by the Ottoman Empire.

By 1914, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire had control of Bosnia and Herzegovina and viewed Slavic Serbia, a nation protected by Russia, as its next challenge. On June 28, 1914, after Serbian Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Austrian-Hungarian heirs to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Grand Duchess Sophie, vengeful nationalist leaders believed the time had arrived to eliminate the rebellious ethnic Serbian threat.[1]

On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States played an insignificant role in global diplomacy—it rarely forayed into internal European politics. The federal government did not participate in international diplomatic alliances but nevertheless championed and assisted with the expansion of the transatlantic economy. American businesses and consumers benefited from the trade generated as the result of the extended period of European peace.

Stated American attitudes toward international affairs followed the advice given by President George Washington in his 1796 Farewell Address, 120 years before America's entry into World War I. He had recommended that his fellow countrymen avoid "foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues" and "those overgrown military establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty."[2]

A foreign policy of neutrality reflected America's inward-looking focus on the construction and management of its new powerful industrial economy (built in large part with foreign capital). The federal government possessed limited diplomatic tools with which to engage in international struggles for world power. America's small and increasingly antiquated military precluded forceful coercion and left American diplomats to persuade by reason, appeals to justice, or economic coercion. But in the 1880s, as Americans embarked upon empire, Congress authorized the construction of a modern navy. The army nevertheless remained small and underfunded compared to the armies of many industrializing nations.

After the turn of the century, the army and navy faced a great deal of organizational uncertainty. New technologies—airplanes, motor vehicles, submarines, modern artillery—stressed the capability of army and navy personnel to effectively procure and use them. The nation's army could police Native Americans in the West and garrison recent overseas acquisitions, but it could not sustain a full-blown conflict of any size. The Davis Act of 1908 and the National Defense Act of 1916 inaugurated the rise of the modern versions of the National Guard and military reserves. A system of state-administered units available for local emergencies that received conditional federal funding for training could be activated for use in international wars. The National Guard program encompassed individual units separated by state borders. The program supplied summer training for college students as a reserve officer corps. Federal and state governments now had a long-term strategic reserve of trained soldiers and sailors.[3]

Border troubles in Mexico served as an important field test for modern American military forces. Revolution and chaos threatened American business interests in Mexico. Mexican reformer Francisco Madero challenged Porfirio Diaz's corrupt and unpopular

conservative regime. He was jailed, fled to San Antonio, and penned the Plan of San Luis Potosí, paving the way for the Mexican Revolution and the rise of armed revolutionaries across the country.

In April 1914, President Woodrow Wilson ordered Marines to accompany a naval escort to Veracruz on the lower eastern coast of Mexico. After a brief battle, the Marines supervised the city government and prevented shipments of German arms to Mexican leader Victor Huerta until they departed in November 1914. The raid emphasized the continued reliance on naval forces and the difficulty in modernizing the military during a period of European imperial influence in the Caribbean and elsewhere. The threat of war in Europe enabled passage of the Naval Act of 1916. President Wilson declared that the national goal was to build the Navy as "incomparably, the greatest . . . in the world." And yet Mexico still beckoned. The Wilson administration had withdrawn its support of Diaz but watched warily as the revolution devolved into assassinations and deceit. In 1916, Pancho Villa, a popular revolutionary in northern Mexico, raided Columbus, New Mexico, after being provoked by American support for his rivals. His raiders killed seventeen Americans and and burned down the town center before American soldiers forced their retreat. In response, President Wilson commissioned Army general John "Black Jack" Pershing to capture Villa and disperse his rebels. Motorized vehicles, reconnaissance aircraft, and the wireless telegraph aided in the pursuit of Villa. Motorized vehicles in particular allowed General Pershing to obtain supplies without relying on railroads controlled by the Mexican government. The aircraft assigned to the campaign crashed or were grounded by mechanical malfunctions, but they provided invaluable lessons in their worth and use in war. Wilson used the powers of the new National Defense Act to mobilize over one hundred thousand National Guard units across the country as a show of force in northern Mexico.[4]

The conflict between the United States and Mexico might have escalated into full-scale war if the international crisis in Europe had not overwhelmed the public's attention. After the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, President Wilson declared American neutrality. He insisted from the start that the United States be neutral "in fact as well as in name," a policy the majority of American people enthusiastically endorsed. It was unclear, however, what "neutrality" meant in a world of close economic connections. Ties to the British and French proved strong, and those nations obtained far more loans and supplies than the Germans. In October 1914, President Wilson approved commercial credit loans to the combatants, which made it increasingly difficult for the nation to claim impartiality as war spread through Europe. Trade and financial relations with the Allied nations ultimately drew the United States further into the conflict. In spite of mutually declared blockades between Germany, Great Britain, and France, munitions and other war suppliers in the United States witnessed a brisk and booming increase in business. The British naval blockades that often stopped or seized ships proved annoying and costly, but the unrestricted and surprise torpedo attacks from German submarines were deadly. In May 1915, Germans sank the RMS *Lusitania*. Over a hundred American lives were lost. The attack, coupled with other German attacks on American and British shipping, raised the ire of the public and stoked the desire for war.[5]

American diplomatic tradition avoided formal alliances, and the Army seemed inadequate for sustained overseas fighting. However, the United States outdistanced the nations of Europe in one important measure of world power: by 1914, the nation held the top position in the global industrial economy. The United States was producing slightly more than one third of the world's manufactured goods, roughly equal to the outputs of France, Great Britain, and Germany combined.

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21.6: War Spreads through Europe

After the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and Grand Duchess Sophie, Austria secured the promise of aid from its German ally and issued a list of ten ultimatums to Serbia. On July 28, 1914, Austria declared war on Serbia for failure to meet all of the demands. Russia, determined to protect Serbia, began to mobilize its armed forces. On August 1, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia to protect Austria after warnings directed at Tsar Nicholas II failed to stop Russian preparations for war.

In spite of the central European focus of the initial crises, the first blow was struck against neutral Belgium in northwestern Europe. Germany planned to take advantage of sluggish Russian mobilization by focusing the German army on France. German military leaders recycled tactics developed earlier and activated the Schlieffen Plan, which moved German armies rapidly by rail to march through Belgium and into France. However, this violation of Belgian neutrality also ensured that Great Britain entered the war against Germany. On August 4, 1914, Great Britain declared war on Germany for failing to respect Belgium as a neutral nation.



Figure 21.6.1: A French assault on German positions. Champagne, France. 1917. National Archives.

In 1915, the European war had developed into a series of bloody trench stalemates that continued through the following year. Offensives, largely carried out by British and French armies, achieved nothing but huge numbers of casualties. Peripheral campaigns against the Ottoman Empire in Turkey at Gallipoli, throughout the Middle East, and in various parts of Africa either were unsuccessful or had little bearing on the European contest for victory. The third year of the war, however, witnessed a coup for German military prospects: the regime of Tsar Nicholas II collapsed in Russia in March 1917. At about the same time, the Germans again pursued unrestricted submarine warfare to deprive the Allies of replenishment supplies from the United States.[6]

The Germans, realizing that submarine warfare could spark an American intervention, hoped the European war would be over before American soldiers could arrive in sufficient numbers to alter the balance of power. A German diplomat, Arthur Zimmermann, planned to complicate the potential American intervention. He offered support to the Mexican government via a desperate bid to regain Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Mexican national leaders declined the offer, but the revelation of the Zimmermann Telegram helped usher the United States into the war.

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21.7: America Enters the War

By the fall of 1916 and spring of 1917, President Wilson believed an imminent German victory would drastically and dangerously alter the balance of power in Europe. Submarine warfare and the Zimmerman Telegram, meanwhile, inflamed public opinion. Congress declared war on Germany on April 4, 1917. The nation entered a war three thousand miles away with a small and unprepared military. The United States was unprepared in nearly every respect for modern war. Considerable time elapsed before an effective army and navy could be assembled, trained, equipped, and deployed to the Western Front in Europe. The process of building the army and navy for the war proved to be different from previous conflicts. Unlike the largest European military powers of Germany, France, and Austria-Hungary, no tradition existed in the United States to maintain large standing armed forces or trained military reserves during peacetime. Moreover, there was no American counterpart to the European practice of rapidly equipping, training, and mobilizing reservists and conscripts.

The U.S. historically relied solely on traditional volunteerism to fill the ranks of the armed forces. Notions of patriotic duty and adventure appealed to many young men who not only volunteered for wartime service but sought and paid for their own training at army camps before the war. American labor organizations favored voluntary service over conscription. Labor leader Samuel Gompers argued for volunteerism in letters to the congressional committees considering the question. “The organized labor movement,” he wrote, “has always been fundamentally opposed to compulsion.” Referring to American values as a role model for others, he continued, “It is the hope of organized labor to demonstrate that under voluntary conditions and institutions the Republic of the United States can mobilize its greatest strength, resources and efficiency.”[7]



Figure 21.7.1: The Boy Scouts of America charge up Fifth Avenue in New York City in a “Wake Up, America” parade to support recruitment efforts. Nearly sixty thousand people attended this single parade. *Wikimedia.*

Despite fears of popular resistance, Congress quickly instituted a reasonably equitable and locally administered system to draft men for the military. On May 18, 1917, Congress approved the Selective Service Act, and President Wilson signed it a week later. The new legislation avoided the unpopular system of bonuses and substitutes used during the Civil War and was generally received without major objection by the American people.[8]

The conscription act initially required men from ages twenty-one to thirty to register for compulsory military service. Basic physical fitness was the primary requirement for service. The resulting tests offered the emerging fields of social science a range of data collection tools and new screening methods. The Army Medical Department examined the general condition of young American men selected for service from the population. The Surgeon General compiled his findings from draft records in the 1919 report, “Defects Found in Drafted Men,” a snapshot of the 2.5 million men examined for military service. Of that group, 1,533,937 physical defects were recorded (often more than one per individual). More than 34 percent of those examined were rejected for service or later discharged for neurological, psychiatric, or mental deficiencies.[9]

To provide a basis for the neurological, psychiatric, and mental evaluations, the army used cognitive skills tests to determine intelligence. About 1.9 million men were tested on intelligence. Soldiers who could read took the Army Alpha test. Illiterates and non-English-speaking immigrants took the nonverbal equivalent, the Army Beta test, which relied on visual testing procedures. Robert M. Yerkes, president of the American Psychological Association and chairman of the Committee on the Psychological Examination of Recruits, developed and analyzed the tests. His data argued that the actual mental age of recruits was only about thirteen years. Among recent immigrants, he said, it was even lower. As a eugenicist, he interpreted the results as roughly equivalent to a mild level of retardation and as an indication of racial deterioration. Years later, experts agreed that the results misrepresented the levels of education for the recruits and revealed defects in the design of the tests.

The experience of service in the army expanded many individual social horizons as native-born and foreign-born soldiers served together. Immigrants had been welcomed into Union ranks during the Civil War, including large numbers of Irish and Germans who had joined and fought alongside native-born men. Some Germans in the Civil War fought in units where German was the main language. Between 1917 and 1918, the army accepted immigrants with some hesitancy because of the widespread public agitation against “hyphenated Americans.” Others were segregated.



Figure 21.7.2: A staged scene of two British soldiers charging a bunker with a “dead” German soldier lying in front. C. 1922. *Library of Congress*.

Prevailing racial attitudes among white Americans mandated the assignment of white and black soldiers to different units. Despite racial discrimination, many black American leaders, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, supported the war effort and sought a place at the front for black soldiers. Black leaders viewed military service as an opportunity to demonstrate to white society the willingness and ability of black men to assume all duties and responsibilities of citizens, including wartime sacrifice. If black soldiers were drafted and fought and died on equal footing with white soldiers, then white Americans would see that they deserved full citizenship. The War Department, however, barred black troops from combat and relegated black soldiers to segregated service units where they worked as general laborers.

In France, the experiences of black soldiers during training and periods of leave proved transformative. The army often restricted the privileges of black soldiers to ensure that the conditions they encountered in Europe did not lead them to question their place in American society. However, black soldiers were not the only ones tempted by European vices. To ensure that American “doughboys” did not compromise their special identity as men of the new world who arrived to save the old, several religious and progressive organizations created an extensive program designed to keep the men pure of heart, mind, and body. With assistance from the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and other temperance organizations, the War Department put together a program of schools, sightseeing tours, and recreational facilities to provide wholesome and educational outlets. The soldiers welcomed most of the activities from these groups, but many still managed to find and enjoy the traditional recreations of soldiers at war.[10]

Women reacted to the war preparations by joining several military and civilian organizations. Their enrollment and actions in these organizations proved to be a pioneering effort for American women in war. Military leaders authorized the permanent gender transition of several occupations that gave women opportunities to don uniforms where none had existed before in history. Civilian wartime organizations, although chaired by male members of the business elite, boasted all-female volunteer workforces.

Women performed the bulk of volunteer work during the war.[11]

The admittance of women brought considerable upheaval. The War and Navy Departments authorized the enlistment of women to fill positions in several established administrative occupations. The gendered transition of these jobs freed more men to join combat units. Army women served as telephone operators (Hello Girls) for the Signal Corps, navy women enlisted as yeomen (clerical workers), and the first groups of women joined the Marine Corps in July 1918. Approximately twenty-five thousand nurses served in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps for duty stateside and overseas, and about a hundred female physicians were contracted by the army. Neither the female nurses nor the doctors served as commissioned officers in the military. The army and navy chose to appoint them instead, which left the status of professional medical women hovering somewhere between the enlisted and officer ranks. As a result, many female nurses and doctors suffered various physical and mental abuses at the hands of their male coworkers with no system of redress in place.[12]

Millions of women also volunteered in civilian organizations such as the American Red Cross, the Young Men's and Women's Christian Associations (YMCA/YWCA), and the Salvation Army. Most women performed their volunteer duties in communal spaces owned by the leaders of the municipal chapters of these organizations. Women met at designated times to roll bandages, prepare and serve meals and snacks, package and ship supplies, and organize community fund-raisers. The variety of volunteer opportunities gave women the ability to appear in public spaces and promote charitable activities for the war effort. Female volunteers encouraged entire communities, including children, to get involved in war work. While most of these efforts focused on support for the home front, a small percentage of female volunteers served with the American Expeditionary Force in France.[13]

Jim Crow segregation in both the military and the civilian sector stood as a barrier for black women who wanted to give their time to the war effort. The military prohibited black women from serving as enlisted or appointed medical personnel. The only avenue for black women to wear a military uniform existed with the armies of the allied nations. A few black female doctors and nurses joined the French Foreign Legion to escape the racism in the American army. Black female volunteers faced the same discrimination in civilian wartime organizations. White leaders of the American Red Cross, YMCA/YWCA, and Salvation Army municipal chapters refused to admit black women as equal participants. Black women were forced to charter auxiliary units as subsidiary divisions and were given little guidance on organizing volunteers. They turned instead to the community for support and recruited millions of women for auxiliaries that supported the nearly two hundred thousand black soldiers and sailors serving in the military. While most female volunteers labored to care for black families on the home front, three YMCA secretaries worked with the black troops in France.[14]

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21.8: On the Home Front

In the early years of the war, Americans were generally detached from the events in Europe. Progressive Era reform politics dominated the political landscape, and Americans remained most concerned with the shifting role of government at home. However, the facts of the war could not be ignored by the public. The destruction taking place on European battlefields and the ensuing casualty rates exposed the unprecedented brutality of modern warfare. Increasingly, a sense that the fate of the Western world lay in the victory or defeat of the Allies took hold in the United States.

President Wilson, a committed progressive, articulated a global vision of democracy even as he embraced neutrality. As war engulfed Europe, it seemed apparent that the United States' economic power would shape the outcome of the conflict regardless of any American military intervention. By 1916, American trade with the Allies tripled, while trade with the Central Powers shrank to less than 1 percent of previous levels.

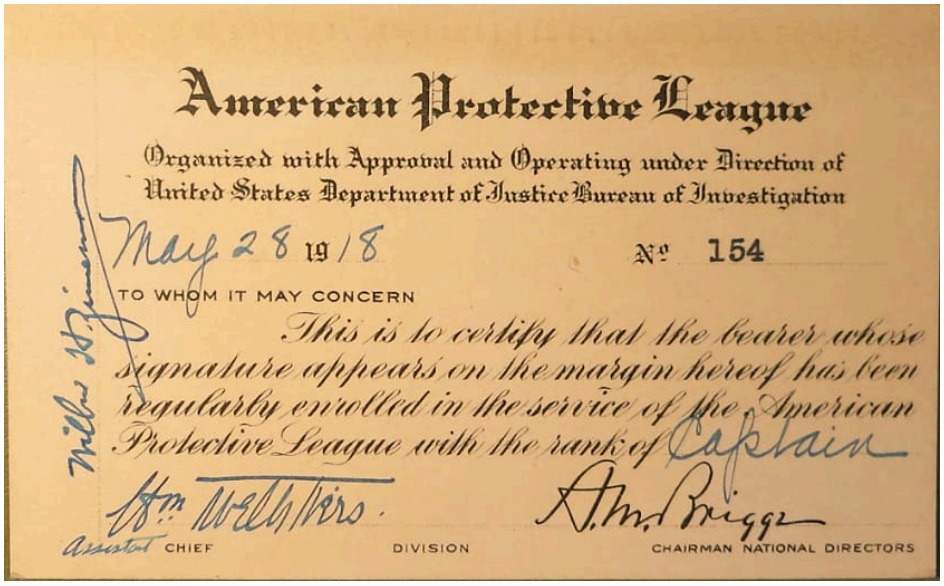


Figure 21.8.1: A membership card for the American Protective League, issued May 28, 1918. German immigrants in the United States aroused popular suspicions during World War I and the American Protective League (APL), a group of private citizens, worked directly with the U.S. government to identify suspected German sympathizers and to eradicate all antiwar and politically radical activities through surveillance, public shaming, and government raids. J. Edgar Hoover, the head of the Bureau of Investigation (later the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI), used the APL to gather intelligence. *Wikimedia*.

The progression of the war in Europe generated fierce national debates about military preparedness. The Allies and the Central Powers had quickly raised and mobilized vast armies and navies. The United States still had a small military. When America entered the war, the mobilization of military resources and the cultivation of popular support consumed the country, generating enormous publicity and propaganda campaigns. President Wilson created the Committee on Public Information, known as the Creel Committee, headed by Progressive George Creel, to inspire patriotism and generate support for military adventures. Creel enlisted the help of Hollywood studios and other budding media outlets to cultivate a view of the war that pitted democracy against imperialism and framed America as a crusading nation rescuing Western civilization from medievalism and militarism. As war passions flared, challenges to the onrushing patriotic sentiment that America was making the world "safe for democracy" were considered disloyal. Wilson signed the Espionage Act in 1917 and the Sedition Act in 1918, stripping dissenters and protesters of their rights to publicly resist the war. Critics and protesters were imprisoned. Immigrants, labor unions, and political radicals became targets of government investigations and an ever more hostile public culture. Meanwhile, the government insisted that individual financial contributions made a discernible difference for the men on the Western Front. Americans lent their financial support to the war effort by purchasing war bonds or supporting the Liberty Loan Drive. Many Americans, however, sacrificed much more than money.[15]

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21.9: Before the Armistace

European powers struggled to adapt to the brutality of modern war. Until the spring of 1917, the Allies possessed few effective defensive measures against submarine attacks. German submarines sank more than a thousand ships by the time the United States entered the war. The rapid addition of American naval escorts to the British surface fleet and the establishment of a convoy system countered much of the effect of German submarines. Shipping and military losses declined rapidly, just as the American army arrived in Europe in large numbers. Although much of the equipment still needed to make the transatlantic passage, the physical presence of the army proved to a fatal blow to German war plans.[16]

In July 1917, after one last disastrous offensive against the Germans, the Russian army disintegrated. The tsarist regime collapsed and in November 1917 Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik party came to power. Russia soon surrendered to German demands and exited the war, freeing Germany to finally fight the one-front war it had desired since 1914. The German military quickly shifted hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the eastern theater in preparation for a new series of offensives planned for the following year in France.[17]

In March 1918, Germany launched the Kaiserschlacht (Spring Offensive), a series of five major attacks. By the middle of July 1918, each and every one had failed to break through the Western Front. On August 8, 1918, two million men of the American Expeditionary Forces joined British and French armies in a series of successful counteroffensives that pushed the disintegrating German lines back across France. German general Erich Ludendorff referred to the launch of the counteroffensive as the "black day of the German army." The German offensive gamble exhausted Germany's faltering military effort. Defeat was inevitable. Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated at the request of the German military leaders and the new democratic government agreed to an armistice (cease-fire) on November 11, 1918. German military forces withdrew from France and Belgium and returned to a Germany teetering on the brink of chaos.[18]

By the end of the war, more than 4.7 million American men had served in all branches of the military: four million in the army, six hundred thousand in the navy, and about eighty thousand in the Marine Corps. The United States lost over one hundred thousand men (fifty-three thousand died in battle, and even more from disease). Their terrible sacrifice, however, paled before the Europeans'. After four years of brutal stalemate, France had suffered almost a million and a half military dead and Germany even more. Both nations lost about 4 percent of their population to the war. And death was not done.[19]

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21.10: The War and the Influenza Epidemic

Even as war raged on the Western Front, a new deadly threat loomed: influenza. In the spring of 1918, a strain of the flu virus appeared in the farm country of Haskell County, Kansas, and hit nearby Camp Funston, one of the largest army training camps in the nation. The virus spread like wildfire. The camp had brought disparate populations together, shuffled them between bases, sent them back to their homes across the nation, and, in consecutive waves, deployed them around the world. Between March and May 1918, fourteen of the largest American military training camps reported outbreaks of influenza. Some of the infected soldiers carried the virus on troop transports to France. By September 1918, influenza spread to all training camps in the United States. And then it mutated.[20]

The second wave of the virus, a mutated strain, was even deadlier than the first. It struck down those in the prime of their lives: a disproportionate amount of influenza victims were between ages eighteen and thirty-five. In Europe, influenza hit both sides of the Western Front. The “Spanish Influenza,” or the “Spanish Lady,” misnamed due to accounts of the disease that first appeared in the uncensored newspapers of neutral Spain, resulted in the deaths of an estimated fifty million people worldwide. Reports from the surgeon general of the army revealed that while 227,000 soldiers were hospitalized from wounds received in battle, almost half a million suffered from influenza. The worst part of the epidemic struck during the height of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in the fall of 1918 and weakened the combat capabilities of the American and German armies. During the war, more soldiers died from influenza than combat. The pandemic continued to spread after the armistice before finally fading in the early 1920s. No cure was ever found.[21]

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21.11: The Fourteen Points and the League of Nations

As the flu virus wracked the world, Europe and America rejoiced at the end of hostilities. On December 4, 1918, President Wilson became the first American president to travel overseas during his term. He intended to shape the peace. The war brought an abrupt end to four great European imperial powers. The German, Russian, Austrian-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires evaporated, and the map of Europe was redrawn to accommodate new independent nations. As part of the the armistice, Allied forces followed the retreating Germans and occupied territories in the Rhineland to prevent Germany from reigniting war. As Germany disarmed, Wilson and the other Allied leaders gathered in France at Versailles for the Paris Peace Conference to dictate the terms of a settlement to the war. After months of deliberation, the Treaty of Versailles officially ended the war.

Earlier that year, on January 8, 1918, before a joint session of Congress, President Wilson offered an ambitious statement of war aims and peace terms known as the Fourteen Points. The plan not only dealt with territorial issues but offered principles on which a long-term peace could be built. But in January 1918, Germany still anticipated a favorable verdict on the battlefield and did not seriously consider accepting the terms of the Fourteen Points. The Allies were even more dismissive. French prime minister Georges Clemenceau remarked, “The good Lord only had ten [points].”[22]

President Wilson labored to realize his vision of the postwar world. The United States had entered the fray, Wilson proclaimed, “to make the world safe for democracy.” At the center of the plan was a novel international organization—the League of Nations—charged with keeping a worldwide peace by preventing the kind of destruction that tore across Europe and “affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.” This promise of collective security, that an attack on one sovereign member would be viewed as an attack on all, was a key component of the Fourteen Points.[23]

But the fight for peace was daunting. While President Wilson was celebrated in Europe and welcomed as the “God of Peace,” his fellow statesmen were less enthusiastic about his plans for postwar Europe. America’s closest allies had little interest in the League of Nations. Allied leaders sought to guarantee the future safety of their own nations. Unlike the United States, the Allies endured the horrors of the war firsthand. They refused to sacrifice further. The negotiations made clear that British prime minister David Lloyd-George was more interested in preserving Britain’s imperial domain, while French prime minister Clemenceau sought a peace that recognized the Allies’ victory and the Central Powers’ culpability: he wanted reparations—severe financial penalties—and limits on Germany’s future ability to wage war. The fight for the League of Nations was therefore largely on the shoulders of President Wilson. By June 1919, the final version of the treaty was signed and President Wilson was able to return home. The treaty was a compromise that included demands for German reparations, provisions for the League of Nations, and the promise of collective security. For President Wilson, it was an imperfect peace, but an imperfect peace was better than none at all.

The real fight for the League of Nations was on the American home front. Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts stood as the most prominent opponent of the League of Nations. As chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and an influential Republican Party leader, he could block ratification of the treaty. Lodge attacked the treaty for potentially robbing the United States of its sovereignty. Never an isolationist, Lodge demanded instead that the country deal with its own problems in its own way, free from the collective security—and oversight—offered by the League of Nations. Unable to match Lodge’s influence in the Senate, President Wilson took his case to the American people in the hopes that ordinary voters might be convinced that the only guarantee of future world peace was the League of Nations. During his grueling cross-country trip, however, President Wilson suffered an incapacitating stroke. His opponents had the upper hand.[24]

President Wilson’s dream for the League of Nations died on the floor of the Senate. Lodge’s opponents successfully blocked America’s entry into the League of Nations, an organization conceived and championed by the American president. The League of Nations operated with fifty-eight sovereign members, but the United States refused to join, refused to lend it American power, and refused to provide it with the power needed to fulfill its purpose.[25]

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21.12: Aftermath of World War I

The war transformed the world. The Middle East, for instance, was drastically changed. For centuries the Ottoman Empire had shaped life in the region. Before the war, the Middle East had three main centers of power: the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Iran. President Wilson's call for self-determination appealed to many under the Ottoman Empire's rule. In the aftermath of the war, Wilson sent a commission to investigate the region to determine the conditions and aspirations of the populace. The King-Crane Commission found that most of the inhabitants favored an independent state free of European control. However, these wishes were largely ignored, and the lands of the former Ottoman Empire were divided into mandates through the Treaty of Sèvres at the San Remo Conference in 1920. The Ottoman Empire disintegrated into several nations, many created by European powers with little regard to ethnic realities. These Arab provinces were ruled by Britain and France, and the new nation of Turkey emerged from the former heartland of Anatolia. According to the League of Nations, mandates "were inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world." Though allegedly for the benefit of the people of the Middle East, the mandate system was essentially a reimagined form of nineteenth-century imperialism. France received Syria; Britain took control of Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan (Jordan). The United States was asked to become a mandate power but declined. The geographical realignment of the Middle East also included the formation of two new nations: the Kingdom of Hejaz and Yemen. (The Kingdom of Hejaz was ruled by Sharif Hussein and only lasted until the 1920s, when it became part of Saudi Arabia.)[26]

The 1917 Russian Revolution, meanwhile enflamed American fears of communism. The fates of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian-born anarchists who were convicted of robbery and murder in 1920 epitomized a sudden American Red Scare. Their arrest, trial, and execution, meanwhile, inspired many leftists and dissenting artists to express their sympathy with the accused, such as in Maxwell Anderson's *Gods of the Lightning* or Upton Sinclair's *Boston*. The Sacco-Vanzetti case demonstrated an exacerbated nervousness about immigrants and the potential spread of radical ideas, especially those related to international communism.[27]

When in March 1918 the Bolsheviks signed a separate peace treaty with Germany, the Allies planned to send troops to northern Russia and Siberia to prevent German influence and fight the Bolshevik Revolution. Wilson agreed, and, in a little-known foreign intervention, American troops remained in Russia as late as 1920. Although the Bolshevik rhetoric of self-determination followed many of the ideals of Wilson's Fourteen Points—Vladimir Lenin supported revolutions against imperial rule across the world—the American commitment to self-rule was hardly strong enough to overcome powerful strains of anticommunism.



Figure 21.12.1: With America still at war in World War I, President Wilson sent American troops to Siberia during the Russian civil war to oppose the Bolsheviks. This August 1918 photograph shows American soldiers in Vladivostok parading before the building occupied by the staff of the Czecho-Slovaks. To the left, Japanese marines stand to attention as the American troops march. *Wikimedia*.

At home, the United States grappled with harsh postwar realities. Racial tensions culminated in the Red Summer of 1919 when violence broke out in at least twenty-five cities, including Chicago and Washington, D.C. The riots originated from wartime racial

tensions. Industrial war production and massive wartime service created vast labor shortages, and thousands of black southerners traveled to the North and Midwest to escape the traps of southern poverty. But the so-called Great Migration sparked significant racial conflict as white northerners and returning veterans fought to reclaim their jobs and their neighborhoods from new black migrants.[28]

Many black Americans, who had fled the Jim Crow South and traveled halfway around the world to fight for the United States, would not so easily accept postwar racism. The overseas experience of black Americans and their return triggered a dramatic change in black communities. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote boldly of returning soldiers: "We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy!"[29] But white Americans desired a return to the status quo, a world that did not include social, political, or economic equality for black people.

In 1919, America suffered through the "Red Summer." Riots erupted across the country from April until October. The massive bloodshed included thousands of injuries, hundreds of deaths, and vast destruction of private and public property across the nation. The Chicago Riot, from July 27 to August 3, 1919, considered the summer's worst, sparked a week of mob violence, murder, and arson. Race riots had rocked the nation before, but the Red Summer was something new. Recently empowered black Americans actively defended their families and homes from hostile white rioters, often with militant force. This behavior galvanized many in black communities, but it also shocked white Americans who alternatively interpreted black resistance as a desire for total revolution or as a new positive step in the path toward black civil rights. In the riots' aftermath, James Weldon Johnson wrote, "Can't they understand that the more Negroes they outrage, the more determined the whole race becomes to secure the full rights and privileges of freemen?" Those six hot months in 1919 forever altered American society and roused and terrified those that experienced the sudden and devastating outbreaks of violence.[30]

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22: THE NEW ERA



"Women competing in low hurdle race, Washington, D.C.," ca. 1920s. Library of Congress (LC-USZ62-65429)

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22.1: Introduction

On a sunny day in early March 1921, Warren G. Harding took the oath to become the twenty-ninth president of the United States. He had won a landslide election by promising a “return to normalcy.” “Our supreme task is the resumption of our onward, normal way,” he declared in his inaugural address. Two months later, he said, “America’s present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration.” The nation still reeled from the shock of World War I, the explosion of racial violence and political repression in 1919, and, a lingering “Red Scare” sparked by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.”

More than 115,000 American soldiers had lost their lives in barely a year of fighting in Europe. Then, between 1918 and 1920, nearly seven hundred thousand Americans died in a flu epidemic that hit nearly 20 percent of the American population. Waves of labor strikes, meanwhile, hit soon after the war. Radicals bellowed. Anarchists and others sent more than thirty bombs through the mail on May 1, 1919. After wartime controls fell, the economy tanked and national unemployment hit 20 percent. Farmers’ bankruptcy rates, already egregious, now skyrocketed. Harding could hardly deliver the peace that he promised, but his message nevertheless resonated among a populace wracked by instability.

The 1920s, of course, would be anything but “normal.” The decade so reshaped American life that it came to be called by many names: the New Era, the Jazz Age, the Age of the Flapper, the Prosperity Decade, and, most commonly, the Roaring Twenties. The mass production and consumption of automobiles, household appliances, film, and radio fueled a new economy and new standards of living. New mass entertainment introduced talking films and jazz while sexual and social restraints loosened. But at the same time, many Americans turned their back on political and economic reform, denounced America’s shifting demographics, stifled immigration, retreated toward “old-time religion,” and revived the Ku Klux Klan with millions of new members. On the other hand, many Americans fought harder than ever for equal rights and cultural observers noted the appearance of “the New Woman” and “the New Negro.” Old immigrant communities that had predated new immigration quotas, meanwhile, clung to their cultures and their native faiths. The 1920s were a decade of conflict and tension. But whatever it was, it was not “normalcy.”

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22.2: Republican White House, 1921-1933

To deliver on his promises of stability and prosperity, Harding signed legislation to restore a high protective tariff and dismantled the last wartime controls over industry. Meanwhile, the vestiges of America's involvement in World War I and its propaganda and suspicions of anything less than "100 percent American" pushed Congress to address fears of immigration and foreign populations. A sour postwar economy led elites to raise the specter of the Russian Revolution and sideline not just the various American socialist and anarchist organizations but nearly all union activism. During the 1920s, the labor movement suffered a sharp decline in memberships. Workers lost not only bargaining power but also the support of courts, politicians, and, in large measure, the American public.[1]

Harding's presidency would go down in history as among the most corrupt. Many of Harding's cabinet appointees, however, were individuals of true stature that answered to various American constituencies. For instance, Henry C. Wallace, the vocal editor of *Wallace's Farmer* and a well-known proponent of scientific farming, was made secretary of agriculture. Herbert Hoover, the popular head and administrator of the wartime Food Administration and a self-made millionaire, was made secretary of commerce. To satisfy business interests, the conservative businessman Andrew Mellon became secretary of the treasury. Mostly, however, it was the appointing of friends and close supporters, dubbed "the Ohio gang," that led to trouble.[2]

Harding's administration suffered a tremendous setback when several officials conspired to lease government land in Wyoming to oil companies in exchange for cash. Known as the Teapot Dome scandal (named after the nearby rock formation that resembled a teapot), interior secretary Albert Fall and navy secretary Edwin Denby were eventually convicted and sent to jail. Harding took vacation in the summer of 1923 so that he could think deeply on how to deal "with my God-damned friends"—it was his friends, and not his enemies, that kept him up walking the halls at nights. But then, in August 1923, Harding died suddenly of a heart attack and Vice President Calvin Coolidge ascended to the highest office in the land.[3]

The son of a shopkeeper, Coolidge climbed the Republican ranks from city councilman to governor of Massachusetts. As president, Coolidge sought to remove the stain of scandal but otherwise continued Harding's economic approach, refusing to take actions in defense of workers or consumers against American business. "The chief business of the American people," the new president stated, "is business." One observer called Coolidge's policy "active inactivity," but Coolidge was not afraid of supporting business interests and wealthy Americans by lowering taxes or maintaining high tariff rates. Congress, for instance, had already begun to reduce taxes on the wealthy from wartime levels of 66 percent to 20 percent, which Coolidge championed.[4]

While Coolidge supported business, other Americans continued their activism. The 1920s, for instance, represented a time of great activism among American women, who had won the vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Female voters, like their male counterparts, pursued many interests. Concerned about squalor, poverty, and domestic violence, women had already lent their efforts to prohibition, which went into effect under the Eighteenth Amendment in January 1920. After that point, alcohol could no longer be manufactured or sold. Other reformers urged government action to ameliorate high mortality rates among infants and children, provide federal aid for education, and ensure peace and disarmament. Some activists advocated protective legislation for women and children, while Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party called for the elimination of all legal distinctions "on account of sex" through the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was introduced but defeated in Congress.[5]



Figure 22.2.1: During the 1920s, the National Women's Party fought for the rights of women beyond that of suffrage, which they had secured through the 19th Amendment in 1920. They organized private events, like the tea party pictured here, and public campaigning, such as the introduction of the Equal Rights Amendment to Congress, as they continued the struggle for equality. Library of Congress.

National politics in the 1920s were dominated by the Republican Party, which held not only the presidency but both houses of Congress as well. In a note passed to American reporters, Coolidge announced his decision not to run in the presidential election of 1928. Republicans nominated Herbert Hoover, an orphan from Iowa who graduated from Stanford, became wealthy as a mining engineer, and won a deserved reputation as a humanitarian for his relief efforts in famine-struck, war-torn Europe. Running against Hoover was Democrat Alfred E. Smith, the four-time governor of New York and the son of Irish immigrants. Smith was a part of the New York machine and favored workers' protections while also opposing prohibition and immigration restrictions. Hoover focused on economic growth and prosperity. He had served as secretary of commerce under Harding and Coolidge and claimed credit for the sustained growth seen during the 1920s; Hoover claimed in 1928 that America had never been closer to eliminating poverty. Much of the election, however, centered on Smith's religion: he was a Catholic. And not only was he a Catholic, he opposed Protestant America's greatest political triumph: Prohibition. Many Protestant ministers preached against Smith and warned that he would be enthralled to the pope. Hoover won in a landslide. While Smith won handily in the nation's largest cities, portending future political trends, he lost most of the rest of the country. Even several solidly Democratic southern states pulled the lever for a Republican for the first time since Reconstruction.[6]

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22.3: Culture of Consumption

"Change is in the very air Americans breathe, and consumer changes are the very bricks out of which we are building our new kind of civilization," announced marketing expert and home economist Christine Frederick in her influential 1929 monograph, *Selling Mrs. Consumer*. The book, which was based on one of the earliest surveys of American buying habits, advised manufacturers and advertisers how to capture the purchasing power of women, who, according to Frederick, accounted for 90 percent of household expenditures. Aside from granting advertisers insight into the psychology of the "average" consumer, Frederick's text captured the tremendous social and economic transformations that had been wrought over the course of her lifetime.[7]

Indeed, the America of Frederick's birth looked very different from the one she confronted in 1929. The consumer change she studied had resulted from the industrial expansion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the discovery of new energy sources and manufacturing technologies, industrial output flooded the market with a range of consumer products such as ready-to-wear clothing, convenience foods, and home appliances. By the end of the nineteenth century, output had risen so dramatically that many contemporaries feared supply had outpaced demand and that the nation would soon face the devastating financial consequences of overproduction. American businessmen attempted to avoid this catastrophe by developing new merchandising and marketing strategies that transformed distribution and stimulated a new culture of consumer desire.[8]

The department store stood at the center of this early consumer revolution. By the 1880s, several large dry-goods houses blossomed into modern retail department stores. These emporiums concentrated a broad array of goods under a single roof, allowing customers to purchase shirtwaists and gloves alongside toy trains and washbasins. To attract customers, department stores relied on more than variety. They also employed innovations in service (such as access to restaurants, writing rooms, and babysitting) and spectacle (such as elaborately decorated store windows, fashion shows, and interior merchandise displays). Marshall Field & Co. was among the most successful of these ventures. Located on State Street in Chicago, the company pioneered many of these strategies, including establishing a tearoom that provided refreshment to the well-heeled female shoppers who composed the store's clientele. Reflecting on the success of Field's marketing techniques, Thomas W. Goodspeed, an early trustee of the University of Chicago, wrote, "Perhaps the most notable of Mr. Field's innovations was that he made a store in which it was a joy to buy."[9]



Figure 22.3.1: In the 1920's Americans across the country bought magazines like Photoplay in order to get more information about the stars of their new favorite entertainment media: the movies. Advertisers took advantage of this broad audience to promote a wide range of goods and services to both men and women. *Archive.org*.

The joy of buying infected a growing number of Americans in the early twentieth century as the rise of mail-order catalogs, mass-circulation magazines, and national branding further stoked consumer desire. The automobile industry also fostered the new culture of consumption by promoting the use of credit. By 1927, more than 60 percent of American automobiles were sold on credit, and installment purchasing was made available for nearly every other large consumer purchase. Spurred by access to easy

credit, consumer expenditures for household appliances, for example, grew by more than 120 percent between 1919 and 1929. Henry Ford's assembly line, which advanced production strategies practiced within countless industries, brought automobiles within the reach of middle-income Americans and further drove the spirit of consumerism. By 1925, Ford's factories were turning out a Model-T every ten seconds. The number of registered cars ballooned from just over nine million in 1920 to nearly twenty-seven million by the decade's end. Americans owned more cars than Great Britain, Germany, France, and Italy combined. In the late 1920s, 80 percent of the world's cars drove on American roads.

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22.4: Culture of Escape

As transformative as steam and iron had been in the previous century, gasoline and electricity—embodied most dramatically for many Americans in automobiles, film, and radio—propelled not only consumption but also the famed popular culture in the 1920s. “We wish to escape,” wrote Edgar Burroughs, author of the Tarzan series, “. . . the restrictions of manmade laws, and the inhibitions that society has placed upon us.” Burroughs authored a new Tarzan story nearly every year from 1914 until 1939. “We would each like to be Tarzan,” he said. “At least I would; I admit it.” Like many Americans in the 1920s, Burroughs sought to challenge and escape the constraints of a society that seemed more industrialized with each passing day.[10]

Just like Burroughs, Americans escaped with great speed. Whether through the automobile, Hollywood’s latest films, jazz records produced on Tin Pan Alley, or the hours spent listening to radio broadcasts of Jack Dempsey’s prizefights, the public wrapped itself in popular culture. One observer estimated that Americans belted out the silly musical hit “Yes, We Have No Bananas” more than “The Star Spangled Banner” and all the hymns in all the hymnals combined.[11]

As the automobile became more popular and more reliable, more people traveled more frequently and attempted greater distances. Women increasingly drove themselves to their own activities as well as those of their children. Vacationing Americans sped to Florida to escape northern winters. Young men and women fled the supervision of courtship, exchanging the staid parlor couch for sexual exploration in the backseat of a sedan. In order to serve and capture the growing number of drivers, Americans erected gas stations, diners, motels, and billboards along the roadside. Automobiles themselves became objects of entertainment: nearly one hundred thousand people gathered to watch drivers compete for the $50,000 prize of the Indianapolis 500.



Figure 22.4.1: Side view of a Ford sedan with four passengers and a woman getting in on the driver’s side, ca.1923. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-54096.

Meanwhile, the United States dominated the global film industry. By 1930, as moviemaking became more expensive, a handful of film companies took control of the industry. Immigrants, mostly of Jewish heritage from central and Eastern Europe, originally “invented Hollywood” because most turn-of-the-century middle- and upper-class Americans viewed cinema as lower-class entertainment. After their parents emigrated from Poland in 1876, Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack Warner (who were, according to family lore, given the name when an Ellis Island official could not understand their surname) founded Warner Bros. In 1918, Universal, Paramount, Columbia, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) were all founded by or led by Jewish executives. Aware of their social status as outsiders, these immigrants (or sons of immigrants) purposefully produced films that portrayed American values of opportunity, democracy, and freedom.

Not content with distributing thirty-minute films in nickelodeons, film moguls produced longer, higher-quality films and showed them in palatial theaters that attracted those who had previously shunned the film industry. But as filmmakers captured the middle and upper classes, they maintained working-class moviegoers by blending traditional and modern values. Cecil B. DeMille’s 1923 epic *The Ten Commandments* depicted orgiastic revelry, for instance, while still managing to celebrate a biblical story. But what

good was a silver screen in a dingy theater? Moguls and entrepreneurs soon constructed picture palaces. Samuel Rothafel's Roxy Theater in New York held more than six thousand patrons who could be escorted by a uniformed usher past gardens and statues to their cushioned seat. In order to show *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the first movie with synchronized words and pictures, the Warners spent half a million to equip two theaters. "Sound is a passing fancy," one MGM producer told his wife, but Warner Bros.' assets, which increased from just $5,000,000 in 1925 to $230,000,000 in 1930, tell a different story.[12]

Americans fell in love with the movies. Whether it was the surroundings, the sound, or the production budgets, weekly movie attendance skyrocketed from sixteen million in 1912 to forty million in the early 1920s. Hungarian immigrant William Fox, founder of Fox Film Corporation, declared that "the motion picture is a distinctly American institution" because "the rich rub elbows with the poor" in movie theaters. With no seating restriction, the one-price admission was accessible for nearly all Americans (African Americans, however, were either excluded or segregated). Women represented more than 60 percent of moviegoers, packing theaters to see Mary Pickford, nicknamed "America's Sweetheart," who was earning one million dollars a year by 1920 through a combination of film and endorsements contracts. Pickford and other female stars popularized the "flapper," a woman who favored short skirts, makeup, and cigarettes.



Figure 22.4.2: Mary Pickford's film personas led the glamorous and lavish lifestyle that female movie-goers of the 1920s desired so much. Mary Pickford, 1920. *Library of Congress*.

As Americans went to the movies more and more, at home they had the radio. Italian scientist Guglielmo Marconi transmitted the first transatlantic wireless (radio) message in 1901, but radios in the home did not become available until around 1920, when they boomed across the country. Around half of American homes contained a radio by 1930. Radio stations brought entertainment directly into the living room through the sale of advertisements and sponsorships, from *The Maxwell House Hour* to the *Lucky Strike Orchestra*. Soap companies sponsored daytime dramas so frequently that an entire genre—"soap operas"—was born, providing housewives with audio adventures that stood in stark contrast to common chores. Though radio stations were often under the control of corporations like the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) or the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), radio programs were less constrained by traditional boundaries in order to capture as wide an audience as possible, spreading popular culture on a national level.

Radio exposed Americans to a broad array of music. Jazz, a uniquely American musical style popularized by the African-American community in New Orleans, spread primarily through radio stations and records. The *New York Times* had ridiculed jazz as "savage" because of its racial heritage, but the music represented cultural independence to others. As Harlem-based musician William Dixon put it, "It did seem, to a little boy, that . . . white people really owned everything. But that wasn't entirely true. They didn't own the music that I played." The fast-paced and spontaneity-laced tunes invited the listener to dance along. "When a good orchestra plays a 'rag,'" dance instructor Vernon Castle recalled, "one has simply got to move." Jazz became a national sensation, played and heard by whites and blacks both. Jewish Lithuanian-born singer Al Jolson—whose biography inspired *The Jazz Singer* and who played the film's titular character—became the most popular singer in America.[13]

The 1920s also witnessed the maturation of professional sports. Play-by-play radio broadcasts of major collegiate and professional sporting events marked a new era for sports, despite the institutionalization of racial segregation in most. Suddenly,

Jack Dempsey's left crosses and right uppercuts could almost be felt in homes across the United States. Dempsey, who held the heavyweight championship for most of the decade, drew million-dollar gates and inaugurated "Dempseymania" in newspapers across the country. Red Grange, who carried the football with a similar recklessness, helped popularize professional football, which was then in the shadow of the college game. Grange left the University of Illinois before graduating to join the Chicago Bears in 1925. "There had never been such evidence of public interest since our professional league began," recalled Bears owner George Halas of Grange's arrival.[14]

Perhaps no sports figure left a bigger mark than did Babe Ruth. Born George Herman Ruth, the "Sultan of Swat" grew up in an orphanage in Baltimore's slums. Ruth's emergence onto the national scene was much needed, as the baseball world had been rocked by the so-called Black Sox Scandal in which eight players allegedly agreed to throw the 1919 World Series. Ruth hit fifty-four home runs in 1920, which was more than any other team combined. Baseball writers called Ruth a superman, and more Americans could recognize Ruth than they could then-president Warren G. Harding.

After an era of destruction and doubt brought about by World War I, Americans craved heroes who seemed to defy convention and break boundaries. Dempsey, Grange, and Ruth dominated their respective sports, but only Charles Lindbergh conquered the sky. On May 21, 1927, Lindbergh concluded the first ever nonstop solo flight from New York to Paris. Armed with only a few sandwiches, some bottles of water, paper maps, and a flashlight, Lindbergh successfully navigated over the Atlantic Ocean in thirty-three hours. Some historians have dubbed Lindbergh the "hero of the decade," not only for his transatlantic journey but because he helped to restore the faith of many Americans in individual effort and technological advancement. In a world so recently devastated by machine guns, submarines, and chemical weapons, Lindbergh's flight demonstrated that technology could inspire and accomplish great things. *Outlook Magazine* called Lindbergh "the heir of all that we like to think is best in America."[15]

The decade's popular culture seemed to revolve around escape. Coney Island in New York marked new amusements for young and old. Americans drove their sedans to massive theaters to enjoy major motion pictures. Radio towers broadcasted the bold new sound of jazz, the adventures of soap operas, and the feats of amazing athletes. Dempsey and Grange seemed bigger, stronger, and faster than any who dared to challenge them. Babe Ruth smashed home runs out of ball parks across the country. And Lindbergh escaped the earth's gravity and crossed an entire ocean. Neither Dempsey nor Ruth nor Lindbergh made Americans forget the horrors of World War I and the chaos that followed, but they made it seem as if the future would be that much brighter.



Figure 22.4.3: Babe Ruth's incredible talent accelerated the popularity of baseball, cementing it as America's pastime. Ruth's propensity to shatter records made him a national hero. *Library of Congress*.

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22.5: "The New Woman"

The rising emphasis on spending and accumulation nurtured a national ethos of materialism and individual pleasure. These impulses were embodied in the figure of the flapper, whose bobbed hair, short skirts, makeup, cigarettes, and carefree spirit captured the attention of American novelists such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis. Rejecting the old Victorian values of desexualized modesty and self-restraint, young "flappers" seized opportunities for the public coed pleasures offered by new commercial leisure institutions, such as dance halls, cabarets, and nickelodeons, not to mention the illicit blind tigers and speakeasies spawned by Prohibition. So doing, young American women had helped usher in a new morality that permitted women greater independence, freedom of movement, and access to the delights of urban living. In the words of psychologist G. Stanley Hall, "She was out to see the world and, incidentally, be seen of it."



Figure 22.5.1: This "new breed" of women – known as the flapper – went against the gender proscriptions of the era, bobbing their hair, wearing short dresses, listening to jazz, and flouting social and sexual norms. While liberating in many ways, these behaviors also reinforced stereotypes of female carelessness and obsessive consumerism that would continue throughout the twentieth century. *Library of Congress*.

Such sentiments were repeated in an oft-cited advertisement in a 1930 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*: "Today's woman gets what she wants. The vote. Slim sheaths of silk to replace voluminous petticoats. Glassware in sapphire blue or glowing amber. The right to a career. Soap to match her bathroom's color scheme." As with so much else in the 1920s, however, sex and gender were in many ways a study in contradictions. It was the decade of the "New Woman," and one in which only 10 percent of married women—although nearly half of unmarried women—worked outside the home.[16] It was a decade in which new technologies decreased time requirements for household chores, and one in which standards of cleanliness and order in the home rose to often impossible standards. It was a decade in which women finally could exercise their right to vote, and one in which the often thinly bound women's coalitions that had won that victory splintered into various causes. Finally, it was a decade in which images such as the "flapper" gave women new modes of representing femininity, and one in which such representations were often inaccessible to women of certain races, ages, and socioeconomic classes.

Women undoubtedly gained much in the 1920s. There was a profound and keenly felt cultural shift that, for many women, meant increased opportunity to work outside the home. The number of professional women, for example, significantly rose in the decade. But limits still existed, even for professional women. Occupations such as law and medicine remained overwhelmingly male: most female professionals were in feminized professions such as teaching and nursing. And even within these fields, it was difficult for women to rise to leadership positions.

Further, it is crucial not to overgeneralize the experience of all women based on the experiences of a much-commented-upon subset of the population. A woman's race, class, ethnicity, and marital status all had an impact on both the likelihood that she worked outside the home and the types of opportunities that were available to her. While there were exceptions, for many minority women, work outside the home was not a cultural statement but rather a financial necessity (or both), and physically demanding, low-paying domestic service work continued to be the most common job type. Young, working-class white women were joining

the workforce more frequently, too, but often in order to help support their struggling mothers and fathers.

For young, middle-class, white women—those most likely to fit the image of the carefree flapper—the most common workplace was the office. These predominantly single women increasingly became clerks, jobs that had been primarily male earlier in the century. But here, too, there was a clear ceiling. While entry-level clerk jobs became increasingly feminized, jobs at a higher, more lucrative level remained dominated by men. Further, rather than changing the culture of the workplace, the entrance of women into lower-level jobs primarily changed the coding of the jobs themselves. Such positions simply became "women's work."



Figure 22.5.2: The frivolity, decadence, and obliviousness of the 1920s was embodied in the image of the flapper, the stereotyped carefree and indulgent woman of the Roaring Twenties depicted by Russell Patterson's drawing. *Library of Congress*.

Finally, as these same women grew older and married, social changes became even subtler. Married women were, for the most part, expected to remain in the domestic sphere. And while new patterns of consumption gave them more power and, arguably, more autonomy, new household technologies and philosophies of marriage and child-rearing increased expectations, further tying these women to the home—a paradox that becomes clear in advertisements such as the one in the *Chicago Tribune*. Of course, the number of women in the workplace cannot exclusively measure changes in sex and gender norms. Attitudes towards sex, for example, continued to change in the 1920s as well, a process that had begun decades before. This, too, had significantly different impacts on different social groups. But for many women—particularly young, college-educated white women—an attempt to rebel against what they saw as a repressive Victorian notion of sexuality led to an increase in premarital sexual activity strong enough that it became, in the words of one historian, "almost a matter of conformity."[17]

In the homosexual community, meanwhile, a vibrant gay culture grew, especially in urban centers such as New York. While gay males had to contend with increased policing of the gay lifestyle (especially later in the decade), in general they lived more openly in New York in the 1920s than they would be able to for many decades following World War II.[18] At the same time, for many lesbians in the decade, the increased sexualization of women brought new scrutiny to same-sex female relationships previously dismissed as harmless.[19]

Ultimately, the most enduring symbol of the changing notions of gender in the 1920s remains the flapper. And indeed, that image was a "new" available representation of womanhood in the 1920s. But it is just that: *a* representation of womanhood of the 1920s. There were many women in the decade of differing races, classes, ethnicities, and experiences, just as there were many men with different experiences. For some women, the 1920s were a time of reorganization, new representations, and new opportunities. For others, it was a decade of confusion, contradiction, new pressures, and struggles new and old.

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22.6: "The New Negro"

Just as cultural limits loosened across the nation, the 1920s represented a period of serious self-reflection among African Americans, most especially those in northern ghettos. New York City was a popular destination of American blacks during the Great Migration. The city's black population grew 257 percent, from 91,709 in 1910 to 327,706 by 1930 (the white population grew only 20 percent).[20] Moreover, by 1930, some 98,620 foreign-born blacks had migrated to the United States. Nearly half made their home in Manhattan's Harlem district.[21]

Harlem originally lay between Fifth Avenue and Eighth Avenue and 130th Street to 145th Street. By 1930, the district had expanded to 155th Street and was home to 164,000 people, mostly African Americans. Continuous relocation to "the greatest Negro City in the world" exacerbated problems with crime, health, housing, and unemployment.[22] Nevertheless, it brought together a mass of black people energized by race pride, military service in World War I, the urban environment, and, for many, ideas of Pan-Africanism or Garveyism (discussed shortly). James Weldon Johnson called Harlem "the Culture Capital."[23] The area's cultural ferment produced the Harlem Renaissance and fostered what was then termed the New Negro Movement.

Alain Locke did not coin the term *New Negro*, but he did much to popularize it. In the 1925 book *The New Negro*, Locke proclaimed that the generation of subservience was no more—"we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation." Bringing together writings by men and women, young and old, black and white, Locke produced an anthology that was *of* African Americans, rather than only *about* them. The book joined many others. Popular Harlem Renaissance writers published some twenty-six novels, ten volumes of poetry, and countless short stories between 1922 and 1935.[24] Alongside the well-known Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, female writers like Jessie Redmon Fauset and Zora Neale Hurston published nearly one third of these novels. While themes varied, the literature frequently explored and countered pervading stereotypes and forms of American racial prejudice.

The Harlem Renaissance was manifested in theater, art, and music. For the first time, Broadway presented black actors in serious roles. The 1924 production *Dixie to Broadway* was the first all-black show with mainstream showings.[25] In art, Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, Aaron Douglas, and Palmer Hayden showcased black cultural heritage and captured the population's current experience. In music, jazz rocketed in popularity. Eager to hear "real jazz," whites journeyed to Harlem's Cotton Club and Smalls. Next to Greenwich Village, Harlem's nightclubs and speakeasies (venues where alcohol was publicly consumed) presented a place where sexual freedom and gay life thrived. Unfortunately, while headliners like Duke Ellington were hired to entertain at Harlem's venues, the surrounding black community was usually excluded. Furthermore, black performers were often restricted from restroom use and relegated to service door entry. As the Renaissance faded to a close, several Harlem Renaissance artists went on to produce important works indicating that this movement was but one component in African American's long history of cultural and intellectual achievements.[26]



Figure 22.6.1: Garveyism, criticized as too radical, nevertheless formed a substantial following, and was a major stimulus for later black nationalistic movements. Photograph of Marcus Garvey, August 5, 1924. *Library of Congress*.

