Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VI

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

8. Discuss the evolution of American philosophies or ideals.
   - 8.1 Describe the innovations and impact of the American System.
   - 8.2 Discuss the political fight that emerged in the wake of the Corrupt Bargain and its impact on the Era of Good Feelings.
   - 8.3 Explore the landmarks of the Jackson administration and their fallout.

9. Analyze the impact new technologies had on the evolution of gender and social roles.
   - 9.1 Identify the opportunities and limitations for women in the factory system.
   - 9.2 Describe the shift in gender expectations in the wake of the Market Revolution.

Reading Assignment

O'Sullivan, J. (1839). John L. O'Sullivan on *Manifest Destiny*, 1839. Retrieved from https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/osulliva.htm

O'Sullivan, J. (1839). The great nation of futurity. Retrieved from https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/osulliva.htm

In order to access the articles below, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the America: History and Life with Full Text database within the CSU Online Library.

Barzun, J. (1987). Thoreau the thorough Impressionist. *American Scholar*, *56*(2), 250.

Larson, J. L. (2005). The Market Revolution in early America: An introduction. *OAH Magazine Of History*, *19*(3), 4-7.

Pencak, W. (2006). Cultural change and the Market Revolution in America, 1789-1860. *Journal Of The Early Republic*, *26*(3), 498-502.

Ronda, J. P. (2004). Washington Irving's west. *Historian*, *66*(3), 546-551.

Stembridge, L. (2001). Not such simple gifts. *History Today*, *51*(1), 46.

The articles cited in the Unit Lesson are required reading. You may be tested on your knowledge and understanding of that material as well as the information in the Unit Lesson readings.

Unit Lesson

The Jefferson administration would, in many ways, serve as a stabilizing agent for the young nation. However, as was true of Franklin, Washington, and Henry before him, Jefferson and his generation had to accept that the success of the republic depended on new leadership and the role that progress has in healing old wounds.

As mentioned in the previous unit, the term "Jeffersonian" can be attributed to the period from 1800-1824, a reference to the string of Republican Presidents he inspired. Coupled with the ousting of much of the lingering Federalist support after their anti-war faux pas, the following two decades, sometimes called the Era of Good Feeling, would essentially be a return to a one party republic—this, however, did not mean that political issues

were without debate. The Corrupt Bargain that put John Quincy Adams into the Oval Office would become a rally cry for the next prominent politician to take over. Though they had comparable backgrounds, Jackson and Jefferson's "ideal" America would prove to be drastically different. While the office of the President steadily moved into a moderate position, attitudes were clearly dividing, with the traditional conservatives backing Adams, while the more desperate for reform helped usher in the "Jacksonian" era.

This era, however, would see more than just the political carousel start to spin once again. This would also be a scene of necessity and reforms, both of which would directly challenge all three branches of government and dominate conversation from the factory, to the pub, to the home. What may have been even more unexpected than the reforms themselves was who was leading them—women, church-sponsored organizations, and other such less-aggressive voices that had previously been drowned out under the expectations of Republican Motherhood. What was providing them with this new influence were the changing nature of the American market, the new structure of the home, and even expansion westward. The gains of the Jeffersonian era were not the expansion expected by so many, however. As the nation took new shape, there came a series of new voices. Arguably the loudest voice from this era would become the most impactful to America's future: the abolition debate.

First, it is important to recognize how the nation began to evolve. In the early nineteenth century, a period collectively known as the Market Revolution became defined by a series of technological innovations and associated economic changes that caused the partisan industry and agricultural economic lines begin to blur. While the Industrial Revolution began in Europe, the U.S. remained an agricultural giant. However, innovation was not completely foreign to American shores. A series of reforms would occur, impacting the nature of labor, the laborer, the ways industry moved, and even the family structure. Starting in 1815, two major programs would be put into motion causing this transition. The first would be the transportation revolution.

The Transportation Revolution

Much of the limitation to the United States' economic success had been due to geographical limitations. The Atlantic and Gulf coasts, which were essential to America's shipping and trade, were still dependent on rugged roads and naturally flowing water to gather exports. This left the nation's economy squarely in the hands of Mother Nature. This type of transportation was not only slow and unreliable, but it was also excessively expensive, especially when compared to the more developed English infrastructure. However, with the growth in the nation's size, there was greater ability to utilize the natural resources to benefit North America's economy. From 1815 to 1840, the nation would undergo a great construction project, starting with the national road, to the creation of a canal system, and finally a railroad.

The National (Cumberland) Road stretched from Maryland to the Ohio River. This was the nation's first federally funded interstate system, meant to provide a path from the Atlantic to the western territories. The Ohio River also served as a junction point, feeding into several other major waterways, including the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Missouri Rivers (and to their feeding branches and tributaries). The installation of this road not only aided community development as far West as St. Louis, but it also provided quicker and more reliable access to ports such as New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mobile, Alabama.

The second part of this Transportation Revolution was also dependent on water, but would only be possible through the vision of then New York Governor DeWitt Clinton: the Erie Canal. Finished in 1826, the canal literally cut through 360 miles of northern countryside to connect the Great Lakes to the Hudson River; its completion meant that New York harbor could now expand its exports to include those that were previously only feasible by the Gulf ports. To accompany this, there would now also be a need to travel North, East, and West along these rivers leading to Fulton's innovative, yet environmentally and operationally dangerous, steamboat. Popular for their significantly lower expense, canals would be developed throughout the nation but were still not perfect, as their size and location geared them toward slower moving, narrow barges. This innovation did, however, inspire the growth of several northern towns, including Buffalo, NY, and inspired New York City's growth into the economic capital it is today.

Picture of the Erie Canal as seen today.
(Leongard G., 2005)

The last great transportation innovation would prove to become the key to solving the problem of civilizing the expanding American West: the railroad. The first rails were placed in small doses starting in the 1830s, but would quickly expand into the frontier over the next decade. Quicker to construct and cheaper to maintain than either of the previous innovations, the rails proved to be more cost-effective and better able to keep the attention of the American population. More about this will be added later.

The American System

A second massive project called the American System would be promoted in 1814 and installed in 1816 to do three things: regulate the national currency, revise foreign tariffs (taxes), and expand on the Transportation Revolution projects. There were three fundamental issues that this system set out to address:

- the timing and relationship to the transportation revolution;
- the American System's origins, which actually traced as far back as Hamilton's Federalist Party, which faded during Jefferson's Presidency; and
- creation of a second National Bank.

A lot would happen during Madison's terms: a massive second military revolution, the War of 1812, the repeal of the Embargo Act, and the Transportation and Market Revolutions. The Madison administration saw the Federalist threat lessen. Because of these occurrences, he supported the economic program as a way to settle the economy and as an act of good faith between former political rivals. But this was not without issues, including the fears that came with locally beneficial improvements, such as the Erie Canal.

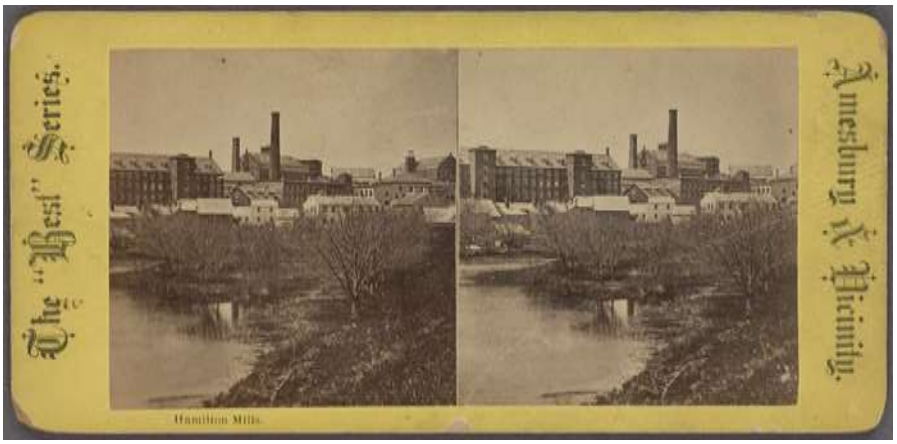
The idea of unequal distribution of funds had also been a hindrance for Jefferson when trying to support similar economic projects. The message sent by Monroe supported such a program and its reflection on the unification efforts. It was clear that the Era of Good Feeling had caused the party's platform to evolve from Jefferson's agrarian dream to a more national scope. Finally, there was fallout after the First National Bank failed to be re-chartered in 1811 due to pressure from supporters, particularly in the agricultural sector, who had rights to fear its potential for corruption.

The American Factory

With all of this innovation, what changes promoted industry in the pre-industrial United States? One of the more significant was the earliest form of common factory, the mill, perhaps the most famous of which was located in Lowell, Massachusetts. This company was not only notable for its production, which spanned the full gambit of textile production, or the worker population, which was overwhelmingly unmarried young women. This mill was also notable because of how these women, who were drastically underpaid for their efforts, would lead some of the first, though generally unsuccessful, strikes in American history.

It was very common for families in pre-industrial America to have and raise large families. This was due to several factors, including labor needs, religious beliefs, gender expectations, and infant mortality rates. As technology improved, both on the farm and in production, families continued to grow, but family land became scarce. With it becoming increasingly difficult to raise such large families, mills such as Lowell would crop up as a new employment option. They often had built-in dorms, recreation opportunities, and very strict moral codes/rules (as part of the appeal for parental consent). All of this was a luxury, but it was also an excuse to lower the pay for women doing the same work a man would be paid more to do in cruder environments.

Though it may not seem directly related, it would be the words of noted reform leaders Sarah and Angelina Grimké, daughters of a prosperous plantation owner and planter, speaking on behalf of the abolitionist crusade, that would inspire workers to look at their own situation. Moving into the mid-1830s, the situation became worse with the lowering price of cotton. Following demands for pay cuts and greater output, the women united and went on strike against the factory. Ultimately, however, it would be a seemingly never-ending supply of replacement workers that allowed the demands of these workers to fall on deaf ears. As women aged, those who rebelled would leave or be replaced, and eventually immigrant labor would gladly take the work, as many had migrated from lands with significantly less economic opportunity, especially for women.