The explosion of African American self-expression found multiple outlets in politics. In the 1910s and 1920s, perhaps no one so attracted disaffected black activists as Marcus Garvey. Garvey was a Jamaican publisher and labor organizer who arrived in New York City in 1916. Within just a few years of his arrival, he built the largest black nationalist organization in the world, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).[27] Inspired by Pan-Africanism and Booker T. Washington's model of industrial education, and critical of what he saw as Du Bois's elitist strategies in service of black elites, Garvey sought to promote racial pride, encourage black economic independence, and root out racial oppression in Africa and the Diaspora.[28]

Headquartered in Harlem, the UNIA published a newspaper, *Negro World*, and organized elaborate parades in which members, known as Garveyites, dressed in ornate, militaristic regalia and marched down city streets. The organization criticized the slow pace of the judicial focus of the NAACP as well as its acceptance of memberships and funds from whites. "For the Negro to depend on the ballot and his industrial progress alone," Garvey opined, "will be hopeless as it does not help him when he is lynched, burned, jim-crowed, and segregated." In 1919, the UNIA announced plans to develop a shipping company called the Black Star Line as part of a plan that pushed for blacks to reject the political system and to "return to Africa" instead." Most of the investments came in the form of shares purchased by UNIA members, many of whom heard Garvey give rousing speeches across the country about the importance of establishing commercial ventures between African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Africans.[29]

Garvey's detractors disparaged these public displays and poorly managed business ventures, and they criticized Garvey for peddling empty gestures in place of measures that addressed the material concerns of African Americans. NAACP leaders depicted Garvey's plan as one that simply said, "Give up! Surrender! The struggle is useless." Enflamed by his aggressive attacks on other black activists and his radical ideas of racial independence, many African American and Afro-Caribbean leaders worked with government officials and launched the "Garvey Must Go" campaign, which culminated in his 1922 indictment and 1925 imprisonment and subsequent deportation for "using the mails for fraudulent purposes." The UNIA never recovered its popularity or financial support, even after Garvey's pardon in 1927, but his movement made a lasting impact on black consciousness in the United States and abroad. He inspired the likes of Malcolm X, whose parents were Garveyites, and Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. Garvey's message, perhaps best captured by his rallying cry, "Up, you mighty race," resonated with African Americans who found in Garveyism a dignity not granted them in their everyday lives. In that sense, it was all too typical of the Harlem Renaissance.[30]

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22.7: Culture War

For all of its cultural ferment, however, the 1920s were also a difficult time for radicals and immigrants and anything "modern." Fear of foreign radicals led to the executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian anarchists, in 1927. In May 1920, the two had been arrested for robbery and murder connected with an incident at a Massachusetts factory. Their guilty verdicts were appealed for years as the evidence surrounding their convictions was slim. For instance, while one eyewitness claimed that Vanzetti drove the getaway car, accounts of others described a different person altogether. Nevertheless, despite worldwide lobbying by radicals and a respectable movement among middle-class Italian organizations in the United States, the two men were executed on August 23, 1927. Vanzetti conceivably provided the most succinct reason for his death, saying, "This is what I say . . . . I am suffering because I am a radical and indeed I am a radical; I have suffered because I was an Italian, and indeed I am an Italian."[31]

Many Americans expressed anxieties about the changes that had remade the United States and, seeking scapegoats, many middle-class white Americans pointed to Eastern European and Latin American immigrants (Asian immigration had already been almost completely prohibited), African Americans who now pushed harder for civil rights, and, after migrating out of the American South to northern cities as a part of the Great Migration, the mass exodus that carried nearly half a million blacks out of the South between 1910 and 1920. Protestants, meanwhile, continued to denounce the Roman Catholic Church and charged that American Catholics gave their allegiance to the pope and not to their country.

In 1921, Congress passed the Emergency Immigration Act as a stopgap immigration measure and then, three years later, permanently established country-of-origin quotas through the National Origins Act. The number of immigrants annually admitted to the United States from each nation was restricted to 2 percent of the population who had come from that country and resided in the United States in 1890. (By pushing back three decades, past the recent waves of "new" immigrants from southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia, the law made it extremely difficult for immigrants outside northern Europe to legally enter the United States.) The act also explicitly excluded all Asians, although, to satisfy southern and western growers, it temporarily omitted restrictions on Mexican immigrants. The Sacco and Vanzetti trial and sweeping immigration restrictions pointed to a rampant nativism. A great number of Americans worried about a burgeoning America that did not resemble the one of times past. Many wrote of an American riven by a cultural war.

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22.8: Fundamentalist Christianity

In addition to alarms over immigration and the growing presence of Catholicism and Judaism, a new core of Christian fundamentalists were very much concerned about relaxed sexual mores and increased social freedoms, especially as found in city centers. Although never a centralized group, most fundamentalists lashed out against what they saw as a sagging public morality, a world in which Protestantism seemed challenged by Catholicism, women exercised ever greater sexual freedoms, public amusements encouraged selfish and empty pleasures, and critics mocked Prohibition through bootlegging and speakeasies.

Christian Fundamentalism arose most directly from a doctrinal dispute among Protestant leaders. Liberal theologians sought to intertwine religion with science and secular culture. These Modernists, influenced by the biblical scholarship of nineteenth-century German academics, argued that Christian doctrines about the miraculous might be best understood metaphorically. The Church, they said, needed to adapt itself to the world. According to the Baptist pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick, the "coming of Christ" might occur "slowly . . . but surely, [as] His will and principles [are] worked out by God's grace in human life and institutions."[32] The social gospel, which encouraged Christians to build the Kingdom of God on earth by working against social and economic inequality, was very much tied to liberal theology.

During the 1910s, funding from oil barons Lyman and Milton Stewart enabled the evangelist A. C. Dixon to commission some ninety essays to combat religious liberalism. The collection, known as *The Fundamentals*, became the foundational documents of Christian fundamentalism, from which the movement's name is drawn. Contributors agreed that Christian faith rested on literal truths, that Jesus, for instance, would physically return to earth at the end of time to redeem the righteous and damn the wicked. Some of the essays put forth that human endeavor would not build the Kingdom of God, while others covered such subjects as the virgin birth and biblical inerrancy. American fundamentalists spanned Protestant denominations and borrowed from diverse philosophies and theologies, most notably the holiness movement, the larger revivalism of the nineteenth century, and new dispensationalist theology (in which history proceeded, and would end, through "dispensations" by God). They did, however, all agree that modernism was the enemy and the Bible was the inerrant word of God. It was a fluid movement often without clear boundaries, but it featured many prominent clergymen, including the well-established and extremely vocal John Roach Straton (New York), J. Frank Norris (Texas), and William Bell Riley (Minnesota).[33]

On March 21, 1925, in a tiny courtroom in Dayton, Tennessee, fundamentalists gathered to tackle the issues of creation and evolution. A young biology teacher, John T. Scopes, was being tried for teaching his students evolutionary theory in violation of the Butler Act, a state law preventing evolutionary theory or any theory that denied "the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible" from being taught in publicly funded Tennessee classrooms. Seeing the act as a threat to personal liberty, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) immediately sought a volunteer for a "test" case, hoping that the conviction and subsequent appeals would lead to a day in the Supreme Court, testing the constitutionality of the law. It was then that Scopes, a part-time teacher and coach, stepped up and voluntarily admitted to teaching evolution (Scopes's violation of the law was never in question). Thus the stage was set for the pivotal courtroom showdown—"the trial of the century"—between the champions and opponents of evolution that marked a key moment in an enduring American "culture war."[34]

The case became a public spectacle. Clarence Darrow, an agnostic attorney and a keen liberal mind from Chicago, volunteered to aid the defense and came up against William Jennings Bryan. Bryan, the "Great Commoner," was the three-time presidential candidate who in his younger days had led the political crusade against corporate greed. He had done so then with a firm belief in the righteousness of his cause, and now he defended biblical literalism in similar terms. The theory of evolution, Bryan said, with its emphasis on the survival of the fittest, "would eliminate love and carry man back to a struggle of tooth and claw."[35]



Figure 22.8.1: During the Scopes Trial, Clarence Darrow (right) savaged the idea of a literal interpretation of the Bible. "Dudley Field Malone, Dr. John R. Neal, and Clarence Darrow in Chicago, Illinois." The Clarence Darrow Digital Collection, *University of Minnesota*.

Newspapermen and spectators flooded the small town of Dayton. Across the nation, Americans tuned their radios to the national broadcasts of a trial that dealt with questions of religious liberty, academic freedom, parental rights, and the moral responsibility of education. For six days in July, the men and women of America were captivated as Bryan presented his argument on the morally corrupting influence of evolutionary theory (and pointed out that Darrow made a similar argument about the corruptive potential of education during his defense of the famed killers Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb a year before). Darrow eloquently fought for academic freedom.[36]

At the request of the defense, Bryan took the stand as an "expert witness" on the Bible. At his age, he was no match for Darrow's famous skills as a trial lawyer and his answers came across as blundering and incoherent, particularly as he was not in fact a literal believer in *all* of the Genesis account (believing—as many anti-evolutionists did—that the meaning of the word *day* in the book of Genesis could be taken as allegory) and only hesitantly admitted as much, not wishing to alienate his fundamentalist followers. Additionally, Darrow posed a series of unanswerable questions: Was the "great fish" that swallowed the prophet Jonah created for that specific purpose? What precisely happened astronomically when God made the sun stand still? Bryan, of course, could cite only his faith in miracles. Tied into logical contradictions, Bryan's testimony was a public relations disaster, although his statements were expunged from the record the next day and no further experts were allowed—Scopes's guilt being established, the jury delivered a guilty verdict in minutes. The case was later thrown out on a technicality. But few cared about the verdict. Darrow had, in many ways, at least to his defenders, already won: the fundamentalists seemed to have taken a beating in the national limelight. Journalist and satirist H. L. Mencken characterized the "circus in Tennessee" as an embarrassment for fundamentalism, and modernists remembered the "Monkey Trial" as a smashing victory. If fundamentalists retreated from the public sphere, they did not disappear entirely. Instead, they went local, built a vibrant subculture, and emerged many decades later stronger than ever.[37]

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22.9: Rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK)



Figure 22.9.1: This photo by popular news photographers Underwood and Underwood shows a gathering of a reported three hundred Ku Klux Klansmen just outside Washington DC to initiate a new group of men into their order. The proximity of the photographer to his subjects for one of the Klan's notorious night-time rituals suggests that this was yet another of the Klan's numerous publicity stunts. Underwood and Underwood, "Klan assembles Short Distance from U.S. Capitol," (ca. 1920's). *Library of Congress*.

Suspicions of immigrants, Catholics, and modernists contributed to a string of reactionary organizations. None so captured the imaginations of the country as the reborn Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a white supremacist organization that expanded beyond its Reconstruction Era antiblack politics to now claim to protect American values and the American way of life from blacks, feminists (and other radicals), immigrants, Catholics, Jews, atheists, bootleggers, and a host of other imagined moral enemies.

Two events in 1915 are widely credited with inspiring the rebirth of the Klan: the lynching of Leo Frank and the release of *The Birth of a Nation*, a popular and groundbreaking film that valorized the Reconstruction Era Klan as a protector of feminine virtue and white racial purity. Taking advantage of this sudden surge of popularity, Colonel William Joseph Simmons organized what is often called the "second" Ku Klux Klan in Georgia in late 1915. This new Klan, modeled after other fraternal organizations with elaborate rituals and a hierarchy, remained largely confined to Georgia and Alabama until 1920, when Simmons began a professional recruiting effort that resulted in individual chapters being formed across the country and membership rising to an estimated five million.[38]

Partly in response to the migration of southern blacks to northern cities during World War I, the KKK expanded above the Mason-Dixon Line. Membership soared in Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, and Portland, while Klan-endorsed mayoral candidates won in Indianapolis, Denver, and Atlanta.[39] The Klan often recruited through fraternal organizations such as the Freemasons and through various Protestant churches. In many areas, local Klansmen visited churches of which they approved and bestowed a gift of money on the presiding minister, often during services. The Klan also enticed people to join through large picnics, parades, rallies, and ceremonies. The Klan established a women's auxiliary in 1923 headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Women of the Ku Klux Klan mirrored the KKK in practice and ideology and soon had chapters in all forty-eight states, often attracting women who were already part of the Prohibition movement, the defense of which was a centerpiece of Klan activism.[40]

Contrary to its perception of as a primarily southern and lower-class phenomenon, the second Klan had a national reach composed largely of middle-class people. Sociologist Rory McVeigh surveyed the KKK newspaper *Imperial Night-Hawk* for the years 1923 and 1924, at the organization's peak, and found the largest number of Klan-related activities to have occurred in Texas, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and Georgia. The Klan was even present in Canada, where it was a powerful force within Saskatchewan's Conservative Party. In many states and localities, the Klan dominated politics to such a level that one could not be elected without the support of the KKK. For example, in 1924, the Klan supported William Lee Cazort for governor of Arkansas, leading his opponent in the Democratic Party primary, Thomas Terral, to seek honorary membership through a Louisiana klavern so as not to be tagged as the anti-Klan candidate. In 1922, Texans elected Earle B. Mayfield, an avowed Klansman who ran openly

as that year's "klandidate," to the U.S. Senate. At its peak the Klan claimed between four and five million members.[41]

Despite the breadth of its political activism, the Klan is today remembered largely as a violent vigilante group—and not without reason. Members of the Klan and affiliated organizations often carried out acts of lynching and "nightriding"—the physical harassment of bootleggers, union activists, civil rights workers, or any others deemed "immoral" (such as suspected adulterers) under the cover of darkness or while wearing their hoods and robes. In fact, Klan violence was extensive enough in Oklahoma that Governor John C. Walton placed the entire state under martial law in 1923. Witnesses testifying before the military court disclosed accounts of Klan violence ranging from the flogging of clandestine brewers to the disfiguring of a prominent black Tulsan for registering African Americans to vote. In Houston, Texas, the Klan maintained an extensive system of surveillance that included tapping telephone lines and putting spies in the local post office in order to root out "undesirables." A mob organized and led by Klan members in Aiken, South Carolina, lynched Bertha Lowman and her two brothers in 1926, but no one was ever prosecuted: the sheriff, deputies, city attorney, and state representative all belonged to the Klan.[42]

The Klan dwindled in the face of scandal and diminished energy over the last years of the 1920s. By 1930, the Klan only had about thirty thousand members and it was largely spent as a national force, only to appear again as a much diminished force during the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

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22.10: Conclusion

In his inauguration speech in 1929, Herbert Hoover told Americans that the Republican Party had brought prosperity. Even ignoring stubbornly large rates of poverty and unparalleled levels of inequality, he could not see the weaknesses behind the decade's economy. Even as the new culture of consumption promoted new freedoms, it also promoted new insecurities. An economy built on credit exposed the nation to tremendous risk. Flailing European economies, high tariffs, wealth inequality, a construction bubble, and an ever-more flooded consumer market loomed dangerously until the Roaring Twenties ground to a halt. In a moment the nation's glitz and glamour seemed to give way to decay and despair. For farmers, racial minorities, unionized workers, and other populations that did not share in 1920s prosperity, the veneer of a Jazz Age and a booming economy had always been a fiction. But for them, as for millions of Americans, the end of an era was close. The Great Depression loomed.

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22.11: Primary Sources

Warren G. Harding and the “Return to Normalcy” (1920)

Republican Senator and presidential candidate Warren G. Harding of Ohio delivered the following address to the Home Market Club of Boston on May 14, 1920. In it, Harding outlined his hope that the United States would, after a decade of progressive politics and foreign interventions, return to “normalcy.” In November, Harding received the highest percentage of the popular vote in a presidential election up to that time.

Crystal Eastman, “Now We Can Begin” (1920)

In the following selection, Crystal Eastman, a socialist and feminist, considered what women should fight for following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted American women the right to vote.

Explanation of the Objects of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (1921)

Inspired by the writings of Booker T. Washington, Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey became the most prominent Black Nationalist in the United States. He championed the back-to-Africa movement, advocated for black-owned businesses—he founded the Black Star Line, a transnational shipping company—and founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Thousands of UNIA chapters formed all across the world. In 1921, Garvey recorded a message in a New York studio explaining the object of the UNIA.

Hiram Evans on the “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism” (1926)

The “Second” Ku Klux Klan rose to prominence in the 1920s and, at its peak, claimed millions of Americans as members. Klansmen wrapped themselves in the flag and the cross and proclaimed themselves the moral guardians of America. The organization appealed to many “respectable,” middle-class Americans. Here, Imperial Wizard Hiram Evans, a dentist from Dallas, Texas, outlines the Second Klan’s potent mix of Americanism, Protestantism, and white supremacy.

Herbert Hoover, “Principles and Ideals of the United States Government” (1928)

Republican Herbert Hoover embodied the political conservatism of the 1920s. He denounced the regulation of business and championed the individual against “bureaucracy.” In November 1928, Hoover, a Protestant from the Midwest, soundly defeated Al Smith, an Irish Catholic from New York City. Here, in a speech delivered in late October, Hoover outlined his vision of American government.

Advertisements (1924)

In the 1920’s Americans across the country bought magazines like Photoplay in order to get more information about the stars of their new favorite entertainment media: the movies. Advertisers took advantage of this broad audience to promote a wide range of goods and services to both men and women who enjoyed the proliferation of consumer culture during this time.

Klan Gathering (ca. 1920s)

This photo by popular news photographers Underwood and Underwood shows a gathering of a reported 300 Ku Klux Klansmen just outside Washington DC to initiate a new group of men into their order. The proximity of the photographer to his subjects for one of the Klan’s notorious night-time rituals suggests that this was yet another of the Klan’s numerous publicity stunts.

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22.12: Reference Material

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23: THE GREAT DEPRESSION



In this famous 1936 photograph by Dorothea Lange, a destitute, thirty-two-year-old mother of seven captures the agonies of the Great Depression. Library of Congress.

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23.1: Voices of Protest



Figure 23.1.1: Huey Long was an indomitable force who campaigned tirelessly for the common man during the Great Depression. He demanded that Americans "Share the Wealth." *Wikimedia*.

Despite the unprecedented actions taken in his first year in office, Roosevelt's initial relief programs could often be quite conservative. He had usually been careful to work within the bounds of presidential authority and congressional cooperation. And, unlike Europe, where several nations had turned toward state-run economies, and even fascism and socialism, Roosevelt's New Deal demonstrated a clear reluctance to radically tinker with the nation's foundational economic and social structures. Many high-profile critics attacked Roosevelt for not going far enough, and, beginning in 1934, Roosevelt and his advisors were forced to respond.

Senator Huey Long, a flamboyant Democrat from Louisiana, was perhaps the most important "voice of protest." Long's populist rhetoric appealed to those who saw deeply rooted but easily addressed injustice in the nation's economic system. Long proposed a Share Our Wealth program in which the federal government would confiscate the assets of the extremely wealthy and redistribute them to the less well-off through guaranteed minimum incomes. "How many men ever went to a barbecue and would let one man take off the table what's intended for nine-tenths of the people to eat?" he asked. Over twenty-seven thousand Share the Wealth clubs sprang up across the nation as Long traveled the country explaining his program to crowds of impoverished and unemployed Americans. Long envisioned the movement as a stepping-stone to the presidency, but his crusade ended in late 1935 when he was assassinated on the floor of the Louisiana state capitol. Even in death, however, Long convinced Roosevelt to more stridently attack the Depression and American inequality.

But Huey Long was not alone in his critique of Roosevelt. Francis Townsend, a former doctor and public health official from California, promoted a plan for old-age pensions which, he argued, would provide economic security for the elderly (who disproportionately suffered poverty) and encourage recovery by allowing older workers to retire from the workforce. Reverend Charles Coughlin, meanwhile, a priest and radio personality from the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan, gained a following by making vitriolic, anti-Semitic attacks on Roosevelt for cooperating with banks and financiers and proposing a new system of "social justice" through a more state-driven economy instead. Like Long, both Townsend and Coughlin built substantial public followings.

If many Americans urged Roosevelt to go further in addressing the economic crisis, the president faced even greater opposition from conservative politicians and business leaders. By late 1934, complaints increased from business-friendly Republicans about Roosevelt's willingness to regulate industry and use federal spending for public works and employment programs. In the South, Democrats who had originally supported the president grew more hostile toward programs that challenged the region's political, economic, and social status quo. Yet the greatest opposition came from the Supreme Court, filled with conservative appointments made during the long years of Republican presidents.

By early 1935 the Court was reviewing programs of the New Deal. On May 27, a day Roosevelt's supporters called Black Monday,

the justices struck down one of the president's signature reforms: in a case revolving around poultry processing, the Court unanimously declared the NRA unconstitutional. In early 1936, the AAA fell.[41]

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23.2: The “Second” New Deal (1935-1936)

Facing reelection and rising opposition from both the left and the right, Roosevelt decided to act. The New Deal adopted a more radical, aggressive approach to poverty, the Second New Deal. In 1935, hoping to reconstitute some of the protections afforded workers in the now-defunct NRA, Roosevelt worked with Congress to pass the National Labor Relations Act (known as the Wagner Act for its chief sponsor, New York senator Robert Wagner), offering federal legal protection, for the first time, for workers to organize unions. Three years later, Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, creating the modern minimum wage. The Second New Deal also oversaw the restoration of a highly progressive federal income tax, mandated new reporting requirements for publicly traded companies, refinanced long-term home mortgages for struggling homeowners, and attempted rural reconstruction projects to bring farm incomes in line with urban ones.[42]

The labor protections extended by Roosevelt’s New Deal were revolutionary. In northern industrial cities, workers responded to worsening conditions by banding together and demanding support for workers’ rights. In 1935, the head of the United Mine Workers, John L. Lewis, took the lead in forming a new national workers’ organization, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), breaking with the more conservative, craft-oriented AFL. The CIO won a major victory in 1937 when affiliated members in the United Automobile Workers (UAW) struck for recognition and better pay and hours at a General Motors (GM) plant in Flint, Michigan. In the first instance of a “sit-down” strike, the workers remained in the building until management agreed to negotiate. GM recognized the UAW and the “sit-down” strike became a new weapon in the fight for workers’ rights. Across the country, unions and workers took advantage of the New Deal’s protections to organize and win major concessions from employers.



Figure 23.2.1: Unionization was met with fierce opposition from owners and managers, particularly in the manufacturing belt of the Mid-West. In this 1937 image, strikers guard the entrance to a Flint, Michigan, manufacturing plant. *Library of Congress*.

The signature piece of Roosevelt’s Second New Deal came the same year, in 1935. The Social Security Act provided for old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, and economic aid, based on means, to assist both the elderly and dependent children. The president was careful to mitigate some of the criticism from what was, at the time, in the American context, a revolutionary concept. He specifically insisted that social security be financed from payroll, not the federal government; “No dole,” Roosevelt said repeatedly, “mustn’t have a dole.”[43] He thereby helped separate social security from the stigma of being an undeserved “welfare” entitlement. While such a strategy saved the program from suspicions, social security became the centerpiece of the modern American social welfare state. It was the culmination of a long progressive push for government-sponsored social welfare, an answer to the calls of Roosevelt’s opponents on the Left for reform, a response to the intractable poverty among America’s neediest groups, and a recognition that the government would now assume some responsibility for the economic well-being of its citizens. But for all of its groundbreaking provisions, the act, and the larger New Deal as well, excluded large swaths of the American population.[44]

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23.3: Equal Rights and the New Deal

The Great Depression was particularly tough for nonwhite Americans. As an African American pensioner told interviewer Studs Terkel, “The Negro was born in depression. It didn’t mean too much to him. The Great American Depression . . . only became official when it hit the white man.” Black workers were generally the last hired when businesses expanded production and the first fired when businesses experienced downturns. In 1932, with the national unemployment average hovering around 25 percent, black unemployment reached as high as 50 percent, while even black workers who kept their jobs saw their already low wages cut dramatically.[45]

Blacks faced discrimination everywhere but suffered especially severe legal inequality in the Jim Crow South. In 1931, for instance, a group of nine young men riding the rails between Chattanooga and Memphis, Tennessee, were pulled from the train near Scottsboro, Alabama, and charged with assaulting two white women. Despite clear evidence that the assault had not occurred, and despite one of the women later recanting, the young men endured a series of sham trials in which all but one were sentenced to death. Only the communist-oriented International Legal Defense (ILD) came to the aid of the “Scottsboro Boys,” who soon became a national symbol of continuing racial prejudice in America and a rallying point for civil rights–minded Americans. In appeals, the ILD successfully challenged the boys’ sentencing, and the death sentences were either commuted or reversed, although the last of the accused did not receive parole until 1946.[46]

Despite a concerted effort to appoint black advisors to some New Deal programs, Franklin Roosevelt did little to directly address the difficulties black communities faced. To do so openly would provoke southern Democrats and put his New Deal coalition—–the uneasy alliance of national liberals, urban laborers, farm workers, and southern whites—at risk. Roosevelt not only rejected such proposals as abolishing the poll tax and declaring lynching a federal crime, he refused to specifically target African American needs in any of his larger relief and reform packages. As he explained to the national secretary of the NAACP, “I just can’t take that risk.”[47]

In fact, many of the programs of the New Deal had made hard times more difficult. When the codes of the NRA set new pay scales, they usually took into account regional differentiation and historical data. In the South, where African Americans had long suffered unequal pay, the new codes simply perpetuated that inequality. The codes also exempted those involved in farm work and domestic labor, the occupations of a majority of southern black men and women. The AAA was equally problematic as owners displaced black tenants and sharecroppers, many of whom were forced to return to their farms as low-paid day labor or to migrate to cities looking for wage work.[48]

Perhaps the most notorious failure of the New Deal to aid African Americans came with the passage of the Social Security Act. Southern politicians chafed at the prospect of African Americans benefiting from federally sponsored social welfare, afraid that economic security would allow black southerners to escape the cycle of poverty that kept them tied to the land as cheap, exploitable farm laborers. The *Jackson* (Mississippi) *Daily News* callously warned that “The average Mississippian can’t imagine himself chipping in to pay pensions for able-bodied Negroes to sit around in idleness . . . while cotton and corn crops are crying for workers.” Roosevelt agreed to remove domestic workers and farm laborers from the provisions of the bill, excluding many African Americans, already laboring under the strictures of legal racial discrimination, from the benefits of an expanding economic safety net.[49]

Women, too, failed to receive the full benefits of New Deal programs. On one hand, Roosevelt included women in key positions within his administration, including the first female cabinet secretary, Frances Perkins, and a prominently placed African American advisor in the National Youth Administration, Mary McLeod Bethune. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was a key advisor to the president and became a major voice for economic and racial justice. But many New Deal programs were built on the assumption that men would serve as breadwinners and women as mothers, homemakers, and consumers. New Deal programs aimed to help both but usually by forcing such gendered assumptions, making it difficult for women to attain economic autonomy. New Deal social welfare programs tended to funnel women into means-tested, state-administered relief programs while reserving entitlement benefits for male workers, creating a kind of two-tiered social welfare state. And so, despite great advances, the New Deal failed to challenge core inequalities that continued to mark life in the United States.[50]

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23.4: The End of the New Deal (1937-1939)

By 1936 Roosevelt and his New Deal had won record popularity. In November Roosevelt annihilated his Republican challenger, Governor Alf Landon of Kansas, who lost in every state save Maine and Vermont. The Great Depression had certainly not ended, but it appeared to many to be beating a slow yet steady retreat, and Roosevelt, now safely reelected, appeared ready to take advantage of both his popularity and the improving economic climate to press for even more dramatic changes. But conservative barriers continued to limit the power of his popular support. The Supreme Court, for instance, continued to gut many of his programs.

In 1937, concerned that the Court might overthrow social security in an upcoming case, Roosevelt called for legislation allowing him to expand the Court by appointing a new, younger justice for every sitting member over age seventy. Roosevelt argued that the measure would speed up the Court's ability to handle a growing backlog of cases; however, his "court-packing scheme," as opponents termed it, was clearly designed to allow the president to appoint up to six friendly, pro–New Deal justices to drown the influence of old-time conservatives on the Court. Roosevelt's "scheme" riled opposition and did not become law, but the chastened Court upheld social security and other pieces of New Deal legislation thereafter. Moreover, Roosevelt was slowly able to appoint more amenable justices as conservatives died or retired. Still, the court-packing scheme damaged the Roosevelt administration, and opposition to the New Deal began to emerge and coalesce.[51]

Compounding his problems, Roosevelt and his advisors made a costly economic misstep. Believing the United States had turned a corner, Roosevelt cut spending in 1937. The American economy plunged nearly to the depths of 1932–1933. Roosevelt reversed course and, adopting the approach popularized by the English economist John Maynard Keynes, hoped that countercyclical, compensatory spending would pull the country out of the recession, even at the expense of a growing budget deficit. It was perhaps too late. The Roosevelt Recession of 1937 became fodder for critics. Combined with the court-packing scheme, the recession allowed for significant gains by a conservative coalition of southern Democrats and Midwestern Republicans. By 1939, Roosevelt struggled to build congressional support for new reforms, let alone maintain existing agencies. Moreover, the growing threat of war in Europe stole the public's attention and increasingly dominated Roosevelt's interests. The New Deal slowly receded into the background, outshined by war.[52]

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23.5: The Legacy of the New Deal

By the end of the 1930s, Roosevelt and his Democratic Congresses had presided over a transformation of the American government and a realignment in American party politics. Before World War I, the American national state, though powerful, had been a "government out of sight." After the New Deal, Americans came to see the federal government as a potential ally in their daily struggles, whether finding work, securing a decent wage, getting a fair price for agricultural products, or organizing a union. Voter turnout in presidential elections jumped in 1932 and again in 1936, with most of these newly mobilized voters forming a durable piece of the Democratic Party that would remain loyal well into the 1960s. Even as affluence returned with the American intervention in World War II, memories of the Depression continued to shape the outlook of two generations of Americans.[53] Survivors of the Great Depression, one man would recall in the late 1960s, "are still riding with the ghost—the ghost of those days when things came hard."[54]

Historians debate when the New Deal ended. Some identify the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 as the last major New Deal measure. Others see wartime measures such as price and rent control and the G.I. Bill (which afforded New Deal–style social benefits to veterans) as species of New Deal legislation. Still others conceive of a "New Deal order," a constellation of "ideas, public policies, and political alliances," which, though changing, guided American politics from Roosevelt's Hundred Days forward to Lyndon Johnson's Great Society—and perhaps even beyond. Indeed, the New Deal's legacy still remains, and its battle lines still shape American politics.

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23.6: Primary Sources

Herbert Hoover on the New Deal (1932)

Americans elected a string of conservative Republicans to the presidency during the boom years of the 1920s. When the economy crashed in 1929, however, and the nation descended deeper into the Great Depression, voters abandoned the Republican Party and conservative politicians struggled to in office. In this speech on the eve of the 1932 election, Herbert Hoover warned against Franklin Roosevelt's proposed New Deal.

Huey P. Long, "Every Man a King" and "Share our Wealth" (1934)

Amid the economic indignities of the Great Depression, Huey P. Long of Louisiana championed an aggressive program of public spending and wealth redistribution. Critics denounced Long, who served as both governor and a senator from Louisiana, as a corrupt demagogue, but "the Kingfish" appealed to impoverished Louisianans and Americans wracked by joblessness and resentful of American economic inequality. He was assassinated before he could mount his independent bid for the White House in 1936. In the following extracts from two of his most famous speeches, Long outlines his political program.

Franklin Roosevelt's Re-Nomination Acceptance Speech (1936)

In July 27, 1936, President Franklin Roosevelt accepted his re-nomination as the Democratic Party's presidential choice. In his acceptance speech, Roosevelt laid out his understanding of what "freedom" and "tyranny" meant in an industrial democracy.

Second Inaugural Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1937)

After winning a landslide victory in his 1936 quest for a second presidential term, President Franklin Roosevelt championed again the ambitious goals of his New Deal economic programs and their relationship to American democracy.

Lester Hunter, "I'd Rather Not Be on Relief" (1938)

Lester Hunter left the Dust Bowl for the fields of California and wrote this poem, later turned into a song by migrant workers in California's Farm Security Administration camps. The "C.I.O." in the final line refers to the Congress of Industrial Unions, a powerful new industrial union founded in 1935.

Family Walking on Highway (1936)

During her assignment as a photographer for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Dorothea Lange documented the movement of migrant families forced from their homes by drought and economic depression. This family was in the process of traveling 124 miles by foot, across Oklahoma, because the father was unable to receive relief or WPA work of his own due to an illness.

"Bonus Army Routed" (1932)

This short newsreel clip made by British film company Pathé shows the federal government's response to the thousands of WWI veterans who organized in Washington DC during the summer of 1932 to form what was called a "Bonus Army." At the demand of attorney general, the marchers were violently removed from government property.

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23.7: Reference Material

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23.8: Introduction

The wonder of the stock market permeated popular culture in the 1920s. Although it was released during the first year of the Great Depression, the 1930 film *High Society Blues* captured the speculative hope and prosperity of the previous decade. "I'm in the Market for You," a popular musical number from the film, even used the stock market as a metaphor for love: *You're going up, up, up in my estimation / I want a thousand shares of your caresses, too / We'll count the hugs and kisses / When dividends are due / 'Cause I'm in the market for you.* But just as the song was being recorded in 1929, the stock market reached the apex of its swift climb, crashed, and brought an abrupt end to the seeming prosperity of the Roaring Twenties. The Great Depression had arrived.

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23.9: The Origins of the Great Depression



Figure 23.9.1: Crowds of people gather outside the New York Stock Exchange following the crash of 1929. *Library of Congress*

On Thursday, October 24, 1929, stock market prices suddenly plummeted. Ten billion dollars in investments (roughly equivalent to about $100 billion today) disappeared in a matter of hours. Panicked selling set in, stock values sank to sudden lows, and stunned investors crowded the New York Stock Exchange demanding answers. Leading bankers met privately at the offices of J. P. Morgan and raised millions in personal and institutional contributions to halt the slide. They marched across the street and ceremoniously bought stocks at inflated prices. The market temporarily stabilized but fears spread over the weekend and the following week frightened investors dumped their portfolios to avoid further losses. On October 29, Black Tuesday, the stock market began its long precipitous fall. Stock values evaporated. Shares of U.S. Steel dropped from $262 to $22. General Motors stock fell from $73 a share to $8. Four fifths of J. D. Rockefeller's fortune—the greatest in American history—vanished.

Although the crash stunned the nation, it exposed the deeper, underlying problems with the American economy in the 1920s. The stock market's popularity grew throughout the decade, but only 2.5 percent of Americans had brokerage accounts; the overwhelming majority of Americans had no direct personal stake in Wall Street. The stock market's collapse, no matter how dramatic, did not by itself depress the American economy. Instead, the crash exposed a great number of factors that, when combined with the financial panic, sank the American economy into the greatest of all economic crises. Rising inequality, declining demand, rural collapse, overextended investors, and the bursting of speculative bubbles all conspired to plunge the nation into the Great Depression.

Despite resistance by Progressives, the vast gap between rich and poor accelerated throughout the early twentieth century. In the aggregate, Americans were better off in 1929 than in 1920. Per capita income had risen 10 percent for all Americans, but 75 percent for the nation's wealthiest citizens.[1] The return of conservative politics in the 1920s reinforced federal fiscal policies that exacerbated the divide: low corporate and personal taxes, easy credit, and depressed interest rates overwhelmingly favored wealthy investors who, flush with cash, spent their money on luxury goods and speculative investments in the rapidly rising stock market.

The pro-business policies of the 1920s were designed for an American economy built on the production and consumption of durable goods. Yet by the late 1920s, much of the market was saturated. The boom of automobile manufacturing, the great driver of the American economy in the 1920s, slowed as fewer and fewer Americans with the means to purchase a car had not already done so. More and more, the well-to-do had no need for the new automobiles, radios, and other consumer goods that fueled gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the 1920s. When products failed to sell, inventories piled up, manufacturers scaled back production, and companies fired workers, stripping potential consumers of cash, blunting demand for consumer goods, and replicating the downward economic cycle. The situation was only compounded by increased automation and rising efficiency in American factories. Despite impressive overall growth throughout the 1920s, unemployment hovered around 7 percent throughout the decade, suppressing purchasing power for a great swath of potential consumers.[2]

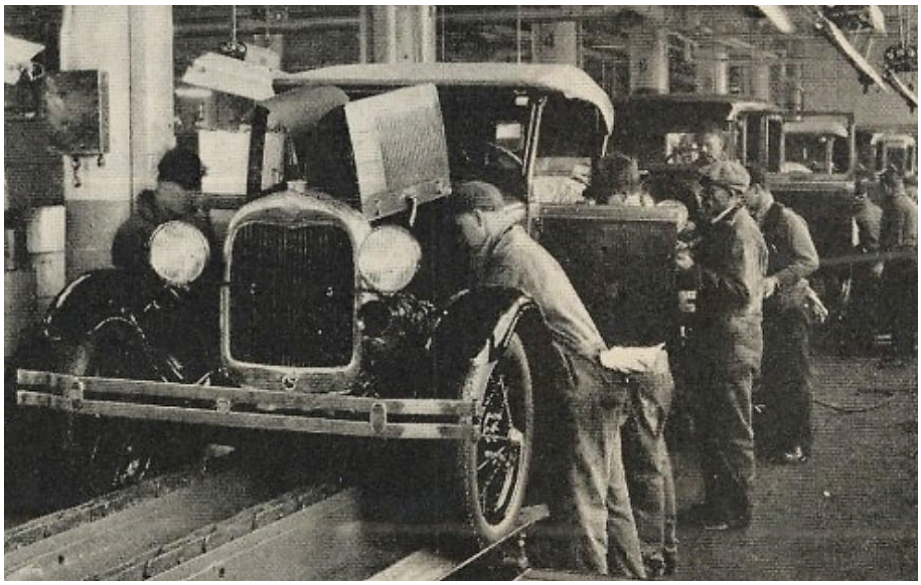


Figure 23.9.2: While a manufacturing innovation, Henry Ford's assembly line produced so many cars as to flood the automobile market in the 1920s. *Wikimedia*.

For American farmers, meanwhile, hard times began long before the markets crashed. In 1920 and 1921, after several years of larger-than-average profits, farm prices in the South and West continued their long decline, plummeting as production climbed and domestic and international demand for cotton, foodstuffs, and other agricultural products stalled. Widespread soil exhaustion on western farms only compounded the problem. Farmers found themselves unable to make payments on loans taken out during the good years, and banks in agricultural areas tightened credit in response. By 1929, farm families were overextended, in no shape to make up for declining consumption, and in a precarious economic position even before the Depression wrecked the global economy.[3]

Despite serious foundational problems in the industrial and agricultural economy, most Americans in 1929 and 1930 still believed the economy would bounce back. In 1930, amid one of the Depression's many false hopes, President Herbert Hoover reassured an audience that "the depression is over."[4] But the president was not simply guilty of false optimism. Hoover made many mistakes. During his 1928 election campaign, Hoover promoted higher tariffs as a means for encouraging domestic consumption and protecting American farmers from foreign competition. Spurred by the ongoing agricultural depression, Hoover signed into law the highest tariff in American history, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930, just as global markets began to crumble. Other countries responded in kind, tariff walls rose across the globe, and international trade ground to a halt. Between 1929 and 1932, international trade dropped from $36 billion to only $12 billion. American exports fell by 78 percent. Combined with overproduction and declining domestic consumption, the tariff exacerbated the world's economic collapse.[5]

But beyond structural flaws, speculative bubbles, and destructive protectionism, the final contributing element of the Great Depression was a quintessentially human one: panic. The frantic reaction to the market's fall aggravated the economy's other many failings. More economic policies backfired. The Federal Reserve overcorrected in their response to speculation by raising interest rates and tightening credit. Across the country, banks denied loans and called in debts. Their patrons, afraid that reactionary policies meant further financial trouble, rushed to withdraw money before institutions could close their doors, ensuring their fate. Such bank runs were not uncommon in the 1920s, but in 1930, with the economy worsening and panic from the crash accelerating, 1,352 banks failed. In 1932, nearly 2,300 banks collapsed, taking personal deposits, savings, and credit with them.[6]

The Great Depression was the confluence of many problems, most of which had begun during a time of unprecedented economic growth. Fiscal policies of the Republican "business presidents" undoubtedly widened the gap between rich and poor and fostered a standoff over international trade, but such policies were widely popular and, for much of the decade, widely seen as a source of the decade's explosive growth. With fortunes to be won and standards of living to maintain, few Americans had the foresight or wherewithal to repudiate an age of easy credit, rampant consumerism, and wild speculation. Instead, as the Depression worked its way across the United States, Americans hoped to weather the economic storm as best they could, waiting for some form of relief, any answer to the ever-mounting economic collapse that strangled so many Americans' lives.

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23.10: Herbert Hoover and the Politics of the Depression



Figure 23.10.1: Unemployed men queued outside a depression soup kitchen opened in Chicago by Al Capone. February 1931. *Wikimedia*.

As the Depression spread, public blame settled on President Herbert Hoover and the conservative politics of the Republican Party. But Hoover was as much victim as perpetrator, a man who had the misfortune of becoming a visible symbol for large invisible forces. In 1928 Hoover had no reason to believe that his presidency would be any different than that of his predecessor, Calvin Coolidge, whose time in office was marked by relative government inaction, seemingly rampant prosperity, and high approval ratings.

Coolidge had decided not to seek a second term in 1928. A man of few words, "Silent Cal" publicized this decision by handing a scrap of paper to a reporter that simply read: "I do not choose to run for president in 1928." The race therefore became a contest between the Democratic governor of New York, Al Smith, whose Catholic faith and immigrant background aroused nativist suspicions and whose connections to Tammany Hall and anti-Prohibition politics offended reformers, and the Republican candidate, Herbert Hoover, whose all-American, Midwestern, Protestant background and managerial prowess during World War I endeared him to American voters.[7]

Hoover epitomized the "self-made man." Orphaned at age nine, he was raised by a strict Quaker uncle on the West Coast. He graduated from Stanford University in 1895 and worked as an engineer for several multinational mining companies. He became a household name during World War I when he oversaw voluntary rationing as the head of the U.S. Food Administration and, after the armistice, served as the director-general of the American Relief Association in Europe. Hoover's reputation for humanitarian service and problem solving translated into popular support, even as the public soured on Wilson's Progressive activism. Hoover was one of the few politicians whose career benefited from wartime public service. After the war both the Democratic and Republican parties tried to draft him to run for president in 1920.[8]

Hoover declined to run in 1920 and 1924. He served instead as secretary of commerce under both Harding and Coolidge, taking an active role in all aspects of government. In 1928, he seemed the natural successor to Coolidge. Politically, aside from the issue of Prohibition (he was a "dry," Smith a "wet"), Hoover's platform differed very little from Smith's, leaving little to discuss during the campaign except personality and religion. Both benefited Hoover. Smith's background engendered opposition from otherwise solid Democratic states, especially in the South, where his Catholic, ethnic, urban, and anti-Prohibition background were anathema. His popularity among urban ethnic voters counted for little. Several southern states, in part owing to the work of itinerant evangelical politicking, voted Republican for the first time since Reconstruction. Hoover won in a landslide, taking nearly 60 percent of the popular vote.[9]

Although Hoover is sometimes categorized as a "business president" in line with his Republican predecessors, he also embraced an inherent business progressivism, a system of voluntary action called *associationalism* that assumed Americans could maintain

a web of voluntary cooperative organizations dedicated to providing economic assistance and services to those in need. Businesses, the thinking went, would willingly limit harmful practice for the greater economic good. To Hoover, direct government aid would discourage a healthy work ethic while associationalism would encourage the self-control and self-initiative that fueled economic growth. But when the Depression exposed the incapacity of such strategies to produce an economic recovery, Hoover proved insufficiently flexible to recognize the limits of his ideology. And when the ideology failed, so too did his presidency.[10]

Hoover entered office on a wave of popular support, but by October 1929 the economic collapse had overwhelmed his presidency. Like all too many Americans, Hoover and his advisors assumed—or perhaps simply hoped—that the sharp financial and economic decline was a temporary downturn, another "bust" of the inevitable boom-bust cycles that stretched back through America's commercial history. Many economists argued that periodic busts culled weak firms and paved the way for future growth. And so when suffering Americans looked to Hoover for help, Hoover could only answer with volunteerism. He *asked* business leaders to promise to maintain investments and employment and *encouraged* state and local charities to assist those in need. Hoover established the President's Organization for Unemployment Relief, or POUR, to help organize the efforts of private agencies. While POUR urged charitable giving, charitable relief organizations were overwhelmed by the growing needs of the many multiplying unemployed, underfed, and unhoused Americans. By mid-1932, for instance, a quarter of all of New York's private charities closed: they had simply run out of money. In Atlanta, solvent relief charities could only provide $1.30 per week to needy families. The size and scope of the Depression overpowered the radically insufficient capacity of private volunteer organizations to mediate the crisis.[11]

By 1932, with the economy long since stagnant and a reelection campaign looming, Hoover, hoping to stimulate American industry, created the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) to provide emergency loans to banks, building-and-loan societies, railroads, and other private industries. It was radical in its use of direct government aid and out of character for the normally laissez-faire Hoover, but it also bypassed needy Americans to bolster industrial and financial interests. New York congressman Fiorello LaGuardia, who later served as mayor of New York City, captured public sentiment when he denounced the RFC as a "millionaire's dole."[12]

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23.11: The Bonus Army

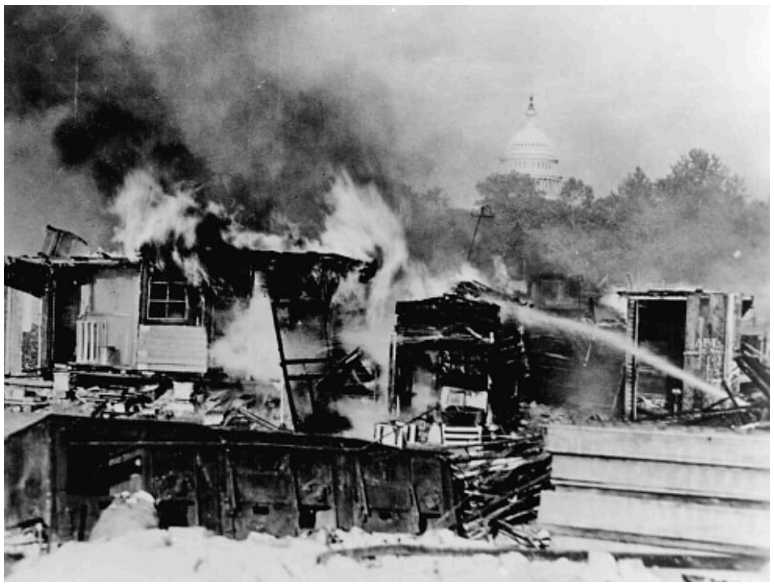


Figure 23.11.1: Shacks, put up by the Bonus Army on the Anacostia flats, Washington, D.C., burning after the battle with the military. The Capitol in the background. 1932. *Wikimedia*.

Hoover's reaction to a major public protest sealed his legacy. In the summer of 1932, Congress debated a bill authorizing immediate payment of long-promised cash bonuses to veterans of World War I, originally scheduled to be paid out in 1945. Given the economic hardships facing the country, the bonus came to symbolize government relief for the most deserving recipients, and from across the country more than fifteen thousand unemployed veterans and their families converged on Washington, D.C. They erected a tent city across the Potomac River in Anacostia Flats, a "Hooverville" in the spirit of the camps of homeless and unemployed Americans then appearing in American cities.

Concerned with what immediate payment would do to the federal budget, Hoover opposed the bill, which was eventually voted down by the Senate. While most of the "Bonus Army" left Washington in defeat, many stayed to press their case. Hoover called the remaining veterans "insurrectionists" and ordered them to leave. When thousands failed to heed the vacation order, General Douglas MacArthur, accompanied by local police, infantry, cavalry, tanks, and a machine gun squadron, stormed the tent city and routed the Bonus Army. National media covered the disaster as troops chased down men and women, tear-gassed children, and torched the shantytown.[13]

Hoover's insensitivity toward suffering Americans, his unwillingness to address widespread economic problems, and his repeated platitudes about returning prosperity condemned his presidency. Hoover of course was not responsible for the Depression, not personally. But neither he nor his advisors conceived of the enormity of the crisis, a crisis his conservative ideology could neither accommodate nor address. As a result, Americans found little relief from Washington. They were on their own.

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23.12: The Lived Experience of the Great Depression



Figure 23.12.1: A Hooverville in Seattle, Washington between 1932 and 1937. *Washington State Archives*.

In 1934 a woman from Humboldt County, California, wrote to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt seeking a job for her husband, a surveyor, who had been out of work for nearly two years. The pair had survived on the meager income she received from working at the county courthouse. “My salary could keep us going,” she explained, “but—I am to have a baby.” The family needed temporary help, and, she explained, “after that I can go back to work and we can work out our own salvation. But to have this baby come to a home full of worry and despair, with no money for the things it needs, is not fair. It needs and deserves a happy start in life.”[14]

As the United States slid ever deeper into the Great Depression, such tragic scenes played out time and time again. Individuals, families, and communities faced the painful, frightening, and often bewildering collapse of the economic institutions on which they depended. The more fortunate were spared the worst effects, and a few even profited from it, but by the end of 1932, the crisis had become so deep and so widespread that most Americans had suffered directly. Markets crashed through no fault of their own. Workers were plunged into poverty because of impersonal forces for which they shared no responsibility. With no safety net, they were thrown into economic chaos.

With rampant unemployment and declining wages, Americans slashed expenses. The fortunate could survive by simply deferring vacations and regular consumer purchases. Middle- and working-class Americans might rely on disappearing credit at neighborhood stores, default on utility bills, or skip meals. Those who could borrowed from relatives or took in boarders in homes or “doubled up” in tenements. The most desperate, the chronically unemployed, encamped on public or marginal lands in “Hoovervilles,” spontaneous shantytowns that dotted America’s cities, depending on bread lines and street-corner peddling. Poor women and young children entered the labor force, as they always had. The ideal of the “male breadwinner” was always a fiction for poor Americans, but the Depression decimated millions of new workers. The emotional and psychological shocks of unemployment and underemployment only added to the shocking material depravities of the Depression. Social workers and charity officials, for instance, often found the unemployed suffering from feelings of futility, anger, bitterness, confusion, and loss of pride. Such feelings affected the rural poor no less than the urban.[15]

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23.13: Migration and the Great Depression

On the Great Plains, environmental catastrophe deepened America's longstanding agricultural crisis and magnified the tragedy of the Depression. Beginning in 1932, severe droughts hit from Texas to the Dakotas and lasted until at least 1936. The droughts compounded years of agricultural mismanagement. To grow their crops, Plains farmers had plowed up natural ground cover that had taken ages to form over the surface of the dry Plains states. Relatively wet decades had protected them, but, during the early 1930s, without rain, the exposed fertile topsoil turned to dust, and without sod or windbreaks such as trees, rolling winds churned the dust into massive storms that blotted out the sky, choked settlers and livestock, and rained dirt not only across the region but as far east as Washington, D.C., New England, and ships on the Atlantic Ocean. The Dust Bowl, as the region became known, exposed all-too-late the need for conservation. The region's farmers, already hit by years of foreclosures and declining commodity prices, were decimated.[16] For many in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas who were "baked out, blown out, and broke," their only hope was to travel west to California, whose rains still brought bountiful harvests and—potentially—jobs for farmworkers. It was an exodus. Oklahoma lost 440,000 people, or a full 18.4 percent of its 1930 population, to outmigration.[17]

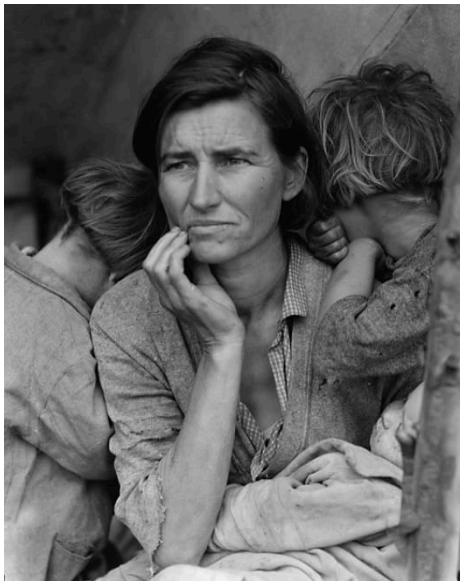


Figure 23.13.1: This iconic 1936 photograph by Dorothea Lange of a destitute, thirty-two-year-old mother of seven made real the suffering of millions during the Great Depression. *Library of Congress*.

Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* became one of the most enduring images of the Dust Bowl and the ensuing westward exodus. Lange, a photographer for the Farm Security Administration, captured the image at a migrant farmworker camp in Nipomo, California, in 1936. In the photograph a young mother stares out with a worried, weary expression. She was a migrant, having left her home in Oklahoma to follow the crops to the Golden State. She took part in what many in the mid-1930s were beginning to recognize as a vast migration of families out of the southwestern Plains states. In the image she cradles an infant and supports two older children, who cling to her. Lange's photo encapsulated the nation's struggle. The subject of the photograph seemed used to hard work but down on her luck, and uncertain about what the future might hold.

The Okies, as such westward migrants were disparagingly called by their new neighbors, were the most visible group who were on the move during the Depression, lured by news and rumors of jobs in far-flung regions of the country. By 1932, sociologists were estimating that millions of men were on the roads and rails traveling the country. Economists sought to quantify the movement of families from the Plains. Popular magazines and newspapers were filled with stories of homeless boys and the veterans-turned-migrants of the Bonus Army commandeering boxcars. Popular culture, such as William Wellman's 1933 film, *Wild Boys of the Road,* and, most famously, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939 and turned into a hit movie a year later, captured the Depression's dislocated populations.

These years witnessed the first significant reversal in the flow of people between rural and urban areas. Thousands of city dwellers fled the jobless cities and moved to the country looking for work. As relief efforts floundered, many state and local officials threw up barriers to migration, making it difficult for newcomers to receive relief or find work. Some state legislatures made it a crime to bring poor migrants into the state and allowed local officials to deport migrants to neighboring states. In the winter of

1935–1936, California, Florida, and Colorado established “border blockades” to block poor migrants from their states and reduce competition with local residents for jobs. A billboard outside Tulsa, Oklahoma, informed potential migrants that there were “NO JOBS in California” and warned them to “KEEP Out.”[18]



Figure 23.13.2: During her assignment as a photographer for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Dorothea Lange documented the movement of migrant families forced from their homes by drought and economic depression. This family, captured by Lange in 1938, was in the process of traveling 124 miles by foot, across Oklahoma, because the father was ill and therefore unable to receive relief or WPA work. *Library of Congress.*

Sympathy for migrants, however, accelerated late in the Depression with the publication of John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. The Joad family’s struggles drew attention to the plight of Depression-era migrants and, just a month after the nationwide release of the film version, Congress created the Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens. Starting in 1940, the committee held widely publicized hearings. But it was too late. Within a year of its founding, defense industries were already gearing up in the wake of the outbreak of World War II, and the “problem” of migration suddenly became a *lack* of migrants needed to fill war industries. Such relief was nowhere to be found in the 1930s.

Americans meanwhile feared foreign workers willing to work for even lower wages. The *Saturday Evening Post* warned that foreign immigrants, who were “compelled to accept employment on any terms and conditions offered,” would exacerbate the economic crisis.[19] On September 8, 1930, the Hoover administration issued a press release on the administration of immigration laws “under existing conditions of unemployment.” Hoover instructed consular officers to scrutinize carefully the visa applications of those “likely to become public charges” and suggested that this might include denying visas to most, if not all, alien laborers and artisans. The crisis itself had stifled foreign immigration, but such restrictive and exclusionary actions in the first years of the Depression intensified its effects. The number of European visas issued fell roughly 60 percent while deportations dramatically increased. Between 1930 and 1932, fifty-four thousand people were deported. An additional forty-four thousand deportable aliens left “voluntarily.”[20]

Exclusionary measures hit Mexican immigrants particularly hard. The State Department made a concerted effort to reduce immigration from Mexico as early as 1929, and Hoover’s executive actions arrived the following year. Officials in the Southwest led a coordinated effort to push out Mexican immigrants. In Los Angeles, the Citizens Committee on Coordination of Unemployment Relief began working closely with federal officials in early 1931 to conduct deportation raids, while the Los Angeles County Department of Charities began a simultaneous drive to repatriate Mexicans and Mexican Americans on relief, negotiating a charity rate with the railroads to return Mexicans “voluntarily” to their mother country. According to the federal census, from 1930 to 1940 the Mexican-born population living in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas fell from 616,998 to 377,433. Franklin Roosevelt did not indulge anti-immigrant sentiment as willingly as Hoover had. Under the New Deal, the Immigration and Naturalization Service halted some of the Hoover administration’s most divisive practices, but with jobs suddenly scarce, hostile attitudes intensified, and official policies less than welcoming, immigration plummeted and deportations rose. Over the course of the Depression, more people left the United States than entered it.[21]

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23.14: Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the “First” New Deal

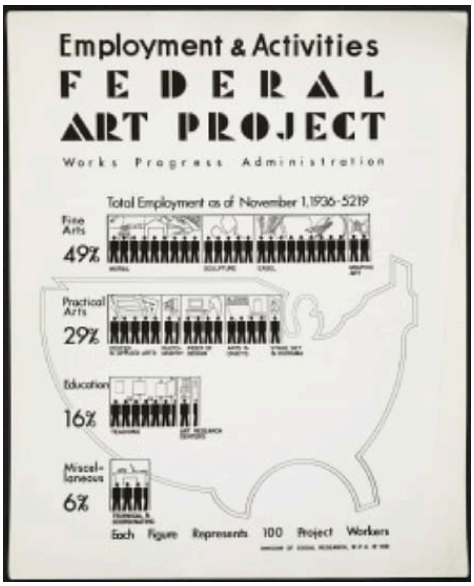


Figure 23.14.1: Posters like this 1936 production showing the extent of the Federal Art Project were used to prove the value of the WPA—and, by extension, the entire New Deal—to the American people. *Wikimedia*.

The early years of the Depression were catastrophic. The crisis, far from relenting, deepened each year. Unemployment peaked at 25 percent in 1932. With no end in sight, and with private firms crippled and charities overwhelmed by the crisis, Americans looked to their government as the last barrier against starvation, hopelessness, and perpetual poverty.

Few presidential elections in modern American history have been more consequential than that of 1932. The United States was struggling through the third year of the Depression, and exasperated voters overthrew Hoover in a landslide to elect the Democratic governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt came from a privileged background in New York’s Hudson River Valley (his distant cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, became president while Franklin was at Harvard). Franklin Roosevelt embarked on a slow but steady ascent through state and national politics. In 1913, he was appointed assistant secretary of the navy, a position he held during the defense emergency of World War I. In the course of his rise, in the summer of 1921, Roosevelt suffered a sudden bout of lower-body pain and paralysis. He was diagnosed with polio. The disease left him a paraplegic, but, encouraged and assisted by his wife, Eleanor, Roosevelt sought therapeutic treatment and maintained sufficient political connections to reenter politics. In 1928, Roosevelt won election as governor of New York. He oversaw the rise of the Depression and drew from progressivism to address the economic crisis. During his gubernatorial tenure, Roosevelt introduced the first comprehensive unemployment relief program and helped pioneer efforts to expand public utilities. He also relied on like-minded advisors. For example, Frances Perkins, then commissioner of the state’s labor department, successfully advocated pioneering legislation that enhanced workplace safety and reduced the use of child labor in factories. Perkins later accompanied Roosevelt to Washington and served as the nation’s first female secretary of labor.[22]

On July 1, 1932, Roosevelt, the newly designated presidential nominee of the Democratic Party, delivered the first and one of the most famous on-site acceptance speeches in American presidential history. Building to a conclusion, he promised, “I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people.” Newspaper editors seized on the phrase “new deal,” and it entered the American political lexicon as shorthand for Roosevelt’s program to address the Great Depression.[23] There were, however, few hints in his political campaign that suggested the size and scope of the “New Deal.” Regardless, Roosevelt crushed Hoover. He won more counties than any previous candidate in American history. He spent the months between his election and inauguration traveling, planning, and assembling a team of advisors, the famous Brain Trust of academics and experts, to help him formulate a plan of attack. On March 4, 1933, in his first inaugural address, Roosevelt famously declared, “This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”[24]

Roosevelt’s reassuring words would have rung hollow if he had not taken swift action against the economic crisis. In his first days

in office, Roosevelt and his advisors prepared, submitted, and secured congressional enactment of numerous laws designed to arrest the worst of the Great Depression. His administration threw the federal government headlong into the fight against the Depression.

Roosevelt immediately looked to stabilize the collapsing banking system. He declared a national "bank holiday" closing American banks and set to work pushing the Emergency Banking Act swiftly through Congress. On March 12, the night before select banks reopened under stricter federal guidelines, Roosevelt appeared on the radio in the first of his Fireside Chats. The addresses, which the president continued delivering through four terms, were informal, even personal. Roosevelt used his airtime to explain New Deal legislation, to encourage confidence in government action, and to mobilize the American people's support. In the first chat, Roosevelt described the new banking safeguards and asked the public to place their trust and their savings in banks. Americans responded and across the country, deposits outpaced withdrawals. The act was a major success. In June, Congress passed the Glass-Steagall Banking Act, which instituted federal deposit insurance and barred the mixing of commercial and investment banking.[25]

Stabilizing the banks was only a first step. In the remainder of his First Hundred Days, Roosevelt and his congressional allies focused especially on relief for suffering Americans.[26] Congress debated, amended, and passed what Roosevelt proposed. As one historian noted, the president "directed the entire operation like a seasoned field general."[27] And despite some questions over the constitutionality of many of his actions, Americans and their congressional representatives conceded that the crisis demanded swift and immediate action. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) employed young men on conservation and reforestation projects; the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) provided direct cash assistance to state relief agencies struggling to care for the unemployed;[28] the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) built a series of hydroelectric dams along the Tennessee River as part of a comprehensive program to economically develop a chronically depressed region;[29] and several agencies helped home and farm owners refinance their mortgages. And Roosevelt wasn't done.

The heart of Roosevelt's early recovery program consisted of two massive efforts to stabilize and coordinate the American economy: the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) and the National Recovery Administration (NRA). The AAA, created in May 1933, aimed to raise the prices of agricultural commodities (and hence farmers' income) by offering cash incentives to voluntarily limit farm production (decreasing supply, thereby raising prices).[30] The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which created the NRA in June 1933, suspended antitrust laws to allow businesses to establish "codes" that would coordinate prices, regulate production levels, and establish conditions of employment to curtail "cutthroat competition." In exchange for these exemptions, businesses agreed to provide reasonable wages and hours, end child labor, and allow workers the right to unionize. Participating businesses earned the right to display a placard with the NRA's Blue Eagle, showing their cooperation in the effort to combat the Great Depression.[31]

The programs of the First Hundred Days stabilized the American economy and ushered in a robust though imperfect recovery. GDP climbed once more, but even as output increased, unemployment remained stubbornly high. Though the unemployment rate dipped from its high in 1933, when Roosevelt was inaugurated, vast numbers remained out of work. If the economy could not put people back to work, the New Deal would try. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) and, later, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) put unemployed men and women to work on projects designed and proposed by local governments. The Public Works Administration (PWA) provided grants-in-aid to local governments for large infrastructure projects, such as bridges, tunnels, schoolhouses, libraries, and America's first federal public housing projects. Together, they provided not only tangible projects of immense public good but employment for millions. The New Deal was reshaping much of the nation.[32]

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23.15: The New Deal in the South



Figure 23.15.1:*The accusation of rape brought against the so-called Scottsboro Boys, pictured with their attorney in 1932, generated controversy across the country. Wikipedia.*

The impact of initial New Deal legislation was readily apparent in the South, a region of perpetual poverty especially plagued by the Depression. In 1929 the average per capita income in the American Southeast was $365, the lowest in the nation. Southern farmers averaged $183 per year at a time when farmers on the West Coast made more than four times that.[33] Moreover, they were trapped into the production of cotton and corn, crops that depleted the soil and returned ever-diminishing profits. Despite the ceaseless efforts of civic boosters, what little industry the South had remained low-wage, low-skilled, and primarily extractive. Southern workers made significantly less than their national counterparts: 75 percent of nonsouthern textile workers, 60 percent of iron and steel workers, and a paltry 45 percent of lumber workers. At the time of the crash, southerners were already underpaid, underfed, and undereducated.[34]

Major New Deal programs were designed with the South in mind. FDR hoped that by drastically decreasing the amount of land devoted to cotton, the AAA would arrest its long-plummeting price decline. Farmers plowed up existing crops and left fields fallow, and the market price did rise. But in an agricultural world of landowners and landless farmworkers (such as tenants and sharecroppers), the benefits of the AAA bypassed the southerners who needed them most. The government relied on landowners and local organizations to distribute money fairly to those most affected by production limits, but many owners simply kicked tenants and croppers off their land, kept the subsidy checks for keeping those acres fallow, and reinvested the profits in mechanical farming equipment that further suppressed the demand for labor. Instead of making farming profitable again, the AAA pushed landless southern farmworkers off the land.[35]

But Roosevelt's assault on southern poverty took many forms. Southern industrial practices attracted much attention. The NRA encouraged higher wages and better conditions. It began to suppress the rampant use of child labor in southern mills and, for the first time, provided federal protection for unionized workers all across the country. Those gains were eventually solidified in the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, which set a national minimum wage of $0.25/hour (eventually rising to $0.40/hour). The minimum wage disproportionately affected low-paid southern workers and brought southern wages within the reach of northern wages.[36]

The president's support for unionization further impacted the South. Southern industrialists had proven themselves ardent foes of unionization, particularly in the infamous southern textile mills. In 1934, when workers at textile mills across the southern Piedmont struck over low wages and long hours, owners turned to local and state authorities to quash workers' groups, even as they recruited thousands of strikebreakers from the many displaced farmers swelling industrial centers looking for work. But in 1935 the National Labor Relations Act, also known as the Wagner Act, guaranteed the rights of most workers to unionize and bargain collectively. And so unionized workers, backed by the support of the federal government and determined to enforce the reforms of the New Deal, pushed for higher wages, shorter hours, and better conditions. With growing success, union members

came to see Roosevelt as a protector of workers' rights. Or, as one union leader put it, an "agent of God."[37]

Perhaps the most successful New Deal program in the South was the TVA, an ambitious program to use hydroelectric power, agricultural and industrial reform, flood control, economic development, education, and healthcare to radically remake the impoverished watershed region of the Tennessee River. Though the area of focus was limited, Roosevelt's TVA sought to "make a different type of citizen" out of the area's penniless residents.[38] The TVA built a series of hydroelectric dams to control flooding and distribute electricity to the otherwise nonelectrified areas at government-subsidized rates. Agents of the TVA met with residents and offered training and general education classes to improve agricultural practices and exploit new job opportunities. The TVA encapsulates Roosevelt's vision for uplifting the South and integrating it into the larger national economy.[39]

Roosevelt initially courted conservative southern Democrats to ensure the legislative success of the New Deal, all but guaranteeing that the racial and economic inequalities of the region remained intact, but by the end of his second term, he had won the support of enough non-southern voters that he felt confident confronting some of the region's most glaring inequalities. Nowhere was this more apparent than in his endorsement of a report, formulated by a group of progressive southern New Dealers, titled "A Report on Economic Conditions in the South." The pamphlet denounced the hardships wrought by the southern economy—in his introductory letter to the report, Roosevelt called the region "the Nation's No. 1 economic problem"—and blasted reactionary southern anti–New Dealers. He suggested that the New Deal could save the South and thereby spur a nationwide recovery. The report was among the first broadsides in Roosevelt's coming reelection campaign that addressed the inequalities that continued to mark southern and national life.[40]

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23.16: The New Deal in Appalachia

The New Deal also addressed another poverty-stricken region, Appalachia, the mountain-and-valley communities that roughly follow the Appalachian Mountain Range from southern New York to the foothills of northern Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Appalachia's abundant natural resources, including timber and coal, were in high demand during the country's post–Civil War industrial expansion, but Appalachian industry simply extracted these resources for profit in far-off industries, depressing the coal-producing areas even earlier than the rest of the country. By the mid-1930s, with the Depression suppressing demand, many residents were stranded in small, isolated communities whose few employers stood on the verge of collapse. Relief workers from FERA reported serious shortages of medical care, adequate shelter, clothing, and food. Rampant illnesses, including typhus, tuberculosis, pneumonia, and venereal disease, as well as childhood malnutrition, further crippled Appalachia.

Several New Deal programs targeted the region. Under the auspices of the NIRA, Roosevelt established the Division of Subsistence Homesteads (DSH) within the Department of the Interior to give impoverished families an opportunity to relocate "back to the land"; the DSH established thirty-four homestead communities nationwide, including the Appalachian regions of Alabama, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia. The CCC contributed to projects throughout Appalachia, including the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia, reforestation of the Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia, and state parks such as Pine Mountain Resort State Park in Kentucky. The TVA's efforts aided communities in Tennessee and North Carolina, and the Rural Electric Administration (REA) brought electricity to 288,000 rural households.

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24: WORLD WAR II



American soldiers recover the dead on Omaha Beach in 1944. Library of Congress.

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24.1: Introduction

The 1930s and 1940s were trying times. A global economic crisis gave way to a global war that became the deadliest and most destructive in human history. Perhaps eighty million individuals lost their lives during World War II. The war saw industrialized genocide and nearly threatened the eradication of an entire people. It also unleashed the most fearsome technology ever used in war. And when it ended, the United States found itself alone as the world's greatest superpower. Armed with the world's greatest economy, it looked forward to the fruits of a prosperous consumers' economy. But the war raised as many questions as it would settle and unleashed new social forces at home and abroad that confronted generations of Americans to come.

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24.2: The Origins of the Pacific War

Although the United States joined the war in 1941, two years after Europe exploded into conflict in 1939, the path to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, the surprise attack that threw the United States headlong into war, began much earlier. For the Empire of Japan, the war had begun a decade before Pearl Harbor.

On September 18, 1931, a small explosion tore up railroad tracks controlled by the Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railway near the city of Shenyang (Mukden) in the Chinese province of Manchuria. The railway company condemned the bombing as the work of anti-Japanese Chinese dissidents. Evidence, though, suggests that the initial explosion was neither an act of Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment nor an accident but an elaborate ruse planned by the Japanese to provide a basis for invasion. In response, the privately operated Japanese Guandong (Kwangtung) army began shelling the Shenyang garrison the next day, and the garrison fell before nightfall. Hungry for Chinese territory and witnessing the weakness and disorganization of Chinese forces, but under the pretense of protecting Japanese citizens and investments, the Japanese Imperial Army ordered a full-scale invasion of Manchuria. The invasion was swift. Without a centralized Chinese army, the Japanese quickly defeated isolated Chinese warlords and by the end of February 1932, all of Manchuria was firmly under Japanese control. Japan established the nation of Manchukuo out of the former province of Manchuria.[1]

This seemingly small skirmish—known by the Chinese as the September 18 Incident and the Japanese as the Manchurian Incident—sparked a war that would last thirteen years and claim the lives of over thirty-five million people. Comprehending Japanese motivations for attacking China and the grueling stalemate of the ensuing war are crucial for understanding Japan's seemingly unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, and, therefore, for understanding the involvement of the United States in World War II as well.

Despite their rapid advance into Manchuria, the Japanese put off the invasion of China for nearly three years. Japan occupied a precarious domestic and international position after the September 18 Incident. At home, Japan was riven by political factionalism due to its stagnating economy. Leaders were torn as to whether to address modernization and lack of natural resources through unilateral expansion (the conquest of resource-rich areas such as Manchuria to export raw materials to domestic Japanese industrial bases such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki) or international cooperation (a philosophy of pan-Asianism in an anti-Western coalition that would push the colonial powers out of Asia). Ultimately, after a series of political crises and assassinations enflamed tensions, pro-war elements within the Japanese military triumphed over the more moderate civilian government. Japan committed itself to aggressive military expansion.

Chinese leaders Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang appealed to the League of Nations for assistance against Japan. The United States supported the Chinese protest, proclaiming the Stimson Doctrine in January 1932, which refused to recognize any state established as a result of Japanese aggression. Meanwhile, the League of Nations sent Englishman Victor Bulwer-Lytton to investigate the September 18 Incident. After a six-month investigation, Bulwer-Lytton found the Japanese guilty of inciting the September 18 incident and demanded the return of Manchuria to China. The Japanese withdrew from the League of Nations in March 1933.

Japan isolated itself from the world. Its diplomatic isolation empowered radical military leaders who could point to Japanese military success in Manchuria and compare it to the diplomatic failures of the civilian government. The military took over Japanese policy. And in the military's eyes, the conquest of China would not only provide for Japan's industrial needs, it would secure Japanese supremacy in East Asia.

The Japanese launched a full-scale invasion of China. It assaulted the Marco Polo Bridge on July 7, 1937, and routed the forces of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army led by Chiang Kai-shek. The broken Chinese army gave up Beiping (Beijing) to the Japanese on August 8, Shanghai on November 26, and the capital, Nanjing (Nanking), on December 13. Between 250,000 and 300,000 people were killed, and tens of thousands of women were raped, when the Japanese besieged and then sacked Nanjing. The Western press labeled it the Rape of Nanjing. To halt the invading enemy, Chiang Kai-shek adopted a scorched-earth strategy of "trading space for time." His Nationalist government retreated inland, burning villages and destroying dams, and established a new capital at the Yangtze River port of Chongqing (Chungking). Although the Nationalists' scorched-earth policy hurt the Japanese military effort, it alienated scores of dislocated Chinese civilians and became a potent propaganda tool of the emerging Chinese Communist Party (CCP).[2]

Americans read about the brutal fighting in China, but the United States lacked both the will and the military power to oppose the Japanese invasion. After the gut-wrenching carnage of World War I, many Americans retreated toward isolationism by opposing

any involvement in the conflagrations burning in Europe and Asia. And even if Americans wished to intervene, their military was lacking. The Japanese army was a technologically advanced force consisting of 4,100,000 men and 900,000 Chinese collaborators—and that was in China alone. The Japanese military was armed with modern rifles, artillery, armor, and aircraft. By 1940, the Japanese navy was the third-largest and among the most technologically advanced in the world.

Still, Chinese Nationalists lobbied Washington for aid. Chiang Kai-shek's wife, Soong May-ling—known to the American public as Madame Chiang—led the effort. Born into a wealthy Chinese merchant family in 1898, Madame Chiang spent much of her childhood in the United States and graduated from Wellesley College in 1917 with a major in English literature. In contrast to her gruff husband, Madame Chiang was charming and able to use her knowledge of American culture and values to garner support for her husband and his government. But while the United States denounced Japanese aggression, it took no action.

As Chinese Nationalists fought for survival, the Communist Party was busy collecting people and supplies in the northwestern Shaanxi Province. China had been at war with itself when the Japanese came. Nationalists battled a stubborn communist insurgency. In 1935 the Nationalists threw the communists out of the fertile Chinese coast, but an ambitious young commander named Mao Zedong recognized the power of the Chinese peasant population. In Shaanxi, Mao recruited from the local peasantry, building his force from a meager seven thousand survivors at the end of the Long March in 1935 to a robust 1.2 million members by the end of the war.

Although Japan had conquered much of the country, the Nationalists regrouped and the communists rearmed. An uneasy truce paused the country's civil war and refocused efforts on the invaders. The Chinese could not dislodge the Japanese, but they could stall their advance. The war mired in stalemate.

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24.3: The Origins of the European War

Across the globe in Europe, the continent's major powers were still struggling with the aftereffects of World War I when the global economic crisis spiraled much of the continent into chaos. Germany's Weimar Republic collapsed with the economy, and out of the ashes emerged Adolf Hitler's National Socialists—the Nazis. Championing German racial supremacy, fascist government, and military expansionism, Hitler rose to power and, after aborted attempts to take power in Germany, became chancellor in 1933 and the Nazis conquered German institutions. Democratic traditions were smashed. Leftist groups were purged. Hitler repudiated the punitive damages and strict military limitations of the Treaty of Versailles. He rebuilt the German military and navy. He reoccupied regions lost during the war and remilitarized the Rhineland, along the border with France. When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, Hitler and Benito Mussolini—the fascist Italian leader who had risen to power in the 1920s—intervened for the Spanish fascists, toppling the communist Spanish Republican Party. Britain and France stood by warily and began to rebuild their militaries, anxious in the face of a renewed Germany but still unwilling to draw Europe into another bloody war.[3]

In his autobiographical manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler advocated for the unification of Europe's German peoples under one nation and that nation's need for *Lebensraum*, or living space, particularly in Eastern Europe, to supply Germans with the land and resources needed for future prosperity. The *Untermenschen* (lesser humans) would have to go. Once in power, Hitler worked toward the twin goals of unification and expansion.

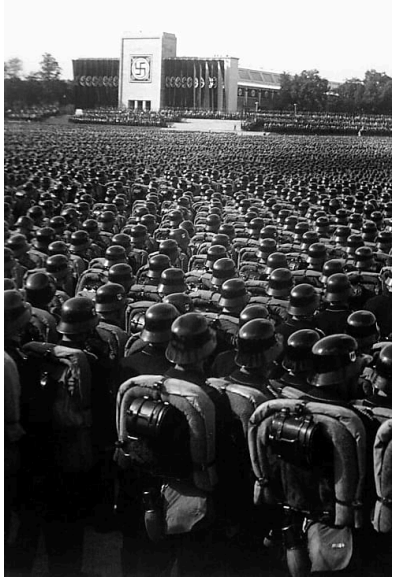


Figure 24.3.1: The massive Nuremberg rallies, such as this one in 1935, instilled a fierce loyalty to (or fearful silence about) Hitler and the National Socialist Party in Germany. *Wikimedia*.

n 1938, Germany annexed Austria and set its sights on the Sudetenland, a large, ethnically German area of Czechoslovakia. Britain and France, alarmed but still anxious to avoid war, agreed—without Czechoslovakia's input—that Germany could annex the region in return for a promise to stop all future German aggression. They thought that Hitler could be appeased, but it became clear that his ambitions would continue pushing German expansion. In March 1939, Hitler took the rest of Czechoslovakia and began to make demands on Poland. Britain and France promised war. And war came.

Hitler signed a secret agreement—the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact—with the Soviet Union that coordinated the splitting of Poland between the two powers and promised nonaggression thereafter. The European war began when the German Wehrmacht invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Britain and France declared war two days later and mobilized their armies. Britain and France hoped that the Poles could hold out for three to four months, enough time for the Allies to intervene. Poland fell in three weeks. The German army, anxious to avoid the rigid, grinding war of attrition that took so many millions in the stalemate of World War I, built their new modern army for speed and maneuverability. German doctrine emphasized the use of tanks, planes, and motorized infantry (infantry that used trucks for transportation instead of marching) to concentrate forces, smash front lines, and wreak havoc behind the enemy's defenses. It was called *Blitzkrieg*, or lightning war.

After the fall of Poland, France and its British allies braced for an inevitable German attack. Throughout the winter of 1939–1940,

however, fighting was mostly confined to smaller fronts in Norway. Belligerents called it the *Sitzkrieg* (sitting war). But in May 1940, Hitler launched his attack into Western Europe. Mirroring the German's Schlieffen Plan of 1914 in the previous war, Germany attacked through the Netherlands and Belgium to avoid the prepared French defenses along the French-German border. Poland had fallen in three weeks; France lasted only a few weeks more. By June, Hitler was posing for photographs in front of the Eiffel Tower. Germany split France in half. Germany occupied and governed the north, and the south would be ruled under a puppet government in Vichy.

With France under heel, Hitler turned to Britain. Operation Sea Lion—the planned German invasion of the British Isles—required air superiority over the English Channel. From June until October the German Luftwaffe fought the Royal Air Force (RAF) for control of the skies. Despite having fewer planes, British pilots won the so-called Battle of Britain, saving the islands from immediate invasion and prompting the new prime minister, Winston Churchill, to declare, "Never before in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."



Figure 24.3.2: The German bombing of London left thousands homeless, hurt, or dead. This child, holding a stuffed toy, sits in the rubble as adults ponder their fate in the background. 1945. *Library of Congress*.

If Britain was safe from invasion, it was not immune from additional air attacks. Stymied in the Battle of Britain, Hitler began the Blitz—a bombing campaign against cities and civilians. Hoping to crush the British will to fight, the Luftwaffe bombed the cities of London, Liverpool, and Manchester every night from September to the following May. Children were sent far into the countryside to live with strangers to shield them from the bombings. Remaining residents took refuge in shelters and subway tunnels, emerging each morning to put out fires and bury the dead. The Blitz ended in June 1941, when Hitler, confident that Britain was temporarily out of the fight, launched Operation Barbarossa—the invasion of the Soviet Union.

Hoping to capture agricultural lands, seize oil fields, and break the military threat of Stalin's Soviet Union, Hitler broke the two powers' 1939 nonaggression pact and, on June 22, invaded the Soviet Union. It was the largest land invasion in history. France and Poland had fallen in weeks, and German officials hoped to break Russia before the winter. And initially, the *Blitzkrieg* worked. The German military quickly conquered enormous swaths of land and netted hundreds of thousands of prisoners. But Russia was too big and the Soviets were willing to sacrifice millions to stop the fascist advance. After recovering from the initial shock of the German invasion, Stalin moved his factories east of the Urals, out of range of the Luftwaffe. He ordered his retreating army to adopt a "scorched earth" policy, to move east and destroy food, rails, and shelters to stymie the advancing German army. The German army slogged forward. It split into three pieces and stood at the gates of Moscow, Stalingrad, and Leningrad, but supply lines now stretched thousands of miles, Soviet infrastructure had been destroyed, partisans harried German lines, and the brutal Russian winter arrived. Germany had won massive gains but the winter found Germany exhausted and overextended. In the north, the German army starved Leningrad to death during an interminable siege; in the south, at Stalingrad, the two armies bled themselves to death in the destroyed city; and, in the center, on the outskirts of Moscow, in sight of the capital city, the German army faltered and fell back. It was the Soviet Union that broke Hitler's army. Twenty-five million Soviet soldiers and civilians died during the Great Patriotic War, and roughly 80 percent of all German casualties during the war came on the Eastern Front. The German army and its various conscripts suffered 850,000 casualties at the Battle of Stalingrad alone. In December 1941, Germany began its long retreat.[4]

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24.4: The United States and the European War

While Hitler marched across Europe, the Japanese continued their war in the Pacific. In 1939 the United States dissolved its trade treaties with Japan and the following year cut off supplies of war materials by embargoing oil, steel, rubber, and other vital goods. It was hoped that economic pressure would shut down the Japanese war machine. Instead, Japan's resource-starved military launched invasions across the Pacific to sustain its war effort. The Japanese called their new empire the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and, with the cry of "Asia for the Asians," made war against European powers and independent nations throughout the region. Diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States collapsed. The United States demanded that Japan withdraw from China; Japan considered the oil embargo a de facto declaration of war.[5]

Japanese military planners, believing that American intervention was inevitable, planned a coordinated Pacific offensive to neutralize the United States and other European powers and provide time for Japan to complete its conquests and fortify its positions. On the morning of December 7, 1941, the Japanese launched a surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Japanese military planners hoped to destroy enough battleships and aircraft carriers to cripple American naval power for years. Twenty-four hundred Americans were killed in the attack.

American isolationism fell at Pearl Harbor. Japan also assaulted Hong Kong, the Philippines, and American holdings throughout the Pacific, but it was the attack on Hawaii that threw the United States into a global conflict. Franklin Roosevelt called December 7 "a date which will live in infamy" and called for a declaration of war, which Congress answered within hours. Within a week of Pearl Harbor the United States had declared war on the entire Axis, turning two previously separate conflicts into a true world war.



Figure 24.4.1: This pair of U.S. military recruiting posters demonstrates the way that two branches of the military—the Marines and the Women's Army Corps—borrowed techniques from professional advertisers to "sell" a romantic vision of war to Americans. One shows Marines at war in a lush jungle, reminding viewers that the war was taking place in exotic lands; the other depicted women taking on new jobs as a patriotic duty. Bradshaw Crandall, Are You a Girl with a Star-Spangled Heart? Recruiting Publicity Bureau, U.S. Women's Army Corps Recruiting Poster (1943); Unknown, Let's Go Get 'Em. Beck Engraving Co. (1942). *Library of Congress.*

The American war began slowly. Britain had stood alone militarily in Europe, but American supplies had bolstered their resistance. Hitler unleashed his U-boat "wolf packs" into the Atlantic Ocean with orders to sink anything carrying aid to Britain, but Britain's and the United States' superior tactics and technology won them the Battle of the Atlantic. British code breakers cracked Germany's radio codes and the surge of intelligence, dubbed Ultra, coupled with massive naval convoys escorted by destroyers armed with sonar and depth charges, gave the advantage to the Allies and by 1942, Hitler's Kriegsmarine was losing ships faster than they could be built.[6]

In North Africa in 1942, British victory at El Alamein began pushing the Germans back. In November, the first American combat troops entered the European war, landing in French Morocco and pushing the Germans east while the British pushed west.[7] By 1943, the Allies had pushed Axis forces out of Africa. In January President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met at

Casablanca to discuss the next step of the European war. Churchill convinced Roosevelt to chase the Axis up Italy, into the “soft underbelly” of Europe. Afterward, Roosevelt announced to the press that the Allies would accept nothing less than unconditional surrender.

Meanwhile, the Army Air Force (AAF) sent hundreds (and eventually thousands) of bombers to England in preparation for a massive strategic bombing campaign against Germany. The plan was to bomb Germany around the clock. American bombers hit German ball-bearing factories, rail yards, oil fields, and manufacturing centers during the day, while the British RAF carpet-bombed German cities at night. Flying in formation, they initially flew unescorted, since many believed that bombers equipped with defensive firepower flew too high and too fast to be attacked. However, advanced German technology allowed fighters to easily shoot down the lumbering bombers. On some disastrous missions, the Germans shot down almost 50 percent of American aircraft. However, the advent and implementation of a long-range escort fighter let the bombers hit their targets more accurately while fighters confronted opposing German aircraft.



Figure 24.4.2: In 1943, Allied forces began a bombing campaign of railroad and oil targets in Bucharest, part of the wider policy of bombing expeditions meant to incapacitate German transportation. Bucharest was considered the number one oil target in Europe. Photograph, August 1, 1943. *Wikimedia*.



Figure 24.4.1: Bombings throughout Europe caused complete devastation in some areas, leveling beautiful ancient cities like Cologne, Germany. Cologne experienced an astonishing 262 separate air raids by Allied forces, leaving the city in ruins as in these the photograph above. Amazingly, the Cologne Cathedral stood nearly undamaged even after being hit numerous times, while the area around it crumbled. Photograph, April 24, 1945. Wikimedia.

In the wake of the Soviets' victory at Stalingrad, the Big Three (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin) met in Tehran in November 1943. Dismissing Africa and Italy as a sideshow, Stalin demanded that Britain and the United States invade France to relieve pressure on the Eastern Front. Churchill was hesitant, but Roosevelt was eager. The invasion was tentatively scheduled for 1944.

Back in Italy, the "soft underbelly" turned out to be much tougher than Churchill had imagined. Italy's narrow, mountainous terrain gave the defending Axis the advantage. Movement up the peninsula was slow, and in some places conditions returned to the trenchlike warfare of World War I. Americans attempted to land troops behind them at Anzio on the western coast of Italy, but, surrounded, they suffered heavy casualties. Still, the Allies pushed up the peninsula, Mussolini's government revolted, and a new Italian government quickly made peace.

On the day the American army entered Rome, American, British and Canadian forces launched Operation Overlord, the long-awaited invasion of France. D-Day, as it became popularly known, was the largest amphibious assault in history. American general Dwight Eisenhower was uncertain enough of the attack's chances that the night before the invasion he wrote two speeches: one for success and one for failure. The Allied landings at Normandy were successful, and although progress across France was much slower than hoped for, Paris was liberated roughly two months later. Allied bombing expeditions meanwhile continued to level German cities and industrial capacity. Perhaps four hundred thousand German civilians were killed by allied bombing.[8]

The Nazis were crumbling on both fronts. Hitler tried but failed to turn the war in his favor in the west. The Battle of the Bulge failed to drive the Allies back to the English Channel, but the delay cost the Allies the winter. The invasion of Germany would have to wait, while the Soviet Union continued its relentless push westward, ravaging German populations in retribution for German war crimes.[9]

German counterattacks in the east failed to dislodge the Soviet advance, destroying any last chance Germany might have had to regain the initiative. 1945 dawned with the end of European war in sight. The Big Three met again at Yalta in the Soviet Union, where they reaffirmed the demand for Hitler's unconditional surrender and began to plan for postwar Europe.

The Soviet Union reached Germany in January, and the Americans crossed the Rhine in March. In late April American and Soviet troops met at the Elbe while the Soviets pushed relentlessly by Stalin to reach Berlin first and took the capital city in May, days after Hitler and his high command had committed suicide in a city bunker. Germany was conquered. The European war was over. Allied leaders met again, this time at Potsdam, Germany, where it was decided that Germany would be divided into pieces according to current Allied occupation, with Berlin likewise divided, pending future elections. Stalin also agreed to join the fight against Japan in approximately three months.[10]

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24.5: The United States and the Japanese War

As Americans celebrated V-E (Victory in Europe) Day, they redirected their full attention to the still-raging Pacific War. As in Europe, the war in the Pacific started slowly. After Pearl Harbor, the American-controlled Philippine archipelago fell to Japan. After running out of ammunition and supplies, the garrison of American and Filipino soldiers surrendered. The prisoners were marched eighty miles to their prisoner-of-war camp without food, water, or rest. Ten thousand died on the Bataan Death March.[11]

But as Americans mobilized their armed forces, the tide turned. In the summer of 1942, American naval victories at the Battle of the Coral Sea and the aircraft carrier duel at the Battle of Midway crippled Japan's Pacific naval operations. To dislodge Japan's hold over the Pacific, the U.S. military began island hopping: attacking island after island, bypassing the strongest but seizing those capable of holding airfields to continue pushing Japan out of the region. Combat was vicious. At Guadalcanal American soldiers saw Japanese soldiers launch suicidal charges rather than surrender. Many Japanese soldiers refused to be taken prisoner or to take prisoners themselves. Such tactics, coupled with American racial prejudice, turned the Pacific Theater into a more brutal and barbarous conflict than the European Theater.[12]

Japanese defenders fought tenaciously. Few battles were as one-sided as the Battle of the Philippine Sea, or what the Americans called the Japanese counterattack, the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot. Japanese soldiers bled the Americans in their advance across the Pacific. At Iwo Jima, an eight-square-mile island of volcanic rock, seventeen thousand Japanese soldiers held the island against seventy thousand Marines for over a month. At the cost of nearly their entire force, they inflicted almost thirty thousand casualties before the island was lost.

By February 1945, American bombers were in range of the mainland. Bombers hit Japan's industrial facilities but suffered high casualties. To spare bomber crews from dangerous daylight raids, and to achieve maximum effect against Japan's wooden cities, many American bombers dropped incendiary weapons that created massive firestorms and wreaked havoc on Japanese cities. Over sixty Japanese cities were fire-bombed. American fire bombs killed one hundred thousand civilians in Tokyo in March 1945.

In June 1945, after eighty days of fighting and tens of thousands of casualties, the Americans captured the island of Okinawa. The mainland of Japan was open before them. It was a viable base from which to launch a full invasion of the Japanese homeland and end the war.

Estimates varied, but given the tenacity of Japanese soldiers fighting on islands far from their home, some officials estimated that an invasion of the Japanese mainland could cost half a million American casualties and perhaps millions of Japanese civilians. Historians debate the many motivations that ultimately drove the Americans to use atomic weapons against Japan, and many American officials criticized the decision, but these would be the numbers later cited by government leaders and military officials to justify their use.[13]

Early in the war, fearing that the Germans might develop an atomic bomb, the U.S. government launched the Manhattan Project, a hugely expensive, ambitious program to harness atomic energy and create a single weapon capable of leveling entire cities. The Americans successfully exploded the world's first nuclear device, Trinity, in New Mexico in July 1945. (Physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Los Alamos Laboratory, where the bomb was designed, later recalled that the event reminded him of Hindu scripture: "Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.") Two more bombs—Fat Man and Little Boy—were built and detonated over two Japanese cities in August. Hiroshima was hit on August 6. Over one hundred thousand civilians were killed. Nagasaki followed on August 9. Perhaps eighty thousand civilians were killed.

Emperor Hirohito announced the surrender of Japan on August 15. On September 2, aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*, delegates from the Japanese government formally signed their surrender. World War II was finally over.

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24.6: Soldiers' Experiences

Almost eighteen million men served in World War II. Volunteers rushed to join the military after Pearl Harbor, but the majority—over ten million—were drafted into service. Volunteers could express their preference for assignment, and many preempted the draft by volunteering. Regardless, recruits judged I-A, “fit for service,” were moved into basic training, where soldiers were developed physically and trained in the basic use of weapons and military equipment. Soldiers were indoctrinated into the chain of command and introduced to military life. After basic, soldiers moved on to more specialized training. For example, combat infantrymen received additional weapons and tactical training, and radio operators learned transmission codes and the operation of field radios. Afterward, an individual’s experience varied depending on what service he entered and to what theater he was assigned.[14]

Soldiers and Marines bore the brunt of on-the-ground combat. After transportation to the front by trains, ships, and trucks, they could expect to march carrying packs weighing anywhere from twenty to fifty pounds containing rations, ammunition, bandages, tools, clothing, and miscellaneous personal items in addition to their weapons. Sailors, once deployed, spent months at sea operating their assigned vessels. Larger ships, particularly aircraft carriers, were veritable floating cities. In most, sailors lived and worked in cramped conditions, often sleeping in bunks stacked in rooms housing dozens of sailors. Senior officers received small rooms of their own. Sixty thousand American sailors lost their lives in the war.

During World War II, the Air Force was still a branch of the U.S. Army and soldiers served in ground and air crews. World War II saw the institutionalization of massive bombing campaigns against cities and industrial production. Large bombers like the B-17 Flying Fortress required pilots, navigators, bombardiers, radio operators, and four dedicated machine gunners. Airmen on bombing raids left from bases in England or Italy or from Pacific islands and endured hours of flight before approaching enemy territory. At high altitude, and without pressurized cabins, crews used oxygen tanks to breathe and on-board temperatures plummeted. Once in enemy airspace, crews confronted enemy fighters and anti-aircraft flak from the ground. While fighter pilots flew as escorts, the Air Corps suffered heavy casualties. Tens of thousands of airmen lost their lives.

On the ground, conditions varied. Soldiers in Europe endured freezing winters, impenetrable French hedgerows, Italian mountain ranges, and dense forests. Germans fought with a Western mentality familiar to Americans. Soldiers in the Pacific endured heat and humidity, monsoons, jungles, and tropical diseases. And they confronted an unfamiliar foe. Americans, for instance, could understand surrender as prudent; many Japanese soldiers saw it as cowardice. What Americans saw as a fanatical waste of life, the Japanese saw as brave and honorable. Atrocities flourished in the Pacific at a level unmatched in Europe.

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24.7: The Wartime Economy

Economies win wars no less than militaries. The war converted American factories to wartime production, reawakened Americans' economic might, armed Allied belligerents and the American armed forces, effectively pulled America out of the Great Depression, and ushered in an era of unparalleled economic prosperity.[15]

Roosevelt's New Deal had ameliorated the worst of the Depression, but the economy still limped its way forward into the 1930s. But then Europe fell into war, and, despite its isolationism, Americans were glad to sell the Allies arms and supplies. And then Pearl Harbor changed everything. The United States drafted the economy into war service. The "sleeping giant" mobilized its unrivaled economic capacity to wage worldwide war. Governmental entities such as the War Production Board and the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion managed economic production for the war effort and economic output exploded. An economy that was unable to provide work for a quarter of the workforce less than a decade earlier now struggled to fill vacant positions.

Government spending during the four years of war *doubled* all federal spending in all of American history up to that point. The budget deficit soared, but, just as Depression-era economists had counseled, the government's massive intervention annihilated unemployment and propelled growth. The economy that came out of the war looked nothing like the one that had begun it.

Military production came at the expense of the civilian consumer economy. Appliance and automobile manufacturers converted their plants to produce weapons and vehicles. Consumer choice was foreclosed. Every American received rationing cards and, legally, goods such as gasoline, coffee, meat, cheese, butter, processed food, firewood, and sugar could not be purchased without them. The housing industry was shut down, and the cities became overcrowded.

But the wartime economy boomed. The Roosevelt administration urged citizens to save their earnings or buy war bonds to prevent inflation. Bond drives were held nationally and headlined by Hollywood celebrities. Such drives were hugely successful. They not only funded much of the war effort, they helped tame inflation as well. So too did tax rates. The federal government raised income taxes and boosted the top marginal tax rate to 94 percent.



Figure 24.7.1: As in World War I, citizens were urged to buy war bonds to support the effort overseas. Rallies, such as this 1943 event, appealed to Americans' sense of patriotism. *Wikimedia*.

With the economy booming and twenty million American workers placed into military service, unemployment virtually disappeared. And yet limits remained. Many defense contractors still refused to hire black workers. A. Philip Randolph in 1941 threatened to lead a march on Washington in protest, compelling Roosevelt to issue Executive Order Number 8802, the Fair Employment Practice in Defense Industries Act, which established the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to end racial discrimination in the federal government and the defense industry.[16]

During the war, more and more African Americans continued to leave the agrarian South for the industrial North. And as more

and more men joined the military, and more and more positions went unfilled, women joined the workforce en masse. Other American producers looked outside the United States, southward, to Mexico, to fill its labor force. Between 1942 and 1964, the United States contracted thousands of Mexican nationals to work in American agriculture and railroads in the Bracero Program. Jointly administered by the State Department, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Justice, the binational agreement secured five million contracts across twenty-four states.[17]

With factory work proliferating across the country and agricultural labor experiencing severe labor shortages, the presidents of Mexico and the United States signed an agreement in July 1942 to bring the first group of legally contracted workers to California. Discriminatory policies toward people of Mexican descent prevented bracero contracts in Texas until 1947. The Bracero Program survived the war, enshrined in law until the 1960s, when the United States liberalized its immigration laws. Though braceros suffered exploitative labor conditions, for the men who participated the program was a mixed blessing. Interviews with ex-braceros captured the complexity. “They would call us pigs . . . they didn’t have to treat us that way,” one said of his employers, while another said, “For me it was a blessing, the United States was a blessing . . . it is a nation I fell in love with because of the excess work and good pay.”[18] After the exodus of Mexican migrants during the Depression, the program helped reestablish Mexican migration, institutionalized migrant farm work across much of the country, and further planted a Mexican presence in the southern and western United States.

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24.8: Women and World War II

President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his administration had encouraged all able-bodied American women to help the war effort. He considered the role of women in the war critical for American victory, and the public expected women to assume various functions to free men for active military service. While most women opted to remain at home or volunteer with charitable organizations, many went to work or donned a military uniform.

World War II brought unprecedented labor opportunities for American women. Industrial labor, an occupational sphere dominated by men, shifted in part to women for the duration of wartime mobilization. Women applied for jobs in converted munitions factories. The iconic illustrated image of Rosie the Riveter, a muscular woman dressed in coveralls with her hair in a kerchief and inscribed with the phrase *We Can Do It!*, came to stand for female factory labor during the war. But women also worked in various auxiliary positions for the government. Although such jobs were often traditionally gendered female, over a million administrative jobs at the local, state, and national levels were transferred from men to women for the duration of the war.[19]



Figure 24.8.1: With so many American workers deployed overseas and so many new positions created by war production, posters like the iconic "We Can Do It!" urged women to support the war effort by entering the work force. *Wikimedia Commons*

For women who elected not to work, many volunteer opportunities presented themselves. The American Red Cross, the largest charitable organization in the nation, encouraged women to volunteer with local city chapters. Millions of women organized community social events for families, packed and shipped almost half a million tons of medical supplies overseas, and prepared twenty-seven million care packages of nonperishable items for American and other Allied prisoners of war. The American Red Cross further required all female volunteers to certify as nurse's aides, providing an extra benefit and work opportunity for hospital staffs that suffered severe personnel losses. Other charity organizations, such as church and synagogue affiliates, benevolent associations, and social club auxiliaries, gave women further outlets for volunteer work.

Military service was another option for women who wanted to join the war effort. Over 350,000 women served in several all-female units of the military branches. The Army and Navy Nurse Corps Reserves, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Navy's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, the Coast Guard's SPARs (named for the Coast Guard motto, *Semper Paratus*, "Always Ready"), and Marine Corps units gave women the opportunity to serve as either commissioned officers or enlisted members at military bases at home and abroad. The Nurse Corps Reserves alone commissioned 105,000 army and navy nurses recruited by the American Red Cross. Military nurses worked at base hospitals, mobile medical units, and onboard hospital "mercy" ships.[20]

Jim Crow segregation in both the civilian and military sectors remained a problem for black women who wanted to join the war effort. Even after President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 in 1941, supervisors who hired black women still often relegated them to the most menial tasks on factory floors. Segregation was further upheld in factory lunchrooms, and many black women were forced to work at night to keep them separate from whites. In the military, only the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps

and the Nurse Corps Reserves accepted black women for active service, and the army set a limited quota of 10 percent of total end strength for black female officers and enlisted women and segregated black units on active duty. The American Red Cross, meanwhile, recruited only four hundred black nurses for the Army and Navy Nurse Corps Reserves, and black army and navy nurses worked in segregated military hospitals on bases stateside and overseas.

And for all of the postwar celebration of Rosie the Riveter, after the war ended the men returned and most women voluntarily left the workforce or lost their jobs. Meanwhile, former military women faced a litany of obstacles in obtaining veteran's benefits during their transition to civilian life. The nation that beckoned the call for assistance to millions of women during the four-year crisis hardly stood ready to accommodate their postwar needs and demands.

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24.9: Race and World War II

World War II affected nearly every aspect of life in the United States, and America's racial relationships were not immune. African Americans, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Jews, and Japanese Americans were profoundly impacted.

In early 1941, months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the largest black trade union in the nation, made headlines by threatening President Roosevelt with a march on Washington, D.C. In this "crisis of democracy," Randolph said, defense industries refused to hire African Americans and the armed forces remained segregated. In exchange for Randolph calling off the march, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, banning racial and religious discrimination in defense industries and establishing the FEPC to monitor defense industry hiring practices. While the armed forces remained segregated throughout the war, and the FEPC had limited influence, the order showed that the federal government could stand against discrimination. The black workforce in defense industries rose from 3 percent in 1942 to 9 percent in 1945.[21]

More than one million African Americans fought in the war. Most blacks served in segregated, noncombat units led by white officers. Some gains were made, however. The number of black officers increased from five in 1940 to over seven thousand in 1945. The all-black pilot squadrons, known as the Tuskegee Airmen, completed more than 1,500 missions, escorted heavy bombers into Germany, and earned several hundred merits and medals. Many bomber crews specifically requested the Red Tail Angels as escorts. And near the end of the war, the army and navy began integrating some of their units and facilities, before the U.S. government finally ordered the full integration of its armed forces in 1948.[22]



Figure 24.9.1: The Tuskegee Airmen stand at attention in 1941 as Major James A. Ellison returns the salute of Mac Ross, one of the first graduates of the Tuskegee cadets. The photographs captures the pride and poise of the Tuskegee Airmen, who continued the tradition of African Americans' military service despite widespread racial discrimination and inequality at home. *Wikimedia*.

While black Americans served in the armed forces (though they were segregated), on the home front they became riveters and welders, rationed food and gasoline, and bought victory bonds. But many black Americans saw the war as an opportunity not only to serve their country but to improve it. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, a leading black newspaper, spearheaded the Double V campaign. It called on African Americans to fight two wars: the war against Nazism and fascism abroad and the war against racial inequality at home. To achieve victory, to achieve "real democracy," the *Courier* encouraged its readers to enlist in the armed forces, volunteer on the home front, and fight against racial segregation and discrimination.[23]

During the war, membership in the NAACP jumped tenfold, from fifty thousand to five hundred thousand. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was formed in 1942 and spearheaded the method of nonviolent direct action to achieve desegregation. Between 1940 and 1950, some 1.5 million southern blacks, the largest number of any decade since the beginning of the Great Migration, also indirectly demonstrated their opposition to racism and violence by migrating out of the Jim Crow South to the North. But

transitions were not easy. Racial tensions erupted in 1943 in a series of riots in cities such as Mobile, Beaumont, and Harlem. The bloodiest race riot occurred in Detroit and resulted in the death of twenty-five blacks and nine whites. Still, the war ignited in African Americans an urgency for equality that they would carry with them into the subsequent years.[24]

Many Americans had to navigate American prejudice, and America's entry into the war left foreign nationals from the belligerent nations in a precarious position. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) targeted many on suspicions of disloyalty for detainment, hearings, and possible internment under the Alien Enemy Act. Those who received an order for internment were sent to government camps secured by barbed wire and armed guards. Such internments were supposed to be for cause. Then, on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the removal of any persons from designated "exclusion zones"—which ultimately covered nearly a third of the country—at the discretion of military commanders. Thirty thousand Japanese Americans fought for the United States in World War II, but wartime anti-Japanese sentiment built on historical prejudices, and under the order, people of Japanese descent, both immigrants and American citizens, were detained and placed under the custody of the War Relocation Authority, the civil agency that supervised their relocation to internment camps. They lost their homes and jobs. Over ten thousand German nationals and a smaller number of Italian nationals were interned at various times in the United States during World War II, but American policies disproportionately targeted Japanese-descended populations, and individuals did not receive personalized reviews prior to their internment. This policy of mass exclusion and detention affected over 110,000 Japanese and Japanese-descended individuals. Seventy thousand were American citizens.[25]

In its 1982 report, *Personal Justice Denied*, the congressionally appointed Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded that "the broad historical causes" shaping the relocation program were "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."[26] Although the exclusion orders were found to have been constitutionally permissible under the vagaries of national security, they were later judged, even by the military and judicial leaders of the time, to have been a grave injustice against people of Japanese descent. In 1988, President Reagan signed a law that formally apologized for internment and provided reparations to surviving internees.

But if actions taken during war would later prove repugnant, so too could inaction. As the Allies pushed into Germany and Poland, they uncovered the full extent of Hitler's genocidal atrocities. The Allies liberated massive camp systems set up for the imprisonment, forced labor, and extermination of all those deemed racially, ideologically, or biologically "unfit" by Nazi Germany. But the Holocaust—the systematic murder of eleven million civilians, including six million Jews—had been under way for years. How did America respond?



Figure 24.9.2: This photograph, originally from Jürgen Stroop's May 1943 report to Heinrich Himmler, circulated throughout Europe and America as an image of the Nazi Party's brutality. The original German caption read: "Forcibly pulled out of dug-outs". *Wikimedia Commons*.

Initially, American officials expressed little official concern for Nazi persecutions. At the first signs of trouble in the 1930s, the State Department and most U.S. embassies did relatively little to aid European Jews. Roosevelt publicly spoke out against the persecution and even withdrew the U.S. ambassador to Germany after Kristallnacht. He pushed for the 1938 Evian Conference in France, in which international leaders discussed the Jewish refugee problem and worked to expand Jewish immigration quotas

by tens of thousands of people per year. But the conference came to nothing, and the United States turned away countless Jewish refugees who requested asylum in the United States.

In 1939, the German ship *St. Louis* carried over nine hundred Jewish refugees. They could not find a country that would take them. The passengers could not receive visas under the U.S. quota system. A State Department wire to one passenger read that all must "await their turns on the waiting list and qualify for and obtain immigration visas before they may be admissible into the United States." The ship cabled the president for special privilege, but the president said nothing. The ship was forced to return to Europe. Hundreds of the *St. Louis*'s passengers would perish in the Holocaust.

Anti-Semitism still permeated the United States. Even if Roosevelt wanted to do more—it's difficult to trace his own thoughts and personal views—he judged the political price for increasing immigration quotas as too high. In 1938 and 1939, the U.S. Congress debated the Wagner-Rogers Bill, an act to allow twenty thousand German-Jewish children into the United States. First lady Eleanor Roosevelt endorsed the measure, but the president remained publicly silent. The bill was opposed by roughly two thirds of the American public and was defeated. Historians speculate that Roosevelt, anxious to protect the New Deal and his rearmament programs, was unwilling to expend political capital to protect foreign groups that the American public had little interest in protecting.[27]

Knowledge of the full extent of the Holocaust was slow in coming. When the war began, American officials, including Roosevelt, doubted initial reports of industrial death camps. But even when they conceded their existence, officials pointed to their genuinely limited options. The most plausible response was for the U.S. military was to bomb either the camps or the railroads leading to them, but those options were rejected by military and civilian officials who argued that it would do little to stop the deportations, would distract from the war effort, and could cause casualties among concentration camp prisoners. Whether bombing would have saved lives remains a hotly debated question.[28]

Late in the war, secretary of the treasury Henry Morgenthau, himself born into a wealthy New York Jewish family, pushed through major changes in American policy. In 1944, he formed the War Refugees Board (WRB) and became a passionate advocate for Jewish refugees. The WRB saved perhaps two hundred thousand Jews and twenty thousand others. Morgenthau also convinced Roosevelt to issue a public statement condemning the Nazi's persecution. But it was already 1944, and such policies were far too little, far too late.[29]

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24.10: Toward a Postwar World

Americans celebrated the end of the war. At home and abroad, the United States looked to create a postwar order that would guarantee global peace and domestic prosperity. Although the alliance of convenience with Stalin's Soviet Union would collapse, Americans nevertheless looked for the means to ensure postwar stability and economic security for returning veterans.

The inability of the League of Nations to stop German, Italian, and Japanese aggressions caused many to question whether any global organization or agreements could ever ensure world peace. This included Franklin Roosevelt, who, as Woodrow Wilson's undersecretary of the navy, witnessed the rejection of this idea by both the American people and the Senate. In 1941, Roosevelt believed that postwar security could be maintained by an informal agreement between what he termed the Four Policemen—the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China—instead of a rejuvenated League of Nations. But others, including secretary of state Cordell Hull and British prime minister Winston Churchill, disagreed and convinced Roosevelt to push for a new global organization. As the war ran its course, Roosevelt came around to the idea. And so did the American public. Pollster George Gallup noted a "profound change" in American attitudes. The United States had rejected membership in the League of Nations after World War I, and in 1937 only a third of Americans polled supported such an idea. But as war broke out in Europe, half of Americans did. America's entry into the war bolstered support, and, by 1945, with the war closing, 81 percent of Americans favored the idea.[30]

Whatever his support, Roosevelt had long shown enthusiasm for the ideas later enshrined in the United Nations (UN) charter. In January 1941, he announced his Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, of worship, from want, and from fear—that all of the world's citizens should enjoy. That same year he signed the Atlantic Charter with Churchill, which reinforced those ideas and added the right of self-determination and promised some sort of postwar economic and political cooperation. Roosevelt first used the term *united nations* to describe the Allied powers, not the subsequent postwar organization. But the name stuck. At Tehran in 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill convinced Stalin to send a Soviet delegation to a conference at Dumbarton Oaks, outside Washington, D.C., in August 1944, where they agreed on the basic structure of the new organization. It would have a Security Council—the original Four Policemen, plus France—which would consult on how best to keep the peace and when to deploy the military power of the assembled nations. According to one historian, the organization demonstrated an understanding that "only the Great Powers, working together, could provide real security." But the plan was a kind of hybrid between Roosevelt's policemen idea and a global organization of equal representation. There would also be a General Assembly, made up of all nations; an International Court of Justice; and a council for economic and social matters. Dumbarton Oaks was a mixed success—the Soviets especially expressed concern over how the Security Council would work—but the powers agreed to meet again in San Francisco between April and June 1945 for further negotiations. There, on June 26, 1945, fifty nations signed the UN charter.[31]

Anticipating victory in World War II, leaders not only looked to the postwar global order, they looked to the fate of returning American servicemen. American politicians and interest groups sought to avoid another economic depression—the economy had tanked after World War I—by gradually easing returning veterans back into the civilian economy. The brainchild of William Atherton, the head of the American Legion, the G.I. Bill won support from progressives and conservatives alike. Passed in 1944, the G.I. Bill was a multifaceted, multibillion-dollar entitlement program that rewarded honorably discharged veterans with numerous benefits.[32]

Faced with the prospect of over fifteen million members of the armed services (including approximately 350,000 women) suddenly returning to civilian life, the G.I. Bill offered a bevy of inducements to slow their influx into the civilian workforce as well as reward their service with public benefits. The legislation offered a year's worth of unemployment benefits for veterans unable to secure work. About half of American veterans (eight million) received $4 billion in unemployment benefits over the life of the bill. The G.I. Bill also made postsecondary education a reality for many. The Veterans Administration (VA) paid the lion's share of educational expenses, including tuition, fees, supplies, and even stipends for living expenses. The G.I. Bill sparked a boom in higher education. Enrollments at accredited colleges, universities, and technical and professional schools spiked, rising from 1.5 million in 1940 to 3.6 million in 1960. The VA disbursed over $14 billon in educational aid in just over a decade. Furthermore, the bill encouraged home ownership. Roughly 40 percent of Americans owned homes in 1945, but that figure climbed to 60 percent a decade after the close of the war. Because the bill did away with down payment requirements, veterans could obtain home loans for as little as $1 down. Close to four million veterans purchased homes through the G.I. Bill, sparking a construction bonanza that fueled postwar growth. In addition, the VA also helped nearly two hundred thousand veterans secure farms and offered thousands more guaranteed financing for small businesses.[33]

Not all Americans, however, benefited equally from the G.I. Bill. Indirectly, since the military limited the number of female

personnel, men qualified for the bill's benefits in far higher numbers. Colleges also limited the number of female applicants to guarantee space for male veterans. African Americans, too, faced discrimination. Segregation forced black veterans into overcrowded "historically black colleges" that had to turn away close to twenty thousand applicants. Meanwhile, residential segregation limited black home ownership in various neighborhoods, denying black homeowners the equity and investment that would come with home ownership. There were other limits and other disadvantaged groups. Veterans accused of homosexuality, for instance, were similarly unable to claim GI benefits.[34]

The effects of the G.I. Bill were significant and long-lasting. It helped sustain the great postwar economic boom and, even if many could not attain it, it nevertheless established the hallmarks of American middle class life.