The mill at Lowell, Massachusetts.
(Dennis, n.d.)

Though unsuccessful at Lowell, this spirit would spread to other mills, such as the Lynn shoebinders, which fed them into independent (family-run) enterprises. This was only the first attempt at feminist equality, a fight that we will discuss further later, and is still carried on today.

A New National Bank

Coming back to the bank issue, the main argument for a new national bank came understandably from those with the most to gain: the elites and industrial leaders. Their fear was the rapid growth of smaller banks throughout the United States. Often with their own independent currency, these banks caused havoc on exchange rates, In some cases, they were ways to guarantee that skilled and trained laborers would not attempt to save up and leave for better opportunities in other factory towns.

Having multiple currencies circulating hurt the nation for multiple reasons, perhaps chief among them being unity. Though now clearly an established country, the inability to secure a single national currency called into question the sovereignty of the young nation. In 1816, the Second National Bank would be granted a twenty-year charter. Although led by a figurehead "president," Mr. Nicholas Biddle, once again the cards lined up for the wealthiest Americans to have the greatest influence on the nation's economy, an issue that irritated the traditional agricultural base.

Just as with any economic system, there would be prosperous ("boom") and wanting ("bust") years. While the boom was beneficial, the bust hurt the lower classes drastically more than it did those influencing the bank. Those who had significant investments also had the ability to call back loans, which led directly to drastic economic woes for those with loans. The losses among those who could not afford to immediately repay their creditors developed into increased disapproval of the banks. In periods of prolonged loss, otherwise known as a "panic," the resentment only became louder. The Panic of 1819, for example, would occur only three years

after the establishment of this new bank. This new institution showing such a fluid structure, along with the reality of a 20 year charter, drew the ire of many who blamed the changes for the downturn.

Jackson Enters the Political Scene

One of the most outspoken anti-bank politicians at the time was also a highly regarded lawyer, previous law-keeper, and nationally known war hero from his successful victory at the Battle of New Orleans. Andrew Jackson, an agricultural supporter from the Jefferson mold, would emerge in the wake of these harsh economic times and take up the mantle that had once formed the agrarian resistance in the form of the Republican Party. Jackson was not new to the political scene, having served in multiple capacities in and for his home state of Tennessee, as well as stints in both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. He brought a resurgent states-rights attitude, condemned the Electoral College, and gained the reputation of a "people's politician."

The Corrupt Bargain of 1824, which had hand-delivered the election to John Quincy Adams despite Jackson's control of the popular vote, only furthered Jackson's crusade. Like Jefferson a generation before, Jackson would use this perceived injustice as a springboard and platform against the struggling administration. The election of 1828 would once again give Jackson the overwhelming popular vote, and new laws in more than twenty states guaranteed that these voices would be heard. The people came out in unprecedented numbers as the thought of Jackson as President was either a blessing or a curse. Politicians encouraged local political supporters to speak out on their benefit, and the advent of new print media and the mail system worked to spread the pressure to vote. This was also one of the first examples of smear campaigning, as each side took to bashing the ethics, actions, and even the families of the other.

Political cartoon regarding the "Corrupt Bargain" with Henry Clay sewing General Jackson's mouth shut.
(Johnston, 1828.)

After the examination of over a million votes, Jackson took the South and agrarian Mid Atlantic, whereas John Quincy Adams only retained his expected New England. Jackson was declared the winner with 178 electoral votes. Related, this election was often compared to the public feuds of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams; however, despite their fierce political rivalry, they were able to salvage their personal friendship in retirement, and would both die on July 4, 1826. In their post administrative lives, they saw their life's work evolve from chaos into a thriving nation—it is perhaps justice that neither lived to see what would happen next.

A New White House

This result was not the only change to emerge from this campaign; however, the two sides were clearly visible, and though both claimed Jefferson's Party as their own, it was clear that the Era of Good Feeling had ended. Jackson was running under the banner of Democratic Republican—an ode to Jefferson that would, sometime before the 1836 election, be shortened to "Democrats." Adams claimed the name National Republican, which would evolve into the "Whig" Party.

Another change would also emerge, this time from the media. Cartoonists, picking on Jackson's stubbornness and popularity, would draw him in a multitude of unflattering characterizations ranging from a poor-tempered monarch (King Andrew I) to an ornery mule. Some were even so blunt as to label him a "jackass" as a play on both his name and his reputation. Unexpectedly, Jackson's supporters recognized the gift of press, and the imagery stuck even past his administration, eventually leading to the first of two modern political mascots: the Democratic donkey.

Jackson was quick to claim his title as the people's President, a move that allowed his supporters seemingly unprecedented access to the public figure. But to his opponents, this became akin to a rowdy bar, or, in modern terms, a fraternity house. Jackson would continue to defy tradition by not welcoming a diverse cabinet of advisors, but instead a committee of platform loyalists, sometimes choosing shrewd political figures who benefitted his campaign and shared similar beliefs over competent advisors. This was nicknamed the "spoils system" by those left out.

Jackson had a clear agenda—to revoke or revise the plans which had limited the agrarian American and to utilize new territories for future generations. Among those who would be in the way of this plan, not including the outspoken Whigs, would be the Native Americans and the aforementioned National Bank.

Jackson's first act, however, would be a direct attack on one of the opposition's leaders. Acting on his disagreement concerning private use of national funds, he vetoed a road project in Maysville, Kentucky, a project which would have benefitted that region, which just happened to be Henry Clay's home state. This was not only a display of his executive privilege, but also an act of defiance against another branch: Congress. This would turn out to be only the first of many.

Political cartoon depicting President Jackson's abuse of power.
(King Andrew, 1883)

Indian Removal Act

One of Thomas Jefferson's most significant decisions as President would be to offer Native Americans the right to stay on their tribal lands as long as they assimilated into U.S. culture by learning the language, respecting the laws, and living as citizens. Jackson, who had earned the reputation as an "Indian fighter" in his military years, would now choose to challenge the patriarch of the party he claimed. Using the argument that western expansion was inevitable and would lead to unnecessary war and fighting, Jackson ordered all Native American tribes to move west of the Mississippi River in an attempt to "save" them.

At this time there were still five major tribes in the South, often referred to as the "Five Civilized Tribes"—the Cherokee, Seminole, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw. It should be noted that prior to Jefferson's assimilation plan, most of the major northern tribes had already vacated due to unregulated expansion and continued frontier conflict for similar promised western lands from the Louisiana Purchase. One of the few exceptions were the Sauk and Fox. Congress would pass the Indian Removal Act of 1830, opening 100+ million acres of previously tribal land to farmers and American developers.

The fallout of this declaration was huge, and multiple methods of resistance were displayed. The Seminoles in Florida would take a very direct approach, aggressively attacking any who came near their lands in a series of skirmishes known as the Seminole Wars. They were finally subdued by the U.S. Army and forcibly moved to the Oklahoma Territory via water and land caravan.

Map showing the Trail of Tears routes.
(NPS, n.d.)

The Creeks, Chickasaw, and Choctaw also would put up some resistance, but they were also ultimately displaced. The Cherokee, however, took a different approach—in an attempt to prove their acceptance and action on the assimilation plan, the Cherokee Nation took the U.S. government to the Supreme Court, twice.

In the cases *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the Cherokee were found to be an independent sovereign nation and not subject to U.S. law. Jackson once again ignored the decision and pushed the Cherokee out, using less than scrupulous means. What would follow would be dubbed "the Trail of Tears," where the U.S. Army marched the Cherokee Nation into the Oklahoma Territory, but only after sentencing them to disease-infested encampments. Between the strain, the heartache, and the disease, almost a quarter of the Cherokee population died during the forced exodus.

The Bank War

Arguably the second most significant issue during Jackson's administration would relate to Jackson's handling of the Second Bank of the United States. Picking up from earlier, Jackson had a very negative perspective and opinion of Biddle's prize bank, and the 1832 election would prove itself an opportunity to act. Used as bait for Jackson to make a perceived political blunder, Biddle allowed for Senators Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, who eyed the executive office for themselves, to move up the re-chartering of the bank to 1832, instead of waiting until 1836. Knowing that the bank's failure would likely cause economic collapse, and with that an unhappy population, these Whigs believed this would guarantee Jackson's inability to gain reelection.

Expectedly, Jackson took the opportunity to veto the bill. Unexpectedly, the American people approved. His veto, putting the spotlight back on the inequality of the classes, helped to remind the American people of why he was elected. This helped his 1832 campaign, leading to an easy victory.

To ensure that Congress did not resurrect the bank, Jackson moved the U.S.'s shares in the bank to trusted smaller banks. Since it no longer held the same power, the bank folded in 1836, but not before calling in loans and raising interest rates. With less regulation now, the addition of Mexican silver to the U.S. coffers, and the forced manipulation of inflation, the nation choked itself into an economic nightmare disguised as a boom. At the time, Jackson was again the celebrated people's President, but when the dust settled, he found that even he was not bulletproof. In response to Jackson's veto, confidence was lost in the bank. Those with the most to lose pressured Biddle to refill the coffers in any fashion, which included calling in loans. What occurred was a devastating recession, putting many of the nation's middle- and lower-class citizens, most of whom had supported Jackson, in an economic hole.

By 1836, even Jackson's supporters questioned their loyalties. During his eight-year administration, Jackson acted like a bulldozer through the combined efforts of his predecessors to unite and govern the nation responsibly. Though very charismatic and able to react to pressure, soon even he could not escape his demons. He had essentially declared a one-sided war on a sovereign nation, oversaw the destruction of

America's economic infrastructure, and outright refused, ignored, and nullified the decisions of the other two government branches any time they impacted his plans.

Jackson might very well have run for a third term if he had not fallen ill, forcing him to retire and allow the newly recreated two-party system to sort out the disheveled nation. Van Buren, Jackson's second Vice President, would take over what was essentially a clean-up effort.