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24.11: Conclusion

The United States entered the war in a crippling economic depression and exited at the beginning of an unparalleled economic boom. The war had been won, the United States was stronger than ever, and Americans looked forward to a prosperous future. And yet new problems loomed. Stalin's Soviet Union and the proliferation of nuclear weapons would disrupt postwar dreams of global harmony. Meanwhile, Americans who had fought a war for global democracy would find that very democracy eradicated around the world in reestablished colonial regimes and at home in segregation and injustice. The war had unleashed powerful forces that would reshape the United States at home and abroad.

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24.12: Primary Sources

Charles A. Lindbergh, “America First” (1941)

Charles Lindbergh won international fame in 1927 after completing the first non-stop, solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. As Hitler’s armies marched across the European continent, many Americans began to imagine American participation in the war. Charles Lindbergh and the America First Committee, advocating “America First,” championed American isolationism.

The Atlantic Charter (1941)

The leaders of the United States and United Kingdom signed the Atlantic Charter in August 1941. The short document neatly outlined an idealized vision for political and economic order of the postwar world.

FDR, Executive Order No. 9066 (1942)

During World War II, the federal government removed over 120,000 men, women, and children of Japanese descent (both foreign-born “issei” and native-born “nisei”) from the West Coast and interned in camps. President Roosevelt authorized the internments with his Executive Order No. 9066, issued on February 19, 1942.

Harry Truman Announcing the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima (1945)

On August 6, 1945, Harry Truman disclosed to the American public that the United States had detonated an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan.

Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945)

Vietnam, which had been colonized by the French and then by the Japanese, declared their independence from colonial rule—particularly the re-imposition of a French colonial regime—in the aftermath of Japan’s defeat in World War II. Proclaimed by Ho Chi Minh in September 1945, Vietnam’s Declaration of Independence reflected back the early promises of the Allies in World War II and even borrowed directly from the American Declaration of Independence.

Tuskegee Airmen (1941)

The Tuskegee Airmen stand at attention as Major James A. Ellison returns the salute of Mac Ross, one of the first graduates of the Tuskegee cadets. The Tuskegee Airmen who continued a tradition of African American military service while honorably serving a country that still considered them second-class citizens.

World War II Recruitment Posters (1942 & 1943)

This pair of US Military recruiting posters demonstrates the way that two branches of the military—the Marines and the Women’s Army Corps—borrowed techniques from advertising professionals to “sell” a romantic vision of war to Americans. These two images take different strategies: one shows Marines at war in a lush jungle, reminding viewers that the war was taking place in exotic lands, the other depicted women taking on new jobs as a patriotic duty.

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24.13: Reference Material

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25: THE COLD WAR



Test of the tactical nuclear weapon "Small Boy" at the Nevada Test Site, July 14, 1962. National Nuclear Security Administration, #760-5-NTS.

25.1: Introduction

25.2: Political, Economic, and Military Dimension

25.3: The Arms Buildup, the Space Race, and Technological Advancement

25.4: The Cold War Red Scare, McCarthyism, and Liberal Anti-Communism

25.5: Decolonization and the Global Reach of the 'American Century'

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25.1: Introduction

Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union—erstwhile allies—soured soon after World War II. On February 22, 1946, less than a year after the end of the war, the chargé d'affaires of the U.S. embassy in Moscow, George Kennan sent a famously lengthy telegram—literally referred to as the Long Telegram—to the State Department denouncing the Soviet Union. "World communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue," he wrote, and "the steady advance of uneasy Russian nationalism . . . in [the] new guise of international Marxism . . . is more dangerous and insidious than ever before."[1] There could be no cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union, Kennan wrote. Instead, the Soviets had to be "contained." Less than two weeks later, on March 5, former British prime minister Winston Churchill visited President Harry Truman in his home state of Missouri and declared that Europe had been cut in half, divided by an "iron curtain" that had "descended across the Continent."[2] Aggressive anti-Soviet sentiment seized the American government and soon the American people.[3]

The Cold War was a global political and ideological struggle between capitalist and communist countries, particularly between the two surviving superpowers of the postwar world: the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). "Cold" because it was never a "hot," direct shooting war between the United States and the Soviet Union, the generations-long, multifaceted rivalry nevertheless bent the world to its whims. Tensions ran highest, perhaps, during the first Cold War, which lasted from the mid-1940s through the mid-1960s, after which followed a period of relaxed tensions and increased communication and cooperation, known by the French term *détente*, until the second Cold War interceded from roughly 1979 until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Cold War reshaped the world and the generations of Americans that lived under its shadow.

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25.2: Political, Economic, and Military Dimension

The United States entered the war in a crippling economic depression and exited at the beginning of an unparalleled economic boom. The war had been won, the United States was stronger than ever, and Americans looked forward to a prosperous future. And yet new problems loomed. Stalin's Soviet Union and the proliferation of nuclear weapons would disrupt postwar dreams of global harmony. Meanwhile, Americans who had fought a war for global democracy would find that very democracy eradicated around the world in reestablished colonial regimes and at home in segregation and injustice. The war had unleashed powerful forces that would reshape the United States at home and abroad.

The Cold War grew out of a failure to achieve a durable settlement among leaders from the Big Three Allies—the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union—as they met at Yalta in Russian Crimea and at Potsdam in occupied Germany to shape the postwar order. The Germans had pillaged their way across Eastern Europe, and the Soviets had pillaged their way back. Millions of lives were lost. Stalin considered the newly conquered territory part of a Soviet sphere of influence. With Germany's defeat imminent, the Allies set terms for unconditional surrender. At the same time, deliberation began over reparations, tribunals, and the nature of an occupation regime that would initially be divided into American, British, French, and Soviet zones. Suspicion and mistrust were already mounting. The political landscape was altered drastically by Franklin Roosevelt's sudden death in April 1945, just days before the inaugural meeting of the UN. Although Roosevelt was skeptical of Stalin, he always held out hope that the Soviets could be brought into the "Free World." Truman, like Churchill, had no such illusions. He committed the United States to a hard-line, anti-Soviet approach.[4]

At the Potsdam Conference, held on the outskirts of Berlin from mid-July to early August, the Allies debated the fate of Soviet-occupied Poland. Toward the end of the meeting, the American delegation received word that Manhattan Project scientists had successfully tested an atomic bomb. On July 24, when Truman told Stalin about this "new weapon of unusual destructive force," the Soviet leader simply nodded his acknowledgment and said that he hoped the Americans would make "good use" of it.[5]

The Cold War had long roots. The World War II alliance of convenience was not enough to erase decades of mutual suspicions. The Bolshevik Revolution had overthrown the Russian tsarists during World War I. Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin urged an immediate worldwide peace that would pave the way for world socialism just as Woodrow Wilson brought the United States into the war with promises of global democracy and free trade. The United States had intervened militarily against the Red Army during the Russian Civil War, and when the Soviet Union was founded in 1922 the United States refused to recognize it. The two powers were brought together only by their common enemy, and without that common enemy, there was little hope for cooperation.[6]

On the eve of American involvement in World War II, on August 14, 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill had issued a joint declaration of goals for postwar peace, known as the Atlantic Charter. An adaptation of Wilson's Fourteen Points, the Atlantic Charter established the creation of the United Nations. The Soviet Union was among the fifty charter UN member-states and was given one of five seats—alongside the United States, Britain, France, and China—on the select Security Council. The Atlantic Charter also set in motion the planning for a reorganized global economy. The July 1944 UN Financial and Monetary Conference, more popularly known as the Bretton Woods Conference, created the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the forerunner of the World Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The Bretton Woods system was bolstered in 1947 with the addition of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), forerunner of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Soviets rejected it all.

Many officials on both sides knew that the Soviet-American relationship would dissolve into renewed hostility at the end of the war, and events proved them right. In 1946 alone, the Soviet Union refused to cede parts of occupied Iran, a Soviet defector betrayed a Soviet spy who had worked on the Manhattan Project, and the United States refused Soviet calls to dismantle its nuclear arsenal. In a 1947 article for *Foreign Affairs*—written under the pseudonym "Mr. X"—George Kennan warned that Americans should "continue to regard the Soviet Union as a rival, not a partner," since Stalin harbored "no real faith in the possibility of a permanent happy coexistence of the Socialist and capitalist worlds." He urged U.S. leaders to pursue "a policy of firm containment, designed to confront the Russians."[7]

Truman, on March 12, 1947, announced $400 million in aid to Greece and Turkey, where "terrorist activities . . . led by Communists" jeopardized "democratic" governance. With Britain "reducing or liquidating its commitments in several parts of the world, including Greece," it fell on the United States, Truman said, "to support free peoples . . . resisting attempted subjugation by . . . outside pressures."[8] The so-called Truman Doctrine became a cornerstone of the American policy of containment.[9]

In the harsh winter of 1946–1947, famine loomed in much of continental Europe. Blizzards and freezing cold halted coal production. Factories closed. Unemployment spiked. Amid these conditions, the communist parties of France and Italy gained nearly a third of the seats in their respective parliaments. American officials worried that Europe's impoverished masses were increasingly vulnerable to Soviet propaganda. The situation remained dire through the spring, when secretary of state General George Marshall gave an address at Harvard University on June 5, 1947, suggesting that "the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health to the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace."[10] Although Marshall had stipulated to potential critics that his proposal was "not directed against any country, but against hunger, poverty . . . and chaos," Stalin clearly understood this as an assault against communism in Europe. He saw it as a "Trojan Horse" designed to lure Germany and other countries into the capitalist web.[11]

The European Recovery Program (ERP), popularly known as the Marshall Plan, pumped enormous sums of capital into Western Europe. From 1948 to 1952 the United States invested $13 billion toward reconstruction while simultaneously loosening trade barriers. To avoid the postwar chaos of World War I, the Marshall Plan was designed to rebuild Western Europe, open markets, and win European support for capitalist democracies. The Soviets countered with their rival Molotov Plan, a symbolic pledge of aid to Eastern Europe. Polish leader Józef Cyrankiewicz was rewarded with a five-year, $450 million trade agreement from Russia for boycotting the Marshall Plan. Stalin was jealous of Eastern Europe. When Czechoslovakia received $200 million in American assistance, Stalin summoned Czech foreign minister Jan Masaryk to Moscow. Masaryk later recounted that he "went to Moscow as the foreign minister of an independent sovereign state" but "returned as a lackey of the Soviet Government." Stalin exercised ever tighter control over Soviet "satellite" countries in central and Eastern Europe.[12]

The situation in Germany meanwhile deteriorated. Berlin had been divided into communist and capitalist zones. In June 1948, when U.S., British, and French officials introduced a new currency, the Soviet Union initiated a ground blockade, cutting off rail and road access to West Berlin (landlocked within the Soviet occupation zone) to gain control over the entire city. The United States organized and coordinated a massive airlift that flew essential supplies into the beleaguered city for eleven months, until the Soviets lifted the blockade on May 12, 1949. Germany was officially broken in half. On May 23, the western half of the country was formally renamed the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the eastern Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic (GDR) later that fall. Berlin, which lay squarely within the GDR, was divided into two sections (and, from August 1961 until November 1989, famously separated by physical walls).[13]



Figure 25.2.1: The Berlin Blockade and resultant Allied airlift was one of the first major crises of the Cold War. Here a U.S. Navy Douglas R4D and U.S. Air Force C-47 aircraft unload at Tempelhof Airport in 1948 or 1949. *Wikimedia*.

In the summer of 1949, American officials launched the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a mutual defense pact in which the United States and Canada were joined by England, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland. The Soviet Union would formalize its own collective defensive agreement in 1955, the Warsaw Pact, which included Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and East Germany.

Liberal journalist Walter Lippmann was largely responsible for popularizing the term *Cold War* in his book *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy*, published in 1947. Lippmann envisioned a prolonged stalemate between the United States and the

USSR, a war of words and ideas in which direct shots would not necessarily be fired between the two. Lippmann agreed that the Soviet Union would only be "prevented from expanding" if it were "confronted with . . . American power," but he felt "that the strategical conception and plan" recommended by Mr. X (George Kennan) was "fundamentally unsound," as it would require having "the money and the military power always available in sufficient amounts to apply 'counter-force' at constantly shifting points all over the world." Lippmann cautioned against making far-flung, open-ended commitments, favoring instead a more limited engagement that focused on halting the influence of communism in the "heart" of Europe; he believed that if the Soviet system were successfully restrained on the continent, it could otherwise be left alone to collapse under the weight of its own imperfections.[14]

A new chapter in the Cold War began on October 1, 1949, when the CCP, led by Mao Zedong, declared victory against Kuomintang nationalists led by the Western-backed Chiang Kai-shek. The Kuomintang retreated to the island of Taiwan and the CCP took over the mainland under the red flag of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Coming so soon after the Soviet Union's successful test of an atomic bomb, on August 29, the "loss of China," the world's most populous country, contributed to a sense of panic among American foreign policy makers, whose attention began to shift from Europe to Asia. After Dean Acheson became secretary of state in 1949, Kennan was replaced in the State Department by former investment banker Paul Nitze, whose first task was to help compose, as Acheson later described in his memoir, a document designed to "bludgeon the mass mind of 'top government'" into approving a "substantial increase" in military expenditures.[15]



Figure 25.2.2: Global communism was shaped by the relationship between the two largest communist nations—the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Despite persistent tensions between the two, this 1950 Chinese stamp depicts Joseph Stalin shaking hands with Mao Zedong. *Wikimedia*.

"National Security Memorandum 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," a national defense memo known as NSC-68, achieved its goal. Issued in April 1950, the nearly sixty-page classified memo warned of "increasingly terrifying weapons of mass destruction," which served to remind "every individual" of "the ever-present possibility of annihilation." It said that leaders of the USSR and its "international communist movement" sought only "to retain and solidify their absolute power." As the central "bulwark of opposition to Soviet expansion," America had become "the principal enemy" that "must be subverted or destroyed by one means or another." NSC-68 urged a "rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength" in order to "roll back the Kremlin's drive for world domination." Such a massive commitment of resources, amounting to more than a threefold increase in the annual defense budget, was necessary because the USSR, "unlike previous aspirants to hegemony," was "animated by a new fanatic faith," seeking "to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world."[16] Both Kennan and Lippmann were among a minority in the foreign policy establishment who argued to no avail that such a "militarization of containment" was tragically wrongheaded.[17]

On June 25, 1950, as U.S. officials were considering the merits of NSC-68's proposals, including "the intensification of . . . operations by covert means in the fields of economic . . . political and psychological warfare" designed to foment "unrest and revolt in . . . [Soviet] satellite countries," fighting erupted in Korea between communists in the north and American-backed anti-communists in the south.[18]

After Japan surrendered in September 1945, a U.S.-Soviet joint occupation had paved the way for the division of Korea. In November 1947, the UN passed a resolution that a united government in Korea should be created, but the Soviet Union refused to cooperate. Only the south held elections. The Republic of Korea (ROK), South Korea, was created three months after the election. A month later, communists in the north established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Both claimed to stand for a unified Korean peninsula. The UN recognized the ROK, but incessant armed conflict broke out between North and South.[19]

In the spring of 1950, Stalin hesitantly endorsed North Korean leader Kim Il Sung's plan to liberate the South by force, a plan heavily influenced by Mao's recent victory in China. While he did not desire a military confrontation with the United States, Stalin thought correctly that he could encourage his Chinese comrades to support North Korea if the war turned against the DPRK. The North Koreans launched a successful surprise attack and Seoul, the capital of South Korea, fell to the communists on June 28. The UN passed resolutions demanding that North Korea cease hostilities and withdraw its armed forces to the thirty-eighth parallel and calling on member states to provide the ROK military assistance to repulse the northern attack.

That July, UN forces mobilized under American general Douglas MacArthur. Troops landed at Inchon, a port city about thirty miles from Seoul, and took the city on September 28. They moved on North Korea. On October 1, ROK/UN forces crossed the thirty-eighth parallel, and on October 26 they reached the Yalu River, the traditional Korea-China border. They were met by three hundred thousand Chinese troops who broke the advance and rolled up the offensive. On November 30, ROK/UN forces began a fevered retreat. They returned across the thirty-eighth parallel and abandoned Seoul on January 4, 1951. The United Nations forces regrouped, but the war entered into a stalemate. General MacArthur, growing impatient and wanting to eliminate the communist threats, requested authorization to use nuclear weapons against North Korea and China. Denied, MacArthur publicly denounced Truman. Truman, unwilling to threaten World War III and refusing to tolerate MacArthur's public insubordination, dismissed the general in April. On June 23, 1951, the Soviet ambassador to the UN suggested a cease-fire, which the U.S. immediately accepted. Peace talks continued for two years.



Figure 25.2.3: With the stated policy of "containing" communism at home and abroad, the U.S. pressured the United Nations to support the South Koreans and deployed American troops to the Korean Peninsula. Though overshadowed in the annals of American history, the Korean War caused over 30,000 American deaths and 100,000 wounded, leaving an indelible mark on those who served. *Wikimedia*.

General Dwight Eisenhower defeated Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson in the 1952 presidential election, and Stalin died in March 1953. The DPRK warmed to peace, and an armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953. More than 1.5 million people had died during the conflict.[20]

Coming so soon after World War II and ending without clear victory, Korea became for many Americans a "forgotten war." Decades later, though, the nation's other major intervention in Asia would be anything but forgotten. The Vietnam War had deep roots in the Cold War world. Vietnam had been colonized by France and seized by Japan during World War II. The nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh had been backed by the United States during his anti-Japanese insurgency and, following Japan's surrender in 1945, Viet Minh nationalists, quoting the American Declaration of Independence, created the independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Yet France moved to reassert authority over its former colony in Indochina, and the United States sacrificed Vietnamese self-determination for France's colonial imperatives. Ho Chi Minh turned to the Soviet Union for assistance in waging

war against the French colonizers in a protracted war.

After French troops were defeated at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, U.S. officials helped broker a temporary settlement that partitioned Vietnam in two, with a Soviet/Chinese-backed state in the north and an American-backed state in the south. To stifle communist expansion southward, the United States would send arms, offer military advisors, prop up corrupt politicians, stop elections, and, eventually, send over five hundred thousand troops, of whom nearly sixty thousand would be lost before the communists finally reunified the country.

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25.3: The Arms Buildup, the Space Race, and Technological Advancement

The world was never the same after the United States leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 with atomic bombs. Not only had perhaps 180,000 civilians been killed, the nature of warfare was forever changed. The Soviets accelerated their nuclear research, expedited in no small part by "atom spies" such as Klaus Fuchs, who had stolen nuclear secrets from the Americans' secret Manhattan Project. Soviet scientists successfully tested an atomic bomb on August 29, 1949, years before American officials had estimated they would. This unexpectedly quick Russian success not only caught the United States off guard but alarmed the Western world and propelled a nuclear arms race between the United States and the USSR.

The United States detonated the first thermonuclear weapon, or hydrogen bomb (using fusion explosives of theoretically limitless power) on November 1, 1952. The blast measured over ten megatons and generated an inferno five miles wide with a mushroom cloud twenty-five miles high and a hundred miles across. The irradiated debris—fallout—from the blast circled the earth, occasioning international alarm about the effects of nuclear testing on human health and the environment. It only hastened the arms race, with each side developing increasingly advanced warheads and delivery systems. The USSR successfully tested a hydrogen bomb in 1953, and soon thereafter Eisenhower announced a policy of "massive retaliation." The United States would henceforth respond to threats or acts of aggression with perhaps its entire nuclear might. Both sides, then, would theoretically be deterred from starting a war, through the logic of mutually assured destruction (MAD). J. Robert Oppenheimer, director of Los Alamos nucelear laboratory that developed the first nuclear bomb, likened the state of "nuclear deterrence" between the United States and the USSR to "two scorpions in a bottle, each capable of killing the other," but only by risking their own lives.[21]



Figure 25.3.1: In response to the Soviet Union's test of a pseudo-hydrogen bomb in 1953, the United States began Castle Bravo — the first U.S. test of a dry fuel, hydrogen bomb. Detonated on March 1, 1954, it was the most powerful nuclear device ever tested by the U.S. But the effects were more gruesome than expected, causing nuclear fall-out and radiation poisoning in nearby Pacific islands. *Wikimedia*.

Fears of nuclear war produced a veritable atomic culture. Films such as *Godzilla*, *On the Beach*, *Fail-Safe*, and *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* plumbed the depths of American anxieties with plots featuring radioactive monsters, nuclear accidents, and doomsday scenarios. Antinuclear protests in the United States and abroad warned against the perils of nuclear testing and highlighted the likelihood that a thermonuclear war would unleash a global environmental catastrophe. Yet at the same time, peaceful nuclear technologies, such as fission- and fusion-based energy, seemed to herald a utopia of power that would be clean, safe, and "too cheap to meter." In 1953, Eisenhower proclaimed at the UN that the United States would share the knowledge and means for other countries to use atomic power. Henceforth, "the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life." The "Atoms for Peace" speech brought about the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), along with worldwide investment in this new economic sector.[22]

As Germany fell at the close of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union each sought to acquire elements of

the Nazi's V-2 superweapon program. A devastating rocket that had terrorized England, the V-2 was capable of delivering its explosive payload up to a distance of nearly six hundred miles, and both nations sought to capture the scientists, designs, and manufacturing equipment to make it work. A former top German rocket scientist, Wernher von Braun, became the leader of the American space program; the Soviet Union's program was secretly managed by former prisoner Sergei Korolev. After the end of the war, American and Soviet rocket engineering teams worked to adapt German technology in order to create an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). The Soviets achieved success first. They even used the same launch vehicle on October 4, 1957, to send Sputnik 1, the world's first human-made satellite, into orbit. It was a decisive Soviet propaganda victory.[23]

In response, the U.S. government rushed to perfect its own ICBM technology and launch its own satellites and astronauts into space. In 1958, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was created as a successor to the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). Initial American attempts to launch a satellite into orbit using the Vanguard rocket suffered spectacular failures, heightening fears of Soviet domination in space. While the American space program floundered, on September 13, 1959, the Soviet Union's Luna 2 capsule became the first human-made object to touch the moon. The "race for survival," as it was called by the *New York Time*s, reached a new level.[24] The Soviet Union successfully launched a pair of dogs (Belka and Strelka) into orbit and returned them to Earth while the American Mercury program languished behind schedule. Despite countless failures and one massive accident that killed nearly one hundred Soviet military and rocket engineers, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was launched into orbit on April 12, 1961. American astronaut Alan Shepard accomplished a suborbital flight in the Freedom 7 capsule on May 5. The United States had lagged behind, and John Kennedy would use America's losses in the "space race" to bolster funding for a moon landing.

While outer space captivated the world's imagination, the Cold War still captured its anxieties. The ever-escalating arms race continued to foster panic. In the early 1950s, the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) began preparing citizens for the worst. Schoolchildren were instructed, via a film featuring Bert the Turtle, to "duck and cover" beneath their desks in the event of a thermonuclear war.[25]

Although it took a backseat to space travel and nuclear weapons, the advent of modern computing was yet another major Cold War scientific innovation, the effects of which were only just beginning to be understood. In 1958, following the humiliation of the Sputnik launches, Eisenhower authorized the creation of an Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) housed within the Department of Defense (later changed to DARPA). As a secretive military research and development operation, ARPA was tasked with funding and otherwise overseeing the production of sensitive new technologies. Soon, in cooperation with university-based computer engineers, ARPA would develop the world's first system of "network packing switches," and computer networks would begin connecting to one another.

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25.4: The Cold War Red Scare, McCarthyism, and Liberal Anti-Communism



Figure 25.4.1: Joseph McCarthy, Republican Senator from Wisconsin, fueled fears during the early 1950s that communism was rampant and growing. This intensified Cold War tensions felt by every segment of society, from government officials to ordinary American citizens. *National Archives and Records Administration*.

Joseph McCarthy burst onto the national scene during a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950. Waving a sheet of paper in the air, he proclaimed: "I have here in my hand a list of 205 . . . names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping [U.S.] policy." Since the Wisconsin Republican had no actual list, when pressed, the number changed to fifty-seven, then, later, eighty-one. Finally, he promised to disclose the name of just one communist, the nation's "top Soviet agent." The shifting numbers brought ridicule, but it didn't matter: McCarthy's claims won him fame and fueled the ongoing "red scare."[26]

McCarthyism was a symptom of a massive and widespread anticommunist hysteria that engulfed Cold War America. Popular fears, for instance, had long since shot through the federal government. Only two years after World War II, President Truman, facing growing anticommunist excitement and with a tough election on the horizon, gave in to pressure in March 1947 and issued his "loyalty order," Executive Order 9835, establishing loyalty reviews for federal employees. The FBI conducted closer examinations of all potential "security risks" among Foreign Service officers. In Congress, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (SPSI) held hearings on communist influence in American society. Between 1949 and 1954, congressional committees conducted over one hundred investigations into subversive activities. Antisubversion committees emerged in over a dozen state legislatures, and review procedures proliferated in public schools and universities across the country. At the University of California, for example, thirty-one professors were dismissed in 1950 for refusing to sign a loyalty oath. The Internal Security Act, or McCarran Act, passed by Congress in September 1950, mandated all "communist organizations" to register with the government, gave the government greater powers to investigate sedition, and made it possible to prevent suspected individuals from gaining or keeping their citizenship.[27]

Anticommunist policies reflected national fears of a surging global communism. Within a ten-month span beginning in 1949, for instance, the USSR developed a nuclear bomb, China fell to communism, and over three hundred thousand American soldiers were deployed to fight a land war in Korea. Newspapers, meanwhile, were filled with headlines alleging Soviet espionage.

During the war, Julius Rosenberg worked briefly at the U.S. Army Signal Corps Laboratory in New Jersey, where he had access to classified information. He and his wife, Ethel, who had both been members of the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA) in the 1930s, were accused of passing secret bomb-related documents to Soviet officials and were indicted in August 1950 on charges of giving nuclear secrets to the Russians. After a trial in March 1951, they were found guilty and executed on June 19, 1953.[28]



Figure 25.4.2: The environment of fear and panic instigated by McCarthyism led to the arrest of many innocent people. Still, some Americans accused of supplying top-secret information to the Soviets were, in fact, spies. Julius and Ethel Rosenbergs were convicted of espionage and executed in 1953 for delivering information about the atomic bomb to the Soviets. *Library of Congress*.

Alger Hiss, the highest-ranking government official linked to Soviet espionage, was another prize for conservatives. Hiss was a prominent official in the U.S. State Department and served as secretary-general of the UN Charter Conference in San Francisco from April to June 1945 before leaving the State Department in 1946. A young congressman and member of HUAC, Richard Nixon, made waves by accusing Hiss of espionage. On August 3, 1948, Whittaker Chambers testified before HUAC that he and Hiss had worked together as part of the secret "communist underground" in Washington, D.C., during the 1930s. Hiss, who always maintained his innocence, stood trial twice. After a hung jury in July 1949, he was convicted on two counts of perjury (the statute of limitations for espionage having expired). Later evidence suggested their guilt. At the time, their convictions fueled an anticommunist frenzy. Some began seeing communists everywhere.[29]

Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs offered anticommunists such as Joseph McCarthy the evidence they needed to allege a vast Soviet conspiracy to infiltrate and subvert the U.S. government and justify the smearing of all left-liberals, even those who were resolutely anticommunist. Not long after his February 1950 speech in Wheeling, McCarthy's sensational charges became a source of growing controversy. Forced to respond, President Truman arranged a partisan congressional investigation designed to discredit McCarthy. The Tydings Committee held hearings from early March through July 1950 and issued a final report admonishing McCarthy for perpetrating a "fraud and a hoax" on the American public. American progressives saw McCarthy's crusade as nothing less than a political witch hunt. In June 1950, *The Nation* magazine editor Freda Kirchwey characterized "McCarthyism" as "the means by which a handful of men, disguised as hunters of subversion, cynically subvert the instruments of justice . . . in order to help their own political fortunes."[30] Truman's liberal supporters, and leftists like Kirchwey, hoped in vain that McCarthy and the new "ism" that bore his name would blow over quickly.

There had, of course, been a communist presence in the United States. The CPUSA was formed in the aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution when the Bolsheviks created a Communist International (the Comintern) and invited socialists from around the world to join. During its first two years of existence, the CPUSA functioned in secret, hidden from a surge of antiradical and anti-immigrant hysteria, investigations, deportations, and raids at the end of World War I. The CPUSA began its public life in 1921, after the panic subsided, but communism remained on the margins of American life until the 1930s, when leftists and liberals began to see the Soviet Union as a symbol of hope amid the Great Depression. Then many communists joined the Popular Front, an effort to make communism mainstream by adapting it to American history and American culture. During the Popular Front era, communists were integrated into mainstream political institutions through alliances with progressives in the Democratic Party. The CPUSA enjoyed most of its influence and popularity among workers in unions linked to the newly formed CIO. Communists also became strong opponents of Jim Crow segregation and developed a presence in both the NAACPand the ACLU. The CPUSA, moreover, established "front" groups, such as the League of American Writers, in which intellectuals participated without even knowing of its ties to the Comintern. But even at the height of the global economic crisis, communism never attracted many Americans. Even at the peak of its membership, the CPUSA had just eighty thousand national "card-carrying" members. From the mid-1930s through the mid-1940s, the party exercised most of its power indirectly, through coalitions with liberals and reformers. When news broke of Hitler's and Stalin's 1939 nonaggression, many fled the party, feeling betrayed. A bloc of left-liberal

anticommunists, meanwhile, purged remaining communists in their ranks, and the Popular Front collapsed.[31]

Lacking the legal grounds to abolish the CPUSA, officials instead sought to expose and contain CPUSA influence. Following a series of predecessor committees, HUAC was established in 1938, then reorganized after the war and given the explicit task of investigating communism. By the time the Communist Control Act was passed in August 1954, effectively criminalizing party membership, the CPUSA had long ceased to have meaningful influence. Anticommunists were driven to eliminate remaining CPUSA influence from progressive institutions, including the NAACP and the CIO. The Taft-Hartley Act (1947) gave union officials the initiative to purge communists from the labor movement. A kind of Cold War liberalism took hold. In January 1947, anticommunist liberals formed Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), whose founding members included labor leader Walter Reuther and NAACP chairman Walter White, as well as historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, and former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Working to help Truman defeat former vice president Henry Wallace's Popular Front–backed campaign in 1948, the ADA combined social and economic reforms with staunch anticommunism.[32]

The domestic Cold War was bipartisan, fueled by a consensus drawn from a left-liberal and conservative anticommunist alliance that included politicians and policy makers, journalists and scientists, business and civic/religious leaders, and educators and entertainers. Led by its imperious director, J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI took an active role in the domestic battle against communism. Hoover's FBI helped incite panic by assisting the creation of blatantly propagandistic films and television shows, including *The Red Menace* (1949), *My Son John* (1951), and *I Led Three Lives*(1953–1956). Such alarmist depictions of espionage and treason in a "free world" imperiled by communism heightened the 1950s culture of fear. In the fall of 1947, HUAC entered the fray with highly publicized hearings of Hollywood. Film mogul Walt Disney and actor Ronald Reagan, among others, testified to aid investigators' attempts to expose communist influence in the entertainment industry. A group of writers, directors, and producers who refused to answer questions were held in contempt of Congress. This Hollywood Ten created the precedent for a blacklist in which hundreds of film artists were barred from industry work for the next decade.

HUAC made repeated visits to Hollywood during the 1950s, and their interrogation of celebrities often began with the same intimidating refrain: "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?" Many witnesses cooperated, and "named names," naming anyone they knew who had ever been associated with communist-related groups or organizations. In 1956, black entertainer and activist Paul Robeson chided his HUAC inquisitors, claiming that they had put him on trial not for his politics but because he had spent his life "fighting for the rights" of his people. "You are the un-Americans," he told them, "and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves."[33] As Robeson and other victims of McCarthyism learned firsthand, this "second red scare," in the glow of nuclear annihilation and global totalitarianism, fueled an intolerant and skeptical political world, what Cold War liberal Arthur Schlesinger, in his *The Vital Center* (1949), called an "age of anxiety."[34]



Figure 25.4.1: Many accused of Communist sentiments refused to denounce friends and acquaintances. One of the most well-known Americans of the time, African American actor and signer Paul Robeson was unwilling to sign an affidavit confirming he was Communist and, as a result, his U.S. passport was revoked. During the Cold War, he was condemned by the press and neither his music nor films could be purchased in the United States.

Anticommunist ideology valorized overt patriotism, religious conviction, and faith in capitalism. Those who shunned such

"American values" were open to attack. If communism was a plague spreading across Europe and Asia, anticommunist hyperbole infected cities, towns, and suburbs throughout the country. The playwright Arthur Miller's popular 1953 play *The Crucible* compared the red scare to the Salem Witch Trials. Miller wrote, "In America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell. Political opposition, thereby, is given an inhumane overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse. A political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a congerie of plots and counterplots, and the main role of government changes from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God."[35]

Rallying against communism, American society urged conformity. "Deviant" behavior became dangerous. Having entered the workforce en masse as part of a collective effort in World War II, middle-class women were told to return to housekeeping responsibilities. Having fought and died abroad for American democracy, black soldiers were told to return home and acquiesce to the American racial order. Homosexuality, already stigmatized, became dangerous. Personal secrets were seen as a liability that exposed one to blackmail. The same paranoid mind-set that fueled the second red scare also ignited the Cold War "lavender scare" against gay Americans."[36]

American religion, meanwhile, was fixated on what McCarthy, in his 1950 Wheeling speech, called an "all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity." Cold warriors in the United States routinely referred to a fundamental incompatibility between "godless communism" and God-fearing Americanism. Religious conservatives championed the idea of the traditional nuclear, God-fearing family as a bulwark against the spread of atheistic totalitarianism. As Baptist minister Billy Graham sermonized in 1950, communism aimed to "destroy the American home and cause . . . moral deterioration," leaving the country exposed to communist infiltration.[37]

In an atmosphere in which ideas of national belonging and citizenship were so closely linked to religious commitment, Americans during the early Cold War years attended church, professed a belief in a supreme being, and stressed the importance of religion in their lives at higher rates than in any time in American history. Americans sought to differentiate themselves from godless communists through public displays of religiosity. Politicians infused government with religious symbols. The Pledge of Allegiance was altered to include the words *one nation, under God* in 1954. *In God We Trust* was adopted as the official national motto in 1956. In popular culture, one of the most popular films of the decade, *The Ten Commandments* (1956), retold the biblical Exodus story as a Cold War parable, echoing (incidentally) NSC-68's characterization of the Soviet Union as a "slave state." Monuments of the Ten Commandments went up at courthouses and city halls across the country.

While the link between American nationalism and religion grew much closer during the Cold War, many Americans began to believe that just believing in almost any religion was better than being an atheist. Gone was the overt anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic language of Protestants in the past. Now, leaders spoke of a common Judeo-Christian heritage. In December 1952, a month before his inauguration, Dwight Eisenhower said that "our form of government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply-felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is."[38]

Joseph McCarthy, an Irish Catholic, made common cause with prominent religious anticommunists, including southern evangelist Billy James Hargis of *Christian Crusade*, a popular radio and television ministry that peaked in the 1950s and 1960s. Cold War religion in America also crossed the political divide. During the 1952 campaign, Eisenhower spoke of U.S. foreign policy as "a war of light against darkness, freedom against slavery, Godliness against atheism."[39] His Democratic opponent, former Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson, said that America was engaged in a battle with the "Anti-Christ." While Billy Graham became a spiritual advisor to Eisenhower as well as other Republican and Democratic presidents, the same was true of the liberal Protestant Reinhold Niebuhr, perhaps the nation's most important theologian when he appeared on the cover of *Life* in March 1948.

Though publicly rebuked by the Tydings Committee, McCarthy soldiered on. In June 1951, on the floor of Congress, McCarthy charged that then secretary of defense (and former secretary of state) General George Marshall had fallen prey to "a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man." He claimed that Marshall, a war hero, had helped to "diminish the United States in world affairs," enabling the United States to "finally fall victim to Soviet intrigue . . . and Russian military might." The speech caused an uproar. During the 1952 campaign, Eisenhower, who was in all things moderate and politically cautious, refused to publicly denounce McCarthy. "I will not . . . get into the gutter with that guy," he wrote privately. McCarthy campaigned for Eisenhower, who won a stunning victory.[40]

So did the Republicans, who regained Congress. McCarthy became chairman of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (SPSI). He turned his newfound power against the government's overseas broadcast division, the Voice of America (VOA). McCarthy's investigation in February–March 1953 resulted in several resignations or transfers. McCarthy's mudslinging had become increasingly unrestrained. Soon he went after the U.S. Army. After forcing the army to again disprove theories of a

Soviet spy ring at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey, McCarthy publicly berated officers suspected of promoting leftists. McCarthy's badgering of witnesses created cover for critics to publicly denounce his abrasive fearmongering.

On March 9, CBS anchor Edward R. Murrow, a respected journalist, told his television audience that McCarthy's actions had "caused alarm and dismay amongst . . . allies abroad, and given considerable comfort to our enemies." Yet, Murrow explained, "he didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it—and rather successfully. Cassius was right. 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.'"[41]

Twenty million people saw the Army-McCarthy hearings unfold over thirty-six days in 1954. The army's head counsel, Joseph Welch, captured much of the mood of the country when he defended a fellow lawyer from McCarthy's public smears, saying, "Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?" In September, a senate subcommittee recommended that McCarthy be censured. On December 2, 1954, his colleagues voted 67–22 to "condemn" his actions. Humiliated, McCarthy faded into irrelevance and alcoholism and died in May 1957 at age 48.[42]

By the late 1950s, the worst of the second red scare was over. Stalin's death, followed by the Korean War armistice, opened new space—and hope—for the easing of Cold War tensions. Détente and the upheavals of the late 1960s were on the horizon. But McCarthyism outlasted McCarthy and the 1950s. The tactics he perfected continued to be practiced long after his death. "Red-baiting," the act of smearing a political opponent by linking them to communism or some other demonized ideology, persevered. But McCarthy had hardly been alone.

Congressman Richard Nixon, for instance, used his place on HUAC and his public role in the campaign against Alger Hiss to catapult himself into the White House alongside Eisenhower and later into the presidency. Ronald Reagan bolstered the fame he had won in Hollywood with his testimony before Congress and his anticommunist work for major American corporations such as General Electric. He too would use anticommunism to enter public life and chart a course to the presidency. In 1958, radical anticommunists founded the John Birch Society, attacking liberals and civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. as communists. Although joined by Cold War liberals, the weight of anticommunism was used as part of an assault against the New Deal and its defenders. Even those liberals, such as historian Arthur Schlesinger, who had fought against communism found themselves smeared by the red scare. The leftist American tradition was in tatters, destroyed by anticommunist hysteria. Movements for social justice, from civil rights to gay rights to feminism, were all suppressed under Cold War conformity.

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25.5: Decolonization and the Global Reach of the 'American Century'

In an influential 1941 *Life* magazine editorial titled "The American Century," publishing magnate Henry Luce outlined his "vision of America as the principal guarantor of freedom of the seas" and "the dynamic leader of world trade." In his embrace of an American-led international system, the conservative Luce was joined by liberals including historian Arthur Schlesinger, who in his 1949 Cold War tome *The Vital Center* proclaimed that a "world destiny" had been "thrust" upon the United States, with perhaps no other nation becoming "a more reluctant great power." Emerging from the war as the world's preeminent military and economic force, the United States was perhaps destined to compete with the Soviet Union for influence in the Third World, where a power vacuum had been created by the demise of European imperialism. As France and Britain in particular struggled in vain to control colonies in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, the United States assumed responsibility for maintaining order and producing a kind of "pax-Americana." Little of the postwar world, however, would be so peaceful.[43]

Based on the logic of militarized containment established by NSC-68 and American Cold War strategy, interventions in Korea and Vietnam were seen as appropriate American responses to the ascent of communism in China. Unless Soviet power in Asia was halted, Chinese influence would ripple across the continent, and one country after another would fall to communism. Easily transposed onto any region of the world, the Domino Theory became a standard basis for the justification of U.S. interventions abroad. Cuba was seen as a communist beachhead that imperiled Latin America, the Caribbean, and perhaps eventually the United States. Like Ho Chi Minh, Cuban leader Fidel Castro was a revolutionary nationalist whose career as a communist began in earnest after he was rebuffed by the United States, and American interventions targeted nations that never espoused official communist positions. Many interventions in Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere were driven by factors that were shaped by but also transcended anticommunist ideology.



Figure 25.5.1: The Cuban revolution seemed to confirm the fears of many Americans that the spread of communism could not be stopped. In this photograph, Castro and fellow revolutionary Che Guevara march in a memorial for those killed in the explosion of a ship unloading munitions in Havana in March 1960. The U.S. government had been active in undermining Castro's regime, and although there was no evidence in this instance, Castro publicly blamed the United States for the explosion. *Wikimedia.*

Instead of the United States dismantling its military after World War II, as it had after every major conflict, the Cold War facilitated a new permanent defense establishment. Federal investments in national defense affected the entire country. Different regions housed various sectors of what sociologist C. Wright Mills, in 1956, called the "permanent war economy." The aerospace industry was concentrated in areas like Southern California and Long Island, New York; Massachusetts was home to several universities that received major defense contracts; the Midwest became home base for intercontinental ballistic missiles pointed at the Soviet Union; many of the largest defense companies and military installations were concentrated in the South, so much so that in 1956 author William Faulkner, who was born in Mississippi, remarked, "Our economy is the Federal Government."[44]

A radical critic of U.S. policy, Mills was one of the first thinkers to question the effects of massive defense spending, which, he said, corrupted the ruling class, or "power elite," who now had the potential to take the country into war for the sake of corporate profits. Yet perhaps the most famous critique of the entrenched war economy came from an unlikely source. During his farewell address to the nation in January 1961, President Eisenhower cautioned Americans against the "unwarranted influence" of a "permanent armaments industry of vast proportions" that could threaten "liberties" and "democratic processes." While the "conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry" was a fairly recent development, this "military-industrial complex" had cultivated a "total influence," which was "economic, political, even spiritual . . . felt in every city . . . Statehouse . . . [and] office of the Federal government." There was, he said, great danger in failing to "comprehend its grave implications."[45]

In Eisenhower's formulation, the "military-industrial complex" referred specifically to domestic connections between arms manufacturers, members of Congress, and the Department of Defense. Yet the new alliance between corporations, politicians, and the military was dependent on having an actual conflict to wage, without which there could be no ultimate financial gain. To critics, military-industrial partnerships at home were now linked to U.S. interests abroad. Suddenly American foreign policy had to secure foreign markets and protect favorable terms for American trade all across the globe. Seen in such a way, the Cold War was just a by-product of America's new role as the remaining Western superpower. Regardless, the postwar rise of U.S. power correlated with what many historians describe as a "national security consensus" that has dominated American policy since World War II. And so the United States was now more intimately involved in world affairs than ever before.

Ideological conflicts and independence movements erupted across the postwar world. More than eighty countries achieved independence, primarily from European control. As it took center stage in the realm of global affairs, the United States played a complicated and often contradictory role in this process of "decolonization." The sweeping scope of post-1945 U.S. military expansion was unique in the country's history. Critics believed that the advent of a "standing army," so feared by many of the founding fathers, set a disturbing precedent. But in the postwar world, American leaders eagerly set about maintaining a new permanent military juggernaut and creating viable international institutions.

But what of independence movements around the world? Roosevelt had spoken for many in his remark to British prime minister Winston Churchill, in 1941, that it was hard to imagine "fight[ing] a war against fascist slavery, and at the same time not work to free people all over the world from a backward colonial policy."[46] American postwar foreign policy leaders therefore struggled to balance support for decolonization against the reality that national independence movements often posed a threat to America's global interests.

American strategy became consumed with thwarting Russian power and the concomitant global spread of communism. Foreign policy officials increasingly opposed all insurgencies or independence movements that could in any way be linked to international communism. The Soviet Union, too, was attempting to sway the world. Stalin and his successors pushed an agenda that included not only the creation of Soviet client states in Eastern and Central Europe, but also a tendency to support leftwing liberation movements everywhere, particularly when they espoused anti-American sentiment. As a result, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) engaged in numerous proxy wars in the Third World.

American planners felt that successful decolonization could demonstrate the superiority of democracy and capitalism against competing Soviet models. Their goal was in essence to develop an informal system of world power based as much as possible on consent (hegemony) rather than coercion (empire). But European powers still defended colonization and American officials feared that anticolonial resistance would breed revolution and push nationalists into the Soviet sphere. And when faced with such movements, American policy dictated alliances with colonial regimes, alienating nationalist leaders in Asia and Africa.

The architects of American power needed to sway the citizens of decolonizing nations toward the United States. In 1948, Congress passed the Smith-Mundt Act to "promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries." The legislation established cultural exchanges with various nations, including even the USSR, in order to showcase American values through American artists and entertainers. The Soviets did the same, through what they called an international peace offensive, which by most accounts was more successful than the American campaign. Although U.S. officials made strides through the initiation of various overt and covert programs, they still perceived that they were lagging behind the Soviet Union in the "war for hearts and minds." But as unrest festered in much of the Third World, American officials faced difficult choices.[47]

As black Americans fought for justice at home, prominent American black radicals, including Malcolm X, Paul Robeson, and the aging W. E. B. Du Bois, joined in solidarity with the global anticolonial movement, arguing that the United States had inherited the racist European imperial tradition. Supporters of the Soviet Union made their own effort to win over countries, claiming that Marxist-Leninist doctrine offered a road map for their liberation from colonial bondage. Moreover, Kremlin propaganda pointed to injustices of the American South as an example of American hypocrisy: how could the United States claim to fight for global freedom when it refused to guarantee freedoms for its own citizenry? In such ways the Cold War connected the black freedom

struggle, the Third World, and the global Cold War.



Figure 25.5.1: The Soviet Union took advantage of racial tensions in the United States to create anti-American propaganda. This 1930 Soviet poster shows a black American being lynched from the Statue of Liberty, while the text below asserts the links between racism and Christianity. *Wikimedia*.

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25.6: Conclusion

In June 1987, American president Ronald Reagan stood at the Berlin Wall and demanded that Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev "Tear down this wall!" Less than three years later, amid civil unrest in November 1989, East German authorities announced that their citizens were free to travel to and from West Berlin. The concrete curtain would be lifted and East Berlin would be opened to the world. Within months, the Berlin Wall was reduced to rubble by jubilant crowds anticipating the reunification of their city and their nation, which took place on October 3, 1990. By July 1991 the Warsaw Pact had crumbled, and on December 25 of that year, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved. Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic States (Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania) were freed from Russian domination.

Partisans fought to claim responsibility for the breakup of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War. Whether it was the triumphalist rhetoric and militaristic pressure of conservatives or the internal fracturing of ossified bureaucracies and work of Russian reformers that shaped the ending of the Cold War is a question of later decades. Questions about the Cold War's end must pause before appreciations of the Cold War's impact at home and abroad. Whether measured by the tens of millions killed in Cold War–related conflicts, in the reshaping of American politics and culture, or in the transformation of America's role in the world, the Cold War pushed American history upon a new path, one that it has yet to yield.

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25.7: Primary Sources

The Truman Doctrine (1947)

The "Truman Doctrine" directed the United States to actively support anti-communist forces around the world. The following is from President Truman's March 12, 1947 address before a joint session of congress requesting support for anti-communist regimes in Greece and Turkey.

NSC-68 (1950)

In 1950, the National Security Council produced a 58-page, top-secret report proclaiming the threat of Soviet communism. In the new postwar world, the report argued, the United States could no longer retreat toward isolationism without encouraging the aggressive expansion of communism across the globe. The United States, the report said, had to mobilize to ensure the survival of "civilization itself."

Joseph McCarthy on Communism (1950)

Senator Joseph McCarthy's relentless attacks on suspected communist influence in American government so captivated American attention that "McCarthyism" came to stand in for the fervor of Cold War America's anti-communism. In the following extract, McCarthy depicts what he imagined were the stakes his anti-communist crusades.

Woody Guthrie, "This Land" (1940-1945)

"This Land" was written by Woodie Guthrie in 1940 and first recorded in 1944 at Folkway Records. According to folk singer Pete Seeger, Guthrie printed the songs' lyrics and music in 1955 with the note, "This song is Copyrighted in U.S., under Seal of Copyright # 154085, for a period of 28 years, and anybody caught singin it without our permission, will be mighty good friends of ourn, cause we don't give a dern. Publish it. Write it. Sing it. Swing to it. Yodel it. We wrote it, that's all we wanted to do." Song lyrics were first published in 1945.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Atoms for Peace" (1953)

In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower spoke to the United Nations' General Assembly about the possibilities of peace in "the atomic age."

Atomic Energy Lab 1951-1952

This toy laboratory set was intended to let young people perform small scale experiments with radioactive materials in their own home. Equipped with a small working Geiger Counter, a "cloud chamber," and samples of radioactive ore, the set's creator claimed that the government supported its production to help Americans become more comfortable with nuclear energy.

Duck and Cover (1951)

In 1951, Archer Productions created "Duck and Cover," a civil defense film funded by the U.S. Federal Civil Defense Administration. The short film, starring Bert the Turtle and shown to Cold War school children, demonstrates "duck and cover"–a physical position designed to mitigate the effects of a nuclear blast.

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25.8: Reference Material

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26: THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY



Little Rock schools closed rather than allow integration. This 1958 photograph shows an African American high school girl watching school lessons on television. Library of Congress (LC-U9- 1525F-28).

26.1: Introduction

26.2: The Rise of the Suburbs

26.3: Race and Education

26.4: Civil Rights in an Affluent Society

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26.1: Introduction

In 1958, Harvard economist and public intellectual John Kenneth Galbraith published *The Affluent Society*. Galbraith's celebrated book examined America's new post–World War II consumer economy and political culture. While noting the unparalleled riches of American economic growth, it criticized the underlying structures of an economy dedicated only to increasing production and the consumption of goods. Galbraith argued that the U.S. economy, based on an almost hedonistic consumption of luxury products, would inevitably lead to economic inequality as private-sector interests enriched themselves at the expense of the American public. Galbraith warned that an economy where "wants are increasingly created by the process by which they are satisfied" was unsound, unsustainable, and, ultimately, immoral. "The Affluent Society," he said, was anything but.[1]

While economists and scholars debate the merits of Galbraith's warnings and predictions, his analysis was so insightful that the title of his book has come to serve as a ready label for postwar American society. In the two decades after the end of World War II, the American economy witnessed massive and sustained growth that reshaped American culture through the abundance of consumer goods. Standards of living—across all income levels—climbed to unparalleled heights and economic inequality plummeted.[2]

And yet, as Galbraith noted, the Affluent Society had fundamental flaws. The new consumer economy that lifted millions of Americans into its burgeoning middle class also reproduced existing inequalities. Women struggled to claim equal rights as full participants in American society. The poor struggled to win access to good schools, good healthcare, and good jobs. The same suburbs that gave middle-class Americans new space left cities withering in spirals of poverty and crime. The Jim Crow South tenaciously defended segregation, and black Americans and other minorities suffered discrimination all across the country.

The contradictions of the Affluent Society defined the decade: unrivaled prosperity alongside persistent poverty, expanded opportunity alongside entrenched discrimination, and new liberating lifestyles alongside a stifling conformity.

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26.2: The Rise of the Suburbs



Figure 26.2.1: Levittown in the early1950s. *Flickr/Creative Commons*.

The seeds of a suburban nation were planted in New Deal government programs. At the height of the Great Depression, in 1932, some 250,000 households lost their property to foreclosure. A year later, half of all U.S. mortgages were in default. The foreclosure rate stood at more than one thousand per day. In response, FDR's New Deal created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), which began purchasing and refinancing existing mortgages at risk of default. The HOLC introduced the amortized mortgage, allowing borrowers to pay back interest and principal regularly over fifteen years instead of the then standard five-year mortgage that carried large balloon payments at the end of the contract. The HOLC eventually owned nearly one of every five mortgages in America. Though homeowners paid more for their homes under this new system, home ownership was opened to the multitudes who could now gain residential stability, lower monthly mortgage payments, and accrue wealth as property values rose over time.[3]

Additionally, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), another New Deal organization, increased access to home ownership by insuring mortgages and protecting lenders from financial loss in the event of a default. Lenders, however, had to agree to offer low rates and terms of up to twenty or thirty years. Even more consumers could afford homes. Though only slightly more than a third of homes had an FHA-backed mortgage by 1964, FHA loans had a ripple effect, with private lenders granting more and more home loans even to non-FHA-backed borrowers. Government programs and subsidies like the HOLC and the FHA fueled the growth of home ownership and the rise of the suburbs.

Government spending during World War II pushed the United States out of the Depression and into an economic boom that would be sustained after the war by continued government spending. Government expenditures provided loans to veterans, subsidized corporate research and development, and built the interstate highway system. In the decades after World War II, business boomed, unionization peaked, wages rose, and sustained growth buoyed a new consumer economy. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act (popularly known as the G.I. Bill), passed in 1944, offered low-interest home loans, a stipend to attend college, loans to start a business, and unemployment benefits.

The rapid growth of home ownership and the rise of suburban communities helped drive the postwar economic boom. Builders created sprawling neighborhoods of single-family homes on the outskirts of American cities. William Levitt built the first Levittown, the prototypical suburban community, in 1946 in Long Island, New York. Purchasing large acreage, subdividing lots, and contracting crews to build countless homes at economies of scale, Levitt offered affordable suburban housing to veterans and their families. Levitt became the prophet of the new suburbs, and his model of large-scale suburban development was duplicated by developers across the country. The country's suburban share of the population rose from 19.5 percent in 1940 to 30.7 percent by 1960. Home ownership rates rose from 44 percent in 1940 to almost 62 percent in 1960. Between 1940 and 1950, suburban communities with more than ten thousand people grew 22.1 percent, and planned communities grew at an astonishing rate of 126.1 percent.[4] As historian Lizabeth Cohen notes, these new suburbs "mushroomed in territorial size and the populations they

harbored."[5] Between 1950 and 1970, America's suburban population nearly doubled to seventy-four million. Eighty-three percent of all population growth occurred in suburban places.[6]

The postwar construction boom fed into countless industries. As manufacturers converted from war materials back to consumer goods, and as the suburbs developed, appliance and automobile sales rose dramatically. Flush with rising wages and wartime savings, homeowners also used newly created installment plans to buy new consumer goods at once instead of saving for years to make major purchases. Credit cards, first issued in 1950, further increased access to credit. No longer stymied by the Depression or wartime restrictions, consumers bought countless washers, dryers, refrigerators, freezers, and, suddenly, televisions. The percentage of Americans that owned at least one television increased from 12 percent in 1950 to more than 87 percent in 1960. This new suburban economy also led to increased demand for automobiles. The percentage of American families owning cars increased from 54 percent in 1948 to 74 percent in 1959. Motor fuel consumption rose from some twenty-two million gallons in 1945 to around fifty-nine million gallons in 1958.[7]

On the surface, the postwar economic boom turned America into a land of abundance. For advantaged buyers, loans had never been easier to obtain, consumer goods had never been more accessible, and well-paying jobs had never been more abundant. "If you had a college diploma, a dark suit, and anything between the ears," a businessman later recalled, "it was like an escalator; you just stood there and you moved up."[8] But the escalator did not serve everyone. Beneath aggregate numbers, racial disparity, sexual discrimination, and economic inequality persevered, undermining many of the assumptions of an Affluent Society.

In 1939 real estate appraisers arrived in sunny Pasadena, California. Armed with elaborate questionnaires to evaluate the city's building conditions, the appraisers were well versed in the policies of the HOLC. In one neighborhood, most structures were rated in "fair" repair, and appraisers noted a lack of "construction hazards or flood threats." However, they concluded that the area "is detrimentally affected by 10 owner occupant Negro families." While "the Negroes are said to be of the better class," the appraisers concluded, "it seems inevitable that ownership and property values will drift to lower levels."[9]

Wealth created by the booming economy filtered through social structures with built-in privileges and prejudices. Just when many middle- and working-class white American families began their journey of upward mobility by moving to the suburbs with the help of government programs such as the FHA and the G.I. Bill, many African Americans and other racial minorities found themselves systematically shut out.

A look at the relationship between federal organizations such as the HOLC, the FHA, and private banks, lenders, and real estate agents tells the story of standardized policies that produced a segregated housing market. At the core of HOLC appraisal techniques, which reflected the existing practices of private real estate agents, was the pernicious insistence that mixed-race and minority-dominated neighborhoods were credit risks. In partnership with local lenders and real estate agents, the HOLC created Residential Security Maps to identify high- and low-risk-lending areas. People familiar with the local real estate market filled out uniform surveys on each neighborhood. Relying on this information, the HOLC assigned every neighborhood a letter grade from A to D and a corresponding color code. The least secure, highest-risk neighborhoods for loans received a D grade and the color red. Banks limited loans in such "redlined" areas.[10]

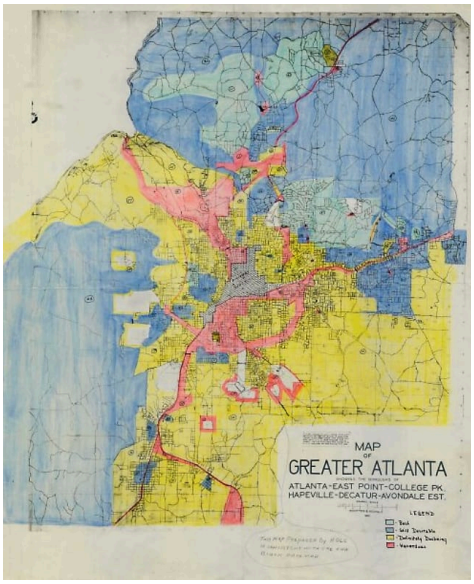


Figure 26.2.2: Black communities in cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Brooklyn, and Atlanta (mapped here) experienced redlining, the process by which banks and other organizations demarcated minority neighborhoods on a map with a red line. Doing so made visible the areas they believed were unfit for their services, directly denying black residents loans, but also, indirectly, housing, groceries, and other necessities of modern life. *National Archives*

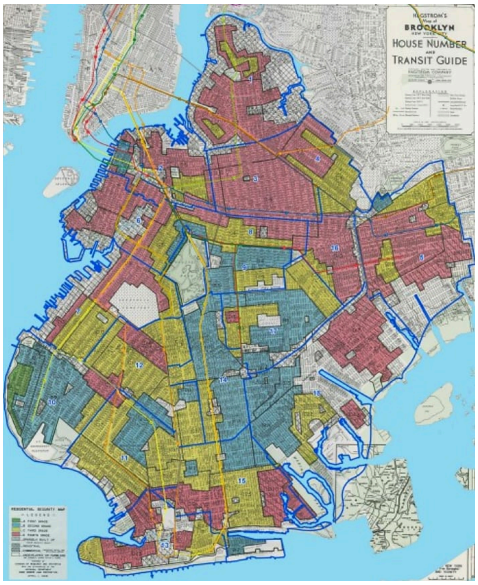


Figure 26.2.3: 1938 Brooklyn redlining map. *National Archives*.

Phrases like *subversive racial elements* and *racial hazards* pervade the redlined-area description files of surveyors and HOLC officials. Los Angeles's Echo Park neighborhood, for instance, had concentrations of Japanese and African Americans and a "sprinkling of Russians and Mexicans." The HOLC security map and survey noted that the neighborhood's "adverse racial influences which are noticeably increasing inevitably presage lower values, rentals and a rapid decrease in residential desirability."[11]

While the HOLC was a fairly short-lived New Deal agency, the influence of its security maps lived on in the FHA and Veterans Administration (VA), the latter of which dispensed G.I. Bill–backed mortgages. Both of these government organizations, which reinforced the standards followed by private lenders, refused to back bank mortgages in "redlined" neighborhoods. On the one hand, FHA- and VA-backed loans were an enormous boon to those who qualified for them. Millions of Americans received mortgages that they otherwise would not have qualified for. But FHA-backed mortgages were not available to all. Racial minorities could not get loans for property improvements in their own neighborhoods and were denied mortgages to purchase property in other areas for fear that their presence would extend the red line into a new community. Levittown, the poster child of the new suburban America, only allowed whites to purchase homes. Thus, FHA policies and private developers increased home ownership

and stability for white Americans while simultaneously creating and enforcing racial segregation.

The exclusionary structures of the postwar economy prompted protest from African Americans and other minorities who were excluded. Fair housing, equal employment, consumer access, and educational opportunity, for instance, all emerged as priorities of a brewing civil rights movement. In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court sided with African American plaintiffs and, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, declared racially restrictive neighborhood housing covenants—property deed restrictions barring sales to racial minorities—legally unenforceable. Discrimination and segregation continued, however, and activists would continue to push for fair housing practices.

During the 1950s and early 1960s many Americans retreated to the suburbs to enjoy the new consumer economy and search for some normalcy and security after the instability of depression and war. But many could not. It was both the limits and opportunities of housing, then, that shaped the contours of postwar American society.

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26.3: Race and Education



Figure 26.3.1: School desegregation was a tense experience for all involved, but none more so than the African American students who integrated white schools. The Little Rock Nine were the first to do so in Arkansas. Their escorts, the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army, protected students who took that first step in 1957. *Wikimedia*.

Older battles over racial exclusion also confronted postwar American society. One long-simmering struggle targeted segregated schooling. In 1896, the Supreme Court declared the principle of "separate but equal" constitutional. Segregated schooling, however, was rarely "equal": in practice, black Americans, particularly in the South, received fewer funds, attended inadequate facilities, and studied with substandard materials. African Americans' battle against educational inequality stretched across half a century before the Supreme Court again took up the merits of "separate but equal."

On May 17, 1954, after two years of argument, re-argument, and deliberation, Chief Justice Earl Warren announced the Supreme Court's decision on segregated schooling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The court found by a unanimous 9–0 vote that racial segregation violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court's decision declared, "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." "Separate but equal" was made unconstitutional.[12]

Decades of African American–led litigation, local agitation against racial inequality, and liberal Supreme Court justices made *Brown* possible. In the early 1930s, the NAACP began a concerted effort to erode the legal underpinnings of segregation in the American South. Legal, or de jure, segregation subjected racial minorities to discriminatory laws and policies. Law and custom in the South hardened antiblack restrictions. But through a series of carefully chosen and contested court cases concerning education, disfranchisement, and jury selection, NAACP lawyers such as Charles Hamilton Houston, Robert L. Clark, and future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall undermined Jim Crow's constitutional underpinnings. These attorneys initially sought to demonstrate that states systematically failed to provide African American students "equal" resources and facilities, and thus failed to live up to *Plessy*. By the late 1940s activists began to more forcefully challenge the assumptions that "separate" was constitutional at all.



Figure 26.3.2: The NAACP was a key organization in the fight to end legalized racial discrimination. In this 1956 photograph, NAACP leaders, including Thurgood Marshall, who would become the first African American Supreme Court Justice, hold a poster decrying racial bias in Mississippi in 1956. *Library of Congress*.

Though remembered as just one lawsuit, *Brown v. Board of Education* consolidated five separate cases that had originated in the southeastern United States: *Briggs v. Elliott* (South Carolina), *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (Virginia), *Beulah v. Belton* (Delaware), *Boiling v. Sharpe* (Washington, D.C.), and *Brown v. Board of Education* (Kansas). Working with local activists already involved in desegregation fights, the NAACP purposely chose cases with a diverse set of local backgrounds to show that segregation was not just an issue in the Deep South, and that a sweeping judgment on the fundamental constitutionality of *Plessy* was needed.

Briggs v. Elliott, the first case accepted by the NAACP, illustrated the plight of segregated black schools. *Briggs* originated in rural Clarendon County, South Carolina, where taxpayers in 1950 spent $179 to educate each white student and $43 for each black student. The district's twelve white schools were cumulatively worth $673,850; the value of its sixty-one black schools (mostly dilapidated, overcrowded shacks) was $194,575.[13] While *Briggs* underscored the South's failure to follow *Plessy*, the *Brown* suit focused less on material disparities between black and white schools (which were significantly less than in places like Clarendon County) and more on the social and spiritual degradation that accompanied legal segregation. This case cut to the basic question of whether "separate" was itself inherently unequal. The NAACP said the two notions were incompatible. As one witness before the U.S. District Court of Kansas said, "The entire colored race is craving light, and the only way to reach the light is to start [black and white] children together in their infancy and they come up together."[14]

To make its case, the NAACP marshaled historical and social scientific evidence. The Court found the historical evidence inconclusive and drew their ruling more heavily from the NAACP's argument that segregation psychologically damaged black children. To make this argument, association lawyers relied on social scientific evidence, such as the famous doll experiments of Kenneth and Mamie Clark. The Clarks demonstrated that while young white girls would naturally choose to play with white dolls, young black girls would, too. The Clarks argued that black children's aesthetic and moral preference for white dolls demonstrated the pernicious effects and self-loathing produced by segregation.

Identifying and denouncing injustice, though, is different from rectifying it. Though *Brown* repudiated *Plessy*, the Court's orders did not extend to segregation in places other than public schools and, even then, to preserve a unanimous decision for such an historically important case, the justices set aside the divisive yet essential question of enforcement. Their infamously ambiguous order in 1955 (what came to be known as *Brown II*) that school districts desegregate "with all deliberate speed" was so vague and ineffectual that it left the actual business of desegregation in the hands of those who opposed it.



Figure 26.3.3: In 1959, photographer John Bledsoe captured this image of the crowd on the steps of the Arkansas state capitol building protesting the federally mandated integration of Little Rock's Central High School. This image shows how worries about desegregation were bound up with other concerns, such as the reach of communism and government power. Library of Congress.

In most of the South, as well as the rest of the country, school integration did not occur on a wide scale until well after *Brown*. Only in the 1964 Civil Rights Act did the federal government finally implement some enforcement of the *Brown* decision by threatening to withhold funding from recalcitrant school districts, but even then southern districts found loopholes. Court decisions such as *Green v. New Kent County* (1968) and *Alexander v. Holmes* (1969) finally closed some of those loopholes, such as "freedom of choice" plans, to compel some measure of actual integration.

When *Brown* finally was enforced in the South, the quantitative impact was staggering. In 1968, fourteen years after *Brown*, some 80 percent of school-age black southerners remained in schools that were 90 to 100 percent nonwhite. By 1972, though, just 25 percent were in such schools, and 55 percent remained in schools with a simple nonwhite minority. By many measures, the public schools of the South became, ironically, the most integrated in the nation.[15]

As a landmark moment in American history, *Brown*'s significance perhaps lies less in immediate tangible changes—which were slow, partial, and inseparable from a much longer chain of events—than in the idealism it expressed and the momentum it created. The nation's highest court had attacked one of the fundamental supports of Jim Crow segregation and offered constitutional cover for the creation of one of the greatest social movements in American history.

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26.4: Civil Rights in an Affluent Society



FIgure 26.4.1***:*** *This segregated drinking fountain was located on the grounds of the Halifax County courthouse in North Carolina. Photograph, April 1938. Wikimedia.*

Education was but one aspect of the nation's Jim Crow machinery. African Americans had been fighting against a variety of racist policies, cultures, and beliefs in all aspects of American life. And while the struggle for black inclusion had few victories before World War II, the war and the Double V campaign for victory against fascism abroad and racism at home, as well as the postwar economic boom led, to rising expectations for many African Americans. When persistent racism and racial segregation undercut the promise of economic and social mobility, African Americans began mobilizing on an unprecedented scale against the various discriminatory social and legal structures.

While many of the civil rights movement's most memorable and important moments, such as the sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, and especially the March on Washington, occurred in the 1960s, the 1950s were a significant decade in the sometimes tragic, sometimes triumphant march of civil rights in the United States. In 1953, years before Rosa Parks's iconic confrontation on a Montgomery city bus, an African American woman named Sarah Keys publicly challenged segregated public transportation. Keys, then serving in the Women's Army Corps, traveled from her army base in New Jersey back to North Carolina to visit her family. When the bus stopped in North Carolina, the driver asked her to give up her seat for a white customer. Her refusal to do so landed her in jail in 1953 and led to a landmark 1955 decision, *Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company*, in which the Interstate Commerce Commission ruled that "separate but equal" violated the Interstate Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution. Poorly enforced, it nevertheless gave legal coverage for the Freedom Riders years later and motivated further assaults against Jim Crow.

But if some events encouraged civil rights workers with the promise of progress, others were so savage they convinced activists that they could do nothing but resist. In the summer of 1955, two white men in Mississippi kidnapped and brutally murdered fourteen-year-old Emmett Till. Till, visiting from Chicago and perhaps unfamiliar with the "etiquette" of Jim Crow, allegedly whistled at a white woman named Carolyn Bryant. Her husband, Roy Bryant, and another man, J. W. Milam, abducted Till from his relatives' home, beat him, mutilated him, shot him, and threw his body in the Tallahatchie River. Emmett's mother held an open-casket funeral so that Till's disfigured body could make national news. The men were brought to trial. The evidence was damning, but an all-white jury found the two not guilty. Mere months after the decision, the two boasted of their crime, in all of its brutal detail, in *Look* magazine. "They ain't gonna go to school with my kids," Milam said. They wanted "to make an example of [Till]—just so everybody can know how me and my folks stand."[16] The Till case became an indelible memory for the young black men and women soon to propel the civil rights movement forward.

On December 1, 1955, four months after Till's death and six days after the *Keys v. Carolina Coach Company* decision, Rosa Parks refused to surrender her seat on a Montgomery city bus and was arrested. Montgomery's public transportation system had longstanding rules requiring African American passengers to sit in the back of the bus and to give up their seats to white

passengers if the buses filled. Parks was not the first to protest the policy by staying seated, but she was the first around whom Montgomery activists rallied.

Montgomery's black population, under the leadership of local ministers and civil rights workers, formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and coordinated an organized boycott of the city's buses. The Montgomery Bus Boycott lasted from December 1955 until December 20, 1956, when the Supreme Court ordered their integration. The boycott not only crushed segregation in Montgomery's public transportation, it energized the entire civil rights movement and established the leadership of the MIA's president, a recently arrived, twenty-six-year-old Baptist minister named Martin Luther King Jr.

Motivated by the success of the Montgomery boycott, King and other African American leaders looked to continue the fight. In 1957, King helped create the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to coordinate civil rights groups across the South and buoy their efforts organizing and sustaining boycotts, protests, and other assaults against southern Jim Crow laws.

As pressure built, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the first such measure passed since Reconstruction. The act was compromised away nearly to nothing, although it did achieve some gains, such as creating the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Commission, which was charged with investigating claims of racial discrimination. And yet, despite its weakness, the act signaled that pressure was finally mounting on Americans to confront the legacy of discrimination.

Despite successes at both the local and national level, the civil rights movement faced bitter opposition. Those opposed to the movement often used violent tactics to scare and intimidate African Americans and subvert legal rulings and court orders. For example, a year into the Montgomery bus boycott, angry white southerners bombed four African American churches as well as the homes of King and fellow civil rights leader E. D. Nixon. Though King, Nixon, and the MIA persevered in the face of such violence, it was only a taste of things to come. Such unremitting hostility and violence left the outcome of the burgeoning civil rights movement in doubt. Despite its successes, civil rights activists looked back on the 1950s as a decade of mixed results and incomplete accomplishments. While the bus boycott, Supreme Court rulings, and other civil rights activities signaled progress, church bombings, death threats, and stubborn legislators demonstrated the distance that still needed to be traveled.

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26.5: Gender and Culture in the Affluent Society



Figure 26.5.1: As shown in this 1958 advertisement for a "Westinghouse with Cold Injector," a midcentury marketing frenzy targeted female consumers by touting technological innovations designed to make housework easier. Westinghouse.

America's consumer economy reshaped how Americans experienced culture and shaped their identities. The Affluent Society gave Americans new experiences, new outlets, and new ways to understand and interact with one another.

"The American household is on the threshold of a revolution," the *New York Times* declared in August 1948. "The reason is television."[17]Television was presented to the American public at the New York World's Fair in 1939, but commercialization of the new medium in the United States lagged during the war years. In 1947, though, regular full-scale broadcasting became available to the public. Television was instantly popular, so much so that by early 1948 *Newsweek* reported that it was "catching on like a case of high-toned scarlet fever."[18] Indeed, between 1948 and 1955 close to two thirds of the nation's households purchased a television set. By the end of the 1950s, 90 percent of American families had one and the average viewer was tuning in for almost five hours a day.[19]

The technological ability to transmit images via radio waves gave birth to television. Television borrowed radio's organizational structure, too. The big radio broadcasting companies—NBC, CBS, and the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)—used their technical expertise and capital reserves to conquer the airwaves. They acquired licenses to local stations and eliminated their few independent competitors. The refusal of the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to issue any new licenses between 1948 and 1955 was a de facto endorsement of the big three's stranglehold on the market.

In addition to replicating radio's organizational structure, television also looked to radio for content. Many of the early programs were adaptations of popular radio variety and comedy shows, including *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *Milton Berle's Texaco Star Theater*. These were accompanied by live plays, dramas, sports, and situation comedies. Because of the cost and difficulty of recording, most programs were broadcast live, forcing stations across the country to air shows at the same time. And since audiences had a limited number of channels to choose from, viewing experiences were broadly shared. More than two thirds of television-owning households, for instance, watched popular shows such as *I Love Lucy*.

The limited number of channels and programs meant that networks selected programs that appealed to the widest possible audience to draw viewers and advertisers, television's greatest financers. By the mid-1950s, an hour of primetime programming cost about $150,000 (about $1.5 million in today's dollars) to produce. This proved too expensive for most commercial sponsors, who began turning to a joint financing model of thirty-second spot ads. The need to appeal to as many people as possible promoted the production of noncontroversial shows aimed at the entire family. Programs such as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* featured light topics, humor, and a guaranteed happy ending the whole family could enjoy.[20]



Figure 26.5.2***:*** *Advertising was everywhere in the 1950s, including on TV shows such as the quiz show Twenty One, sponsored by Geritol, a dietary supplement. Library of Congress.*

Television's broad appeal, however, was about more than money and entertainment. Shows of the 1950s, such as *Father Knows Best* and *I Love Lucy*, idealized the nuclear family, "traditional" gender roles, and white, middle-class domesticity. *Leave It to Beaver*, which became the prototypical example of the 1950s television family, depicted its breadwinner father and homemaker mother guiding their children through life lessons. Such shows, and Cold War America more broadly, reinforced a popular consensus that such lifestyles were not only beneficial but the most effective way to safeguard American prosperity against communist threats and social "deviancy."

Postwar prosperity facilitated, and in turn was supported by, the ongoing postwar baby boom. From 1946 to 1964, American fertility experienced an unprecedented spike. A century of declining birth rates abruptly reversed. Although popular memory credits the cause of the baby boom to the return of virile soldiers from battle, the real story is more nuanced. After years of economic depression, families were now wealthy enough to support larger families and had homes large enough to accommodate them, while women married younger and American culture celebrated the ideal of a large, insular family.

Underlying this "reproductive consensus" was the new cult of professionalism that pervaded postwar American culture, including the professionalization of homemaking. Mothers and fathers alike flocked to the experts for their opinions on marriage, sexuality, and, most especially, child-rearing. Psychiatrists held an almost mythic status as people took their opinions and prescriptions, as well as their vocabulary, into their everyday life. Books like Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care* (1946) were diligently studied by women who took their career as housewife as just that: a career, complete with all the demands and professional trappings of job development and training. And since most women had multiple children roughly the same age as their neighbors' children, a cultural obsession with kids flourished throughout the era. Women bore the brunt of this pressure, chided if they did not give enough of their time to the children—especially if it was because of a career—yet cautioned that spending too much time would lead to "Momism," producing "sissy" boys who would be incapable of contributing to society and extremely susceptible to the communist threat.

A new youth culture exploded in American popular culture. On the one hand, the anxieties of the atomic age hit America's youth particularly hard. Keenly aware of the discontent bubbling beneath the surface of the Affluent Society, many youth embraced rebellion. The 1955 film *Rebel Without a Cause* demonstrated the restlessness and emotional incertitude of the postwar generation raised in increasing affluence yet increasingly unsatisfied with their comfortable lives. At the same time, perhaps yearning for something beyond the "massification" of American culture yet having few other options to turn to beyond popular culture, American youth embraced rock 'n' roll. They listened to Little Richard, Buddy Holly, and especially Elvis Presley (whose sexually suggestive hip movements were judged subversive).

The popularity of rock 'n' roll had not yet blossomed into the countercultural musical revolution of the coming decade, but it provided a magnet for teenage restlessness and rebellion. "Television and Elvis," the musician Bruce Springsteen recollected, "gave us full access to a new language, a new form of communication, a new way of being, a new way of looking, a new way of

thinking; about sex, about race, about identity, about life; a new way of being an American, a human being; and a new way of hearing music." American youth had seen so little of Elvis's energy and sensuality elsewhere in their culture. "Once Elvis came across the airwaves," Springsteen said, "once he was heard and seen in action, you could not put the genie back in the bottle. After that moment, there was yesterday, and there was today, and there was a red hot, rockabilly forging of a new tomorrow, before your very eyes."[21]



Figure 26.5.3: While many black musicians such as Chuck Berry helped pioneer rock 'n' roll, white artists such as Elvis Presley brought it into the mainstream American culture. Elvis's good looks, sensual dancing, and sonorous voice stole the hearts of millions of American teenage girls, who were at that moment becoming a central segment of the consumer population. *Wikimedia*.

Other Americans took larger steps to reject the expected conformity of the Affluent Society. The writers, poets, and musicians of the Beat Generation, disillusioned with capitalism, consumerism, and traditional gender roles, sought a deeper meaning in life. Beats traveled across the country, studied Eastern religions, and experimented with drugs, sex, and art.

Behind the scenes, Americans were challenging sexual mores. The gay rights movement, for instance, stretched back into the Affluent Society. While the country proclaimed homosexuality a mental disorder, gay men established the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles and gay women formed the Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco as support groups. They held meetings, distributed literature, provided legal and counseling services, and formed chapters across the country. Much of their work, however, remained secretive because homosexuals risked arrest and abuse if discovered.[22]

Society's "consensus," on everything from the consumer economy to gender roles, did not go unchallenged. Much discontent was channeled through the machine itself: advertisers sold rebellion no less than they sold baking soda. And yet others were rejecting the old ways, choosing new lifestyles, challenging old hierarchies, and embarking on new path.

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26.6: Politics and Ideology in the Affluent Society

Postwar economic prosperity and the creation of new suburban spaces inevitably shaped American politics. In stark contrast to the Great Depression, the new prosperity renewed belief in the superiority of capitalism, cultural conservatism, and religion.

InIn the 1930s, the economic ravages of the international economic catastrophe knocked the legs out from under the intellectual justifications for keeping government out of the economy. And yet pockets of true believers kept alive the gospel of the free market. The single most important was the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). In the midst of the depression, NAM reinvented itself and went on the offensive, initiating advertising campaigns supporting "free enterprise" and "The American Way of Life."[23] More importantly, NAM became a node for business leaders, such as J. Howard Pew of Sun Oil and Jasper Crane of DuPont Chemical Co., to network with like-minded individuals and take the message of free enterprise to the American people. The network of business leaders that NAM brought together in the midst of the Great Depression formed the financial, organizational, and ideological underpinnings of the free market advocacy groups that emerged and found ready adherents in America's new suburban spaces in the postwar decades.

One of the most important advocacy groups that sprang up after the war was Leonard Read's Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). Read founded FEE in 1946 on the premise that "The American Way of Life" was essentially individualistic and that the best way to protect and promote that individualism was through libertarian economics. Libertarianism took as its core principle the promotion of individual liberty, property rights, and an economy with a minimum of government regulation. FEE, whose advisory board and supporters came mostly from the NAM network of Pew and Crane, became a key ideological factory, supplying businesses, service clubs, churches, schools, and universities with a steady stream of libertarian literature, much of it authored by Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises.[24]

Shortly after FEE's formation, Austrian economist and libertarian intellectual Friedrich Hayek founded the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) in 1947. The MPS brought together libertarian intellectuals from both sides of the Atlantic to challenge Keynesian economics—the dominant notion that government fiscal and monetary policy were necessary economic tools—in academia. University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman became its president. Friedman (and his Chicago School of Economics) and the MPS became some of the most influential free market advocates in the world and helped legitimize for many the libertarian ideology so successfully evangelized by FEE, its descendant organizations, and libertarian popularizers such as the novelist Ayn Rand.[25]

Libertarian politics and evangelical religion were shaping the origins of a new conservative, suburban constituency. Suburban communities' distance from government and other top-down community-building mechanisms—despite relying on government subsidies and government programs—left a social void that evangelical churches eagerly filled. More often than not the theology and ideology of these churches reinforced socially conservative views while simultaneously reinforcing congregants' belief in economic individualism. Novelist Ayn Rand, meanwhile, whose novels *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) were two of the decades' best sellers, helped move the ideas of individualism, "rational self-interest," and "the virtue of selfishness" outside the halls of business and academia and into suburbia. The ethos of individualism became the building blocks for a new political movement. And yet, while the growing suburbs and their brewing conservative ideology eventually proved immensely important in American political life, their impact was not immediately felt. They did not yet have a champion.

In the post–World War II years the Republican Party faced a fork in the road. Its complete lack of electoral success since the Depression led to a battle within the party about how to revive its electoral prospects. The more conservative faction, represented by Ohio senator Robert Taft (son of former president William Howard Taft) and backed by many party activists and financiers such as J. Howard Pew, sought to take the party further to the right, particularly in economic matters, by rolling back New Deal programs and policies. On the other hand, the more moderate wing of the party, led by men such as New York governor Thomas Dewey and Nelson Rockefeller, sought to embrace and reform New Deal programs and policies. There were further disagreements among party members about how involved the United States should be in the world. Issues such as foreign aid, collective security, and how best to fight communism divided the party.

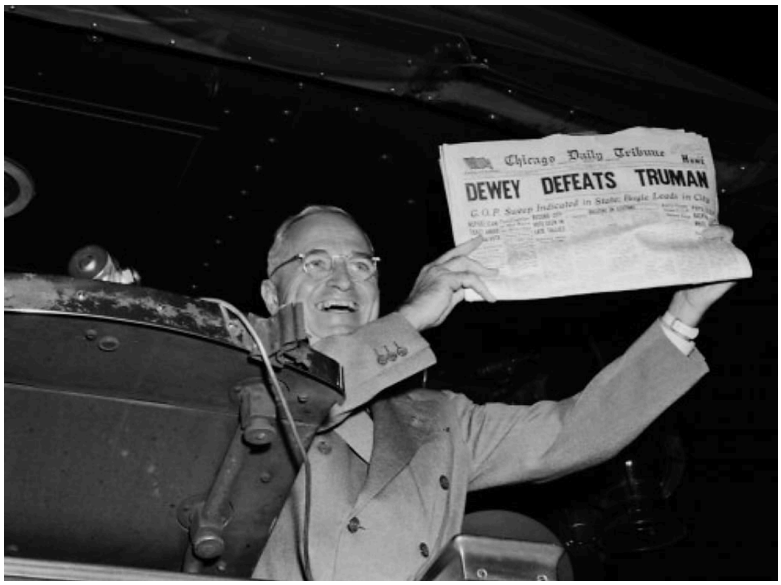


Figure 26.6.1: Undated portrait of President Harry S. Truman. *National Archives*.

Initially, the moderates, or "liberals," won control of the party with the nomination of Thomas Dewey in 1948. Dewey's shocking loss to Truman, however, emboldened conservatives, who rallied around Taft as the 1952 presidential primaries approached. With the conservative banner riding high in the party, General Dwight Eisenhower ("Ike"), most recently North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) supreme commander, felt obliged to join the race in order to beat back the conservatives and "prevent one of our great two Parties from adopting a course which could lead to national suicide." In addition to his fear that Taft and the conservatives would undermine collective security arrangements such as NATO, he also berated the "neanderthals" in his party for their anti–New Deal stance. Eisenhower felt that the best way to stop communism was to undercut its appeal by alleviating the conditions under which it was most attractive. That meant supporting New Deal programs. There was also a political calculus to Eisenhower's position. He observed, "Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history."[26]

The primary contest between Taft and Eisenhower was close and controversial. Taft supporters claimed that Eisenhower stole the nomination from Taft at the convention. Eisenhower, attempting to placate the conservatives in his party, picked California congressman and virulent anticommunist Richard Nixon as his running mate. With the Republican nomination sewn up, the immensely popular Eisenhower swept to victory in the 1952 general election, easily besting Truman's hand-picked successor, Adlai Stevenson. Eisenhower's popularity boosted Republicans across the country, leading them to majorities in both houses of Congress.

The Republican sweep in the 1952 election, owing in part to Eisenhower's popularity, translated into few tangible legislative accomplishments. Within two years of his election, the moderate Eisenhower saw his legislative proposals routinely defeated by an unlikely alliance of conservative Republicans, who thought Eisenhower was going too far, and liberal Democrats, who thought he was not going far enough. For example, in 1954 Eisenhower proposed a national healthcare plan that would have provided federal support for increasing healthcare coverage across the nation without getting the government directly involved in regulating the healthcare industry. The proposal was defeated in the house by a 238–134 vote with a swing bloc of seventy-five conservative Republicans joining liberal Democrats voting against the plan.[27] Eisenhower's proposals in education and agriculture often suffered similar defeats. By the end of his presidency, Ike's domestic legislative achievements were largely limited to expanding social security; making Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) a cabinet position; passing the National Defense Education Act; and bolstering federal support to education, particularly in math and science.

As with any president, however, Eisenhower's impact was bigger than just legislation. Ike's "middle of the road" philosophy guided his foreign policy as much as his domestic agenda. He sought to keep the United States from direct interventions abroad by bolstering anticommunist and procapitalist allies. Ike funneled money to the French in Vietnam fighting the Ho Chi Minh–led communists, walked a tight line between helping Chiang Kai-Shek's Taiwan without overtly provoking Mao Zedong's China, and materially backed groups that destabilized "unfriendly" governments in Iran and Guatemala. The centerpiece of Ike's Soviet policy, meanwhile, was the threat of "massive retaliation," or the threat of nuclear force in the face of communist expansion, thereby checking Soviet expansion without direct American involvement. While Ike's "mainstream" "middle way" won broad popular support, his own party was slowly moving away from his positions. By 1964 the party had moved far enough to the right

to nominate Arizona senator Barry Goldwater, the most conservative candidate in a generation. The political moderation of the Affluent Society proved little more than a way station on the road to liberal reforms and a more distant conservative ascendancy.

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26.7: Conclusion

The postwar American “consensus” held great promise. Despite the looming threat of nuclear war, millions experienced an unprecedented prosperity and an increasingly proud American identity. Prosperity seemed to promise ever higher standards of living. But things fell apart, and the center could not hold: wracked by contradiction, dissent, discrimination, and inequality, the Affluent Society stood on the precipice of revolution.

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26.8: Primary Sources

Migrant Farmers and Immigrant Labor (1952)

During the labor shortages of World War II, the United States' launched the Bracero ("laborer") program to bring Mexican laborers into the United States. The program continued into the 1960s and brought more than a million workers into the United States on short-term contracts. Undocumented immigration continued, however. Congress held hearings and, in the selection below, a migrant worker named Juanita Garcia testifies to Congress about the state of affairs in California's Imperial Valley. Beginning in 1954, Dwight Eisenhower's administration oversaw, with the cooperation of the Mexican government, "Operation Wetback," which empowered to the Border Patrol to crack down upon illegal immigration.

Hernandez v. Texas (1954)

Pete Hernandez, a migrant worker, was tried for the murder of his employer, Joe Espinosa, in Edna, Texas, in 1950. Hernandez was convicted by an all-white jury. His lawyers appealed. They argued that Hernandez was entitled to a jury "of his peers" and that systematic exclusion of Mexican Americans violated constitutional law. In a unanimous decision, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Mexican Americans—and all "classes"—were entitled to the "equal protection" articulated in the Fourteenth Amendment.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)

In 1896 [confirm date], the United States Supreme Court declared in Plessy v. Ferguson *that the doctrine of "separate but equal" was constitutional. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court overturned that decision and*

Richard Nixon on the American Standard of Living (1959)

As Cold War tensions eased, exhibitions allowed for Americans and Soviets to survey the other's culture and way of life. In 1959, the Russians held an exhibition in New York, and the Americans in Moscow. A videotaped discussion between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Kruschev, the so-called "Kitchen Debate," won Richard Nixon acclaim at home for his articulate defense of the American standard of living. In the following extract from July 24, 1959, Nixon opened the American Exhibition in Moscow.

John F. Kennedy on the Separation of Church and State (1960)

American Anti-Catholicism had softened in the aftermath of World War II, but no Catholic had ever been elected president and Protestant Americans had long been suspicious of Catholic politicians when John F. Kennedy ran for the presidency in 1960. (Al Smith, the first Catholic presidential candidate, was roundly defeated in 1928 owing in large part to popular anti-Catholic prejudice). On September 12, 1960, Kennedy addressed the Greater Houston Ministerial Association and he not only allayed popular fears of his Catholic faith, he delivered a seminal statement on the separation of church and state.

Little Rock Rally (1959)

In 1959, photographer John Bledsoe captured this image of the crowd on the steps of the Arkansas state capitol building, protesting the federally mandated integration of Little Rock's Central High School. This image shows how worries about desegregation were bound up with other concerns, such as the reach of communism and government power.

"In the Suburbs" (1957)

Redbook made this film to convince advertisers that the magazine would help them attract the white suburban consumers they desired. The "happy go spending, buy it now, young adults of today" are depicted by the film as flocking to the suburbs to escape global and urban turmoil. Redbook Magazine, "In The Suburbs" (1957). Via The Internet Archive.

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26.9: Reference Material

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27: THE SIXTIES



Demonstrators march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965 to champion African American civil rights. Library of Congress.

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27.1: Reference Material

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27.2: Introduction

Perhaps no decade is so immortalized in American memory as the 1960s. Couched in the colorful rhetoric of peace and love, complemented by stirring images of the civil rights movement, and fondly remembered for its music, art, and activism, the decade brought many people hope for a more inclusive, forward-thinking nation. But the decade was also plagued by strife, tragedy, and chaos. It was the decade of the Vietnam War, inner-city riots, and assassinations that seemed to symbolize the crushing of a new generation's idealism. A decade of struggle and disillusionment rocked by social, cultural, and political upheaval, the 1960s are remembered because so much changed, and because so much did not.

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27.3: Kennedy and Cuba

The decade's political landscape began with a watershed presidential election. Americans were captivated by the 1960 race between Republican vice president Richard Nixon and Democratic senator John F. Kennedy, two candidates who pledged to move the nation forward and invigorate an economy experiencing the worst recession since the Great Depression. Kennedy promised to use federal programs to strengthen the economy and address pockets of longstanding poverty, while Nixon called for a reliance on private enterprise and reduction of government spending. Both candidates faced criticism as well; Nixon had to defend Dwight Eisenhower's domestic policies, while Kennedy, who was attempting to become the first Catholic president, had to counteract questions about his faith and convince voters that he was experienced enough to lead.

One of the most notable events of the Nixon-Kennedy presidential campaign was their televised debate in September, the first of its kind between major presidential candidates. The debate focused on domestic policy and provided Kennedy with an important moment to present himself as a composed, knowledgeable statesman. In contrast, Nixon, an experienced debater who faced higher expectations, looked sweaty and defensive. Radio listeners famously thought the two men performed equally well, but the TV audience was much more impressed by Kennedy, giving him an advantage in subsequent debates. Ultimately, the election was extraordinarily close; in the largest voter turnout in American history up to that point, Kennedy bested Nixon by less than one percentage point (34,227,096 to 34,107,646 votes). Although Kennedy's lead in electoral votes was more comfortable at 303 to 219, the Democratic Party's victory did not translate in Congress, where Democrats lost a few seats in both houses. As a result, Kennedy entered office in 1961 without the mandate necessary to achieve the ambitious agenda he would refer to as the New Frontier.

Kennedy also faced foreign policy challenges. The United States entered the 1960s unaccustomed to stark foreign policy failures, having emerged from World War II as a global superpower before waging a Cold War against the Soviet Union in the 1950s. In the new decade, unsuccessful conflicts in Cuba and Vietnam would yield embarrassment, fear, and tragedy, stunning a nation that expected triumph and altering the way many thought of America's role in international affairs.

On January 8, 1959, Fidel Castro and his revolutionary army initiated a new era of Cuban history. Having ousted the corrupt Cuban president Fulgencio Batista, who had fled Havana on New Year's Eve, Castro and his rebel forces made their way triumphantly through the capital city's streets. The United States, which had long propped up Batista's corrupt regime, had withdrawn support and, initially, expressed sympathy for Castro's new government, which was immediately granted diplomatic recognition. But President Dwight Eisenhower and members of his administration were wary. The new Cuban government soon instituted leftist economic policies centered on agrarian reform, land redistribution, and the nationalization of private enterprises. Cuba's wealthy and middle-class citizens fled the island in droves. Many settled in Miami, Florida, and other American cities.

The relationship between Cuba and the United States deteriorated rapidly. On October 19, 1960, the United States instituted a near-total trade embargo to economically isolate the Cuban regime, and in January 1961, the two nations broke off formal diplomatic relations. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), acting under the mistaken belief that the Castro government lacked popular support and that Cuban citizens would revolt if given the opportunity, began to recruit members of the exile community to participate in an invasion of the island. On April 16, 1961, an invasion force consisting primarily of Cuban émigrés landed on Girón Beach at the Bay of Pigs. Cuban soldiers and civilians quickly overwhelmed the exiles, many of whom were taken prisoner. The Cuban government's success at thwarting the Bay of Pigs invasion did much to legitimize the new regime and was a tremendous embarrassment for the Kennedy administration.

As the political relationship between Cuba and the United States disintegrated, the Castro government became more closely aligned with the Soviet Union. This strengthening of ties set the stage for the Cuban Missile Crisis, perhaps the most dramatic foreign policy crisis in the history of the United States. In 1962, in response to the United States' longtime maintenance of a nuclear arsenal in Turkey and at the invitation of the Cuban government, the Soviet Union deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba. On October 14, 1962, American spy planes detected the construction of missile launch sites, and on October 22, President Kennedy addressed the American people to alert them to this threat. Over the course of the next several days, the world watched in horror as the United States and the Soviet Union hovered on the brink of nuclear war. Finally, on October 28, the Soviet Union agreed to remove its missiles from Cuba in exchange for a U.S. agreement to remove its missiles from Turkey and a formal pledge that the United States would not invade Cuba, and the crisis was resolved peacefully.



Figure 27.3.1: The Cuban Missile Crisis was a time of great anxiety in America. Eight hundred women demonstrated outside the United Nations Building in 1962 to promote peace. *Library of Congress*.

Though the Cuban Missile Crisis temporarily halted the flow of Cuban refugees into the United States, emigration began again in earnest in the mid-1960s. In 1965, the Johnson administration and the Castro government brokered a deal that facilitated the reunion of families that had been separated by earlier waves of migration, opening the door for thousands to leave the island. In 1966 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Cuban Adjustment Act, a law allowing Cuban refugees to become permanent residents. Over the course of the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Cubans left their homeland and built new lives in America.

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27.4: The Civil Rights Movement Continues

So much of the energy and character of the sixties emerged from the civil rights movement, which won its greatest victories in the early years of the decade. The movement itself was changing. Many of the civil rights activists pushing for school desegregation in the 1950s were middle-class and middle-aged. In the 1960s, a new student movement arose whose members wanted swifter changes in the segregated South. Confrontational protests, marches, boycotts, and sit-ins accelerated.[1]

The tone of the modern U.S. civil rights movement changed at a North Carolina department store in 1960, when four African American students participated in a sit-in at a whites-only lunch counter. The 1960 Greensboro sit-ins were typical. Activists sat at segregated lunch counters in an act of defiance, refusing to leave until being served and willing to be ridiculed, attacked, and arrested if they were not. This tactic drew resistance but forced the desegregation of Woolworth's department stores. It prompted copycat demonstrations across the South. The protests offered evidence that student-led direct action could enact social change and established the civil rights movement's direction in the forthcoming years.[2]

The following year, civil rights advocates attempted a bolder variation of a sit-in when they participated in the Freedom Rides. Activists organized interstate bus rides following a Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation on public buses and trains. The rides intended to test the court's ruling, which many southern states had ignored. An interracial group of Freedom Riders boarded buses in Washington, D.C., with the intention of sitting in integrated patterns on the buses as they traveled through the Deep South. On the initial rides in May 1961, the riders encountered fierce resistance in Alabama. Angry mobs composed of KKK members attacked riders in Birmingham, burning one of the buses and beating the activists who escaped. Additional Freedom Rides launched through the summer and generated national attention amid additional violent resistance. Ultimately, the Interstate Commerce Commission enforced integrated interstate buses and trains in November 1961.[3]

In the fall of 1961, civil rights activists descended on Albany, a small city in southwest Georgia. Known for entrenched segregation and racial violence, Albany seemed an unlikely place for black Americans to rally and demand change. The activists there, however, formed the Albany Movement, a coalition of civil rights organizers that included members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, or, "snick"), the SCLC, and the NAACP. But the movement was stymied by Albany police chief Laurie Pritchett, who launched mass arrests but refused to engage in police brutality and bailed out leading officials to avoid negative media attention. It was a peculiar scene, and a lesson for southern activists.[4]

The Albany Movement included elements of a Christian commitment to social justice in its platform, with activists stating that all people were "of equal worth" in God's family and that "no man may discriminate against or exploit another." In many instances in the 1960s, black Christianity propelled civil rights advocates to action and demonstrated the significance of religion to the broader civil rights movement. King's rise to prominence underscored the role that African American religious figures played in the 1960s civil rights movement. Protesters sang hymns and spirituals as they marched. Preachers rallied the people with messages of justice and hope. Churches hosted meetings, prayer vigils, and conferences on nonviolent resistance. The moral thrust of the movement strengthened African American activists and confronted white society by framing segregation as a moral evil.[5]

As the civil rights movement garnered more followers and more attention, white resistance stiffened. In October 1962, James Meredith became the first African American student to enroll at the University of Mississippi. Meredith's enrollment sparked riots on the Oxford campus, prompting President John F. Kennedy to send in U.S. Marshals and National Guardsmen to maintain order. On an evening known infamously as the Battle of Ole Miss, segregationists clashed with troops in the middle of campus, resulting in two deaths and hundreds of injuries. Violence served as a reminder of the strength of white resistance to the civil rights movement, particularly in the realm of education.[6]



Figure 27.4.1: James Meredith, accompanied by U.S. Marshals, walks to class at the University of Mississippi in 1962. Meredith was the first African American student admitted to the segregated university. *Library of Congress*.

The following year, 1963, was perhaps the decade's most eventful year for civil rights. In April and May, the SCLC organized the Birmingham Campaign, a broad campaign of direct action aiming to topple segregation in Alabama's largest city. Activists used business boycotts, sit-ins, and peaceful marches as part of the campaign. SCLC leader Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed, prompting his famous handwritten letter urging not only his nonviolent approach but active confrontation to directly challenge injustice. The campaign further added to King's national reputation and featured powerful photographs and video footage of white police officers using fire hoses and attack dogs on young African American protesters. It also yielded an agreement to desegregate public accommodations in the city: activists in Birmingham scored a victory for civil rights and drew international praise for the nonviolent approach in the face of police-sanctioned violence and bombings.[7]

White resistance intensified. While much of the rhetoric surrounding the 1960s focused on a younger, more liberal generation's progressive ideas, conservatism maintained a strong presence on the American political scene. Few political figures in the decade embodied the working-class, conservative views held by millions of white Americans quite like George Wallace. Wallace's vocal stance on segregation was immortalized in his 1963 inaugural address as Alabama governor with the phrase: "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!" Just as the civil rights movement began to gain unprecedented strength, Wallace became the champion of the many white southerners opposed to the movement. Consequently, Wallace was one of the best examples of the very real opposition civil rights activists faced in the late twentieth century.[8]

As governor, Wallace loudly supported segregation. His efforts were symbolic, but they earned him national recognition as a political figure willing to fight for what many southerners saw as their traditional way of life. In June 1963, just five months after becoming governor, in his "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door," Wallace famously stood in the door of Foster Auditorium to protest integration at the University of Alabama. President Kennedy addressed the nation that evening, criticizing Wallace and calling for a comprehensive civil rights bill. A day later, civil rights leader Medgar Evers was assassinated at his home in Jackson, Mississippi.



Figure 27.4.2: Alabama governor George Wallace stands defiantly at the door of the University of Alabama, blocking the attempted integration of the school. Wallace became the most notorious pro-segregation politician of the 1960s, proudly proclaiming, in his 1963 inaugural address, "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." *Library of Congress*.

That summer, civil rights leaders organized the August 1963 March on Washington. The march called for, among other things, civil rights legislation, school integration, an end to discrimination by public and private employers, job training for the unemployed, and a raise in the minimum wage. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, an internationally renowned call for civil rights that raised the movement's profile to new heights and put unprecedented pressure on politicians to pass meaningful civil rights legislation.[9]



Figure 27.4.3: This photograph shows Martin Luther King Jr. and other black civil rights leaders arm-in-arm with leaders of the Jewish community during the March on Washington on August 28, 1963. *Wikimedia*.

Kennedy offered support for a civil rights bill, but southern resistance was intense and Kennedy was unwilling to expend much political capital on it. And so the bill stalled in Congress. Then, on November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. The nation's youthful, popular president was gone. Vice President Lyndon Johnson lacked Kennedy's youth, his charisma, his popularity, and his aristocratic upbringing, but no one knew Washington better and no one before or since fought harder and more successfully to pass meaningful civil rights legislation. Raised in poverty in the Texas Hill Country, Johnson scratched and clawed his way up the political ladder. He was both ruthlessly ambitious and keenly conscious of poverty and injustice. He idolized Franklin Roosevelt whose New Deal had brought improvements for the impoverished central Texans Johnson grew up with.

President Lyndon Johnson, then, an old white southerner with a thick Texas drawl, embraced the civil rights movement. He took Kennedy's stalled civil rights bill, ensured that it would have teeth, and navigated it through Congress. The following summer he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, widely considered to be among the most important pieces of civil rights legislation in American history. The comprehensive act barred segregation in public accommodations and outlawed discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, and national or religious origin



Figure 27.4.4: Lyndon B. Johnson sits with Civil Rights Leaders in the White House. One of Johnson's greatest legacies would be his staunch support of civil rights legislation. *Wikimedia*.

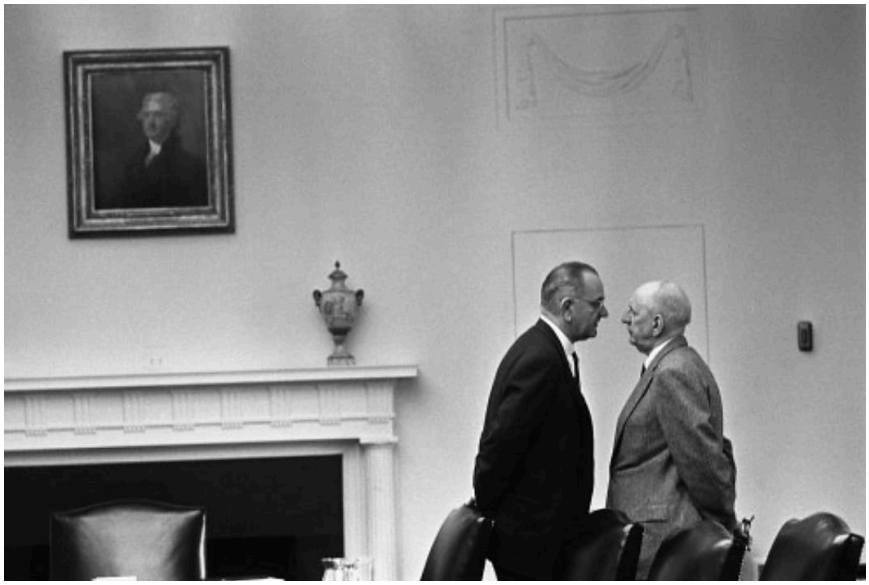


Figure 27.4.5: Johnson gives Senator Richard Russell the famous "Johnson Treatment." Yoichi R. Okamoto, Photograph of Lyndon B. Johnson pressuring Senator Richard Russell, December 17, 1963. *Wikimedia*.

The civil rights movement created space for political leaders to pass legislation, and the movement continued pushing forward. Direct action continued through the summer of 1964, as student-run organizations like SNCC and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) helped with the Freedom Summer in Mississippi, a drive to register African American voters in a state with an ugly history of discrimination. Freedom Summer campaigners set up schools for African American children. Even with progress, intimidation and violent resistance against civil rights continued, particularly in regions with longstanding traditions of segregation.[10]

In March 1965, activists attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, on behalf of local African American voting rights. In a narrative that had become familiar, "Bloody Sunday" featured peaceful protesters attacked by white law enforcement with batons and tear gas. After they were turned away violently a second time, marchers finally made the fifty-mile trek to the

state capitol later in the month. Coverage of the first march prompted President Johnson to present the bill that became the Voting Rights Act of 1965, an act that abolished voting discrimination in federal, state, and local elections. In two consecutive years, landmark pieces of legislation had assaulted de jure (by law) segregation and disenfranchisement.[11]



Figure 27.4.6: Five leaders of the Civil Rights Movement in 1965. From left: Bayard Rustin, Andrew Young, N.Y. Congressman William Ryan, James Farmer, and John Lewis. *Library of Congress*.

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27.5: Lyndon Johnson's Great Society

On a May morning in 1964, President Johnson laid out a sweeping vision for a package of domestic reforms known as the Great Society. Speaking before that year's graduates of the University of Michigan, Johnson called for "an end to poverty and racial injustice" and challenged both the graduates and American people to "enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization." At its heart, he promised, the Great Society would uplift racially and economically disfranchised Americans, too long denied access to federal guarantees of equal democratic and economic opportunity, while simultaneously raising all Americans' standards and quality of life.[12]

The Great Society's legislation was breathtaking in scope, and many of its programs and agencies are still with us today. Most importantly, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 codified federal support for many of the civil rights movement's goals by prohibiting job discrimination, abolishing the segregation of public accommodations, and providing vigorous federal oversight of southern states' election laws in order to guarantee minority access to the ballot. Ninety years after Reconstruction, these measures effectively ended Jim Crow.

In addition to civil rights, the Great Society took on a range of quality-of-life concerns that seemed suddenly solvable in a society of such affluence. It established the first federal food stamp program. Medicare and Medicaid would ensure access to quality medical care for the aged and poor. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was the first sustained and significant federal investment in public education, totaling more than $1 billion. Significant funds were poured into colleges and universities. The Great Society also established the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, federal investments in arts and letters that fund American cultural expression to this day.

While these programs persisted and even thrived, in the years immediately following this flurry of legislative activity, the national conversation surrounding Johnson's domestic agenda largely focused on the $3 billion spent on War on Poverty programming within the Great Society's Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964. No EOA program was more controversial than Community Action, considered the cornerstone antipoverty program. Johnson's antipoverty planners felt that the key to uplifting disfranchised and impoverished Americans was involving poor and marginalized citizens in the actual administration of poverty programs, what they called "maximum feasible participation." Community Action Programs would give disfranchised Americans a seat at the table in planning and executing federally funded programs that were meant to benefit them—a significant sea change in the nation's efforts to confront poverty, which had historically relied on local political and business elites or charitable organizations for administration.[13]

In fact, Johnson himself had never conceived of poor Americans running their own poverty programs. While the president's rhetoric offered a stirring vision of the future, he had singularly old-school notions for how his poverty policies would work. In contrast to "maximum feasible participation," the president imagined a second New Deal: local elite-run public works camps that would instill masculine virtues in unemployed young men. Community Action almost entirely bypassed local administrations and sought to build grassroots civil rights and community advocacy organizations, many of which had originated in the broader civil rights movement. Despite widespread support for most Great Society programs, the War on Poverty increasingly became the focal point of domestic criticisms from the left and right. On the left, frustrated Americans recognized the president's resistance to further empowering poor minority communities and also assailed the growing war in Vietnam, the cost of which undercut domestic poverty spending. As racial unrest and violence swept across urban centers, critics from the right lambasted federal spending for "unworthy" citizens.

Johnson had secured a series of meaningful civil rights laws, but then things began to stall. Days after the ratification of the Voting Rights Act, race riots broke out in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. Rioting in Watts stemmed from local African American frustrations with residential segregation, police brutality, and racial profiling. Waves of riots rocked American cities every summer thereafter. Particularly destructive riots occurred in 1967—two summers later—in Newark and Detroit. Each resulted in deaths, injuries, arrests, and millions of dollars in property damage. In spite of black achievements, problems persisted for many African Americans. The phenomenon of "white flight"—when whites in metropolitan areas fled city centers for the suburbs—often resulted in resegregated residential patterns. Limited access to economic and social opportunities in urban areas bred discord. In addition to reminding the nation that the civil rights movement was a complex, ongoing event without a concrete endpoint, the unrest in northern cities reinforced the notion that the struggle did not occur solely in the South. Many Americans also viewed the riots as an indictment of the Great Society, President Johnson's sweeping agenda of domestic programs that sought to remedy inner-city ills by offering better access to education, jobs, medical care, housing, and other forms of social welfare. The civil rights movement was never the same.[14]

The Civil Rights Acts, the Voting Rights Acts, and the War on Poverty provoked conservative resistance and were catalysts for the rise of Republicans in the South and West. However, subsequent presidents and Congresses have left intact the bulk of the Great Society, including Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps, federal spending for arts and literature, and Head Start. Even Community Action Programs, so fraught during their few short years of activity, inspired and empowered a new generation of minority and poverty community activists who had never before felt, as one put it, that "this government is with us."[15]

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27.6: The Origins of the Vietnam War

American involvement in the Vietnam War began during the postwar period of decolonization. The Soviet Union backed many nationalist movements across the globe, but the United States feared the expansion of communist influence and pledged to confront any revolutions aligned against Western capitalism. The Domino Theory—the idea that if a country fell to communism, then neighboring states would soon follow—governed American foreign policy. After the communist takeover of China in 1949, the United States financially supported the French military's effort to retain control over its colonies in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

Between 1946 and 1954, France fought a counterinsurgency campaign against the nationalist Viet Minh forces led by Ho Chi Minh. The United States assisted the French war effort with funds, arms, and advisors, but it was not enough. On the eve of the Geneva Peace Conference in 1954, Viet Minh forces defeated the French army at Dien Bien Phu. The conference temporarily divided Vietnam into two separate states until UN-monitored elections occurred. But the United States feared a communist electoral victory and blocked the elections. The temporary partition became permanent. The United States established the Republic of Vietnam, or South Vietnam, with the U.S.-backed Ngo Dinh Diem as prime minister. Diem, who had lived in the United States, was a committed anticommunist.