Political cartoon depicting a less-than-flattering farewell message to Jackson, who had lost much of his popular support due to economic woes.
(Robinson, 1850)

Two massive economic panics would cost Van Buren a second term. William Henry Harrison would take the office as both the first Whig President and the first non-Republican since John Adams lost to Jefferson four decades earlier. Ironically, this was done using Jackson's own tricks—Harrison was a war hero, he was touted as a frontiersman (a lie), and he even introduced log toys to attract children. In earnest, the voter turnout showed how desperately the American people simply wanted to move past anyone and anything associated with Jackson.

The Rising Middle Class

While Jackson's "Chuck Norris" style of government was often the headliner during this era, his was not the only influence of note. With the Market Revolution, the family expectation shifted, and with the help of reform movements, the spheres of expectation started to contour.

The Market Revolution had an unexpected side effect, as it took what was once a very small population of citizens who fit neither the upper- nor the lower-class models, and quickly boosted the middle class into a significant population that changed expectations, dress, society, and convention. These men were now more commonly in semi-managerial positions, whereas they had previously been single entrepreneurs or skilled labor. Those in these positions now earned enough to support a small family and worked a schedule that allowed for such luxuries.

Women started to move out of the workplace. Mothering again became an understood profession, as it ensured the success of future generations, like it had under the height of Republican Motherhood. General responsibilities of the wife included the careful education of the children and keeping the house a refuge from

the unforgiving world. Even for families on the lower end of this new class, the one-payroll household was common, though in earnest, many times the house became a place of business for women (e.g., laundry, sewing, teaching, boarding, cooking) while the husband was out. Family sizes shrunk drastically. No longer on the farm or needing cheap, trustworthy labor, huge families were much rarer, but not without some controversy. Though intended to ensure that the husband's wage would suffice for the middle-class lifestyle, this often led to dangerous procedures and actions by women to ensure that the family stayed the ideal size, including abortion, which quickly resulted in questions and conflicts with religion and morality.

America's Cultural Revolution

Another interesting occurrence that would spawn from this new economic class would be new luxuries, philosophies, and interests. The American culture was drastically different, even from the heavy English and German origins of many American citizens. One reason for this was the very limited history and tradition associated with the American ideal. This opened the nation to embracing new ideas; accompanying this would also be increased levels of literacy and spendable income for luxury items, among the most popular of which were reading materials. Authors such as James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving wrote books that romanticized the American West, which was a far cry from the urban city that most Americans knew, as the frontier was the land of opportunity once taken by their forefathers.

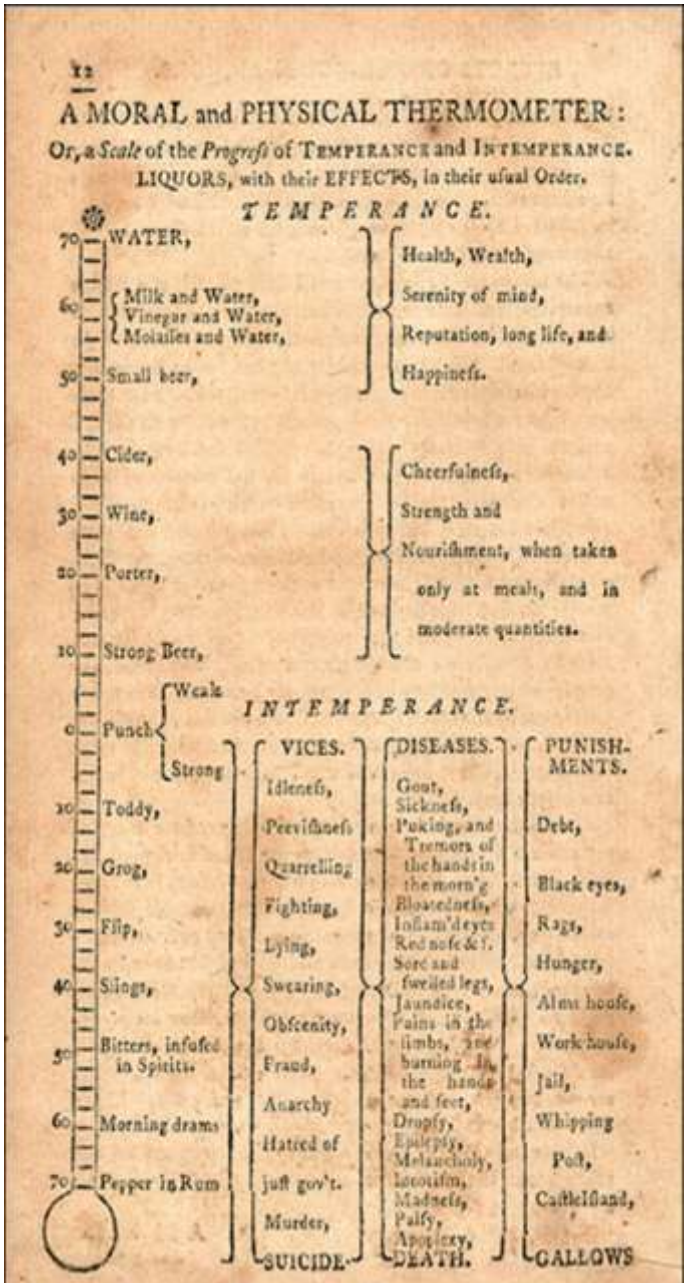
The key to spreading these stories was continued evolution of print. New novels and print type would make these works accessible, and with them new ways of thinking. Among the major philosophies to emerge during this time was Transcendentalism. This philosophy was dominated by the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Their works fed into the lure of the frontier, away from the sin and pain of the city—a cry to embrace nature once again and reform their own world into a more natural scene. In addition, this would be a golden age for Folk Tales and Songs, which are still common today. All too often, this was not so much a call to leave the populated environment, but to find a way to embrace nature and connect with the "Oversoul." On the other end, some less beloved philosophies also emerged, such as the Utopian community founded by John Humphrey Noyes, who took this idea and ran much further with it. This led to extreme behaviors but still developed a community of dedicated believers despite the outward pressures.