Diem's government, however, and its Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) could not contain the communist insurgency seeking the reunification of Vietnam. The Americans provided weapons and support, but despite a clear numerical and technological advantage, South Vietnam stumbled before insurgent Vietcong (VC) units. Diem, a corrupt leader propped up by the American government with little domestic support, was assassinated in 1963. A merry-go-round of military dictators followed as the situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate. The American public, though, remained largely unaware of Vietnam in the early 1960s, even as President John F. Kennedy deployed some sixteen thousand military advisors to help South Vietnam suppress a domestic communist insurgency.[16]

This all changed in 1964. On August 2, the USS *Maddox* reported incoming fire from North Vietnamese ships in the Gulf of Tonkin. Although the details of the incident are controversial, the Johnson administration exploited the event to provide a pretext for escalating American involvement in Vietnam. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, granting President Johnson the authority to deploy the American military to defend South Vietnam. U.S. Marines landed in Vietnam in March 1965, and the American ground war began.

American forces under General William Westmoreland were tasked with defending South Vietnam against the insurgent VC and the regular North Vietnamese Army (NVA). But no matter how many troops the Americans sent or how many bombs they dropped, they could not win. This was a different kind of war. Progress was not measured by cities won or territory taken but by body counts and kill ratios. Although American officials like Westmoreland and secretary of defense Robert McNamara claimed a communist defeat was on the horizon, by 1968 half a million American troops were stationed in Vietnam, nearly twenty thousand had been killed, and the war was still no closer to being won. Protests, which would provide the backdrop for the American counterculture, erupted across the country.

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27.7: Culture and Activism



Figure 27.7.1: Epitomizing the folk music and protest culture of 1960s youth, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan are pictured here singing together at the March on Washington in 1963. *Wikimedia*.

The 1960s wrought enormous cultural change. The United States that entered the decade looked and sounded little like the one that left it. Rebellion rocked the supposedly hidebound conservatism of the 1950s as the youth counterculture became mainstream. Native Americans, Chicanos, women, and environmentalists participated in movements demonstrating that rights activism could be applied to ethnicity, gender, and nature. Even established religious institutions such as the Catholic Church underwent transformations, emphasizing freedom and tolerance. In each instance, the decade brought substantial progress and evidence that activism remained fluid and unfinished.

Much of the counterculture was filtered through popular culture and consumption. The fifties consumer culture still saturated the country, and advertisers continued to appeal to teenagers and the expanding youth market. During the 1960s, though, advertisers looked to a growing counterculture to sell their products. Popular culture and popular advertising in the 1950s had promoted an ethos of "fitting in" and buying products to conform. The new countercultural ethos touted individuality and rebellion. Some advertisers were subtle; ads for Volkswagens (VWs) acknowledged the flaws and strange look of their cars. One ad read, "Presenting America's slowest fastback," which "won't go over 72 mph even though the speedometer shows a wildly optimistic top speed of 90." Another stated, "And if you run out of gas, it's easy to push." By marketing the car's flaws and reframing them as positive qualities, the advertisers commercialized young people's resistance to commercialism, while simultaneously positioning the VW as a car for those wanting to stand out in a crowd. A more obviously countercultural ad for the VW Bug showed two cars: one black and one painted multicolor in the hippie style; the contrasting captions read, "We do our thing," and "You do yours."

Companies marketed their products as countercultural in and of themselves. One of the more obvious examples was a 1968 ad from Columbia Records, a hugely successful record label since the 1920s. The ad pictured a group of stock rebellious characters—a shaggy-haired white hippie, a buttoned-up Beat, two biker types, and a black jazz man sporting an Afro—in a jail cell. The counterculture had been busted, the ad states, but "the man can't bust our music." Merely buying records from Columbia was an act of rebellion, one that brought the buyer closer to the counterculture figures portrayed in the ad.[17]

But it wasn't just advertising: the culture was changing and changing rapidly. Conservative cultural norms were falling everywhere. The dominant style of women's fashion in the 1950s, for instance, was the poodle skirt and the sweater, tight-waisted and buttoned up. The 1960s ushered in an era of much less restrictive clothing. Capri pants became popular casual wear. Skirts became shorter. When Mary Quant invented the miniskirt in 1964, she said it was a garment "in which you could move, in which you could run and jump."[18] By the late 1960s, the hippies' more androgynous look became trendy. Such trends bespoke the new popular ethos of the 1960s: freedom, rebellion, and individuality.

In a decade plagued by social and political instability, the American counterculture also sought psychedelic drugs as its remedy

for alienation. For middle-class white teenagers, society had become stagnant and bureaucratic. The New Left, for instance, arose on college campuses frustrated with the lifeless bureaucracies that they believed strangled true freedom. Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) began its life as a drug used primarily in psychological research before trickling down into college campuses and out into society at large. The counterculture's notion that American stagnation could be remedied by a spiritual-psychedelic experience drew heavily from psychologists and sociologists. The popularity of these drugs also spurred a political backlash. By 1966, enough incidents had been connected to LSD to spur a Senate hearing on the drug, and newspapers were reporting that hundreds of LSD users had been admitted to psychiatric wards.

The counterculture conquered popular culture. Rock 'n' roll, liberalized sexuality, an embrace of diversity, recreational drug use, unalloyed idealism, and pure earnestness marked a new generation. Criticized by conservatives as culturally dangerous and by leftists as empty narcissism, the youth culture nevertheless dominated headlines and steered American culture. Perhaps one hundred thousand youth descended on San Francisco for the utopic promise of 1967's Summer of Love. 1969's Woodstock concert in New York became shorthand for the new youth culture and its mixture of politics, protest, and personal fulfillment. While the ascendance of the hippies would be both exaggerated and short-lived, and while Vietnam and Richard Nixon shattered much of its idealism, the counterculture's liberated social norms and its embrace of personal fulfillment still define much of American culture.

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27.8: Beyond Civil Rights

Despite substantial legislative achievements, frustrations with the slow pace of change grew. Tensions continued to mount in cities, and the tone of the civil rights movement changed yet again. Activists became less conciliatory in their calls for progress. Many embraced the more militant message of the burgeoning Black Power Movement and the late Malcolm X, a Nation of Islam (NOI) minister who had encouraged African Americans to pursue freedom, equality, and justice by "any means necessary." Prior to his death, Malcolm X and the NOI emerged as the radical alternative to the racially integrated, largely Protestant approach of Martin Luther King Jr. Malcolm advocated armed resistance in defense of the safety and well-being of black Americans, stating, "I don't call it violence when it's self-defense, I call it intelligence." For his part, King and leaders from more mainstream organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League criticized both Malcolm X and the NOI for what they perceived to be racial demagoguery. King believed Malcolm X's speeches were a "great disservice" to black Americans, claiming that they lamented the problems of African Americans without offering solutions. The differences between King and Malcolm X represented a core ideological tension that would inhabit black political thought throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[19]



Figure 27.8.1: Like Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois before them, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X, pictured here in 1964, represented different civil rights strategies that both aimed for racial justice. *Library of Congress*.

By the late 1960s, SNCC, led by figures such as Stokely Carmichael, had expelled its white members and shunned the interracial effort in the rural South, focusing instead on injustices in northern urban areas. After President Johnson refused to take up the cause of the black delegates in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, SNCC activists became frustrated with institutional tactics and turned away from the organization's founding principle of nonviolence. This evolving, more aggressive movement called for African Americans to play a dominant role in cultivating black institutions and articulating black interests rather than relying on interracial, moderate approaches. At a June 1966 civil rights march, Carmichael told the crowd, "What we gonna start saying now is black power!"[20] The slogan not only resonated with audiences, it also stood in direct contrast to King's "Freedom Now!" campaign. The political slogan of black power could encompass many meanings, but at its core it stood for the self-determination of black people in political, economic, and social organizations.

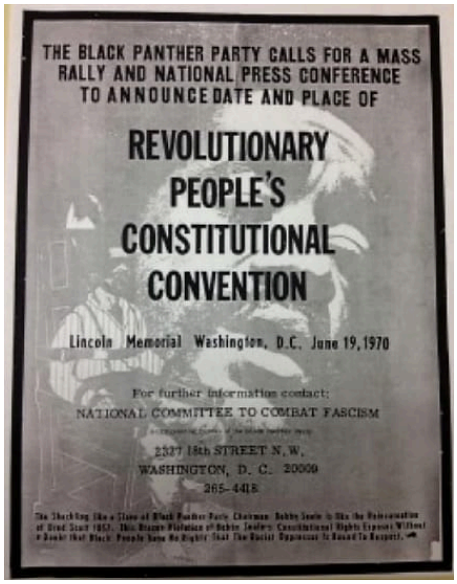


Figure 27.8.2: The Black Panther Party used radical and incendiary tactics to bring attention to the continued oppression of blacks in America. This 1970 poster captures their outlook. *Wikimedia*.

Carmichael asserted that "black power means black people coming together to form a political force."[21] To others it also meant violence. In 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California. The Black Panthers became the standard-bearers for direct action and self-defense, using the concept of decolonization in their drive to liberate black communities from white power structures. The revolutionary organization also sought reparations and exemptions for black men from the military draft. Citing police brutality and racist governmental policies, the Black Panthers aligned themselves with the "other people of color in the world" against whom America was fighting abroad. Although it was perhaps most well known for its open display of weapons, military-style dress, and black nationalist beliefs, the party's 10-Point Plan also included employment, housing, and education. The Black Panthers worked in local communities to run "survival programs" that provided food, clothing, medical treatment, and drug rehabilitation. They focused on modes of resistance that empowered black activists on their own terms.[22]

But African Americans weren't the only Americans struggling to assert themselves in the 1960s. The successes of the civil rights movement and growing grassroots activism inspired countless new movements. In the summer of 1961, for instance, frustrated Native American university students founded the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) to draw attention to the plight of indigenous Americans. In the Pacific Northwest, the council advocated for tribal fisherman to retain immunity from conservation laws on reservations and in 1964 held a series of "fish-ins": activists and celebrities cast nets and waited for the police to arrest them.[23] The NIYC's militant rhetoric and use of direct action marked the beginning of what was called the Red Power movement, an intertribal movement designed to draw attention to Native issues and to protest discrimination. The American Indian Movement (AIM) and other activists staged dramatic demonstrations. In November 1969, dozens began a year-and-a-half-long occupation of the abandoned Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. In 1973, hundreds occupied the town of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, site of the infamous 1890 Indian massacre, for several months.[24]

Meanwhile, the Chicano movement in the 1960s emerged out of the broader Mexican American civil rights movement of the post–World War II era. The word *Chicano* was initially considered a derogatory term for Mexican immigrants, until activists in the 1960s reclaimed the term and used it as a catalyst to campaign for political and social change among Mexican Americans. The Chicano movement confronted discrimination in schools, politics, agriculture, and other formal and informal institutions. Organizations like the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) and the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDF) buoyed the Chicano movement and patterned themselves after similar influential groups in the African American civil rights movement.[25]

Cesar Chavez became the most well-known figure of the Chicano movement, using nonviolent tactics to campaign for workers' rights in the grape fields of California. Chavez and activist Dolores Huerta founded the National Farm Workers Association, which eventually merged and became the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA). The UFWA fused the causes of Chicano and Filipino activists protesting the subpar working conditions of California farmers on American soil. In addition to embarking on a hunger strike and a boycott of table grapes, Chavez led a three-hundred-mile march in March and April 1966 from Delano, California, to

the state capital of Sacramento. The pro-labor campaign garnered the national spotlight and the support of prominent political figures such as Robert Kennedy. Today, Chavez's birthday (March 31) is observed as a federal holiday in California, Colorado, and Texas.

Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales was another activist whose calls for Chicano self-determination resonated long past the 1960s. A former boxer and Denver native, Gonzales founded the Crusade for Justice in 1966, an organization that would establish the first annual Chicano Liberation Day at the National Chicano Youth Conference. The conference also yielded the Plan Espiritual de Aztlán, a Chicano nationalist manifesto that reflected Gonzales's vision of Chicanos as a unified, historically grounded, all-encompassing group fighting against discrimination in the United States. By 1970, the Texas-based La Raza Unida political party had a strong foundation for promoting Chicano nationalism and continuing the campaign for Mexican American civil rights.[26]



Figure 27.8.3: The 1966 Rio Grande Valley Farm Workers March ("La Marcha"). August 27, 1966. The University of Texas-San Antonio Libraries' Special Collections *(MS 360: E-0012-187-D-16)*

The feminist movement also grew in the 1960s. Women were active in both the civil rights movement and the labor movement, but their increasing awareness of gender inequality did not find a receptive audience among male leaders in those movements. In the 1960s, then, many of these women began to form a movement of their own. Soon the country experienced a groundswell of feminist consciousness.

An older generation of women who preferred to work within state institutions figured prominently in the early part of the decade. When John F. Kennedy established the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt headed the effort. The commission's official report, a self-declared "invitation to action," was released in 1963. Finding discriminatory provisions in the law and practices of industrial, labor, and governmental organizations, the commission advocated for "changes, many of them long overdue, in the conditions of women's opportunity in the United States."[27] Change was recommended in areas of employment practices, federal tax and benefit policies affecting women's income, labor laws, and services for women as wives, mothers, and workers. This call for action, if heeded, would ameliorate the types of discrimination primarily experienced by middle-class and elite white working women, all of whom were used to advocating through institutional structures like government agencies and unions.[28] The specific concerns of poor and nonwhite women lay largely beyond the scope of the report.

Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* hit bookshelves the same year the commission released its report. Friedan had been active in the union movement and was by this time a mother in the new suburban landscape of postwar America. In her book, Friedan labeled the "problem that has no name," and in doing so helped many white middle-class American women come to see their dissatisfaction as housewives not as something "wrong with [their] marriage, or [themselves]," but instead as a social problem experienced by millions of American women. Friedan observed that there was a "discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform, the image I call the feminine mystique." No longer would women allow society to blame the "problem that has no name" on a loss of femininity, too much education, or too much female independence and equality with men.[29]

The 1960s also saw a different group of women pushing for change in government policy. Mothers on welfare began to form local advocacy groups in addition to the National Welfare Rights Organization, founded in 1966. Mostly African American, these activists fought for greater benefits and more control over welfare policy and implementation. Women like Johnnie Tillmon successfully advocated for larger grants for school clothes and household equipment in addition to gaining due process and fair administrative hearings prior to termination of welfare entitlements.

Yet another mode of feminist activism was the formation of consciousness-raising groups. These groups met in women's homes and at women's centers, providing a safe environment for women to discuss everything from experiences of gender discrimination to pregnancy, from relationships with men and women to self-image. The goal of consciousness-raising was to increase self-awareness and validate the experiences of women. Groups framed such individual experiences as examples of society-wide sexism, and claimed that "the personal is political."[30] Consciousness-raising groups created a wealth of personal stories that feminists could use in other forms of activism and crafted networks of women from which activists could mobilize support for protests.

The end of the decade was marked by the Women's Strike for Equality, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of women's right to vote. Sponsored by the National Organization for Women (NOW), the 1970 protest focused on employment discrimination, political equality, abortion, free childcare, and equality in marriage. All of these issues foreshadowed the backlash against feminist goals in the 1970s. Not only would feminism face opposition from other women who valued the traditional homemaker role to which feminists objected, the feminist movement would also fracture internally as minority women challenged white feminists' racism and lesbians vied for more prominence within feminist organizations.



Figure 27.8.4: The women's movement stalled during the 1930s and 1940s, but by the 1960s it was back in full force. Inspired by the civil rights movement and fed up with gender discrimination, women took to the streets to demand their rights as American citizens. Photograph, August 26, 1970. *Library of Congress*.

American environmentalism's significant gains during the 1960s emerged in part from Americans' recreational use of nature. Postwar Americans backpacked, went to the beach, fished, and joined birding organizations in greater numbers than ever before. These experiences, along with increased formal education, made Americans more aware of threats to the environment and, consequently, to themselves. Many of these threats increased in the postwar years as developers bulldozed open space for suburbs and new hazards emerged from industrial and nuclear pollutants.

By the time that biologist Rachel Carson published her landmark book, *Silent Spring*, in 1962, a nascent environmentalism had emerged in America. *Silent Spring*stood out as an unparalleled argument for the interconnectedness of ecological and human health. Pesticides, Carson argued, also posed a threat to human health, and their overuse threatened the ecosystems that supported food production. Carson's argument was compelling to many Americans, including President Kennedy, but was virulently opposed by chemical industries that suggested the book was the product of an emotional woman, not a scientist.[31]

After *Silent Spring*, the social and intellectual currents of environmentalism continued to expand rapidly, culminating in the largest demonstration in history, Earth Day, on April 22, 1970, and in a decade of lawmaking that significantly restructured American government. Even before the massive gathering for Earth Day, lawmakers from the local to the federal level had pushed for and

achieved regulations to clean up the air and water. President Richard Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act into law in 1970, requiring environmental impact statements for any project directed or funded by the federal government. He also created the Environmental Protection Agency, the first agency charged with studying, regulating, and disseminating knowledge about the environment. A raft of laws followed that were designed to offer increased protection for air, water, endangered species, and natural areas.

The decade's activism manifested across the world. It even affected the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council, called by Pope John XXIII to modernize the church and bring it in closer dialogue with the non-Catholic world, operated from 1962 to 1965, when it proclaimed multiple reforms, including the vernacular mass (mass in local languages, rather than in Latin) and a greater role for laypeople, and especially women, in the Church. Many Catholic churches adopted more informal, contemporary styles. Many conservative Catholics recoiled at what they perceived as rapid and dangerous changes, but Vatican II's reforms in many ways created the modern Catholic Church.

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27.9: Conclusion

In 1969, Americans hailed the moon landing as a profound victory in the space race against the Soviet Union. This landmark achievement fulfilled the promise of the late John F. Kennedy, who had declared in 1961 that the United States would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. But while Neil Armstrong said his steps marked “one giant leap for mankind,” and Americans marveled at the achievement, the brief moment of wonder only punctuated years of turmoil. The Vietnam War disillusioned a generation, riots rocked cities, protests hit campuses, and assassinations robbed the nation of many of its leaders. The forward-thinking spirit of a complex decade had waned. Uncertainty loomed.

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27.10: Primary Sources

Barry Goldwater, Republican Nomination Acceptance Speech (1964)

In 1964, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona accepted the Republican Party's nomination for the presidency. In his speech, Goldwater refused to apologize for his strict conservative politics. "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice," he said, and "moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."

Lyndon Johnson on Voting Rights and the American Promise (1965)

On March 15, 1965, Lyndon Baines Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress to push for the Voting Rights Act. In his speech, Johnson not only advocated policy, he borrowed the language of the civil rights movement and tied the movement to American history.

Lyndon Johnson, Howard University Commencement Address (1965)

On June 4, 1965, President Johnson delivered the commencement address at Howard University, the nation's most prominent historically black university. In his address, Johnson explained why "opportunity" was not enough to ensure the civil rights of disadvantaged Americans.

National Organization for Women, "Statement of Purpose" (1966)

The National Organization for Women was founded in 1966 by prominent American feminists, including Betty Friedan, Shirley Chisolm, and others. The organization's "statement of purpose" laid out the goals of the organization and the targets of its feminist vision.

George M. Garcia, Vietnam Veteran, Oral Interview (2012/1969)

In 2012, George Garcia sat down to be interviewed about his experiences as a corporal in the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. Alternating between English and Spanish, Garcia told of early life in Brownsville, Texas, his time as a U.S. Marine in Vietnam, and his experience coming home from the war.

Selma March (1965)

Civil rights activists protested against the injustice of segregation in a variety of ways. Here, in 1965, marchers, some carrying American flags, march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to champion African American voting rights.

LBJ and Civil Rights Leaders (1964)

As civil rights demonstrations rocked the American South, civil rights legislation made its way through Washington D.C. Here, President Lyndon B. Johnson sits with civil rights leaders in the White House.

Women's Liberation March (1970)

American popular feminism accelerated throughout the 1960s. The slogan "Women's Liberation" accompanied a growing women's movement but also alarmed conservative Americans. In this 1970 photograph, women march in Washington D.C. carrying signs reading, "Women Demand Equality," "I'm a Second Class Citizen," and "Women's Liberation."

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28: THE UNRAVELING



Abandoned Packard Automotive Plant in Detroit, Michigan. Wikimedia.

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28.1: Primary Sources

Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968)

Riots rocked American cities in the mid-late sixties. Hundreds died, thousands were injured, and thousands of buildings were destroyed. Many communities never recovered. In 1967, devastating riots, particularly in Detroit, Michigan, and Newark, New Jersey, captivated national television audiences. President Lyndon Johnson appointed an 11-person commission, chaired by Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, to explain the origins of the riots and recommend policies to prevent them in the future.

Statement by John Kerry of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (1971)

On April 23, 1971, a young Vietnam veteran named John Kerry spoke on behalf of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War before the Senate Committee of Foreign Relations. Kerry, later a Massachusetts Senator and 2004 presidential contender, articulated a growing disenchantment with the Vietnam War and delivered a blistering indictment of the reasoning behind its prosecution.

Nixon Announcement of China Visit (1971)

Richard Nixon, who built his political career on anti-communism, worked from the first day of his presidency to normalize relations with the communist People's Republic of China. In 1971, Richard Nixon announced that he would make an unprecedented visit there to advance American-Chinese relations. Here, he explains his intentions.

Barbara Jordan, 1976 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address (1976)

On July 12, 1976, Texas Congresswoman Barbara Jordan delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention. As Americans sensed a fracturing of American life in the 1970s, Jordan called for Americans to commit themselves to a "national community" and the "common good." Jordan began by noting she was the first black woman to ever deliver a keynote address at a major party convention and that such a thing would have been almost impossible even a decade earlier.

Jimmy Carter, "Crisis of Confidence" (1979)

On July 15, 1979, amid stagnant economic growth, high inflation, and an energy crisis, Jimmy Carter delivered a televised address to the American people. In it, Carter singled out a pervasive "crisis of confidence" preventing the American people from moving the country forward. A year later, Ronald Reagan would frame his optimistic political campaign in stark contrast to the tone of Carter's speech, which would be remembered, especially by critics, as the "malaise speech."

New York City Subway (1973)

"Urban Decay" confronted Americans of the 1960s and 1970s. As the economy sagged and deindustrialization hit much of the country, many Americans associated major cities with poverty and crime. In this 1973 photo, two subway riders sit amid a graffitied subway car in New York City.

"Stop ERA" Protest (1977)

In the 1970s, conservative Americans defeated the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). With high approval ratings, the ERA–which declared, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex"—seemed destined to pass swiftly through state legislatures and become the Twenty-Seventh Amendment, but conservative opposition stopped the Amendment just short of ratification.

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28.2: Reference Material

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28.3: Introduction

On December 6, 1969, an estimated three hundred thousand people converged on the Altamont Motor Speedway in Northern California for a massive free concert headlined by the Rolling Stones and featuring some of the era's other great rock acts.[1] Only four months earlier, Woodstock had shown the world the power of peace and love and American youth. Altamont was supposed to be "Woodstock West."[2]

But Altamont was a disorganized disaster. Inadequate sanitation, a horrid sound system, and tainted drugs strained concertgoers. To save money, the Hells Angels biker gang was paid $500 in beer to be the show's "security team." The crowd grew progressively angrier throughout the day. Fights broke out. Tensions rose. The Angels, drunk and high, armed themselves with sawed-off pool cues and indiscriminately beat concertgoers who tried to come on the stage. The Grateful Dead refused to play. Finally, the Stones came on stage.[3]

The crowd's anger was palpable. Fights continued near the stage. Mick Jagger stopped in the middle of playing "Sympathy for the Devil" to try to calm the crowd: "Everybody be cool now, c'mon," he pleaded. Then, a few songs later, in the middle of "Under My Thumb," eighteen-year-old Meredith Hunter approached the stage and was beaten back. Pissed off and high on methamphetamines, Hunter brandished a pistol, charged again, and was stabbed and killed by an Angel. His lifeless body was stomped into the ground. The Stones just kept playing.[4]

If the more famous Woodstock music festival captured the idyll of the sixties youth culture, Altamont revealed its dark side. There, drugs, music, and youth were associated not with peace and love but with anger, violence, and death. While many Americans in the 1970s continued to celebrate the political and cultural achievements of the previous decade, a more anxious, conservative mood grew across the nation. For some, the United States had not gone nearly far enough to promote greater social equality; for others, the nation had gone too far, unfairly trampling the rights of one group to promote the selfish needs of another. Onto these brewing dissatisfactions, the 1970s dumped the divisive remnants of a failed war, the country's greatest political scandal, and an intractable economic crisis. It seemed as if the nation was ready to unravel.

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28.4: The Strain of Vietnam

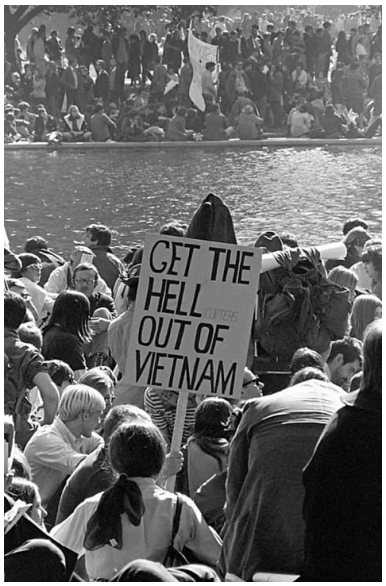


Figure 28.4.1: Vietnam War protestors at the March on the Pentagon. Lyndon B. Johnson Library via *Wikimedia*.

Perhaps no single issue contributed more to public disillusionment than the Vietnam War. As the war deteriorated, the Johnson administration escalated American involvement by deploying hundreds of thousands of troops to prevent the communist takeover of the south. Stalemates, body counts, hazy war aims, and the draft catalyzed an antiwar movement and triggered protests throughout the United States and Europe. With no end in sight, protesters burned draft cards, refused to pay income taxes, occupied government buildings, and delayed trains loaded with war materials. By 1967, antiwar demonstrations were drawing hundreds of thousands. In one protest, hundreds were arrested after surrounding the Pentagon.[5]

Vietnam was the first "living room war."[6] Television, print media, and open access to the battlefield provided unprecedented coverage of the conflict's brutality. Americans confronted grisly images of casualties and atrocities. In 1965, *CBS Evening News* aired a segment in which U.S. Marines burned the South Vietnamese village of Cam Ne with little apparent regard for the lives of its occupants, who had been accused of aiding Vietcong guerrillas. President Johnson berated the head of CBS, yelling over the phone, "Your boys just shat on the American flag."[7]

While the U.S. government imposed no formal censorship on the press during Vietnam, the White House and military nevertheless used press briefings and interviews to paint a deceptive image of the war. The United States was winning the war, officials claimed. They cited numbers of enemies killed, villages secured, and South Vietnamese troops trained. However, American journalists in Vietnam quickly realized the hollowness of such claims (the press referred to afternoon press briefings in Saigon as "the Five o'Clock Follies").[8] Editors frequently toned down their reporters' pessimism, often citing conflicting information received from their own sources, who were typically government officials. But the evidence of a stalemate mounted.

Stories like CBS's Cam Ne piece exposed a credibility gap, the yawning chasm between the claims of official sources and the increasingly evident reality on the ground in Vietnam.[9] Nothing did more to expose this gap than the 1968 Tet Offensive. In January, communist forces attacked more than one hundred American and South Vietnamese sites throughout South Vietnam, including the American embassy in Saigon. While U.S. forces repulsed the attack and inflicted heavy casualties on the Vietcong, Tet demonstrated that despite the repeated claims of administration officials, the enemy could still strike at will anywhere in the country, even after years of war. Subsequent stories and images eroded public trust even further. In 1969, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh revealed that U.S. troops had raped and/or massacred hundreds of civilians in the village of My Lai.[10] Three years later, Americans cringed at Nick Ut's wrenching photograph of a naked Vietnamese child fleeing an American napalm attack. More and more American voices came out against the war.

Reeling from the war's growing unpopularity, on March 31, 1968, President Johnson announced on national television that he

would not seek reelection.[11] Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy unsuccessfully battled against Johnson's vice president, Hubert Humphrey, for the Democratic Party nomination (Kennedy was assassinated in June). At the Democratic Party's national convention in Chicago, local police brutally assaulted protesters on national television.

For many Americans, the violent clashes outside the convention hall reinforced their belief that civil society was unraveling. Republican challenger Richard Nixon played on these fears, running on a platform of "law and order" and a vague plan to end the war. Well aware of domestic pressure to wind down the war, Nixon sought, on the one hand, to appease antiwar sentiment by promising to phase out the draft, train South Vietnamese forces to assume more responsibility for the war effort, and gradually withdraw American troops. Nixon and his advisors called it "Vietnamization."[12] At the same time, Nixon appealed to the so-called silent majority of Americans who still supported the war (and opposed the antiwar movement) by calling for an "honorable" end to U.S. involvement—what he later called "peace with honor."[13] He narrowly edged out Humphrey in the fall's election.

Public assurances of American withdrawal, however, masked a dramatic escalation of conflict. Looking to incentivize peace talks, Nixon pursued a "madman strategy" of attacking communist supply lines across Laos and Cambodia, hoping to convince the North Vietnamese that he would do anything to stop the war.[14] Conducted without public knowledge or congressional approval, the bombings failed to spur the peace process, and talks stalled before the American-imposed November 1969 deadline. News of the attacks renewed antiwar demonstrations. Police and National Guard troops killed six students in separate protests at Jackson State University in Mississippi, and, more famously, Kent State University in Ohio in 1970.

Another three years passed—and another twenty thousand American troops died—before an agreement was reached.[15] After Nixon threatened to withdraw all aid and guaranteed to enforce a treaty militarily, the North and South Vietnamese governments signed the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973, marking the official end of U.S. force commitment to the Vietnam War. Peace was tenuous, and when war resumed North Vietnamese troops quickly overwhelmed southern forces. By 1975, despite nearly a decade of direct American military engagement, Vietnam was united under a communist government.

The Vietnam War profoundly influenced domestic politics. Moreover, it poisoned many Americans' perceptions of their government and its role in the world. And yet, while the antiwar demonstrations attracted considerable media attention and stand today as a hallmark of the sixties counterculture, many Americans nevertheless continued to regard the war as just. Wary of the rapid social changes that reshaped American society in the 1960s and worried that antiwar protests threatened an already tenuous civil order, a growing number of Americans turned to conservatism.

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28.5: Racial, Social, and Cultural Anxieties



Figure 28.5.1: Los Angeles police violently arrest a man during the Watts riot on August 12, 1965. *Wikimedia*.

The civil rights movement looked dramatically different at the end of the 1960s than it had at the beginning. The movement had never been monolithic, but prominent, competing ideologies had fractured the movement in the 1970s. The rise of the Black Power movement challenged the integrationist dreams of many older activists as the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X fueled disillusionment and many alienated activists recoiled from liberal reformers.

The political evolution of the civil rights movement was reflected in American culture. The lines of race, class, and gender ruptured American "mass" culture. The monolith of popular American culture, pilloried in the fifties and sixties as exclusively white, male-dominated, conservative, and stifling, finally shattered and Americans retreated into ever smaller, segmented subcultures. Marketers now targeted particular products to ever smaller pieces of the population, including previously neglected groups such as African Americans.[16] Subcultures often revolved around certain musical styles, whether pop, disco, hard rock, punk rock, country, or hip-hop. Styles of dress and physical appearance likewise aligned with cultures of choice.

If the popular rock acts of the sixties appealed to a new counterculture, the seventies witnessed the resurgence of cultural forms that appealed to a white working class confronting the social and political upheavals of the 1960s. Country hits such as Merle Haggard's "Okie from Muskogee" evoked simpler times and places where people "still wave Old Glory down at the courthouse" and they "don't let our hair grow long and shaggy like the hippies out in San Francisco." A popular television sitcom, *All in the Family*, became an unexpected hit among "middle America." The show's main character, Archie Bunker, was designed to mock reactionary middle-aged white men, but audiences embraced him. "Isn't anyone interested in upholding standards?" he lamented in an episode dealing with housing integration. "Our world is coming crumbling down. The coons are coming!"[17]



Figure 28.5.2: The cast of CBS's *All in the Family in 1973. Wikimedia.*

As Bunker knew, African Americans were becoming much more visible in American culture. While black cultural forms had been prominent throughout American history, they assumed new popular forms in the 1970s. Disco offered a new, optimistic, racially integrated pop music. Musicians such as Aretha Franklin, Andraé Crouch, and "fifth Beatle" Billy Preston brought their background in church performance to their own recordings as well as to the work of white artists like the Rolling Stones, with whom they collaborated. By the end of the decade, African American musical artists had introduced American society to one of the most significant musical innovations in decades: the Sugarhill Gang's 1979 record, *Rapper's Delight*. A lengthy paean to black machismo, it became the first rap single to reach the Top 40.[18]

Just as rap represented a hypermasculine black cultural form, Hollywood popularized its white equivalent. Films such as 1971's *Dirty Harry*captured a darker side of the national mood. Clint Eastwood's titular character exacted violent justice on clear villains, working within the sort of brutally simplistic ethical standard that appealed to Americans anxious about a perceived breakdown in "law and order." ("The film's moral position is fascist," said critic Roger Ebert, who nevertheless gave it three out of four stars.[19])

Perhaps the strongest element fueling American anxiety over "law and order" was the increasingly visible violence associated with the civil rights movement. No longer confined to the antiblack terrorism that struck the southern civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, publicly visible violence now broke out among black Americans in urban riots and among whites protesting new civil rights programs. In the mid-1970s, for instance, protests over the use of busing to overcome residential segregation and truly integrate public schools in Boston washed the city in racial violence. Stanley Forman's Pulitzer Prize–winning photo, *The Soiling of Old Glory*, famously captured one black teenager, Ted Landsmark, being attacked by a mob of anti-busing protesters, one of whom wielded an American flag.[20]

Urban riots, though, rather than anti-integration violence, tainted many white Americans' perception of the civil rights movement and urban life in general. Civil unrest broke out across the country, but the riots in Watts/Los Angeles (1965), Newark (1967), and Detroit (1967) were the most shocking. In each, a physical altercation between white police officers and African Americans spiraled into days of chaos and destruction. Tens of thousands participated in urban riots. Many looted and destroyed white-owned business. There were dozens of deaths, tens of millions of dollars in property damage, and an exodus of white capital that only further isolated urban poverty.[21]

In 1967, President Johnson appointed the Kerner Commission to investigate the causes of America's riots. Their report became an unexpected best seller.[22] The commission cited black frustration with the hopelessness of poverty as the underlying cause of urban unrest. As the head of the black National Business League testified, "It is to be more than naïve—indeed, it is a little short of sheer madness—for anyone to expect the very poorest of the American poor to remain docile and content in their poverty when television constantly and eternally dangles the opulence of our affluent society before their hungry eyes."[23] A Newark rioter who looted several boxes of shirts and shoes put it more simply: "They tell us about that pie in the sky but that pie in the sky is too damn high."[24] But white conservatives blasted the conclusion that white racism and economic hopelessness were to blame for the violence. African Americans wantonly destroying private property, they said, was not a symptom of America's intractable

racial inequalities but the logical outcome of a liberal culture of permissiveness that tolerated—even encouraged—nihilistic civil disobedience. Many white moderates and liberals, meanwhile, saw the explosive violence as a sign that African Americans had rejected the nonviolence of the earlier civil rights movement.

The unrest of the late sixties did, in fact, reflect a real and growing disillusionment among African Americans with the fate of the civil rights crusade. In the still-moldering ashes of Jim Crow, African Americans in Watts and other communities across the country bore the burdens of lifetimes of legally sanctioned discrimination in housing, employment, and credit. Segregation survived the legal dismantling of Jim Crow. The perseverance into the present day of stark racial and economic segregation in nearly all American cities destroyed any simple distinction between southern de jure segregation and nonsouthern de facto segregation. Black neighborhoods became traps that too few could escape.

Political achievements such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act were indispensable legal preconditions for social and political equality, but for most, the movement's long (and now often forgotten) goal of economic justice proved as elusive as ever. "I worked to get these people the right to eat cheeseburgers," Martin Luther King Jr. supposedly said to Bayard Rustin as they toured the devastation in Watts some years earlier, "and now I've got to do something . . . to help them get the money to buy it."[25] What good was the right to enter a store without money for purchases?

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28.6: The Crisis of 1968

To Americans in 1968, the country seemed to be unraveling. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed on April 4, 1968. He had been in Memphis to support striking sanitation workers. (Prophetically, he had reflected on his own mortality in a rally the night before. Confident that the civil rights movement would succeed without him, he brushed away fears of death. “I’ve been to the mountaintop,” he said, “and I’ve seen the promised land.”). The greatest leader in the American civil rights movement was lost. Riots broke out in over a hundred American cities. Two months later, on June 6, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was killed campaigning in California. He had represented the last hope of liberal idealists. Anger and disillusionment washed over the country.

As the Vietnam War descended ever deeper into a brutal stalemate and the Tet Offensive exposed the lies of the Johnson administration, students shut down college campuses and government facilities. Protests enveloped the nation.

Protesters converged on the Democratic National Convention in Chicago at the end of August 1968, when a bitterly fractured Democratic Party gathered to assemble a passable platform and nominate a broadly acceptable presidential candidate. Demonstrators planned massive protests in Chicago’s public spaces. Initial protests were peaceful, but the situation quickly soured as police issued stern threats and young people began to taunt and goad officials. Many of the assembled students had protest and sit-in experiences only in the relative safe havens of college campuses and were unprepared for Mayor Richard Daley’s aggressive and heavily armed police force and National Guard troops in full riot gear. Attendees recounted vicious beatings at the hands of police and Guardsmen, but many young people—convinced that much public sympathy could be won via images of brutality against unarmed protesters—continued stoking the violence. Clashes spilled from the parks into city streets, and eventually the smell of tear gas penetrated the upper floors of the opulent hotels hosting Democratic delegates. Chicago’s brutality overshadowed the convention and culminated in an internationally televised, violent standoff in front of the Hilton Hotel. “The whole world is watching,” the protesters chanted. The Chicago riots encapsulated the growing sense that chaos now governed American life.

For many sixties idealists, the violence of 1968 represented the death of a dream. Disorder and chaos overshadowed hope and progress. And for conservatives, it was confirmation of all of their fears and hesitations. Americans of 1968 turned their back on hope. They wanted peace. They wanted stability. They wanted “law and order.”

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28.7: The Rise and Fall of Richard Nixon



Figure 28.7.1: Richard Nixon campaigns in Philadelphia during the 1968 presidential election. *National Archives.*

Beleaguered by an unpopular war, inflation, and domestic unrest, President Johnson opted against reelection in March 1968—an unprecedented move in modern American politics. The forthcoming presidential election was shaped by Vietnam and the aforementioned unrest as much as by the campaigns of Democratic nominee Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Republican Richard Nixon, and third-party challenger George Wallace, the infamous segregationist governor of Alabama. The Democratic Party was in disarray in the spring of 1968, when senators Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy challenged Johnson's nomination and the president responded with his shocking announcement. Nixon's candidacy was aided further by riots that broke out across the country after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and the shock and dismay experienced after the slaying of Robert Kennedy in June. The Republican nominee's campaign was defined by shrewd maintenance of his public appearances and a pledge to restore peace and prosperity to what he called "the silent center; the millions of people in the middle of the political spectrum." This campaign for the "silent majority" was carefully calibrated to attract suburban Americans by linking liberals with violence and protest and rioting. Many embraced Nixon's message; a September 1968 poll found that 80 percent of Americans believed public order had "broken down."

Meanwhile, Humphrey struggled to distance himself from Johnson and maintain working-class support in northern cities, where voters were drawn to Wallace's appeals for law and order and a rejection of civil rights. The vice president had a final surge in northern cities with the aid of union support, but it was not enough to best Nixon's campaign. The final tally was close: Nixon won 43.3 percent of the popular vote (31,783,783), narrowly besting Humphrey's 42.7 percent (31,266,006). Wallace, meanwhile, carried five states in the Deep South, and his 13.5 percent (9,906,473) of the popular vote constituted an impressive showing for a third-party candidate. The Electoral College vote was more decisive for Nixon; he earned 302 electoral votes, while Humphrey and Wallace received only 191 and 45 votes, respectively. Although Republicans won a few seats, Democrats retained control of both the House and Senate and made Nixon the first president in 120 years to enter office with the opposition party controlling both houses.

Once installed in the White House, Richard Nixon focused his energies on American foreign policy, publicly announcing the Nixon Doctrine in 1969. On the one hand, Nixon asserted the supremacy of American democratic capitalism and conceded that the United States would continue supporting its allies financially. However, he denounced previous administrations' willingness to commit American forces to Third World conflicts and warned other states to assume responsibility for their own defense. He was turning America away from the policy of active, anticommunist containment, and toward a new strategy of détente."[26]

Promoted by national security advisor and eventual secretary of state Henry Kissinger, détente sought to stabilize the international system by thawing relations with Cold War rivals and bilaterally freezing arms levels. Taking advantage of tensions between communist China and the Soviet Union, Nixon pursued closer relations with both in order to de-escalate tensions and strengthen the United States' position relative to each. The strategy seemed to work. Nixon became the first American president

to visit communist China (1971) and the first since Franklin Roosevelt to visit the Soviet Union (1972). Direct diplomacy and cultural exchange programs with both countries grew and culminated with the formal normalization of U.S.-Chinese relations and the signing of two U.S.-Soviet arms agreements: the antiballistic missile (ABM) treaty and the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT I). By 1973, after almost thirty years of Cold War tension, peaceful coexistence suddenly seemed possible.

Soon, though, a fragile calm gave way again to Cold War instability. In November 1973, Nixon appeared on television to inform Americans that energy had become "a serious national problem" and that the United States was "heading toward the most acute shortages of energy since World War II."[27] The previous month Arab members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a cartel of the world's leading oil producers, embargoed oil exports to the United States in retaliation for American intervention in the Middle East. The embargo launched the first U.S. energy crisis. By the end of 1973, the global price of oil had quadrupled.[28] Drivers waited in line for hours to fill up their cars. Individual gas stations ran out of gas. American motorists worried that oil could run out at any moment. A Pennsylvania man died when his emergency stash of gasoline ignited in his trunk and backseat.[29] OPEC rescinded its embargo in 1974, but the economic damage had been done. The crisis extended into the late 1970s.

Like the Vietnam War, the oil crisis showed that small countries could still hurt the United States. At a time of anxiety about the nation's future, Vietnam and the energy crisis accelerated Americans' disenchantment with the United States' role in the world and the efficacy and quality of its leaders. Furthermore, government scandals in the 1970s and early 1980s sapped trust in America's public institutions. In 1971, the Nixon administration tried unsuccessfully to sue the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to prevent the publication of the Pentagon Papers, a confidential and damning history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam commissioned by the Defense Department and later leaked. The papers showed how presidents from Truman to Johnson repeatedly deceived the public on the war's scope and direction.[30] Nixon faced a rising tide of congressional opposition to the war, and Congress asserted unprecedented oversight of American war spending. In 1973, it passed the War Powers Resolution, which dramatically reduced the president's ability to wage war without congressional consent.

However, no scandal did more to unravel public trust than Watergate. On June 17, 1972, five men were arrested inside the offices of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in the Watergate Complex in downtown Washington, D.C. After being tipped off by a security guard, police found the men attempting to install sophisticated bugging equipment. One of those arrested was a former CIA employee then working as a security aide for the Nixon administration's Committee to Re-elect the President (lampooned as "CREEP").

While there is no direct evidence that Nixon ordered the Watergate break-in, he had been recorded in conversation with his chief of staff requesting that the DNC chairman be illegally wiretapped to obtain the names of the committee's financial supporters. The names could then be given to the Justice Department and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to conduct spurious investigations into their personal affairs. Nixon was also recorded ordering his chief of staff to break into the offices of the Brookings Institution and take files relating to the war in Vietnam, saying, "Goddammit, get in and get those files. Blow the safe and get it."[31]

Whether or not the president ordered the Watergate break-in, the White House launched a massive cover-up. Administration officials ordered the CIA to halt the FBI investigation and paid hush money to the burglars and White House aides. Nixon distanced himself from the incident publicly and went on to win a landslide election victory in November 1972. But, thanks largely to two persistent journalists at the *Washington Post*, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, information continued to surface that tied the burglaries ever closer to the CIA, the FBI, and the White House. The Senate held televised hearings. Citing executive privilege, Nixon refused to comply with orders to produce tapes from the White House's secret recording system. In July 1974, the House Judiciary Committee approved a bill to impeach the president. Nixon resigned before the full House could vote on impeachment. He became the first and only American president to resign from office.[32]

Vice President Gerald Ford was sworn in as his successor and a month later granted Nixon a full presidential pardon. Nixon disappeared from public life without ever publicly apologizing, accepting responsibility, or facing charges.

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28.8: Deindustrialization and Rise of the Sunbelt



Figure 28.8.1: Abandoned Youngstown factory. Stuart Spivack, via *Flickr*.

American workers had made substantial material gains throughout the 1940s and 1950s. During the so-called Great Compression, Americans of all classes benefited from postwar prosperity. Segregation and discrimination perpetuated racial and gender inequalities, but unemployment continually fell and a highly progressive tax system and powerful unions lowered general income inequality as working-class standards of living nearly doubled between 1947 and 1973.

But general prosperity masked deeper vulnerabilities. Perhaps no case better illustrates the decline of American industry and the creation of an intractable urban crisis than Detroit. Detroit boomed during World War II. When auto manufacturers like Ford and General Motors converted their assembly lines to build machines for the American war effort, observers dubbed the city the "arsenal of democracy."

After the war, however, automobile firms began closing urban factories and moving to outlying suburbs. Several factors fueled the process. Some cities partly deindustrialized themselves. Municipal governments in San Francisco, St. Louis, and Philadelphia banished light industry to make room for high-rise apartments and office buildings. Mechanization also contributed to the decline of American labor. A manager at a newly automated Ford engine plant in postwar Cleveland captured the interconnections between these concerns when he glibly noted to United Automobile Workers (UAW) president Walter Reuther, "You are going to have trouble collecting union dues from all of these machines."[33] More importantly, however, manufacturing firms sought to reduce labor costs by automating, downsizing, and relocating to areas with "business friendly" policies like low tax rates, anti-union right-to-work laws, and low wages.

Detroit began to bleed industrial jobs. Between 1950 and 1958, Chrysler, which actually kept more jobs in Detroit than either Ford or General Motors, cut its Detroit production workforce in half. In the years between 1953 and 1960, East Detroit lost ten plants and over seventy-one thousand jobs.[34] Because Detroit was a single-industry city, decisions made by the Big Three automakers reverberated across the city's industrial landscape. When auto companies mechanized or moved their operations, ancillary suppliers like machine tool companies were cut out of the supply chain and likewise forced to cut their own workforce. Between 1947 and 1977, the number of manufacturing firms in the city dropped from over three thousand to fewer than two thousand. The labor force was gutted. Manufacturing jobs fell from 338,400 to 153,000 over the same three decades.[35]

Industrial restructuring decimated all workers, but deindustrialization fell heaviest on the city's African Americans. Although many middle-class black Detroiters managed to move out of the city's ghettos, by 1960, 19.7 percent of black autoworkers in Detroit were unemployed, compared to just 5.8 percent of whites.[36] Overt discrimination in housing and employment had for decades confined African Americans to segregated neighborhoods where they were forced to pay exorbitant rents for slum housing. Subject to residential intimidation and cut off from traditional sources of credit, few could afford to follow industry as it left

the city for the suburbs and other parts of the country, especially the South. Segregation and discrimination kept them stuck where there were fewer and fewer jobs. Over time, Detroit devolved into a mass of unemployment, crime, and crippled municipal resources. When riots rocked Detroit in 1967, 25 to 30 percent of black residents between ages eighteen and twenty-four were unemployed.[37]

Deindustrialization in Detroit and elsewhere also went hand in hand with the long assault on unionization that began in the aftermath of World War II. Lacking the political support they had enjoyed during the New Deal years, labor organizations such as the CIO and the UAW shifted tactics and accepted labor-management accords in which cooperation, not agitation, was the strategic objective.

This accord held mixed results for workers. On the one hand, management encouraged employee loyalty through privatized welfare systems that offered workers health benefits and pensions. Grievance arbitration and collective bargaining also provided workers official channels through which to criticize policies and push for better conditions. At the same time, bureaucracy and corruption increasingly weighed down unions and alienated them from workers and the general public. Union management came to hold primary influence in what was ostensibly a "pluralistic" power relationship. Workers—though still willing to protest—by necessity pursued a more moderate agenda compared to the union workers of the 1930s and 1940s. Conservative politicians meanwhile seized on popular suspicions of Big Labor, stepping up their criticism of union leadership and positioning themselves as workers' true ally.

While conservative critiques of union centralization did much to undermine the labor movement, labor's decline also coincided with ideological changes within American liberalism. Labor and its political concerns undergirded Roosevelt's New Deal coalition, but by the 1960s, many liberals had forsaken working-class politics. More and more saw poverty as stemming not from structural flaws in the national economy, but from the failure of individuals to take full advantage of the American system. Roosevelt's New Deal might have attempted to rectify unemployment with government jobs, but Johnson's Great Society and its imitators funded government-sponsored job training, even in places without available jobs. Union leaders in the 1950s and 1960s typically supported such programs and philosophies.

Internal racism also weakened the labor movement. While national CIO leaders encouraged black unionization in the 1930s, white workers on the ground often opposed the integrated shop. In Detroit and elsewhere after World War II, white workers participated in "hate strikes" where they walked off the job rather than work with African Americans. White workers similarly opposed residential integration, fearing, among other things, that black newcomers would lower property values.[38]

By the mid-1970s, widely shared postwar prosperity leveled off and began to retreat. Growing international competition, technological inefficiency, and declining productivity gains stunted working- and middle-class wages. As the country entered recession, wages decreased and the pay gap between workers and management expanded, reversing three decades of postwar contraction. At the same time, dramatic increases in mass incarceration coincided with the deregulation of prison labor to allow more private companies access to cheaper inmate labor, a process that, whatever its aggregate impact, impacted local communities where free jobs were moved into prisons. The tax code became less progressive and labor lost its foothold in the marketplace. Unions represented a third of the workforce in the 1950s, but only one in ten workers belonged to one as of 2015.[39]

Geography dictated much of labor's fall, as American firms fled pro-labor states in the 1970s and 1980s. Some went overseas in the wake of new trade treaties to exploit low-wage foreign workers, but others turned to anti-union states in the South and West stretching from Virginia to Texas to Southern California. Factories shuttered in the North and Midwest, leading commentators by the 1980s to dub America's former industrial heartland the Rust Belt. With this, they contrasted the prosperous and dynamic Sun Belt."



Figure 28.8.2: Urban decay confronted Americans of the 1960s and 1970s. As the economy sagged and deindustrialization hit much of the country, Americans increasingly associated major cities with poverty and crime. In this 1973 photo, two subway riders sit amid a graffitied subway car in New York City. National Archives (8464439).

Coined by journalist Kevin Phillips in 1969, the term *Sun Belt* refers to the swath of southern and western states that saw unprecedented economic, industrial, and demographic growth after World War II.[40] During the New Deal, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared the American South "the nation's No. 1 economic problem" and injected massive federal subsidies, investments, and military spending into the region. During the Cold War, Sun Belt politicians lobbied hard for military installations and government contracts for their states.[41]

Meanwhile, southern states' hostility toward organized labor beckoned corporate leaders. The Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 facilitated southern states' frontal assault on unions. Thereafter, cheap, nonunionized labor, low wages, and lax regulations pulled northern industries away from the Rust Belt. Skilled northern workers followed the new jobs southward and westward, lured by cheap housing and a warm climate slowly made more tolerable by modern air conditioning.

The South attracted business but struggled to share their profits. Middle-class whites grew prosperous, but often these were recent transplants, not native southerners. As the cotton economy shed farmers and laborers, poor white and black southerners found themselves mostly excluded from the fruits of the Sun Belt. Public investments were scarce. White southern politicians channeled federal funding away from primary and secondary public education and toward high-tech industry and university-level research. The Sun Belt inverted Rust Belt realities: the South and West had growing numbers of high-skill, high-wage jobs but lacked the social and educational infrastructure needed to train native poor and middle-class workers for those jobs.

Regardless, more jobs meant more people, and by 1972, southern and western Sun Belt states had more electoral votes than the Northeast and Midwest. This gap continues to grow.[42] Though the region's economic and political ascendance was a product of massive federal spending, New Right politicians who constructed an identity centered on "small government" found their most loyal support in the Sun Belt. These business-friendly politicians successfully synthesized conservative Protestantism and free market ideology, creating a potent new political force. Housewives organized reading groups in their homes, and from those reading groups sprouted new organized political activities. Prosperous and mobile, old and new suburbanites gravitated toward an individualistic vision of free enterprise espoused by the Republican Party. Some, especially those most vocally anticommunist, joined groups like the Young Americans for Freedom and the John Birch Society. Less radical suburban voters, however, still gravitated toward the more moderate brand of conservatism promoted by Richard Nixon.

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28.9: The Politics of Love, Sex, and Gender



Figure 28.9.1: Demonstrators opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment protest in front of the White House in 1977. *Library of Congress*.

The sexual revolution continued into the 1970s. Many Americans—feminists, gay men, lesbians, and straight couples—challenged strict gender roles and rejected the rigidity of the nuclear family. Cohabitation without marriage spiked, straight couples married later (if at all), and divorce levels climbed. Sexuality, decoupled from marriage and procreation, became for many not only a source of personal fulfillment but a worthy political cause.

At the turn of the decade, sexuality was considered a private matter yet rigidly regulated by federal, state, and local law. Statutes typically defined legitimate sexual expression within the confines of patriarchal, procreative marriage. Interracial marriage, for instance, was illegal in many states until 1967 and remained largely taboo long after. Same-sex intercourse and cross-dressing were criminalized in most states, and gay men, lesbians, and transgender people were vulnerable to violent police enforcement as well as discrimination in housing and employment.

Two landmark legal rulings in 1973 established the battle lines for the "sex wars" of the 1970s. First, the Supreme Court's 7–2 ruling in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) struck down a Texas law that prohibited abortion in all cases when a mother's life was not in danger. The Court's decision built on precedent from a 1965 ruling that, in striking down a Connecticut law prohibiting married couples from using birth control, recognized a constitutional "right to privacy."[43] In *Roe*, the Court reasoned that "this right of privacy . . . is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy."[44] The Court held that states could not interfere with a woman's right to an abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy and could only fully prohibit abortions during the third trimester.

Other Supreme Court rulings, however, found that sexual privacy could be sacrificed for the sake of "public" good. *Miller v. California* (1973), a case over the unsolicited mailing of sexually explicit advertisements for illustrated "adult" books, held that the First Amendment did not protect "obscene" material, defined by the Court as anything with sexual appeal that lacked, "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."[45] The ruling expanded states' abilities to pass laws prohibiting materials like hard-core pornography. However, uneven enforcement allowed pornographic theaters and sex shops to proliferate despite whatever laws states had on the books. Americans debated whether these represented the pinnacle of sexual liberation or, as poet and lesbian feminist Rita Mae Brown suggested, "the ultimate conclusion of sexist logic."[46]

Of more tangible concern for most women, though, was the right to equal employment access. Thanks partly to the work of black feminists like Pauli Murray, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act banned employment discrimination based on sex, in addition to race, color, religion, and national origin. "If sex is not included," she argued in a memorandum sent to members of Congress, "the civil rights bill would be including only half of the Negroes."[47] Like most laws, Title VII's full impact came about slowly, as women across the nation cited it to litigate and pressure employers to offer them equal opportunities compared to those they offered

to men. For one, employers in the late sixties and seventies still viewed certain occupations as inherently feminine or masculine. NOW organized airline workers against a major company's sexist ad campaign that showed female flight attendants wearing buttons that read, "I'm Debbie, Fly Me" or "I'm Cheryl, Fly Me." Actual female flight attendants were required to wear similar buttons.[48] Other women sued to gain access to traditionally male jobs like factory work. Protests prompted the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to issue a more robust set of protections between 1968 and 1971. Though advancement came haltingly and partially, women used these protections to move eventually into traditional male occupations, politics, and corporate management.

The battle for sexual freedom was not just about the right to get *into* places, though. It was also about the right to get out of them—specifically, unhappy households and marriages. Between 1959 and 1979, the American divorce rate more than doubled. By the early 1980s, nearly half of all American marriages ended in divorce.[49] The stigma attached to divorce evaporated and a growing sense of sexual and personal freedom motivated individuals to leave abusive or unfulfilling marriages. Legal changes also promoted higher divorce rates. Before 1969, most states required one spouse to prove that the other was guilty of a specific offense, such as adultery. The difficulty of getting a divorce under this system encouraged widespread lying in divorce courts. Even couples desiring an amicable split were sometimes forced to claim that one spouse had cheated on the other even if neither (or both) had. Other couples temporarily relocated to states with more lenient divorce laws, such as Nevada.[50] Widespread recognition of such practices prompted reforms. In 1969, California adopted the first no-fault divorce law. By the end of the 1970s, almost every state had adopted some form of no-fault divorce. The new laws allowed for divorce on the basis of "irreconcilable differences," even if only one party felt that he or she could not stay in the marriage.[51]

Gay men and women, meanwhile, negotiated a harsh world that stigmatized homosexuality as a mental illness or an immoral depravity. Building on postwar efforts by gay rights organizations to bring homosexuality into the mainstream of American culture, young gay activists of the late sixties and seventies began to challenge what they saw as the conservative gradualism of the "homophile" movement. Inspired by the burgeoning radicalism of the Black Power movement, the New Left protests of the Vietnam War, and the counterculture movement for sexual freedom, gay and lesbian activists agitated for a broader set of sexual rights that emphasized an assertive notion of liberation rooted not in mainstream assimilation but in pride of sexual difference.

Perhaps no single incident did more to galvanize gay and lesbian activism than the 1969 uprising at the Stonewall Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village. Police regularly raided gay bars and hangouts. But when police raided the Stonewall in June 1969, the bar patrons protested and sparked a multiday street battle that catalyzed a national movement for gay liberation. Seemingly overnight, calls for homophile respectability were replaced with chants of "Gay Power!"[52]



Figure 28.9.2: The window under the Stonewall Inn sign reads: "We homosexuals plead with our people to please help maintain peaceful and quiet conduct on the streets of the Village–Mattachine." Photograph 1969. *Wikimedia*.

In the following years, gay Americans gained unparalleled access to private and public spaces. Gay activists increasingly attacked cultural norms that demanded they keep their sexuality hidden. Citing statistics that sexual secrecy contributed to stigma and suicide, gay activists urged people to come out and embrace their sexuality. A step towards the normalization of homosexuality occurred in 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association stopped classifying homosexuality as a mental illness. Pressure

mounted on politicians. In 1982, Wisconsin became the first state to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation. More than eighty cities and nine states followed suit over the following decade. But progress proceeded unevenly, and gay Americans continued to suffer hardships from a hostile culture.

Like all social movements, the sexual revolution was not free of division. Transgender people were often banned from participating in Gay Pride rallies and lesbian feminist conferences. They, in turn, mobilized to fight the high incidence of rape, abuse, and murder of transgender people. A 1971 newsletter denounced the notion that transgender people were mentally ill and highlighted the particular injustices they faced in and out of the gay community, declaring, "All power to Trans Liberation."[53]

As events in the 1970s broadened sexual freedoms and promoted greater gender equality, so too did they generate sustained and organized opposition. Evangelical Christians and other moral conservatives, for instance, mobilized to reverse gay victories. In 1977, activists in Dade County, Florida, used the slogan "Save Our Children" to overturn an ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual orientation.[54] A leader of the ascendant religious right, Jerry Falwell, said in 1980, "It is now time to take a stand on certain moral issues. . . . We must stand against the Equal Rights Amendment, the feminist revolution, and the homosexual revolution. We must have a revival in this country."[55]

Much to Falwell's delight, conservative Americans did, in fact, stand against and defeat the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), their most stunning social victory of the 1970s. Versions of the amendment—which declared, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex"—were introduced to Congress each year since 1923. It finally passed amid the upheavals of the sixties and seventies and went to the states for ratification in March 1972.[56] With high approval ratings, the ERA seemed destined to pass swiftly through state legislatures and become the Twenty-Seventh Amendment. Hawaii ratified the amendment the same day it cleared Congress. Within a year, thirty states had done so. But then the amendment stalled. It took years for more states to pass it. In 1977, Indiana became the thirty-fifth and final state to ratify.[57]

By 1977, anti-ERA forces had successfully turned the political tide against the amendment. At a time when many women shared Betty Friedan's frustration that society seemed to confine women to the role of homemaker, Phyllis Schlafly's STOP ERA organization ("Stop Taking Our Privileges") trumpeted the value and advantages of being a homemaker and mother.[58] Marshaling the support of evangelical Christians and other religious conservatives, Schlafly worked tirelessly to stifle the ERA. She lobbied legislators and organized counter-rallies to ensure that Americans heard "from the millions of happily married women who believe in the laws which protect the family and require the husband to support his wife and children."[59] The amendment needed only three more states for ratification. It never got them. In 1982, the time limit for ratification expired—and along with it, the amendment.[60]

The failed battle for the ERA uncovered the limits of the feminist crusade. And it illustrated the women's movement's inherent incapacity to represent fully the views of 50 percent of the country's population, a population riven by class differences, racial disparities, and cultural and religious divisions.

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Figure 28.10.1: Supporters rally with pumpkins carved in the likeness of President Jimmy Carter in Polk County, Florida, in October 1980. State Library and Archives of Florida via *Flickr*.

Although Nixon eluded prosecution, Watergate continued to weigh on voters' minds. It netted big congressional gains for Democrats in the 1974 midterm elections, and Ford's pardon damaged his chances in 1976. Former one-term Georgia governor Jimmy Carter, a nuclear physicist and peanut farmer who represented the rising generation of younger, racially liberal "New South" Democrats, captured the Democratic nomination. Carter did not identify with either his party's liberal or conservative wing; his appeal was more personal and moral than political. He ran on no great political issues, letting his background as a hardworking, honest, southern Baptist navy man ingratiate him to voters around the country, especially in his native South, where support for Democrats had wavered in the wake of the civil rights movement. Carter's wholesome image was painted in direct contrast to the memory of Nixon, and by association with the man who pardoned him. Carter sealed his party's nomination in June and won a close victory in November.[61]

When Carter took the oath of office on January 20, 1977, however, he became president of a nation in the midst of economic turmoil. Oil shocks, inflation, stagnant growth, unemployment, and sinking wages weighed down the nation's economy. Some of these problems were traceable to the end of World War II when American leaders erected a complex system of trade policies to help rebuild the shattered economies of Western Europe and Asia. After the war, American diplomats and politicians used trade relationships to win influence and allies around the globe. They saw the economic health of their allies, particularly West Germany and Japan, as a crucial bulwark against the expansion of communism. Americans encouraged these nations to develop vibrant export-oriented economies and tolerated restrictions on U.S. imports.



Figure 28.10.2: The 1979 energy crisis panicked consumers who remembered the 1973 oil shortage, prompting many Americans to buy oil in huge quantities. *Library of Congress*.

This came at great cost to the United States. As the American economy stalled, Japan and West Germany soared and became major forces in the global production for autos, steel, machine tools, and electrical products. By 1970, the United States began to run massive trade deficits. The value of American exports dropped and the prices of its imports skyrocketed. Coupled with the huge cost of the Vietnam War and the rise of oil-producing states in the Middle East, growing trade deficits sapped the United States' dominant position in the global economy.

American leaders didn't know how to respond. After a series of negotiations with leaders from France, Great Britain, West Germany, and Japan in 1970 and 1971, the Nixon administration allowed these rising industrial nations to continue flouting the principles of free trade. They maintained trade barriers that sheltered their domestic markets from foreign competition while at the same time exporting growing amounts of goods to the United States. By 1974, in response to U.S. complaints and their own domestic economic problems, many of these industrial nations overhauled their protectionist practices but developed even subtler methods (such as state subsidies for key industries) to nurture their economies.

The result was that Carter, like Ford before him, presided over a hitherto unimagined economic dilemma: the simultaneous onset of inflation and economic stagnation, a combination popularized as *stagflation*."[62] Neither Ford nor Carter had the means or ambition to protect American jobs and goods from foreign competition. As firms and financial institutions invested, sold goods, and manufactured in new rising economies like Mexico, Taiwan, Japan, Brazil, and elsewhere, American politicians allowed them to sell their often cheaper products in the United States.

As American officials institutionalized this new unfettered global trade, many American manufacturers perceived only one viable path to sustained profitability: moving overseas, often by establishing foreign subsidiaries or partnering with foreign firms. Investment capital, especially in manufacturing, fled the United States looking for overseas investments and hastened the decline in the productivity of American industry.

During the 1976 presidential campaign, Carter had touted the "misery index," the simple addition of the unemployment rate to the inflation rate, as an indictment of Gerald Ford and Republican rule. But Carter failed to slow the unraveling of the American economy, and the stubborn and confounding rise of both unemployment and inflation damaged his presidency.

Just as Carter failed to offer or enact policies to stem the unraveling of the American economy, his idealistic vision of human rights–based foreign policy crumbled. He had not made human rights a central theme in his campaign, but in May 1977 he declared his wish to move away from a foreign policy in which "inordinate fear of communism" caused American leaders to "adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries." Carter proposed instead "a policy based on constant decency in its values and on optimism in our historical vision."[63]

Carter's human rights policy achieved real victories: the United States either reduced or eliminated aid to American-supported right-wing dictators guilty of extreme human rights abuses in places like South Korea, Argentina, and the Philippines. In September 1977, Carter negotiated the return to Panama of the Panama Canal, which cost him enormous political capital in the

United States.[64] A year later, in September 1978, Carter negotiated a peace treaty between Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. The Camp David Accords—named for the president's rural Maryland retreat, where thirteen days of secret negotiations were held—represented the first time an Arab state had recognized Israel, and the first time Israel promised Palestine self-government. The accords had limits, for both Israel and the Palestinians, but they represented a major foreign policy coup for Carter.[65]

And yet Carter's dreams of a human rights–based foreign policy crumbled before the Cold War and the realities of American politics. The United States continued to provide military and financial support for dictatorial regimes vital to American interests, such as the oil-rich state of Iran. When the President and First Lady Rosalynn Carter visited Tehran, Iran, in January 1978, the president praised the nation's dictatorial ruler, Shah Reza Pahlavi, and remarked on the "respect and the admiration and love" Iranians had for their leader.[66] When the shah was deposed in November 1979, revolutionaries stormed the American embassy in Tehran and took fifty-two Americans hostage. Americans not only experienced another oil crisis as Iran's oil fields shut down, they watched America's news programs, for 444 days, remind them of the hostages and America's new global impotence. Carter couldn't win their release. A failed rescue mission only ended in the deaths of eight American servicemen. Already beset with a punishing economy, Carter's popularity plummeted.

Carter's efforts to ease the Cold War by achieving a new nuclear arms control agreement disintegrated under domestic opposition from conservative Cold War hawks such as Ronald Reagan, who accused Carter of weakness. A month after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, a beleaguered Carter committed the United States to defending its "interests" in the Middle East against Soviet incursions, declaring that "an assault [would] be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." The Carter Doctrine not only signaled Carter's ambivalent commitment to de-escalation and human rights, it testified to his increasingly desperate presidency.[67]

The collapse of American manufacturing, the stubborn rise of inflation, the sudden impotence of American foreign policy, and a culture ever more divided: the sense of unraveling pervaded the nation. "I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy," Jimmy Carter said in a televised address on July 15, 1979. "The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will."

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28.11: Conclusion

Though American politics moved right after Lyndon Johnson's administration, Nixon's 1968 election was no conservative counterrevolution. American politics and society remained in flux throughout the 1970s. American politicians on the right and the left pursued relatively moderate courses compared to those in the preceding and succeeding decades. But a groundswell of anxieties and angers brewed beneath the surface. The world's greatest military power had floundered in Vietnam and an American president stood flustered by Middle Eastern revolutionaries. The cultural clashes from the sixties persisted and accelerated. While cities burned, a more liberal sexuality permeated American culture. The economy crashed, leaving America's cities prone before poverty and crime and its working class gutted by deindustrialization and globalization. American weakness was everywhere. And so, by 1980, many Americans—especially white middle- and upper-class Americans—felt a nostalgic desire for simpler times and simpler answers to the frustratingly complex geopolitical, social, and economic problems crippling the nation. The appeal of Carter's soft drawl and Christian humility had signaled this yearning, but his utter failure to stop the unraveling of American power and confidence opened the way for a new movement, one with new personalities and a new conservatism—one that promised to undo the damage and restore the United States to its own nostalgic image of itself.

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29: THE TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHT



Activist Phyllis Schlafly campaigns against the Equal Rights Amendment in 1977. Library of Congress

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29.1: Introduction

Speaking to Detroit autoworkers in October 1980, Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan described what he saw as the American Dream under Democratic president Jimmy Carter. The family garage may have still held two cars, cracked Reagan, but they were "both Japanese and they're out of gas."[1] The charismatic former governor of California suggested that a once-proud nation was running on empty. But Reagan held out hope for redemption. Stressing the theme of "national decline," he nevertheless promised to make the United States once again a glorious "city upon a hill."[2] In November, Reagan's vision triumphed.

Reagan rode the wave of a powerful political movement referred to by historians as the New Right. More libertarian in its economics and more politically forceful in its conservative religious principles than the moderate brand of conservatism popular after World War II, the New Right had by the 1980s evolved into the most influential wing of the Republican Party. And it could claim increasing credit for Republican electoral successes. Building on the gradual unraveling of the New Deal political order in the 1960s and 1970s (see Chapter 28), the conservative movement not only enjoyed the guidance of skilled politicians like Reagan but drew tremendous energy from a broad range of grassroots activists. Countless ordinary citizens—newly mobilized Christian conservatives, in particular—helped the Republican Party steer the country rightward. Enduring conflicts over race, economic policy, sexual politics, and foreign affairs fatally fractured the liberal consensus that had dominated American politics since the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, and the New Right attracted support from Reagan Democrats, blue-collar voters who had lost faith in the old liberal creed.

The rise of the right affected Americans' everyday lives in numerous ways. The Reagan administration's embrace of free markets dispensed with the principles of active income redistribution and social welfare spending that had animated the New Deal and Great Society in the 1930s and 1960s. As American liberals increasingly embraced a "rights" framework directed toward African Americans, Latinos, women, lesbians and gays, and other marginalized groups, conservative policy makers targeted the regulatory and legal landscape of the United States. Critics complained that Reagan's policies served the interests of corporations and wealthy individuals and pointed to the sudden widening of economic inequality. But the New Right harnessed popular distrust of regulation, taxes, and bureaucrats, and conservative activists celebrated the end of hyperinflation and substantial growth in GDP.

In many ways, however, the rise of the right promised more than it delivered. Battered but intact, the social welfare programs of the New Deal and Great Society (for example, social security, Medicaid, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children) survived the 1980s. Despite Republican vows of fiscal discipline, both the federal government and the national debt ballooned. At the end of the decade, conservative Christians viewed popular culture as more vulgar and hostile to their values than ever before. And in the near term, the New Right registered only partial victories on a range of public policies and cultural issues. Yet from a long-term perspective, conservatives achieved a subtler and more enduring transformation of American politics and society. In the words of one historian, the conservative movement successfully "changed the terms of debate and placed its opponents on the defensive."[3] Liberals and their programs and policies did not disappear, but they increasingly fought battles on terrain chosen by the New Right.

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29.2: Conservative Ascendance

The Reagan Revolution marked the culmination of a long process of political mobilization on the American right. In the first two decades after World War II the New Deal seemed firmly embedded in American electoral politics and public policy. Even two-term Republican president Dwight D. Eisenhower declined to roll back the welfare state. To be sure, William F. Buckley tapped into a deep vein of elite conservatism in 1955 by announcing in the first issue of *National Review* that his magazine "stands athwart history yelling Stop."[4] Senator Joseph McCarthy and John Birch Society founder Robert Welch stirred anticommunist fervor. But in general, the far right lacked organizational cohesion. Following Lyndon Johnson's resounding defeat of Republican Barry Goldwater—"Mr. Conservative"—in the 1964 presidential election, many observers declared American conservatism finished. *New York Times* columnist James Reston wrote that Goldwater had "wrecked his party for a long time to come."[5]

Despite these dire predictions, conservatism not only persisted, it prospered. Its growing appeal had several causes. The expansive social and economic agenda of Johnson's Great Society reminded anticommunists of Soviet-style central planning and deficits alarmed fiscal conservatives. Race also drove the creation of the New Right. The civil rights movement, along with the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, challenged the racial hierarchy of the Jim Crow South. All of these occurred under Democratic leadership, pushing white southerners toward the Republican Party. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Black Power, affirmative action, and court-ordered busing of children between schools to achieve racial balance brought "white backlash" in the North, often in cities previously known for political liberalism. To many white Americans, the urban rebellions, antiwar protests, and student uprisings of the late 1960s signaled social chaos. At the same time, slowing wage growth, rising prices, and growing tax burdens threatened many working- and middle-class citizens who long formed the core of the New Deal coalition. Liberalism no longer seemed to offer the great mass of white Americans a road map to prosperity, so they searched for new political solutions.

Former Alabama governor and conservative Democrat George Wallace masterfully exploited the racial, cultural, and economic resentments of working-class whites during his presidential runs in 1968 and 1972. Wallace's record as a staunch segregationist made him a hero in the Deep South, where he won five states as a third-party candidate in the 1968 general election. Wallace's populist message also resonated with blue-collar voters in the industrial North who felt left behind by the rights revolution. On the campaign stump, the fiery candidate lambasted hippies, antiwar protesters, and government bureaucrats. He assailed female welfare recipients for "breeding children as a cash crop" and ridiculed "over-educated, ivory-tower" intellectuals who "don't know how to park a bicycle straight."[6] Wallace also advanced progressive proposals for federal job training programs, a minimum wage hike, and legal protections for collective bargaining. Running as a Democrat in 1972, Wallace captured the Michigan primary and polled second in the industrial heartland of Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. In May 1972, an assassin's bullet left Wallace paralyzed and ended his campaign. Nevertheless, his amalgamation of older, New Deal–style proposals and conservative populism represented the rapid reordering of party loyalties in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Richard Nixon similarly harnessed the New Right's sense of grievance through his rhetoric about "law and order" and the "silent majority."[7] But Nixon and his Republican successor, Gerald Ford, continued to accommodate the politics of the New Deal order. The New Right remained without a major public champion.

Christian conservatives also felt themselves under siege from liberalism. In the early 1960s, Supreme Court decisions prohibiting teacher-led prayer (*Engel v. Vitale*) and Bible reading in public schools (*Abington v. Schempp*) led some on the right to conclude that a liberal judicial system threatened Christian values. In the following years, the counterculture's celebration of sex and drugs, along with relaxed obscenity and pornography laws, intensified the conviction that "permissive" liberalism encouraged immorality in private life. Evangelical Protestants—Christians who professed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, upheld the Bible as an infallible source of truth, and felt a duty to convert, or evangelize, nonbelievers—composed the core of the so-called religious right.

With increasing assertiveness in the 1960s and 1970s, Christian conservatives mobilized to protect the "traditional" family. Women composed a striking number of the religious right's foot soldiers. In 1968 and 1969 a group of newly politicized mothers in Anaheim, California, led a sustained protest against sex education in public schools.[8] Catholic activist Phyllis Schlafly marshaled opposition to the ERA, while evangelical pop singer Anita Bryant drew national headlines for her successful fight to repeal Miami's gay rights ordinance in 1977. In 1979, Beverly LaHaye (whose husband, Tim—an evangelical pastor in San Diego—later coauthored the wildly popular *Left Behind* Christian book series) founded Concerned Women for America, which linked small groups of local activists opposed to the ERA, abortion, homosexuality, and no-fault divorce.

Activists like Schlafly and LaHaye valorized motherhood as women's highest calling. Abortion therefore struck at the core of their female identity. More than perhaps any other issue, abortion drew different segments of the religious right—Catholics and

Protestants, women and men—together. The Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling outraged many devout Catholics and evangelicals (who had been less universally opposed to the procedure than their Catholic counterparts). Christian author Francis Schaeffer cultivated evangelical opposition to abortion through the 1979 documentary film *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, arguing that the "fate of the unborn is the fate of the human race."[9] With abortion framed in stark, existential terms, many evangelicals felt compelled to combat the procedure through political action.

Grassroots passion drove anti-abortion activism, but a set of religious and secular institutions turned the various strands of the New Right into a sophisticated movement. In 1979 Jerry Falwell—a Baptist minister and religious broadcaster from Lynchburg, Virginia—founded the Moral Majority, an explicitly political organization dedicated to advancing a "pro-life, pro-family, pro-morality, and pro-American" agenda. The Moral Majority skillfully wove together social and economic appeals to make itself a force in Republican politics. Secular, business-oriented institutions also joined the attack on liberalism, fueled by stagflation and by the federal government's creation of new regulatory agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Conservative business leaders bankrolled new "think tanks" like the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute. These organizations provided grassroots activists with ready-made policy prescriptions. Other business leaders took a more direct approach by hiring Washington lobbyists and creating political action committees (PACs) to press their agendas in the halls of Congress and federal agencies. Between 1976 and 1980 the number of corporate PACs rose from under three hundred to over twelve hundred.

Grassroots activists and business leaders received unlikely support from a circle of neoconservatives—disillusioned intellectuals who had rejected liberalism and the Left and become Republicans. Irving Kristol, a former Marxist who went on to champion free-market capitalism as a *Wall Street Journal* columnist, defined a neoconservative as a "liberal who has been mugged by reality."[10] Neoconservative journals like *Commentary* and *Public Interest* argued that the Great Society had proven counterproductive, perpetuating the poverty and racial segregation that it aimed to cure. By the middle of the 1970s, neoconservatives felt mugged by foreign affairs as well. As ardent Cold Warriors, they argued that Nixon's policy of détente left the United States vulnerable to the Soviet Union.

In sum, several streams of conservative political mobilization converged in the late 1970s. Each wing of the burgeoning New Right—disaffected northern blue-collar workers, white southerners, evangelicals and devout Catholics, business leaders, disillusioned intellectuals, and Cold War hawks—turned to the Republican Party as the most effective vehicle for their political counterassault on liberalism and the New Deal political order. After years of mobilization, the domestic and foreign policy catastrophes of the Carter administration provided the headwinds that brought the conservative movement to shore.

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29.3: The Conservatism of the Carter Years

The election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 brought a Democrat to the White House for the first time since 1969. Large Democratic majorities in Congress provided the new president with an opportunity to move aggressively on the legislative front. With the infighting of the early 1970s behind them, many Democrats hoped the Carter administration would update and expand the New Deal. But Carter won the presidency on a wave of post-Watergate disillusionment with government that did not translate into support for liberal ideas.

In its early days, the Carter administration embraced several policies backed by liberals. It pushed an economic stimulus package containing $4 billion for public works, extended food stamp benefits to 2.5 million new recipients, enlarged the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income households, and expanded the Nixon-era Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).[11] But the White House quickly realized that Democratic control of Congress did not guarantee support for its initially left-leaning economic proposals. Many of the Democrats elected to Congress in the aftermath of Watergate were more moderate than their predecessors, who had been trained in the New Deal gospel. These conservative Democrats sometimes partnered with congressional Republicans to oppose Carter, most notably in response to the administration's proposal for a federal office of consumer protection.

Events outside Carter's control certainly helped discredit liberalism, but the president's own temperamental and philosophical conservatism hamstrung the administration and pushed national politics further to the right. In his 1978 State of the Union address, Carter lectured Americans that "government cannot solve our problems . . . it cannot eliminate poverty, or provide a bountiful economy, or reduce inflation, or save our cities, or cure illiteracy, or provide energy."[12] The statement neatly captured the ideological transformation of the county. Rather than leading a resurgence of American liberalism, Carter became, as one historian put it, "the first president to govern in a post–New Deal framework."[13]Organized labor felt abandoned by Carter, who remained cool to several of their highest legislative priorities. The president offered tepid support for a national health insurance proposal and declined to lobby aggressively for a package of modest labor law reforms. The business community rallied to defeat the latter measure, in what AFL-CIO chief George Meany described as "an attack by every anti-union group in America to kill the labor movement."[14] In 1977 and 1978, liberal Democrats rallied behind the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Training Act, which promised to end unemployment through extensive government planning. The bill aimed not only to guarantee a job to every American but also to reunite the interracial, working-class Democratic coalition that had been fractured by deindustrialization and affirmative action.[15] But Carter's lack of enthusiasm for the proposal allowed conservatives from both parties to water the bill down to a purely symbolic gesture. Liberals, like labor leaders, came to regard the president as an unreliable ally.

Carter also came under fire from Republicans, especially the religious right. His administration incurred the wrath of evangelicals in 1978 when the IRS established new rules revoking the tax-exempt status of racially segregated, private Christian schools. The rules only strengthened a policy instituted by the Nixon administration; however, the religious right accused Carter of singling out Christian institutions. Republican activist Richard Viguerie described the IRS controversy as the "spark that ignited the religious right's involvement in real politics."[16] Race sat just below the surface of the IRS fight. After all, many of the schools had been founded to circumvent court-ordered desegregation. But the IRS ruling allowed the New Right to rain down fire on big government interference while downplaying the practice of segregation at the heart of the case.

While the IRS controversy flared, economic crises multiplied. Unemployment reached 7.8 percent in May 1980, up from 6 percent at the start of Carter's first term.[17] Inflation (the rate at which the cost of goods and services increases) jumped from 6 percent in 1978 to a staggering 20 percent by the winter of 1980.[18] In another bad omen, the iconic Chrysler Corporation appeared close to bankruptcy. The administration responded to these challenges in fundamentally conservative ways. First, Carter proposed a tax cut for the upper middle class, which Congress passed in 1978. Second, the White House embraced a longtime goal of the conservative movement by deregulating the airline and trucking industries in 1978 and 1980, respectively. Third, Carter proposed balancing the federal budget—much to the dismay of liberals, who would have preferred that he use deficit spending to finance a *new* New Deal. Finally, to halt inflation, Carter's appointed chair of the Federal Reserve, Paul Volcker, raised interest rates and tightened the money supply—policies designed to reduce inflation in the long run but which increased unemployment in the short run. Liberalism was on the run.

The decade's second "energy crisis," which witnessed another spike in oil prices and oil shortages across the country, brought out the southern Baptist moralist in Carter. On July 15, 1979, the president delivered a nationally televised speech on energy policy in which he attributed the country's economic woes to a "crisis of confidence." Carter lamented that "too many of us now tend

to worship self-indulgence and consumption."[19] The country initially responded favorably to the push for energy conservation, yet Carter's emphasis on discipline and sacrifice and his spiritual diagnosis for economic hardship sidestepped deeper questions of large-scale economic change and downplayed the harsh toll inflation had taken on regular Americans.

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29.4: The Election of 1980

These domestic challenges, combined with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the hostage crisis in Iran, hobbled Carter heading into his 1980 reelection campaign. Many Democrats were dismayed by his policies. The president of the International Association of Machinists dismissed Carter as "the best Republican President since Herbert Hoover."[20] Angered by the White House's refusal to back national health insurance, Massachusetts senator Ted Kennedy challenged Carter in the Democratic primaries. Running as the party's liberal standard-bearer and heir to the legacy of his slain older brothers, Kennedy garnered support from key labor unions and left-wing Democrats. Carter ultimately vanquished Kennedy, but the close primary tally exposed the president's vulnerability.

Carter's opponent in the general election was Ronald Reagan, a former Hollywood actor who had served two terms as governor of California. Reagan ran as a staunch fiscal conservative and a Cold War hawk, vowing to reduce government spending and shrink the federal bureaucracy. Reagan also accused his opponent of failing to confront the Soviet Union and vowed steep increases in military spending. Carter responded by calling Reagan a warmonger, but the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the confinement of 52 American hostages in Iran discredited Carter's foreign policy in the eyes of many Americans.

The incumbent fared no better on domestic affairs. Unemployment remained at nearly 8 percent.[21] Meanwhile the Federal Reserve's anti-inflation measures pushed interest rates to an unheard-of 18.5 percent.[22] Reagan seized on these bad economic trends. On the campaign trail he brought down the house by proclaiming: "A recession is when your neighbor loses his job, and a depression is when you lose your job." Reagan would then pause before concluding, "And a recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his job."[23]

Social and cultural issues presented yet another challenge for the president. Although a self-proclaimed "born-again" Christian and Sunday school teacher, Carter struggled to court the religious right. Carter scandalized devout Christians by admitting to lustful thoughts during an interview with *Playboy* magazine in 1976, telling the reporter he had "committed adultery in my heart many times."[24] Although Reagan was only a nominal Christian and rarely attended church, the religious right embraced him. Reverend Jerry Falwell directed the full weight of the Moral Majority behind Reagan. The organization registered an estimated two million new voters in 1980. Reagan also cultivated the religious right by denouncing abortion and endorsing prayer in school. The IRS tax exemption issue resurfaced as well, with the 1980 Republican platform vowing to "halt the unconstitutional regulatory vendetta launched by Mr. Carter's IRS commissioner against independent schools."[25] Early in the primary season, Reagan condemned the policy during a speech at South Carolina's Bob Jones University, which had recently sued the IRS after the school's ban on interracial dating led to the loss of its tax-exempt status.



Figure 29.4.1: Jerry Falwell, a wildly popular TV evangelist, founded the Moral Majority in the late 1970s. Decrying the demise of the nation's morality, the organization gained a massive following and helped to cement the status of the New Christian Right in American politics. *Wikimedia*.

Reagan's campaign appealed subtly but unmistakably to the racial hostilities of white voters. The candidate held his first post–nominating convention rally at the Neshoba County Fair near Philadelphia, Mississippi, the town where three civil rights workers had been murdered in 1964. In his speech, Reagan championed the doctrine of states' rights, which had been the rallying cry of segregationists in the 1950s and 1960s. In criticizing the welfare state, Reagan had long employed thinly veiled racial stereotypes about a "welfare queen" in Chicago who drove a Cadillac while defrauding the government or a "strapping young buck" purchasing T-bone steaks with food stamps.[26] Like George Wallace before him, Reagan exploited the racial and cultural resentments of struggling white working-class voters. And like Wallace, he attracted blue-collar workers in droves.

With the wind at his back on almost every issue, Reagan only needed to blunt Carter's characterization of him as an angry extremist. Reagan did so during their only debate by appearing calm and amiable. "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" he asked the American people at the conclusion of the debate.[27] The American people answered no. Reagan won the election with 51 percent of the popular vote to Carter's 41 percent. (Independent John Anderson captured 7 percent.)[28] Despite capturing only a slim majority, Reagan scored a decisive 489–49 victory in the Electoral College.[29] Republicans gained control of the Senate for the first time since 1955 by winning twelve seats. Liberal Democrats George McGovern, Frank Church, and Birch Bayh went down in defeat, as did liberal Republican Jacob Javits. The GOP picked up thirty-three House seats, narrowing the Democratic advantage in the lower chamber.[30] The New Right had arrived in Washington, D.C.

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29.5: The New Right in Power



Figure 29.5.1: Ronald Reagan secured the presidency by appealing to the growing conservatism of much of the country. Here, Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy Reagan, wave from a limousine during the inaugural parade in Washington, D.C., in 1981. *Wikimedia*.

In his first inaugural address Reagan proclaimed that "government is not the solution to the problem, government is the problem."[31] In reality, Reagan focused less on eliminating government than on redirecting government to serve new ends. In line with that goal, his administration embraced supply-side economic theories that had recently gained popularity among the New Right. While the postwar gospel of Keynesian economics had focused on stimulating consumer demand, supply-side economics held that lower personal and corporate tax rates would encourage greater private investment and production. Supply-side advocates promised that the resulting wealth would reach—or "trickle down" to, in the words of critics—lower-income groups through job creation and higher wages. Conservative economist Arthur Laffer predicted that lower tax rates would generate so much economic activity that federal tax revenues would actually increase. The administration touted the so-called Laffer Curve as justification for the tax cut plan that served as the cornerstone of Reagan's first year in office. Republican congressman Jack Kemp, an early supply-side advocate and co-sponsor of Reagan's tax bill, promised that it would unleash the "creative genius that has always invigorated America."[32]



Figure 29.5.2: The Iranian hostage crisis ended literally during President Reagan's inauguration speech. The Reagan administration received credit for bringing the hostages home. This group photograph shows the former hostages in the hospital in 1981 before being released back to the United States. *Wikimedia*.

The tax cut faced early skepticism from Democrats and even some Republicans. Vice president George H. W. Bush had belittled supply-side theory as "voodoo economics" during the 1980 Republican primaries.[33] But a combination of skill and serendipity pushed the bill over the top. Reagan aggressively and effectively lobbied individual members of Congress for support on the measure. Then on March 30, 1981, Reagan survived an assassination attempt by a mentally unstable young man named John Hinckley. Public support swelled for the hospitalized president. Congress ultimately approved a $675 billion tax cut in July 1981 with significant Democratic support. The bill reduced overall federal taxes by more than one quarter and lowered the top marginal rate from 70 percent to 50 percent, with the bottom rate dropping from 14 percent to 11 percent. It also slashed the rate on capital gains from 28 percent to 20 percent.[34] The next month, Reagan scored another political triumph in response to a strike called by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). During the 1980 campaign, Reagan had wooed organized labor, describing himself as "an old union man" (he had led the Screen Actors Guild from 1947 to 1952) who still held Franklin Roosevelt in high regard.[35] PATCO had been one of the few labor unions to endorse Reagan. Nevertheless, the president ordered the union's striking air traffic controllers back to work and fired more than eleven thousand who refused. Reagan's actions crippled PATCO and left the American labor movement reeling. For the rest of the 1980s the economic terrain of the United States—already unfavorable to union organizing—shifted decisively in favor of employers. The unionized portion of the private-sector workforce fell from 20 percent in 1980 to 12 percent in 1990.[36]Reagan's tax bill and the defeat of PATCO not only enhanced the economic power of corporations and high-income households, they confirmed that a new conservative age had dawned in American life.

The new administration appeared to be flying high in the fall of 1981, but developments challenged the rosy economic forecasts emanating from the White House. As Reagan ratcheted up tension with the Soviet Union, Congress approved his request for $1.2 trillion in new military spending.[37] The combination of lower taxes and higher defense budgets caused the national debt to balloon. By the end of Reagan's first term it equaled 53 percent of GDP, as opposed to 33 percent in 1981.[38] The increase was staggering, especially for an administration that had promised to curb spending. Meanwhile, Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker continued his policy from the Carter years of combating inflation by maintaining high interest rates, which surpassed 20 percent in June 1981.[39] The Fed's action increased the cost of borrowing money and stifled economic activity.

As a result, the United States experienced a severe economic recession in 1981 and 1982. Unemployment rose to nearly 11 percent, the highest figure since the Great Depression.[40] Reductions in social welfare spending heightened the impact of the recession on ordinary people. Congress had followed Reagan's lead by reducing funding for food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children and removed a half million people from the Supplemental Social Security program for the physically disabled.[41] The cuts exacted an especially harsh toll on low-income communities of color. The head of the NAACP declared that the administration's budget cuts had rekindled "war, pestilence, famine, and death."[42] Reagan also received bipartisan rebuke in 1981 after proposing cuts to social security benefits for early retirees. The Senate voted unanimously to condemn the plan, and Democrats framed it as a heartless attack on the elderly. Confronted with recession and harsh public criticism, a chastened

White House worked with Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neill in 1982 on a bill that restored $98 billion of the previous year's tax cuts.[43] Despite compromising with the administration on taxes, Democrats railed against the so-called Reagan Recession, arguing that the president's economic policies favored the most fortunate Americans. This appeal, which Democrats termed the "fairness issue," helped them win twenty-six House seats in the autumn congressional races.[44] The New Right appeared to be in trouble.

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29.6: Morning in America



Figure 29.6.1: President Ronald Reagan, a master of the photo op, appears here with a row of American flags at his back at a 1982 rally for Senator David Durenberger in Minneapolis, Minnesota. National Archives (198527).

Reagan nimbly adjusted to the political setbacks of 1982. Following the rejection of his social security proposals, Reagan appointed a bipartisan panel to consider changes to the program. In early 1983, the commission recommended a onetime delay in cost-of-living increases, a new requirement that government employees pay into the system, and a gradual increase in the retirement age from sixty-five to sixty-seven. The commission also proposed raising state and federal payroll taxes, with the new revenue poured into a trust fund that would transform social security from a pay-as-you-go system to one with significant reserves.[45] Congress quickly passed the recommendations into law, allowing Reagan to take credit for strengthening a program cherished by most Americans. The president also benefited from an economic rebound. Real disposable income rose 2.5 percent in 1983 and 5.8 percent the following year.[46] Unemployment dropped to 7.5 percent in 1984.[47] Meanwhile, the "harsh medicine" of high interest rates helped reduce inflation to 3.5 percent.[48] While campaigning for reelection in 1984, Reagan pointed to the improving economy as evidence that it was "morning again in America."[49] His personal popularity soared. Most conservatives ignored the debt increase and tax hikes of the previous two years and rallied around the president.

The Democratic Party, on other hand, stood at an ideological crossroads in 1984. The favorite to win the party's nomination was Walter Mondale, a staunch ally of organized labor and the civil rights movement as a senator during the 1960s and 1970s. He later served as Jimmy Carter's vice president. Mondale's chief rivals were civil rights activist Jesse Jackson and Colorado senator Gary Hart, one of the young Democrats elected to Congress in 1974 following Nixon's downfall. Hart and other "Watergate babies" still identified themselves as liberals but rejected their party's faith in activist government and embraced market-based approaches to policy issues. In so doing, they conceded significant political ground to supply-siders and conservative opponents of the welfare state. Many Democrats, however, were not prepared to abandon their New Deal heritage, and so the ideological tension within the party played out in the 1984 primary campaign. Jackson offered a largely progressive program but won only two states. Hart's platform—economically moderate but socially liberal—inverted the political formula of Mondale's New Deal–style liberalism. Throughout the primaries, Hart contrasted his "new ideas" with Mondale's "old-fashioned" politics. Mondale eventually secured his party's nomination but suffered a crushing defeat in the general election. Reagan captured forty-nine of fifty states, winning 58.8 percent of the popular vote.[50]

Mondale's loss seemed to confirm that the new breed of moderate Democrats better understood the mood of the American people. The future of the party belonged to post–New Deal liberals like Hart and to the constituency that supported him in the primaries: upwardly mobile, white professionals and suburbanites. In February 1985, a group of centrists formed the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) as a vehicle for distancing the party from organized labor and Keynesian economics while cultivating the business community. Jesse Jackson dismissed the DLC as "Democrats for the Leisure Class," but the organization included many of the party's future leaders, including Arkansas governor Bill Clinton.[51]The formation of the DLC illustrated the degree to

which to the New Right had transformed American politics: New Democrats looked a lot like old Republicans.

Reagan entered his second term with a much stronger mandate than in 1981, but the Grand Old Party (GOP) makeover of Washington, D.C., stalled. The Democrats regained control of the Senate in 1986, and Democratic opposition prevented Reagan from eliminating means-tested social welfare programs, although Congress failed to increase benefit levels for welfare programs or raise the minimum wage, decreasing the real value of those benefits. Democrats and Republicans occasionally fashioned legislative compromises, as with the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The bill lowered the top corporate tax rate from 46 percent to 34 percent and reduced the highest marginal income tax rate from 50 percent to 28 percent, while also simplifying the tax code and eliminating numerous loopholes.[52] The steep cuts to the corporate and individual rates certainly benefited wealthy individuals, but the legislation made virtually no net change to federal revenues. In 1986, Reagan also signed into law the Immigration Reform and Control Act. American policy makers hoped to do two things: deal with the millions of undocumented immigrants already in the United States while simultaneously choking off future unsanctioned migration. The former goal was achieved (nearly three million undocumented workers received legal status) but the latter proved elusive.

One of Reagan's most far-reaching victories occurred through judicial appointments. He named 368 district and federal appeals court judges during his two terms.[53] Observers noted that almost all of the appointees were white men. (Seven were African American, fifteen were Latino, and two were Asian American.) Reagan also appointed three Supreme Court justices: Sandra Day O'Connor, who to the dismay of the religious right turned out to be a moderate; Anthony Kennedy, a solidly conservative Catholic who occasionally sided with the court's liberal wing; and archconservative Antonin Scalia. The New Right's transformation of the judiciary had limits. In 1987, Reagan nominated Robert Bork to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court. Bork, a federal judge and former Yale University law professor, was a staunch conservative. He had opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, affirmative action, and the *Roe v. Wade* decision. After acrimonious confirmation hearings, the Senate rejected Bork's nomination by a vote of 58–42.[54]

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29.7: African American Life in Reagan's America

African Americans read Bork's nomination as another signal of the conservative movement's hostility to their social, economic, and political aspirations. Indeed, Ronald Reagan's America presented African Americans with a series of contradictions. Black Americans achieved significant advances in politics, culture, and socioeconomic status. A trend from the late 1960s and 1970s continued and black politicians gained control of major municipal governments across the country during the 1980s. In 1983, voters in Philadelphia and Chicago elected Wilson Goode and Harold Washington, respectively, as their cities' first black mayors. At the national level, civil rights leader Jesse Jackson became the first African American man to run for president when he campaigned for the Democratic Party's nomination in 1984 and 1988. Propelled by chants of "Run, Jesse, run," Jackson achieved notable success in 1988, winning nine state primaries and finishing second with 29 percent of the vote.[55]

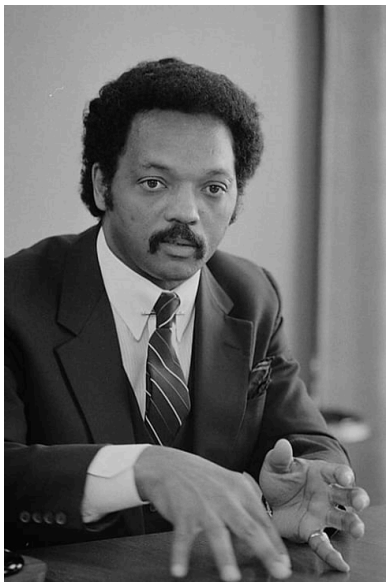


Figure 29.7.1: Jesse Jackson, pictured here in 1983, was only the second African American to mount a national campaign for the presidency. His work as a civil rights activist garnered him a significant following in the African American community but never enough to secure the Democratic nomination. *Library of Congress*

The excitement created by Jackson's campaign mirrored the acclaim received by a few prominent African Americans in media and entertainment. Comedian Eddie Murphy rose to stardom on television's *Saturday Night Live* and achieved box office success with movies like *48 Hours* and *Beverly Hills Cop*. In 1982, pop singer Michael Jackson released *Thriller*, the best-selling album of all time. Oprah Winfrey began her phenomenally successful nationally syndicated talk show in 1985. Comedian Bill Cosby's sitcom about an African American doctor and lawyer raising their four children drew the highest ratings on television for most of the decade. The popularity of *The Cosby Show* revealed how class informed perceptions of race in the 1980s. Cosby's fictional TV family represented a growing number of black middle-class professionals in the United States. Indeed, income for the top fifth of African American households increased faster than that of white households for most of the decade. Middle-class African Americans found new doors open to them in the 1980s, but the poor and working-class faced continued challenges. During Reagan's last year in office the African American poverty rate stood at 31.6 percent, as opposed to 10.1 percent for whites.[56] Black unemployment remained double that of whites throughout the decade.[57] By 1990, the median income for black families was $21,423, 42 percent below the median income for white households.[58] The Reagan administration failed to address such disparities and in many ways intensified them.

New Right values threatened the legal principles and federal policies of the Great Society and the "rights revolution." Reagan's appointment of conservatives to agencies such as the Justice Department and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission took aim at key policy achievements of the civil rights movement. When the 1965 Voting Rights Act came up for renewal during Reagan's first term, the Justice Department pushed the president to oppose any extension. Only the intervention of more moderate congressional Republicans saved the law. The administration also initiated a plan to rescind federal affirmative action rules. In 1986, a broad coalition of groups—including the NAACP, the Urban League, the AFL-CIO, and even the National Association of Manufacturers—compelled the administration to abandon the effort. Despite the conservative tenor of the country,

diversity programs were firmly entrenched in the corporate world by the end of the decade.

Americans increasingly embraced racial diversity as a positive value but most often approached the issue through an individualistic—not a systemic—framework. Certain federal policies disproportionately affected racial minorities. Spending cuts enacted by Reagan and congressional Republicans shrank Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Medicaid, food stamps, school lunch programs, and job training programs that provided crucial support to African American households. In 1982, the National Urban League's annual "State of Black America" report concluded that "never [since the first report in 1976] . . . has the state of Black America been more vulnerable. Never in that time have black economic rights been under such powerful attack."[59] African American communities, especially in urban areas, also bore the stigma of violence and criminality. Homicide was the leading cause of death for black males between ages fifteen and twenty-four, occurring at a rate six times that of other groups.[60] Although African Americans were most often the victims of violent crime, sensationalist media reports incited fears about black-on-white crime in big cities. Ironically, such fear could by itself spark violence. In December 1984 a thirty-seven-year-old white engineer, Bernard Goetz, shot and seriously wounded four black teenagers on a New York City subway car. The so-called Subway Vigilante suspected that the young men—armed with screwdrivers—planned to rob him. Pollsters found that 90 percent of white New Yorkers sympathized with Goetz.[61] Echoing the law-and-order rhetoric (and policies) of the 1960s and 1970s, politicians—both Democratic and Republican—and law enforcement agencies implemented more aggressive policing of minority communities and mandated longer prison sentences for those arrested. The explosive growth of mass incarceration exacted a heavy toll on African American communities long into the twenty-first century.

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29.8: Bad Times and Good Times

Working- and middle-class Americans, especially those of color, struggled to maintain economic equilibrium during the Reagan years. The growing national debt generated fresh economic pain. The federal government borrowed money to finance the debt, raising interest rates to heighten the appeal of government bonds. Foreign money poured into the United States, raising the value of the dollar and attracting an influx of goods from overseas. The imbalance between American imports and exports grew from $36 billion in 1980 to $170 billion in 1987.[62] Foreign competition battered the already anemic manufacturing sector. The appeal of government bonds likewise drew investment away from American industry.

Continuing an ongoing trend, many steel and automobile factories in the industrial Northeast and Midwest closed or moved overseas during the 1980s. Bruce Springsteen, the self-appointed bard of blue-collar America, offered eulogies to Rust Belt cities in songs like “Youngstown” and “My Hometown,” in which the narrator laments that his “foreman says these jobs are going, boys / and they ain’t coming back.”[63] Competition from Japanese carmakers spurred a “Buy American” campaign. Meanwhile, a “farm crisis” gripped the rural United States. Expanded world production meant new competition for American farmers, while soaring interest rates caused the already sizable debt held by family farms to mushroom. Farm foreclosures skyrocketed during Reagan’s tenure. In September 1985, prominent musicians including Neil Young and Willie Nelson organized Farm Aid, a benefit concert at the University of Illinois’s football stadium designed to raise money for struggling farmers.

At the other end of the economic spectrum, wealthy Americans thrived under the policies of the New Right. The financial industry found new ways to earn staggering profits during the Reagan years. Wall Street brokers like junk bond king Michael Milken reaped fortunes selling high-risk, high-yield securities. Reckless speculation helped drive the stock market steadily upward until the crash of October 19, 1987. On Black Friday, the market plunged eight hundred points, erasing 13 percent of its value. Investors lost more than $500 billion.[64] An additional financial crisis loomed in the savings and loan (S&L) industry, and Reagan’s deregulatory policies bore significant responsibility. In 1982 Reagan signed a bill increasing the amount of federal insurance available to savings and loan depositors, making those financial institutions more popular with consumers. The bill also allowed S&Ls to engage in high-risk loans and investments for the first time. Many such deals failed catastrophically, while some S&L managers brazenly stole from their institutions. In the late 1980s, S&Ls failed with regularity, and ordinary Americans lost precious savings. The 1982 law left the government responsible for bailing out S&Ls out at an eventual cost of $132 billion.[65]

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29.9: Culture Wars of the 1980s

Popular culture of the 1980s offered another venue in which conservatives and liberals waged a battle of ideas. The militarism and patriotism of Reagan's presidency pervaded movies like *Top Gun* and the *Rambo* series, starring Sylvester Stallone as a Vietnam War veteran haunted by his country's failure to pursue victory in Southeast Asia. In contrast, director Oliver Stone offered searing condemnations of the war in *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*. Television shows like *Dynasty* and *Dallas* celebrated wealth and glamour, reflecting the pride in conspicuous consumption that emanated from the White House and corporate boardrooms during the decade. At the same time, films like *Wall Street* and novels like Bret Easton Ellis's *Less Than Zero* skewered the excesses of the rich.

The most significant aspect of much popular culture in the 1980s, however, was its lack of politics altogether. Steven Spielberg's *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* and his Indiana Jones adventure trilogy topped the box office. Cinematic escapism replaced the social films of the 1970s. Quintessential Hollywood leftist Jane Fonda appeared frequently on television but only to peddle exercise videos. Television viewership—once dominated by the big three networks of NBC, ABC, and CBS—fragmented with the rise of cable channels catering to particularized tastes. Few cable channels so captured the popular imagination as MTV, which debuted in 1981. Telegenic artists like Madonna, Prince, and Michael Jackson skillfully used MTV to boost their reputations and album sales. Conservatives condemned music videos for corrupting young people with vulgar, anti-authoritarian messages, but the medium only grew in stature. Critics of MTV targeted Madonna in particular. Her 1989 video "Like a Prayer" drew protests for what some people viewed as sexually suggestive and blasphemous scenes. The religious right increasingly perceived popular culture as hostile to Christian values.



Figure 29.9.1: The Apple II was the smallest and sleekest personal computer model yet introduced. Indeed, it revolutionized both the substance and design of personal computers. *Wikimedia.*

The Apple II computer, introduced in 1977, was the first successful mass-produced microcomputer meant for home use. Cultural battles were even more heated in the realm of gender and sexual politics. American women pushed further into male-dominated spheres during the 1980s. By 1984, women in the workforce outnumbered those who worked at home.[66] That same year, New York representative Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman to run on a major party's presidential ticket when Democratic candidate Walter Mondale named her his running mate. Yet the triumph of the right placed fundamental questions about women's rights near the center of American politics—particularly in regard to abortion. The issue increasingly divided Americans. Pro-life Democrats and pro-choice Republicans grew rare, as the National Abortion Rights Action League enforced pro-choice orthodoxy on the left and the National Right to Life Commission did the same with pro-life orthodoxy on the right. Religious conservatives took advantage of the Republican takeover of the White House and Senate in 1980 to push for new restrictions on abortion—with limited success. Senators Jesse Helms of North Carolina and Orrin Hatch of Utah introduced versions of a Human Life Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that defined life as beginning at conception. Both efforts failed.[67] Reagan, more interested in economic issues than social ones, provided only lukewarm support for the anti-abortion movement. He further

outraged anti-abortion activists by appointing Sandra Day O'Connor, a supporter of abortion rights, to the Supreme Court. Despite these setbacks, anti-abortion forces succeeded in defunding some abortion providers. The 1976 Hyde Amendment prohibited the use of federal funds to pay for abortions; by 1990 almost every state had its own version of the Hyde Amendment. Yet some anti-abortion activists demanded more. In 1988 evangelical activist Randall Terry founded Operation Rescue, an organization that targeted abortion clinics and pro-choice politicians with confrontational—and sometimes violent—tactics. Operation Rescue demonstrated that the fight over abortion would grow only more heated in the 1990s.

The emergence of a deadly new illness, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), simultaneously devastated, stigmatized, and energized the nation's homosexual community. When AIDS appeared in the early 1980s, most of its victims were gay men. For a time the disease was known as GRID—gay-related immune deficiency. The epidemic rekindled older pseudoscientific ideas about the inherently diseased nature of homosexual bodies. The Reagan administration met the issue with indifference, leading liberal congressman Henry Waxman to rage that "if the same disease had appeared among Americans of Norwegian descent . . . rather than among gay males, the response of both the government and the medical community would be different."[68] Some religious figures seemed to relish the opportunity to condemn homosexual activity; Catholic columnist Patrick Buchanan remarked that "the sexual revolution has begun to devour its children."[69]

Homosexuals were left to forge their own response to the crisis. Some turned to confrontation—like New York playwright Larry Kramer. Kramer founded the Gay Men's Health Crisis, which demanded a more proactive response to the epidemic. Others sought to humanize AIDS victims; this was the goal of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a commemorative project begun in 1985. By the middle of the decade the federal government began to address the issue haltingly. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, an evangelical Christian, called for more federal funding on AIDS-related research, much to the dismay of critics on the religious right. By 1987 government spending on AIDS-related research reached $500 million—still only 25 percent of what experts advocated.[70] In 1987 Reagan convened a presidential commission on AIDS; the commission's report called for antidiscrimination laws to protect people with AIDS and for more federal spending on AIDS research. The shift encouraged activists. Nevertheless, on issues of abortion and gay rights—as with the push for racial equality—activists spent the 1980s preserving the status quo rather than building on previous gains. This amounted to a significant victory for the New Right.



Figure 29.9.2: The AIDS epidemic hit gay and African American communities particularly hard in the 1980s, prompting widespread social stigmatization, but also prompting awareness campaigns, such as this poster featuring singer Patti LaBelle. *Wikimedia*.

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29.10: The New Right Abroad

The conservative movement gained ground on gender and sexual politics, but it captured the entire battlefield on American foreign policy in the 1980s, at least for a time. Ronald Reagan entered office a committed Cold Warrior. He held the Soviet Union in contempt, denouncing it in a 1983 speech as an "evil empire."[71] And he never doubted that the Soviet Union would end up "on the ash heap of history," as he said in a 1982 speech to the British Parliament.[72] Indeed, Reagan believed it was the duty of the United States to speed the Soviet Union to its inevitable demise. His Reagan Doctrine declared that the United States would supply aid to anticommunist forces everywhere in the world.[73] To give this doctrine force, Reagan oversaw an enormous expansion in the defense budget. Federal spending on defense rose from $171 billion in 1981 to $229 billion in 1985, the highest level since the Vietnam War.[74] He described this as a policy of "peace through strength," a phrase that appealed to Americans who, during the 1970s, feared that the United States was losing its status as the world's most powerful nation. Yet the irony is that Reagan, for all his militarism, helped bring the Cold War to an end through negotiation, a tactic he had once scorned.

Reagan's election came at a time when many Americans feared their country was in an irreversible decline. American forces withdrew in disarray from South Vietnam in 1975. The United States returned control of the Panama Canal to Panama in 1978, despite protests from conservatives. Pro-American dictators were toppled in Iran and Nicaragua in 1979. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan that same year, leading conservatives to warn about American weakness in the face of Soviet expansion. Reagan spoke to fears of decline and warned, in 1976, that "this nation has become Number Two in a world where it is dangerous—if not fatal—to be second best.[75]



Figure 29.10.1: Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, pictured here at Camp David in December 1984, led two of the world's most powerful countries and formed an alliance that benefited both throughout their tenures in office. *Wikimedia*.

The Reagan administration made Latin America a showcase for its newly assertive policies. Jimmy Carter had sought to promote human rights in the region, but Reagan and his advisors scrapped this approach and instead focused on fighting communism—a term they applied to all Latin American left-wing movements. And so when communists with ties to Cuba overthrew the government of the Caribbean nation of Grenada in October 1983, Reagan dispatched the U.S. Marines to the island. Dubbed Operation Urgent Fury, the Grenada invasion overthrew the leftist government after less than a week of fighting. Despite the relatively minor nature of the mission, its success gave victory-hungry Americans something to cheer about after the military debacles of the previous two decades.



Figure 29.10.2: Operation Urgent Fury, the U.S. invasion of Grenada, was broadly supported by the U.S. public. This photograph shows the deployment of U.S. Army Rangers into Grenada. Photograph, October 25, 1983. *Wikimedia*.

Grenada was the only time Reagan deployed the American military in Latin America, but the United States also influenced the region by supporting right-wing, anticommunist movements there. From 1981 to 1990, the United States gave more than $4 billion to the government of El Salvador in a largely futile effort to defeat the guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).[76] Salvadoran security forces equipped with American weapons committed numerous atrocities, including the slaughter of almost one thousand civilians at the village of El Mozote in December 1981.