Image of Emerson's "transparent eyeball" concept.
(Cranch, ca. 1837)

Religion Influences Reform

Religion would also adapt to this new culture. Women vastly outnumbered men in church attendance, including young boys, but with a new sense of morality came a revised religious expectation. That expectation spread in a series of revivals known as the Second Great Awakening. Like the First Great Awakening, this series of religious gatherings was intended to whitewash corruption of the past, spread the word to a new generation, and put families back into the pews. Once again, this was a success. Congregation attendance skyrocketed, and the main attraction was a former lawyer from New York named Charles Finney. Finney used the urban sins to attract and provoke his would-be congregations, and he even used Jackson's successful methods to focus people's attentions against the dangers of lewdness and drink.

From religious teachings to outright moral reform, women too would take the stage as prominent figures in this evolving American scene. Now no longer constrained by factory labor or massive families, women could campaign for their ideal nation, just as the mill girls had done before. Women, especially those of recent immigration, knew that one of the most prominent and dangerous vices was alcohol. Drinking was everywhere, and civic or cultural norms lured fathers, sons, husbands, and brothers into the pub on a daily basis. To put it into perspective, the estimated amount of drinking taking place back then doubles even the most prominent issues today. This is especially true in urban environments with easy access and limited need for driving or operation of complicated machinery.



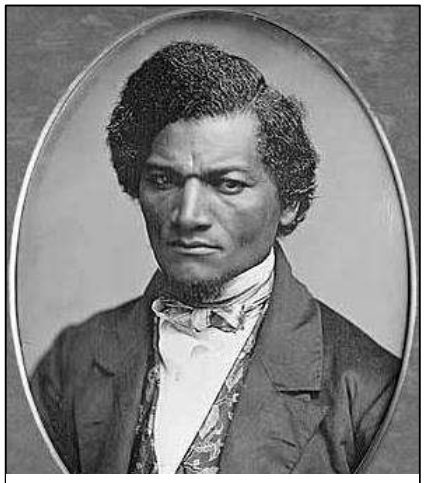
Graph of Benjamin Rush's moral and physical thermometer. *(Rush, 1790)*

Lyman Beecher, a minister from Connecticut, would form the American Temperance Society, but it would be women who made it successful. Men would be faced with messages of temperance at work, and women would reinforce the message at home. However, the most successful deterrent ended up being money. In the same pattern, moral reform would attack sexual deviance, including direct action to deter stimuli for such behaviors as public prostitution. As discussed earlier, the ultimate goal was to create a nation that promoted civil, equal behaviors for all, regardless of class, creed, gender, or race.

Seneca Falls

As determined as women were about temperance, there was unfortunately still limited success in attracting the necessary attention or support to gain lasting change. What was not lost, however, was the passion for this reform. Even toward the middle of the century, new faces and events prompted further discussion.

One of the most significant of these events would take place at Seneca Falls, New York, where Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott would preside over more than 300 like-minded supporters to draft a Declaration of Sentiments, outlining the goals of the convention and reform. This document, a clear comparison to the Declaration of Independence, made a very loud point about excluding gender-specific perspectives from American society. The range of demands was wide and almost universal; the lone exception was also the most cumbersome: the right to vote. Suffrage was essential to these women's plans because no matter how loud their voices were, they still had no say in politics and thus no guarantee for change. Who would prove to be another key voice attempting to unite reformers towards this goal? Interestingly enough, it would be the leader from another prominent movement, Mr. Frederick Douglass, who was a major author and orator in the cause for race equality.



Frederick Douglas *(Miller, ca. 1847-1852)*

The Abolition Debate

What was perhaps the most incendiary issue seeking reform would be abolition. The promotion for the equality of all races was multifaceted and all too often uncivil, even among the reformers. The debate on slavery in America can be traced as far back as the Constitutional Convention itself, but abolition was a direct attack on the economic welfare of a significant enough amount of the population that sufficient support was never there to make a serious run at success. In

the nineteenth century, however, this would change as the nature of the American economy evolved around technology and social views.

One of the more established views was that of the Quaker church. Vehemently against the subjugation of any person based on any such characteristic, this following was among the first to champion many reforms, though not always in a traditional form. Such is the case with abolition. Members from the Mid Atlantic came together as a group called the American Colonization Society to offer to purchase slaves' freedoms and pay their way back to Africa, specifically to the nation of Liberia. However, there was great outcry against this, not so much by slave owners, but by other abolitionists. Not only was this plan economically faulty, but it actually promoted segregation, as the slaves being sent to Africa were American, usually by more than a couple generations.