The Reagan administration took a more cautious approach in the Middle East, where its policy was determined by a mix of anticommunism and hostility toward the Islamic government of Iran. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, the United States supplied Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with military intelligence and business credits—even after it became clear that Iraqi forces were using chemical weapons. Reagan's greatest setback in the Middle East came in 1982, when, shortly after Israel invaded Lebanon, he dispatched Marines to the Lebanese city of Beirut to serve as a peacekeeping force. On October 23, 1983, a suicide bomber killed 241 Marines stationed in Beirut. Congressional pressure and anger from the American public forced Reagan to recall the Marines from Lebanon in March 1984. Reagan's decision demonstrated that, for all his talk of restoring American power, he took a pragmatic approach to foreign policy. He was unwilling to risk another Vietnam by committing American troops to Lebanon.

Though Reagan's policies toward Central America and the Middle East aroused protest, his policy on nuclear weapons generated the most controversy. Initially Reagan followed the examples of presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter by pursuing arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union. American officials participated in the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) Talks that began in 1981 and the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) in 1982. But the breakdown of these talks in 1983 led Reagan to proceed with plans to place Pershing II nuclear missiles in Western Europe to counter Soviet SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe. Reagan went a step further in March 1983, when he announced plans for a Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a space-based system that could shoot down incoming Soviet missiles. Critics derided the program as a "Star Wars" fantasy, and even Reagan's advisors harbored doubts. "We don't have the technology to do this," secretary of state George Shultz told aides.[77]These aggressive policies fed a growing nuclear freeze movement throughout the world. In the United States, organizations like the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy organized protests that culminated in a June 1982 rally that drew almost a million people to New York City's Central Park.

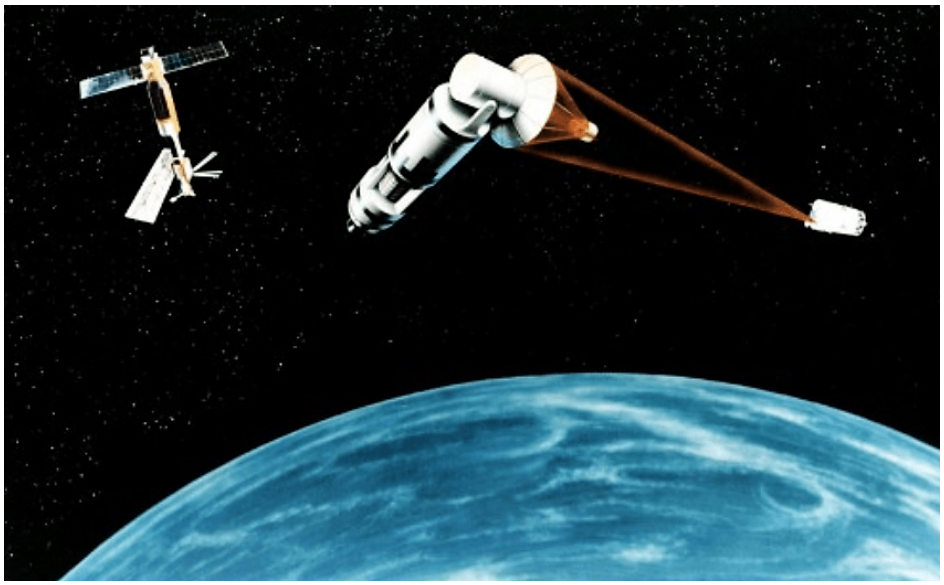


Figure 29.10.3: President Reagan proposed new space- and ground-based defense systems to protect the United States from nuclear missiles in his 1984 Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Scientists argued that it was technologically unfeasible, and it was lambasted in the media as the "Star Wars" program. *Wikimedia*.

Protests in the streets were echoed by resistance in Congress. Congressional Democrats opposed Reagan's policies on the merits; congressional Republicans, though they supported Reagan's anticommunism, were wary of the administration's fondness for circumventing Congress. In 1982, the House voted 411–0 to approve the Boland Amendment, which barred the United States from supplying funds to the contras, a right-wing insurgency fighting the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Reagan, overlooking the contras' brutal tactics, hailed them as the "moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers."[78] The Reagan administration's determination to flout these amendments led to a scandal that almost destroyed Reagan's presidency. Robert MacFarlane, the president's national security advisor, and Oliver North, a member of the National Security Council, raised money to support the contras by selling American missiles to Iran and funneling the money to Nicaragua. When their scheme was revealed in 1986, it was hugely embarrassing for Reagan. The president's underlings had not only violated the Boland Amendment but had also, by selling arms to Iran, made a mockery of Reagan's declaration that "America will never make concessions to the terrorists." But while the Iran-Contra affair generated comparisons to the Watergate scandal, investigators were never able to prove Reagan knew about the operation. Without such a "smoking gun," talk of impeaching Reagan remained simply talk.

Though the Iran-Contra scandal tarnished the Reagan administration's image, it did not derail Reagan's most significant achievement: easing tensions with the Soviet Union. This would have seemed impossible in Reagan's first term, when the president exchanged harsh words with a rapid succession of Soviet leaders—Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko. In 1985, however, the aged Chernenko's death handed leadership of the Soviet Union to Mikhail Gorbachev, who, while a true believer in socialism, nonetheless realized that the Soviet Union desperately needed to reform itself. He instituted a program of *perestroika*, which referred to the restructuring of the Soviet system, and of *glasnost*, which meant greater transparency in government. Gorbachev also reached out to Reagan in hopes of negotiating an end to the arms race, which was bankrupting the Soviet Union. Reagan and Gorbachev met in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1985 and Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1986. The summits failed to produce any concrete agreements, but the two leaders developed a relationship unprecedented in the history of U.S.-Soviet relations. This trust made possible the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987, which committed both sides to a sharp reduction in their nuclear arsenal.

By the late 1980s the Soviet empire was crumbling. Reagan successfully combined anticommunist rhetoric (such as his 1987 speech at the Berlin Wall, where he declared, "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace . . . tear down this wall!") with a willingness to negotiate with Soviet leadership.[79] But the most significant causes of collapse lay within the Soviet empire itself. Soviet-allied governments in Eastern Europe tottered under pressure from dissident organizations like Poland's Solidarity and East Germany's Neues Forum. Some of these countries, such as Poland, were also pressured from within by the Roman Catholic Church, which had turned toward active anticommunism under Pope John Paul II. When Gorbachev made it clear that he would not send the Soviet military to prop up these regimes, they collapsed one by one in 1989—in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and East Germany. Within the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's proposed reforms unraveled the decaying Soviet system rather than bringing stability. By 1991 the Soviet Union itself had vanished, dissolving into a Commonwealth of Independent States."

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29.11: Conclusion

Reagan left office in 1988 with the Cold War waning and the economy booming. Unemployment had dipped to 5 percent by 1988.[80] Between 1981 and 1986, gas prices fell from $1.38 per gallon to 95¢.[81] The stock market recovered from the crash, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average—which stood at 950 in 1981—reached 2,239 by the end of Reagan's second term.[82] Yet the economic gains of the decade were unequally distributed. The top fifth of households enjoyed rising incomes while the rest stagnated or declined.[83] In constant dollars, annual chief executive officer (CEO) pay rose from $3 million in 1980 to roughly $12 million during Reagan's last year in the White House.[84] Between 1985 and 1989 the number of Americans living in poverty remained steady at thirty-three million.[85] Real per capita money income grew at only 2 percent per year, a rate roughly equal to the Carter years.[86] The American economy saw more jobs created than lost during the 1980s, but half of the jobs eliminated were in high-paying industries.[87] Furthermore, half of the new jobs failed to pay wages above the poverty line. The economic divide was most acute for African Americans and Latinos, one third of whom qualified as poor.

The triumph of the right proved incomplete. The number of government employees actually increased under Reagan. With more than 80 percent of the federal budget committed to defense, entitlement programs, and interest on the national debt, the right's goal of deficit elimination floundered for lack of substantial areas to cut.[88] Between 1980 and 1989 the national debt rose from $914 billion to $2.7 trillion.[89] Despite steep tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, the overall tax burden of the American public basically remained unchanged. Moreover, so-called regressive taxes on payroll and certain goods actually *increased* the tax burden on low- and middle-income Americans. Finally, Reagan slowed but failed to vanquish the five-decade legacy of economic liberalism. Most New Deal and Great Society proved durable. Government still offered its neediest citizens a safety net, if a now continually shrinking one.

Yet the discourse of American politics had irrevocably changed. The preeminence of conservative political ideas grew ever more pronounced, even when Democrats controlled Congress or the White House. In response to the conservative mood of the country, the Democratic Party adapted its own message to accommodate many of the Republicans' Reagan-era ideas and innovations. The United States was on a rightward path.

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29.12: Primary Sources

First Inaugural Address of Ronald Reagan (1981)

Ronald Reagan, a former actor, corporate spokesperson, and California governor, won the presidency in 1980 with a potent mix of personal charisma and conservative politics. In his first inaugural address, Reagan famously declared that "government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem."

Jerry Falwell on the "Homosexual Revolution" (1981)

"Letter from Jerry Falwell on his opposition to homosexuality and asking for support in keeping his "Old-Time Gospel Hour" television program on the air. Falwell writes that the Old Time Gospel Hour "is one of the few major ministries in America crying out against militant homosexuals" (p. 1). The letter is printed on what appears to be lined yellow notepad paper."

Statements of AIDS Patients (1983)

HIV/AIDS confronted Americans in the 1980s. The disease was first associated with gay men (it was initially called Gay-Related Immune Disease, or GRID) and AIDS sufferers fought for recognition of the disease's magnitude, petitioned for research funds, and battled against popular stigma associated with the disease.

Statements from The Parents Music Resource Center (1985)

In 1985, the Senate held hearings on explicit music. The Parents Music Resource Center (1985), founded by the wives of prominent politicians in Washington D.C., publicly denounced lyrics, album covers, and music videos dealing with sex, violence, and drug use. The PRMC pressured music publishers and retailers and singled out artists such as Judas Priest, Prince, AC/DC, Madonna, and Black Sabbath, and Cyndi Lauper. The following is extracted from statements by Susan Baker, the wife of then-Treasury Secretary James Baker, and Tipper Gore, wife of Senator and later Vice President Al Gore, in support of warning labels on music packaging.

Pat Buchanan on the Culture War (1992)

Pat Buchanan was a conservative journalist who worked in the Nixon and Reagan administrations before running for the Republican presidential nomination in 1992. Although he lost the nomination to George H.W. Bush, he was invited to speak at that year's Republican National Convention, where he delivered a fiery address criticizing liberals and declaring a "culture war" at the heart of American life.

Satellites Imagined in Orbit (1981)

While Cold War fears still preyed upon Americans, satellite technology and advancements in telecommunications inspired hopes for an interconnected future. Here, an artist in 1981 depicts various satellites in orbit around the Earth.

Ronald Reagan and the American Flag (1982)

President Ronald Reagan, a master of the "photo op," appears here with a row of American flags at his back at a 1982 rally for Senator David Durenberger in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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29.13: Reference Material

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30: THE RECENT PAST



New York City, before September 11, 2001. Library of Congress.

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30.1: Introduction

Revolutionary technological change, unprecedented global flows of goods and people and capital, an amorphous and unending War on Terror, accelerating inequality, growing diversity, a changing climate, political stalemate: our world is remarkable, frustrating, and dynamic. But it is not an island of circumstance—it is a product of history. Time marches forever on. The present becomes the past and the past becomes history. But, as William Faulkner wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."[1] The last several decades of American history have culminated in the present, an era of innovation and advancement but also of stark partisan division, racial and ethnic tension, gender divides, sluggish economic growth, widening inequalities, widespread military interventions, and pervasive anxieties about the present and future of the United States. Through boom and bust, national tragedy, foreign wars, and the maturation of a new generation, a new chapter of American history is busily being written.

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30.2: American Politics before September 11, 2001

The conservative Reagan Revolution lingered over the presidential election of 1988. At stake was the legacy of a newly empowered conservative movement, a movement that would move forward with Reagan's vice president, George H. W. Bush, who triumphed over Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis with a promise to continue the conservative work that had commenced in the 1980s.

The son of a U.S. senator from Connecticut, George H. W. Bush was a World War II veteran, president of a successful oil company, chair of the Republican National Committee, director of the CIA, and member of the House of Representatives from Texas. After failing to best Reagan in the 1980 Republican primaries, he was elected as his vice president in 1980 and again in 1984. In 1988, Michael Dukakis, a proud liberal from Massachusetts, challenged Bush for the White House.

Dukakis ran a weak campaign. Bush, a Connecticut aristocrat who had never been fully embraced by movement conservatism, particularly the newly animated religious right, nevertheless hammered Dukakis with moral and cultural issues. Bush said Dukakis had blocked recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in Massachusetts schools and that he was a "card-carrying member" of the ACLU. Bush meanwhile dispatched his eldest son, George W. Bush, as his ambassador to the religious right.[2] Bush also infamously released a political ad featuring the face of Willie Horton, a black Massachusetts man and convicted murderer who raped a woman being released through a prison furlough program during Dukakis's tenure as governor. "By the time we're finished," Bush's campaign manager, Lee Atwater, said, "they're going to wonder whether Willie Horton is Dukakis' running mate."[3] Liberals attacked conservatives for perpetuating the ugly "code word" politics of the old Southern Strategy—the underhanded appeal to white racial resentments perfected by Richard Nixon in the aftermath of civil rights legislation.[4] Buoyed by such attacks, Bush won a large victory and entered the White House.

Bush's election signaled Americans' continued embrace of Reagan's conservative program and further evidenced the utter disarray of the Democratic Party. American liberalism, so stunningly triumphant in the 1960s, was now in full retreat. It was still, as one historian put it, the "Age of Reagan."[5]

The Soviet Union collapsed during Bush's tenure. Devastated by a stagnant economy, mired in a costly and disastrous war in Afghanistan, confronted with dissident factions in Eastern Europe, and rocked by internal dissent, the Soviet Union crumbled. Soviet leader and reformer Mikhail Gorbachev loosened the Soviet Union's tight personal restraints and censorship (*glasnost*) and liberalized the Soviet political machinery (*perestroika*). Eastern Bloc nations turned against their communist organizations and declared their independence from the Soviet Union. Gorbachev let them go. Soon, Soviet Union unraveled. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned his office, declaring that the Soviet Union no longer existed. At the Kremlin—Russia's center of government—the new tricolor flag of the Russian Federation was raised.[6]

The dissolution of the Soviet Union left the United States as the world's only remaining superpower. Global capitalism seemed triumphant. Observers wondered if some final stage of history had been reached, if the old battles had ended and a new global consensus built around peace and open markets would reign forever. "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such," wrote Francis Fukuyama in his much-talked-about 1989 essay, "The End of History?"[7] Assets in Eastern Europe were privatized and auctioned off as newly independent nations introduced market economies. New markets were rising in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe. India, for instance, began liberalizing its economic laws and opening itself up to international investment in 1991. China's economic reforms, advanced by Chairman Deng Xiaoping and his handpicked successors, accelerated as privatization and foreign investment proceeded.

The post–Cold War world was not without international conflicts, however. When Iraq invaded the small but oil-rich nation of Kuwait in 1990, Congress granted President Bush approval to intervene. The United States laid the groundwork for intervention (Operation Desert Shield) in August and commenced combat operations (Operation Desert Storm) in January 1991. With the memories of Vietnam still fresh, many Americans were hesitant to support military action that could expand into a protracted war or long-term commitment of troops. But the Gulf War was a swift victory for the United States. New technologies—including laser-guided precision bombing—amazed Americans, who could now watch twenty-four-hour live coverage of the war on the Cable News Network (CNN). The Iraqi army disintegrated after only a hundred hours of ground combat. President Bush and his advisors opted not to pursue the war into Baghdad and risk an occupation and insurgency. And so the war was won. Many wondered if the "ghosts of Vietnam" had been exorcised.[8] Bush won enormous popular support. Gallup polls showed a job approval rating as high as 89 percent in the weeks after the end of the war.[9]



Figure 30.2.1: During the Gulf War, the Iraqi military set fire to Kuwait's oil fields, many of which burned for months. March 21, 1991. *Wikimedia*.

President Bush's popularity seemed to suggest an easy reelection in 1992, but Bush had still not won over the New Right, the aggressively conservative wing of the Republican Party, despite his attacks on Dukakis, his embrace of the flag and the pledge, and his promise, "Read my lips: no new taxes." He faced a primary challenge from political commentator Patrick Buchanan, a former Reagan and Nixon White House advisor, who cast Bush as a moderate, as an unworthy steward of the conservative movement who was unwilling to fight for conservative Americans in the nation's ongoing culture war. Buchanan did not defeat Bush in the Republican primaries, but he inflicted enough damage to weaken his candidacy.[10]

Still thinking that Bush would be unbeatable in 1992, many prominent Democrats passed on a chance to run, and the Democratic Party nominated a relative unknown, Arkansas governor Bill Clinton. Dogged by charges of marital infidelity and draft dodging during the Vietnam War, Clinton was a consummate politician with enormous charisma and a skilled political team. He framed himself as a New Democrat, a centrist open to free trade, tax cuts, and welfare reform. Twenty-two years younger than Bush, he was the first baby boomer to make a serious run at the presidency. Clinton presented the campaign as a generational choice. During the campaign he appeared on MTV, played the saxophone on *The Arsenio Hall Show*, and told voters that he could offer the United States a new way forward.

Bush ran on his experience and against Clinton's moral failings. The GOP convention in Houston that summer featured speeches from Pat Buchanan and religious leader Pat Robertson decrying the moral decay plaguing American life. Clinton was denounced as a social liberal who would weaken the American family through both his policies and his individual moral character. But Clinton was able to convince voters that his moderated southern brand of liberalism would be more effective than the moderate conservatism of George Bush. Bush's candidacy, of course, was perhaps most damaged by a sudden economic recession. As Clinton's political team reminded the country, "It's the economy, stupid."

Clinton won the election, but the Reagan Revolution still reigned. Clinton and his running mate, Tennessee senator Albert Gore Jr., both moderate southerners, promised a path away from the old liberalism of the 1970s and 1980s (and the landslide electoral defeats of the 1980s). They were Democrats, but conservative Democrats, so-called New Democrats. In his first term, Clinton set out an ambitious agenda that included an economic stimulus package, universal health insurance, a continuation of the Middle East peace talks initiated by Bush's secretary of state James A. Baker III, welfare reform, and a completion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to abolish trade barriers between the United States, Mexico, and Canada. His moves to reform welfare, open trade, and deregulate financial markets were particular hallmarks of Clinton's Third Way, a new Democratic embrace of heretofore conservative policies.[11]

With NAFTA, Clinton reversed decades of Democratic opposition to free trade and opened the nation's northern and southern borders to the free flow of capital and goods. Critics, particularly in the Midwest's Rust Belt, blasted the agreement for opening American workers to competition by low-paid foreign workers. Many American factories relocated and set up shops—*maquilas*—in northern Mexico that took advantage of Mexico's low wages. Thousands of Mexicans rushed to the *maquilas*. Thousands more continued on past the border.

If NAFTA opened American borders to goods and services, people still navigated strict legal barriers to immigration. Policy makers believed that free trade would create jobs and wealth that would incentivize Mexican workers to stay home, and yet multitudes continued to leave for opportunities in *el norte*. The 1990s proved that prohibiting illegal migration was, if not impossible, exceedingly difficult. Poverty, political corruption, violence, and hopes for a better life in the United States—or simply higher wages—continued to lure immigrants across the border. Between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of foreign-born individuals in the United States grew from 7.9 percent to 12.9 percent, and the number of undocumented immigrants tripled from 3.5 million to 11.2. While large numbers continued to migrate to traditional immigrant destinations—California, Texas, New York, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois—the 1990s also witnessed unprecedented migration to the American South. Among the fastest-growing immigrant destination states were Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Georgia, and North Carolina, all of which had immigration growth rates in excess of 100 percent during the decade.[12]

In response to the continued influx of immigrants and the vocal complaints of anti-immigration activists, policy makers responded with such initiatives as Operation Gatekeeper and Hold the Line, which attempted to make crossing the border more prohibitive. The new strategy "funneled" immigrants to dangerous and remote crossing areas. Immigration officials hoped the brutal natural landscape would serve as a natural deterrent. It wouldn't. By 2017, hundreds of immigrants died each year of drowning, exposure, and dehydration.[13]

Clinton, meanwhile, sought to carve out a middle ground in his domestic agenda. In his first weeks in office, Clinton reviewed Department of Defense policies restricting homosexuals from serving in the armed forces. He pushed through a compromise plan, Don't Ask, Don't Tell, that removed any questions about sexual orientation in induction interviews but also required that gay military personnel keep their sexual orientation private. The policy alienated many. Social conservatives were outraged and his credentials as a conservative southerner suffered, while many liberals recoiled at continued antigay discrimination.

In his first term, Clinton also put forward universal healthcare as a major policy goal, and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton played a major role in the initiative. But the push for a national healthcare law collapsed on itself. Conservatives revolted, the healthcare industry flooded the airwaves with attack ads, Clinton struggled with congressional Democrats, and voters bristled. A national healthcare system was again repulsed.

The midterm elections of 1994 were a disaster for the Democrats, who lost the House of Representatives for the first time since 1952. Congressional Republicans, led by Georgia congressman Newt Gingrich and Texas congressman Dick Armey, offered a policy agenda they called the Contract with America. Republican candidates from around the nation gathered on the steps of the Capitol to pledge their commitment to a conservative legislative blueprint to be enacted if the GOP won control of the House. The strategy worked.

Social conservatives were mobilized by an energized group of religious activists, especially the Christian Coalition, led by Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed. Robertson was a television minister and entrepreneur whose 1988 long shot run for the Republican presidential nomination brought him a massive mailing list and a network of religiously motivated voters around the country. From that mailing list, the Christian Coalition organized around the country, seeking to influence politics on the local and national level.

In 1996 the generational contest played out again when the Republicans nominated another aging war hero, Senator Bob Dole of Kansas, but Clinton again won the election, becoming the first Democrat to serve back-to-back terms since Franklin Roosevelt. He was aided in part by the amelioration of conservatives by his signing of welfare reform legislation, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which decreased welfare benefits, restricted eligibility, and turned over many responsibilities to states. Clinton said it would "break the cycle of dependency."[14]

Clinton presided over a booming economy fueled by emergent computing technologies. Personal computers had skyrocketed in sales, and the Internet became a mass phenomenon. Communication and commerce were never again the same. The tech boom was driven by business, and the 1990s saw robust innovation and entrepreneurship. Investors scrambled to find the next Microsoft or Apple, suddenly massive computing companies. But it was the Internet that sparked a bonanza. The dot-com boom fueled enormous economic growth and substantial financial speculation to find the next Google or Amazon.

Republicans, defeated at the polls in 1996 and 1998, looked for other ways to undermine Clinton's presidency. Political polarization seemed unprecedented and a sensation-starved, post-Watergate media demanded scandal. The Republican Congress spent millions on investigations hoping to uncover some shred of damning evidence to sink Clinton's presidency, whether it be real estate deals, White House staffing, or adultery. Rumors of sexual misconduct had always swirled around Clinton. The press, which had historically turned a blind eye to such private matters, saturated the media with Clinton's sex scandals. Congressional investigations targeted the allegations and Clinton denied having "sexual relations" with Monica Lewinsky before a grand jury and in a statement to the American public. Republicans used the testimony to allege perjury. In December

1998, the House of Representatives voted to impeach the president. It was a wildly unpopular step. Two thirds of Americans disapproved, and a majority told Gallup pollsters that Republicans had abused their constitutional authority. Clinton's approval rating, meanwhile, jumped to 78 percent.[15] In February 1999, Clinton was acquitted by the Senate by a vote that mostly fell along party lines.

The 2000 election pitted Vice President Albert Gore Jr. against George W. Bush, the twice-elected Texas governor and son of the former president. Gore, wary of Clinton's recent impeachment despite Clinton's enduring approval ratings, distanced himself from the president and eight years of relative prosperity. Instead, he ran as a pragmatic, moderate liberal. Bush, too, ran as a moderate, claiming to represent a compassionate conservatism and a new faith-based politics. Bush was an outspoken evangelical. In a presidential debate, he declared Jesus Christ his favorite political philosopher. He promised to bring church leaders into government, and his campaign appealed to churches and clergy to get out the vote. Moreover, he promised to bring honor, dignity, and integrity to the Oval Office, a clear reference to Clinton. Utterly lacking the political charisma that had propelled Clinton, Gore withered under Bush's attacks. Instead of trumpeting the Clinton presidency, Gore found himself answering the media's questions about whether he was sufficiently an alpha male and whether he had invented the Internet.

Few elections have been as close and contentious as the 2000 election, which ended in a deadlock. Gore had won the popular vote by 500,000 votes, but the Electoral College hinged on a contested Florida election. On election night the media called Florida for Gore, but then Bush made late gains and news organizations reversed themselves by declaring the state for Bush—and Bush the probable president-elect. Gore conceded privately to Bush, then backpedaled as the counts edged back toward Gore yet again. When the nation awoke the next day, it was unclear who had been elected president. The close Florida vote triggered an automatic recount.

Lawyers descended on Florida. The Gore campaign called for manual recounts in several counties. Local election boards, Florida secretary of state Kathleen Harris, and the Florida supreme court all weighed in until the U.S. Supreme Court stepped in and, in an unprecedented 5–4 decision in *Bush v. Gore*, ruled that the recount had to end. Bush was awarded Florida by a margin of 537 votes, enough to win him the state and give him a majority in the Electoral College. He had won the presidency.

In his first months in office, Bush fought to push forward enormous tax cuts skewed toward America's highest earners. The bursting of the dot-com bubble weighed down the economy. Old political and cultural fights continued to be fought. And then the towers fell.

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30.3: September 11 and the War on Terror

On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen operatives of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization hijacked four passenger planes on the East Coast. American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City at 8:46 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower at 9:03. American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the western façade of the Pentagon at 9:37. At 9:59, the South Tower of the World Trade Center collapsed. At 10:03, United Airlines Flight 93 crashed in a field outside Shanksville, Pennsylvania, brought down by passengers who had received news of the earlier hijackings. At 10:28, the North Tower collapsed. In less than two hours, nearly three thousand Americans had been killed.



Figure 30.3.1: Ground Zero six days after the September 11th attacks. *Wikimedia,* .

The attacks stunned Americans. Late that night, Bush addressed the nation and assured the country that "the search is under way for those who are behind these evil acts." At Ground Zero three days later, Bush thanked first responders for their work. A worker said he couldn't hear him. "I can hear you," Bush shouted back, "The rest of the world hears you. And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon."



Figure 30.3.2: President Bush addresses rescue workers at Ground Zero. 2001. *FEMA Photo Library.*

American intelligence agencies quickly identified the radical Islamic militant group al-Qaeda, led by the wealthy Saudi Osama bin Laden, as the perpetrators of the attack. Sheltered in Afghanistan by the Taliban, the country's Islamic government, al-Qaeda was responsible for a 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and a string of attacks at U.S. embassies and military bases across the world. Bin Laden's Islamic radicalism and his anti-American aggression attracted supporters across the region and, by 2001, al-Qaeda was active in over sixty countries.

Although in his presidential campaign Bush had denounced foreign nation-building, he populated his administration with neoconservatives, firm believers in the expansion of American democracy and American interests abroad. Bush advanced what was sometimes called the Bush Doctrine, a policy in which the United States would have the right to unilaterally and preemptively make war on any regime or terrorist organization that posed a threat to the United States or to U.S. citizens. It would lead the United States into protracted conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq and entangle the United States in nations across the world. Journalist Dexter Filkins called it a Forever War, a perpetual conflict waged against an amorphous and undefeatable enemy.[16] The geopolitical realities of the twenty-first-century world were forever transformed.

The United States, of course, had a history in Afghanistan. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 to quell an insurrection that threatened to topple Kabul's communist government, the United States financed and armed anti-Soviet insurgents, the Mujahideen. In 1981, the Reagan administration authorized the CIA to provide the Mujahideen with weapons and training to strengthen the insurgency. An independent wealthy young Saudi, Osama bin Laden, also fought with and funded the Mujahideen. And they began to win. Afghanistan bled the Soviet Union dry. The costs of the war, coupled with growing instability at home, convinced the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan in 1989.[17]

Osama bin Laden relocated al-Qaeda to Afghanistan after the country fell to the Taliban in 1996. Under Bill Clinton, the United States launched cruise missiles at al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan in retaliation for al-Qaeda bombings on American embassies in Africa.

After September 11, with a broad authorization of military force, Bush administration officials made plans for military action against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. What would become the longest war in American history began with the launching of Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001. Air and missile strikes hit targets across Afghanistan. U.S. Special Forces joined with fighters in the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. Major Afghan cities fell in quick succession. The capital, Kabul, fell on November 13. Bin Laden and al-Qaeda operatives retreated into the rugged mountains along the border of Pakistan in eastern Afghanistan. The American occupation of Afghanistan continued.

As American troops struggled to contain the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Bush administration set its sights on Iraq. After the conclusion of the Gulf War in 1991, American officials established economic sanctions, weapons inspections, and no-fly zones. By mid-1991, American warplanes were routinely patrolling Iraqi skies and coming under periodic fire from Iraqi missile batteries. The overall cost to the United States of maintaining the two no-fly zones over Iraq was roughly $1 billion a year. Related military activities in the region added almost another $500 million to the annual bill. On the ground in Iraq, meanwhile, Iraqi authorities clashed with UN weapons inspectors. Iraq had suspended its program for weapons of mass destruction, but Saddam Hussein fostered ambiguity about the weapons in the minds of regional leaders to forestall any possible attacks against Iraq.

In 1998, a standoff between Hussein and the United Nations over weapons inspections led President Bill Clinton to launch punitive strikes aimed at debilitating what was thought to be a developed chemical weapons program. Attacks began on December 16, 1998. More than two hundred cruise missiles fired from U.S. Navy warships and Air Force B-52 bombers flew into Iraq, targeting suspected chemical weapons storage facilities, missile batteries, and command centers. Airstrikes continued for three more days, unleashing in total 415 cruise missiles and 600 bombs against 97 targets. The number of bombs dropped was nearly double the number used in the 1991 conflict.

The United States and Iraq remained at odds throughout the 1990s and early 2000, when Bush administration officials began championing "regime change." The Bush administration publicly denounced Saddam Hussein's regime and its alleged weapons of mass destruction. It began pushing for war in the fall of 2002. The administration alleged that Hussein was trying to acquire uranium and that it had aluminum tubes used for nuclear centrifuges. Public opinion was divided. George W. Bush said in October, "Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud."[18] The administration's push for war was in full swing. Protests broke out across the country and all over the world, but majorities of Americans supported military action. On October 16, Congress passed the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq resolution, giving Bush the power to make war in Iraq. Iraq began cooperating with UN weapons inspectors in late 2002, but the Bush administration pressed on. On February 6, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell, who had risen to public prominence as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of State during the Persian Gulf War in 1991, presented allegations of a robust Iraqi weapons program to the UN. Protests continued.

The first American bombs hit Baghdad on March 20, 2003. Several hundred thousand troops moved into Iraq and Hussein's regime quickly collapsed. Baghdad fell on April 9. On May 1, 2003, aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, beneath a banner reading *Mission Accomplished*, George W. Bush announced that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."[19] No evidence of weapons of mass destruction were ever found. And combat operations had not ended, not really. The Iraqi insurgency had begun, and the United States would spend the next ten years struggling to contain it.



Figure 30.3.3: Despite George W. Bush's ill-conceived photo op under a Mission Accomplished banner in May 2003, combat operations in Iraq continued for years. *Wikimedia*.

Efforts by various intelligence gathering agencies led to the capture of Saddam Hussein, hidden in an underground compartment near his hometown, on December 13, 2003. The new Iraqi government found him guilty of crimes against humanity and he was hanged on December 30, 2006.

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30.4: The End of the Bush Years

The War on Terror was a centerpiece in the race for the White House in 2004. The Democratic ticket, headed by Massachusetts senator John F. Kerry, a Vietnam War hero who entered the public consciousness for his subsequent testimony against it, attacked Bush for the ongoing inability to contain the Iraqi insurgency or to find weapons of mass destruction, the revelation and photographic evidence that American soldiers had abused prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad, and the inability to find Osama bin Laden. Moreover, many enemy combatants who had been captured in Iraq and Afghanistan were "detained" indefinitely at a military prison in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. "Gitmo" became infamous for its harsh treatment, indefinite detentions, and torture of prisoners. Bush defended the War on Terror, and his allies attacked critics for failing to "support the troops." Moreover, Kerry had voted for the war—he had to attack the very thing that he had authorized. Bush won a close but clear victory.

The second Bush term saw the continued deterioration of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but Bush's presidency would take a bigger hit from his perceived failure to respond to the domestic tragedy that followed Hurricane Katrina's devastating hit on the Gulf Coast. Katrina had been a category 5 hurricane. It was, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* reported, "the storm we always feared."[20]

New Orleans suffered a direct hit, the levees broke, and the bulk of the city flooded. Thousands of refugees flocked to the Superdome, where supplies and medical treatment and evacuation were slow to come. Individuals died in the heat. Bodies wasted away. Americans saw poor black Americans abandoned. Katrina became a symbol of a broken administrative system, a devastated coastline, and irreparable social structures that allowed escape and recovery for some and not for others. Critics charged that Bush had staffed his administration with incompetent supporters and had further ignored the displaced poor and black residents of New Orleans.[21]



Figure 30.4.1: Hurricane Katrina was one of the deadliest and more destructive hurricanes to hit American soil in U.S. history. It nearly destroyed New Orleans, Louisiana, as well as cities, towns, and rural areas across the Gulf Coast. It sent hundreds of thousands of refugees to near-by cities like Houston, Texas, where they temporarily resided in massive structures like the Astrodome. Photograph, September 1, 2005. *Wikimedia*.

Immigration, meanwhile, had become an increasingly potent political issue. The Clinton administration had overseen the implementation of several anti-immigration policies on the U.S.-Mexico border, but hunger and poverty were stronger incentives than border enforcement policies were deterrents. Illegal immigration continued, often at great human cost, but nevertheless fanned widespread anti-immigration sentiment among many American conservatives. Many immigrants and their supporters, however, fought back. 2006 saw waves of massive protests across the country. Hundreds of thousands marched in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, and tens of thousands marched in smaller cities around the country. Legal change, however, went nowhere. Moderate conservatives feared upsetting business interests' demand for cheap, exploitable labor and alienating large voting blocs by stifling immigration, and moderate liberals feared upsetting anti-immigrant groups by pushing too hard for liberalization of

immigration laws.

Afghanistan and Iraq, meanwhile, continued to deteriorate. In 2006, the Taliban reemerged, as the Afghan government proved both highly corrupt and incapable of providing social services or security for its citizens. Iraq only descended further into chaos as insurgents battled against American troops and groups such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda in Iraq bombed civilians and released video recordings of beheadings.

In 2007, twenty-seven thousand additional U.S. forces deployed to Iraq under the command of General David Petraeus. The effort, "the surge," employed more sophisticated anti-insurgency strategies and, combined with Sunni efforts, pacified many of Iraq's cities and provided cover for the withdrawal of American forces. On December 4, 2008, the Iraqi government approved the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement, and U.S. combat forces withdrew from Iraqi cities before June 30, 2009. The last U.S. combat forces left Iraq on December 18, 2011. Violence and instability continued to rock the country.



Figure 30.4.2: Opened in 2005, the Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Michigan, is the largest Islamic center in the United States. Photograph, 2008. Wikimedia.

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30.5: The Great Recession

The Great Recession began, as most American economic catastrophes began, with the bursting of a speculative bubble. Throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, home prices continued to climb, and financial services firms looked to cash in on what seemed to be a safe but lucrative investment. After the dot-com bubble burst, investors searched for a secure investment rooted in clear value, rather than in trendy technological speculation. What could be more secure than real estate? But mortgage companies began writing increasingly risky loans and then bundling them together and selling them over and over again, sometimes so quickly that it became difficult to determine exactly who owned what.

Decades of financial deregulation had rolled back Depression-era restraints and again allowed risky business practices to dominate the world of American finance. It was a bipartisan agenda. In the 1990s, for instance, Bill Clinton signed the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, repealing provisions of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act separating commercial and investment banks, and the Commodity Futures Modernization Act, which exempted credit-default swaps—perhaps the key financial mechanism behind the crash—from regulation.

Mortgages had been so heavily leveraged that when American homeowners began to default on their loans, the whole system collapsed. Major financial services firms such as Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers disappeared almost overnight. In order to prevent the crisis from spreading, the federal government poured billions of dollars into the industry, propping up hobbled banks. Massive giveaways to bankers created shock waves of resentment throughout the rest of the country. On the right, conservative members of the Tea Party decried the cronyism of an Obama administration filled with former Wall Street executives. The same energies also motivated the Occupy Wall Street movement, as mostly young left-leaning New Yorkers protested an American economy that seemed overwhelmingly tilted toward “the one percent.”[22]

The Great Recession only magnified already rising income and wealth inequalities. According to the chief investment officer at JPMorgan Chase, the largest bank in the United States, “profit margins have reached levels not seen in decades,” and “reductions in wages and benefits explain the majority of the net improvement.”[23] A study from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) found that since the late 1970s, after-tax benefits of the wealthiest 1 percent grew by over 300 percent. The “average” American’s after-tax benefits had grown 35 percent. Economic trends have disproportionately and objectively benefited the wealthiest Americans. Still, despite political rhetoric, American frustration failed to generate anything like the social unrest of the early twentieth century. A weakened labor movement and a strong conservative bloc continue to stymie serious attempts at reversing or even slowing economic inequalities. Occupy Wall Street managed to generate a fair number of headlines and shift public discussion away from budget cuts and toward inequality, but its membership amounted to only a fraction of the far more influential and money-driven Tea Party. Its presence on the public stage was fleeting.

The Great Recession, however, was not. While American banks quickly recovered and recaptured their steady profits, and the American stock market climbed again to new heights, American workers continued to lag. Job growth was slow and unemployment rates would remain stubbornly high for years. Wages froze, meanwhile, and well-paying full-time jobs that were lost were too often replaced by low-paying, part-time work. A generation of workers coming of age within the crisis, moreover, had been savaged by the economic collapse. Unemployment among young Americans hovered for years at rates nearly double the national average.

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30.6: The Obama Years



Figure 30.6.1: In 2008, Barack Obama became the first African American elected to the presidency. In this official White House photo from May, 2009, 5-year-old Jacob Philadelphia said, “I want to know if my hair is just like yours.” The White House via *Flickr*.

By the 2008 election, with Iraq still in chaos, Democrats were ready to embrace the antiwar position and sought a candidate who had consistently opposed military action in Iraq. Senator Barack Obama had only been a member of the Illinois state senate when Congress debated the war actions, but he had publicly denounced the war, predicting the sectarian violence that would ensue, and remained critical of the invasion through his 2004 campaign for the U.S. Senate. He began running for president almost immediately after arriving in Washington.

A former law professor and community activist, Obama became the first African American candidate to ever capture the nomination of a major political party.[24] During the election, Obama won the support of an increasingly antiwar electorate. When an already fragile economy finally collapsed in 2007 and 2008, Bush’s policies were widely blamed. Obama’s opponent, Republican senator John McCain, was tied to those policies and struggled to fight off the nation’s desire for a new political direction. Obama won a convincing victory in the fall and became the nation’s first African American president.

President Obama’s first term was marked by domestic affairs, especially his efforts to combat the Great Recession and to pass a national healthcare law. Obama came into office as the economy continued to deteriorate. He continued the bank bailout begun under his predecessor and launched a limited economic stimulus plan to provide government spending to reignite the economy.

Despite Obama’s dominant electoral victory, national politics fractured, and a conservative Republican firewall quickly arose against the Obama administration. *The Tea Party* became a catch-all term for a diffuse movement of fiercely conservative and politically frustrated American voters. Typically whiter, older, and richer than the average American, flush with support from wealthy backers, and clothed with the iconography of the Founding Fathers, Tea Party activists registered their deep suspicions of the federal government.[25] Tea Party protests dominated the public eye in 2009 and activists steered the Republican Party far to the right, capturing primary elections all across the country.

Obama’s most substantive legislative achievement proved to be a national healthcare law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). Presidents since Theodore Roosevelt had striven to pass national healthcare reform and failed. Obama’s plan forsook liberal models of a national healthcare system and instead adopted a heretofore conservative model of subsidized private care (similar plans had been put forward by Republicans Richard Nixon, Newt Gingrich, and Obama’s 2012 opponent, Mitt Romney). Beset by conservative protests, Obama’s healthcare reform narrowly passed through Congress. It abolished pre-existing conditions as a cause for denying care, scrapped junk plans, provided for state-run healthcare exchanges (allowing individuals without healthcare to pool their purchasing power), offered states funds to subsidize an expansion of Medicaid, and required all Americans to provide proof of a health insurance plan that measured up to government-established standards (those who did not purchase a plan would pay a penalty tax, and those who could not afford insurance would be eligible for federal subsidies). The

number of uninsured Americans remained stubbornly high, however, and conservatives spent most of the next decade attacking the bill.

Meanwhile, in 2009, President Barack Obama deployed seventeen thousand additional troops to Afghanistan as part of a counterinsurgency campaign that aimed to “disrupt, dismantle, and defeat” al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Meanwhile, U.S. Special Forces and CIA drones targeted al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders. In May 2011, U.S. Navy Sea, Air and Land Forces (SEALs) conducted a raid deep into Pakistan that led to the killing of Osama bin Laden. The United States and NATO began a phased withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2011, with an aim of removing all combat troops by 2014. Although weak militarily, the Taliban remained politically influential in south and eastern Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda remained active in Pakistan but shifted its bases to Yemen and the Horn of Africa. As of December 2013, the war in Afghanistan had claimed the lives of 3,397 U.S. service members.



Figure 30.6.2: Former Taliban fighters surrender their arms to the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during a reintegration ceremony at the provincial governor’s compound in May 2012. *Wikimedia*.

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30.7: Stagnation

In 2012, Barack Obama won a second term by defeating Republican Mitt Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts. However, Obama's inability to control Congress and the ascendancy of Tea Party Republicans stunted the passage of meaningful legislation. Obama was a lame duck before he ever won reelection, and gridlocked government came to represent an acute sense that much of American life—whether in politics, economics, or race relations—had grown stagnant.

The economy continued its halfhearted recovery from the Great Recession. The Obama administration campaigned on little to specifically address the crisis and, faced with congressional intransigence, accomplished even less. While corporate profits climbed and stock markets soared, wages stagnated and employment sagged for years after the Great Recession. By 2016, the statistically average American worker had not received a raise in almost forty years. The average worker in January 1973 earned $4.03 an hour. Adjusted for inflation, that wage was about two dollars per hour more than the average American earned in 2014. Working Americans were losing ground. Moreover, most income gains in the economy had been largely captured by a small number of wealthy earners. Between 2009 and 2013, 85 percent of all new income in the United States went to the top 1 percent of the population.[26]

But if money no longer flowed to American workers, it saturated American politics. In 2000, George W. Bush raised a record $172 million for his campaign. In 2008, Barack Obama became the first presidential candidate to decline public funds (removing any applicable caps to his total fund-raising) and raised nearly three quarters of a billion dollars for his campaign. The average House seat, meanwhile, cost about $1.6 million, and the average Senate Seat over $10 million.[27] The Supreme Court, meanwhile, removed barriers to outside political spending. In 2002, Senators John McCain and Russ Feingold had crossed party lines to pass the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, bolstering campaign finance laws passed in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal in the 1970s. But political organizations—particularly PACs—exploited loopholes to raise large sums of money and, in 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. FEC* that no limits could be placed on political spending by corporations, unions, and nonprofits. Money flowed even deeper into politics.

The influence of money in politics only heightened partisan gridlock, further blocking bipartisan progress on particular political issues. Climate change, for instance, has failed to transcend partisan barriers. In the 1970s and 1980s, experts substantiated the theory of anthropogenic (human-caused) global warming. Eventually, the most influential of these panels, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded in 1995 that there was a "discernible human influence on global climate."[28] This conclusion, though stated conservatively, was by that point essentially a scientific consensus. By 2007, the IPCC considered the evidence "unequivocal" and warned that "unmitigated climate change would, in the long term, be likely to exceed the capacity of natural, managed and human systems to adapt."[29]

Climate change became a permanent and major topic of public discussion and policy in the twenty-first century. Fueled by popular coverage, most notably, perhaps, the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, based on Al Gore's book and presentations of the same name, addressing climate change became a plank of the American left and a point of denial for the American right. American public opinion and political action still lagged far behind the scientific consensus on the dangers of global warming. Conservative politicians, conservative think tanks, and energy companies waged war to sow questions in the minds of Americans, who remain divided on the question, and so many others.

Much of the resistance to addressing climate change is economic. As Americans looked over their shoulder at China, many refused to sacrifice immediate economic growth for long-term environmental security. Twenty-first-century relations with China remained characterized by contradictions and interdependence. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, China reinvigorated its efforts to modernize its country. By liberating and subsidizing much of its economy and drawing enormous foreign investments, China has posted massive growth rates during the last several decades. Enormous cities rise by the day. In 2000, China had a GDP around an eighth the size of U.S. GDP. Based on growth rates and trends, analysts suggest that China's economy will bypass that of the United States soon. American concerns about China's political system have persisted, but money sometimes matters more to Americans. China has become one of the country's leading trade partners. Cultural exchange has increased, and more and more Americans visit China each year, with many settling down to work and study.

By 2016, American voters were fed up. In that year's presidential race, Republicans spurned their political establishment and nominated a real estate developer and celebrity billionaire, Donald Trump, who, decrying the tyranny of political correctness and promising to Make America Great Again, promised to build a wall to keep out Mexican immigrants and bar Muslim immigrants. The Democrats, meanwhile, flirted with the candidacy of Senator Bernie Sanders, a self-described socialist from Vermont, before

ultimately nominating Hillary Clinton, who, after eight years as first lady in the 1990s, had served eight years in the Senate and four more as secretary of state. Voters despaired: Trump and Clinton were the most unpopular nominees in modern American history. Majorities of Americans viewed each candidate unfavorably and majorities in both parties said, early in the election season, that they were motivated more by voting *against* their rival candidate than *for* their own.[30] With incomes frozen, politics gridlocked, race relations tense, and headlines full of violence, such frustrations only channeled a larger sense of stagnation, which upset traditional political allegiances. In the end, despite winning nearly three million more votes nationwide, Clinton failed to carry key Midwestern states where frustrated white, working-class voters abandoned the Democratic Party—a Republican president hadn't carried Wisconsin, Michigan, or Pennsylvania, for instance, since the 1980s—and swung their support to the Republicans. Donald Trump won the presidency.

Political divisions only deepened after the election. A nation already deeply split by income, culture, race, geography, and ideology continued to come apart. Trump's presidency consumed national attention. Traditional print media and the consumers and producers of social media could not help but throw themselves at the ins and outs of Trump's norm-smashing first years while seemingly refracting every major event through the prism of the Trump presidency. Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian election-meddling and the alleged collusion of campaign officials in that effort produced countless headlines. Meanwhile, new policies enflamed widening cultural divisions. Border apprehensions and deportations reached record levels under the Obama administration, but Trump pushed even farther. He pushed for a massive wall along the border to supplement the fence built under the Bush administration. He began ordering the deportation of so-called Dreamers—students who were born elsewhere but grew up in the United States—and immigration officials separated refugee-status-seeking parents and children at the border. Trump's border policies heartened his base and aggravated his opponents. But while Trump enflamed America's enduring culture war, his narrowly passed 2017 tax cut continued the redistribution of American wealth toward corporations and wealthy individuals. The tax cut exploded the federal deficit and further exacerbated America's widening economic inequality.

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30.8: New Horizons

Americans looked anxiously to the future, and yet also, often, to a new generation busy discovering, perhaps, that change was not impossible. Much public commentary in the early twenty-first century concerned the millennials, the new generation that came of age during the new millennium. Commentators, demographers, and political prognosticators continued to ask what the new generation will bring. *Time*'s May 20, 2013, cover, for instance, read *Millennials Are Lazy, Entitled Narcissists Who Still Live with Their Parents: Why They'll Save Us All*. Pollsters focused on features that distinguish millennials from older Americans: millennials, the pollsters said, were more diverse, more liberal, less religious, and wracked by economic insecurity. "They are," as one Pew report read, "relatively unattached to organized politics and religion, linked by social media, burdened by debt, distrustful of people, in no rush to marry—and optimistic about the future."[31]

Millennial attitudes toward homosexuality and gay marriage reflected one of the most dramatic changes in the popular attitudes of recent years. After decades of advocacy, American attitudes shifted rapidly. In 2006, a majority of Americans still told Gallup pollsters that "gay or lesbian relations" was "morally wrong."[32] But prejudice against homosexuality plummeted and greater public acceptance of coming out opened the culture–in 2001, 73 percent of Americans said they knew someone who was gay, lesbian, or bisexual; in 1983, only 24 percent did. Gay characters—and in particular, gay characters with depth and complexity—could be found across the cultural landscape. Attitudes shifted such that, by the 2010s, polls registered majority support for the legalization of gay marriage. A writer for the *Wall Street Journal* called it "one of the fastest-moving changes in social attitudes of this generation."[33]

Such change was, in many respects, a generational one: on average, younger Americans supported gay marriage in higher numbers than older Americans. The Obama administration, meanwhile, moved tentatively. Refusing to push for national interventions on the gay marriage front, Obama did, however, direct a review of Defense Department policies that repealed the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy in 2011. Without the support of national politicians, gay marriage was left to the courts. Beginning in Massachusetts in 2003, state courts had begun slowly ruling against gay marriage bans. Then, in June 2015, the Supreme Court ruled 5–4 in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that same-sex marriage was a constitutional right. Nearly two thirds of Americans supported the position.[34]

While liberal social attitudes marked the younger generation, perhaps nothing defined young Americans more than the embrace of technology. The Internet in particular, liberated from desktop modems, shaped more of daily life than ever before. The release of the Apple iPhone in 2007 popularized the concept of smartphones for millions of consumers and, by 2011, about a third of Americans owned a mobile computing device. Four years later, two thirds did.[35].

Together with the advent of social media, Americans used their smartphones and their desktops to stay in touch with old acquaintances, chat with friends, share photos, and interpret the world—as newspaper and magazine subscriptions dwindled, Americans increasingly turned to their social media networks for news and information.[36] Ambitious new online media companies, hungry for clicks and the ad revenue they represented, churned out provocatively titled, easy-to-digest stories that could be linked and tweeted and shared widely among like-minded online communities,[37] but even traditional media companies, forced to downsize their newsrooms to accommodate shrinking revenues, fought to adapt to their new online consumers.

The ability of individuals to share stories through social media apps revolutionized the media landscape—smartphone technology and the democratization of media reshaped political debates and introduced new political questions. The easy accessibility of video capturing and the ability for stories to go viral outside traditional media, for instance, brought new attention to the tense and often violent relations between municipal police officers and African Americans. The 2014 death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, focused the issue, and over the following years videos documenting the deaths of black men at the hands of police officers circulated among social media networks. It became a testament to the power of social media platforms such as Twitter that a hashtag, #blacklivesmatter, became a rallying cry for protesters and counterhashtags, #alllivesmatter and #policelivesmatter, for critics.[38]



Figure 30.8.1***:*** *Just weeks after seventeen students were murdered at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, more than two million Americans across the country participated in the March for Our Lives demonstration to advocate for more effective gun control laws. Several Stoneman Douglas students emerged as prominent national activists in the wake of the shooting. This photo of the demonstration, taken from the Newseum in Washington D.C., captures a graphic on the exterior of the museum listing five protections of the First Amendment.*
Phil Roeder via Flickr

Another social media phenomenon, the #MeToo movement, began as the magnification of and outrage toward the past sexual crimes of notable male celebrities before injecting a greater intolerance toward those accused of sexual harassment and violence into much of the rest of American society. The sudden zero tolerance reflected the new political energies of many American women, sparked in large part by the candidacy and presidency of Donald Trump. The day after Trumps inauguration, between five hundred thousand and one million people descended on Washington, D.C., for the Women's March, and millions more demonstrated in cities and towns around the country to show a broadly defined commitment toward the rights of women and others in the face of the Trump presidency.

As issues of race and gender captured much public discussion, immigration continued on as a potent political issue. Even as anti-immigrant initiatives like California's Proposition 187 (1994) and Arizona's SB1070 (2010) reflected the anxieties of many white Americans, younger Americans proved far more comfortable with immigration and diversity (which makes sense, given that they are the most diverse American generation in living memory). Since Lyndon Johnson's Great Society liberalized immigration laws in the 1960s, the demographics of the United States have been transformed. In 2012, nearly one quarter of all Americans were immigrants or the sons and daughters of immigrants. Half came from Latin America. The ongoing Hispanicization of the United States and the ever-shrinking proportion of non-Hispanic whites have been the most talked about trends among demographic observers. By 2013, 17 percent of the nation was Hispanic. In 2014, Latinos surpassed non-Latino whites to became the largest ethnic group in California. In Texas, the image of a white cowboy hardly captures the demographics of a minority-majority state in which Hispanic Texans will soon become the largest ethnic group. For the nearly 1.5 million people of Texas's Rio Grande Valley, for instance, where most residents speak Spanish at home, a full three fourths of the population is bilingual.[39] Political commentators often wonder what political transformations these populations will bring about when they come of age and begin voting in larger numbers.

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30.9: Conclusion

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought neither global peace nor stability, and the attacks of September 11, 2001, plunged the United States into interminable conflicts around the world. At home, economic recession, a slow recovery, stagnant wage growth, and general pessimism infected American life as contentious politics and cultural divisions poisoned social harmony. And yet the stream of history changes its course. Trends shift, things change, and events turn. New generations bring with them new perspectives, and they share new ideas with new technologies. Our world is not foreordained. It is the product of history, the ever-evolving culmination of a longer and broader story, of a larger history, of a raw, distinctive, American Yawp.

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30.10: Primary Sources

Bill Clinton on Free Trade and Financial Deregulation (1993-2000)

During his time in office, Bill Clinton passed the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) in 1993, allowing for the free movement of goods between Mexico, the United States, and Canada, signed legislation repealing the Glass-Steagall Act, a major plank of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal banking regulation, and deregulated the trading of derivatives, including credit default swaps, a complicated financial instrument that would play a key role in the 2007-2008 economic crash. In the following signing statements, Clinton offers his support of free trade and deregulation.

9/11 Commission Report, "Reflecting On A Generational Challenge" (2004)

On July 22, 2004, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States—or, the 9/11 Commission—delivered a 500-plus-page report that investigated the origins of the 9/11 attacks and America's response and offered policy prescriptions for a post-9/11 world.

George W. Bush on the Post-9/11 World (2002)

In his 2002 State of the Union Address, George W. Bush proclaimed that the attacks of September 11 signaled a new, dangerous world that demanded American interventions. Bush identified an "Axis of Evil" and provided a justification for a broad "war on terror."

Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)

In 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in Obergefell v. Hodges *that prohibitions against same-sex marriage were unconstitutional. Gay marriage had been a divisive issue in American politics for well over a decade. Many states passed referendums and constitutional amendments barring same-sex marriages and, in 1996, Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act, defining marriage at the federal level as between a man and a woman. In 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Court struck down Massachusetts' state's prohibition, making it the first state to legally marry same-sex couples. More followed and public opinion began to turn. Although President Obama still refused to support it, by 2011 a majority of Americans believed same-sex marriages should be legally recognized. Four years later, the Supreme Court issued its* Obergefell *decision. The majority opinion, written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, considered the relationship between history and shifting notions of liberty and injustice.*

Barack Obama, Howard University Commencement Address (2016)

In 2016, President Barack Obama delivered the commencement address at Howard University, the nation's most distinguished historically black university. In it, he urged students to be hardworking yet pragmatic in their quest to achieve "justice and equality and freedom" in American life.

Ground Zero (2001)

A worker stands in front of rubble from the World Trade Center at Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan several weeks after the September 11 attacks.

Barack Obama and a Young Boy (2009)

In 2008, Barack Obama became the first African American elected to the presidency. In this official White House photo from May, 2009, 5-year-old Jacob Philadelphia said, "I want to know if my hair is just like yours."

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