Such was the nature of the debate at this point. With the evolution of laws geared directly toward the benefit of the owner, the only way to ensure equality, including for free African Americans, was to prohibit slavery. Among the key leaders in this reform would be members of the freed community, such as David Walker, who published *An Appeal . . . to the Coloured Citizens of the World*; progressive-minded Whites such as William Lloyd Garrison, who published the *Liberator;* and key representatives from the influential community, such as Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and finally Harriet Tubman, who would incite further anger by freeing many slaves via the underground railroad.

Though increasingly vocal, this is one reform that would gain little traction in Jacksonian America, apart from the oft-debated free-labor ideal, but it set the stage for the political, social, and economic divide that would eventually plunge the nation into war. At the time, however, the law and politics favored the White man, including the right to any claims of a wife. As long as that was the case, the desires of these other populations were not going to be a national concern.

Industrial America

As the nation finally began to recoup from Jackson's influence in the 1840s and 1850s, the more recognizable antebellum society became prominent. Interestingly enough, despite the political ruins left in the wake of the Era of Good Feeling, it is clear that despite the troubles, four decades of progress had been very beneficial for the American economy.

Not only was this a time of great growth in the nation's size, but growth occurred in its industrial capacity too. Although still far from equaling the British giant, the new accessibility and renewed entrepreneurial spirit did begin to turn the nation into a world power for the first time. Mechanization and the American System created less reliance on the skilled worker, thus allowing owners to pay unskilled labor at cost and not have to worry about losing skilled workers to strikes.

So what led to this? First, it is important to reconsider the Market Revolution. Though the middle class had risen at an exponential rate, there was still a labor class, and the divide between the haves and have-nots only continued to grow. Starting in 1800, agricultural innovations from the cotton gin to the mechanical reaper emerged on the local farm. Being able to enhance the work of one farmhand to equal that of many, there was a population migration to the city for work. (Recall this was discussed earlier with the falling sizes of families and rise of mills.) For many, this left a choice: move to the factory or try to build a new farm in the seemingly endless, and very dangerous, frontier. However, even with millions filing into the U.S. from Europe, and more moving from the farm to the city, the western migration still posed a danger to industrial growth.

With western opportunity, either from the purchase or simple claim of lands, the population was not reliant on factory positions. Add in the effectiveness of steam power, as noted with the railroad, access to production was at an all-time high, making rural life more realistic. The first half of the 1800s saw the east become swamped with railroad track, more than 9,000 miles worth in total. Only a decade later, the west too was quickly benefitting from the cheap, quick, and reliable transportation infrastructure. With it, so too was communication building. The telegraph, with its lines able to be built literally right behind the rails, now served those reliant on the railroads the same as on the east coast.

Manifest Destiney

Americans now had the means, motivations, and modes for migration westward; what was still missing was the claim over previous/current owners. John O'Sullivan, editor for the United States *Democratic Review*,

would in 1839 provide that claim. Speaking directly to the heart of the heavy-handed, Democratic Party-supporting American agricultural base, O'Sullivan would publish the most influential, and infamous, article of his career: "The Great Nation of Futurity" (For more information, see https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/osulliva.htm.) In this article, O'Sullivan would make the case that America had the obligation, granted by God, to take its place as the next chosen society.

> Providence is with us, and no earthly power can. We point to the everlasting truth on the first page of our national declaration, and we proclaim to the millions of other lands, that "the gates of hell" -- the powers of aristocracy and monarchy -- "shall not prevail against it."
> – John O'Sullivan

As powerful as this rhetoric was, what it gave to Americans was a reason to infiltrate, squat, and steal claimed lands from other settlements, including Native Americans in the West, British in the North, and Mexicans in the Southwest, the last of which would prove the next staging ground for the much embattled American military. What Americans expected was an untouched and unblemished prairie, an open frontier just waiting for civilization. Lewis and Clark had blazed a trail to the Pacific Ocean only generations earlier, and now there was a great impulse to claim that land for the United States by any means.

Map image showing different trail routes
(Emigrant trails, 2011)

The first example of this imperialistic enthusiasm would be the emergence of three major roads into the West starting from Independence, Missouri: the Oregon Trail, which spawned the California Trail and the Santa Fe Trail. As Americans moved to the west, issues such as disease, property rights, and interruption of Native American hunting patterns were so common that there developed a need to build strategic forts along these trails to guarantee safe passage. Disease, especially, would become a killer of Native Americans, many of whom had no previous experience with Europeans. From these encounters emerged hostile feelings and reactions towards anyone seen trying to settle in what was claimed Native American territory. Eventually, a more organized system emerged. Called *concentration*, this property restriction was sold as mutually beneficial, ensuring safe passage through, but not on, Native American lands, while in reality it was the first inroad to the reservation system.

A second example reflected diverse religious interests. Just as some of America's first settlers wanted freedom of religion, so too did these western migrants. Appropriately called an "exodus," trailblazer Brigham Young would lead Joseph Smith Jr.'s followers, called "Mormons" in reference to their holy text, into the West. Upon reaching the Salt Lake community in 1846, in what is now modern Utah, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which had been founded in the 1830s, founded its modern capital. A much embattled religion, mostly due to its controversial allowance of what Smith called "plural-marriage," these pilgrims received a reception not unlike the early Puritans and Huguenots who settled the American East. Like those explorers, they were able to develop a working society. Still, when the U.S. came to incorporate the territory, the religious fight was renewed, and after brief occupation, Utah fell under U.S. policy with respect to Mormon beliefs. Though relatively non-violent, this is an example of the actions willingly taken by the U.S. government to expand its national claims and fulfill its charge of Manifest Destiny.

Mexican-American War

Not all expansion efforts were without bloodshed. As Americans entered into the Southwestern and California territories, the Mexican government quickly took notice. In much of what is Texas today, government and enforcement of such, was actually quite lax. Mexico had recently ousted Spain, and like the U.S. was intent on developing an American power. Also like the U.S. had been, less than a decade removed from gaining independence, Mexico had not yet bounced back, and the outlying territories (in this case the north) were less guarded or enforced.

Prior to even independence, the Santa Fe Trail had been ushering American settlers into the region known for its furs and precious metals. The first major population would be the province of Texas, with Mexico's blessing to populate (and protect) the land. Put under the rule of Stephen F. Austin in the 1820s, Texas was to be retained by Mexico, just with shared inhabitants. With vast amounts of land at insignificant prices, Americans outnumbered Mexicans 35,000 to 8,000 in Texas within ten years. At that time, to ensure the survival and longevity of the Mexican culture, the border was ordered closed to any further migration. This sparked rebellion in the Texans, only to be marched on by the famous Mexican General, Antonio López de Santa Anna.

In response, America amassed its own defense. Being only an informal conflict, the U.S. Army was not called out to interfere with the Texans' fight for independence. Taking the matter into their own hands, some of America's most legendary figures, including Davy Crockett and James Bowie, came out to defend the American stakes. A small former Franciscan monastery on the outskirts of San Antonio would be the stage for one of the most publicized American losses ever: the Alamo.

In February 1836, Santa Anna, with 2,000 men at his disposal, made relatively quick work of the 187 American volunteers, and later another 400 suspected rebels at Goliad. These two slaughters would be enough for the U.S. to respond. Under the leadership of General Sam Houston, the Texas region was won from Mexico and became the independent Lone Star Republic.

Even after independence, however, it was necessary to defend the borders. This would set the scene for the 1844 Presidential election debate between Whig Henry Clay and Democrat James K. Polk, who is sometimes referred to as the last Jacksonian. The major debate topic—slavery and the need to admit equally for slave and non-slaveholding regions. Before Polk even took office, annexation of Texas was complete in 1845, with Oregon (June 1846) in the works to even up the numbers.

California would have similar results but from different means, using instead the resurgent themes of Manifest Destiny and war. California would become the next major region to be inundated by American settlers, an invasion that would reflect Polk's "stop at no cost" attitude towards expansionism. Using recent frontier battles as reason to claim that Mexico could not protect its borders, Polk offered to buy the California territory, but to no avail. In response, Polk, expecting a quick resolution after a show of military power, sent in zealous veteran (and fervent nationalist) General Zachary "Old Rough and Ready" Taylor to the Rio Grande, drastically south of the understood border, where he met an overpowering Mexican cavalry reacting to the invasion. With the attack, Polk asked Congress to declare war against the southern neighbor.

Standing enlistments were pitiful. Volunteers, notably immigrants, were abundant, however, despite the disagreement towards the war, especially in the Whig-concentrated North who felt that this was just a ploy to extend the influence of Southern, slave-holding states. Nevertheless, Taylor (a Whig) was the right choice to lead, and Polk officially gave him command of the entire campaign after taking Palo Alto in 1846. From here, he would secure major victories in Monterrey and Buena Vista, which pleased Polk with his progress at first.

Soon, however, Taylor's informal methods caught the ire of Polk, and General Winfield Scott would be granted the command to take Mexico City via an amphibious landing at Veracruz – an unprecedented move that solidified Taylor's contempt for Polk. Although a slaveholder himself, Taylor would soon bring his opposition to Polk's policies onto another battlefield: politics. The Presidential 1848 election would see the war hero Taylor receive the Whig nomination and his combination of Southern roots and Whig platform endeared him to the quickly splintering nation.

A Golden Dream

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo would be signed in February 1848, and the United States now spread its borders south to the Rio Grande and west to the Pacific Ocean, just in time for the California Gold Rush. Had Santa Anna known of the Pacific Coast reserves, it is difficult to guess what the status of Mexico and the United States would be today. Seemingly overnight, people poured into the American West, desperately digging for fortune, including 25,000 Chinese whose presence would set off great concerns in the West just as the Irish had in the East.

The United States was now bordered by two nations, neither of which was looking for continued hostilities, and the federal borders stretched "from sea to shining sea." But all was not clear on the horizon; years of

bitter division and political distrust would soon erupt on center stage. The young nation, which had faced and survived so many outward pressures, was about to rip itself apart from the inside.

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