

U.S. History I: Pre-Colonial to 1865

U.S. History I: Pre-Colonial to 1865

*FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE AT
JACKSONVILLE*



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PART I

FACULTY RESOURCES

I. Request Access



To preserve academic integrity and prevent students from gaining unauthorized access to quizzes, assessments, exams, etc., faculty will need to request access to these resources. We verify each request manually. Contact oyer@achievingthedream.org, and we'll get you on your way.

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PART II

MODULE 1: PRE-CONTACT:
AMERICA, AFRICA, AND
EUROPE

3. Module Introduction

Module Introduction: Pre-Contact: America, Africa, and Europe

We begin our journey through American history by getting to know the three broad groups of people who provide the foundation of our country's history: Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans. Each group made valuable contributions to our unique American culture. In Module 1, we will learn about the history of each group before they came together in America.

We will begin with an exploration of Native American history and culture before 1492, including politics, society, and religion. We will then move on to the medieval and Renaissance-era Europeans, and will examine the changes in Europe that led to exploration and colonization. Following our trip to Europe, we will journey to West Africa, where we will visit the great kingdoms that dominated this region in the medieval period. Module 1 concludes with an introduction to slavery in the New World.¹

Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course

- Students will understand the social, political, and economic development of the United States.
- Students will integrate U.S. history into global history.¹

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Locate on a map the major American civilizations before the arrival of the Spanish
- Discuss the cultural achievements of these civilizations
- Discuss the differences and similarities between lifestyles, religious practices, and customs among the native peoples¹

Readings and Resources

- Module 1 Learning Unit (see below)

4. Introduction

Introduction



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/fscjushistory1/?p=21>

[“Pre-Colombian Americans”](#) by Kahn Academy is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

Globalization, the ever-increasing interconnectedness of the world, is not a new phenomenon, but it accelerated when western Europeans discovered the riches of the East. During the Crusades (1095-1291), Europeans developed an appetite for spices, silk, porcelain, sugar, and other luxury items from the East, for which

they traded fur, timber, and Slavic people they captured and sold (hence the word slave). But when the Silk Road, the long overland trading route from China to the Mediterranean, became costlier and more dangerous to travel, Europeans searched for a more efficient and inexpensive trade route over water, initiating the development of what we now call the Atlantic World.

In pursuit of commerce in Asia, fifteenth-century traders unexpectedly encountered a “New World” populated by millions and home to sophisticated and numerous peoples. Mistakenly believing they had reached the East Indies, these early explorers called its inhabitants Indians. West Africa, a diverse and culturally rich area, soon entered the stage as other nations exploited its slave trade and brought its peoples to the New World in chains. Although Europeans would come to dominate the New World, they could not have done so without Africans and native peoples.⁽²⁾

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5. The Americans

The Americans

Between nine and fifteen thousand years ago, some scholars believe that a land bridge existed between Asia and North America that we now call Beringia. (Figure 1)

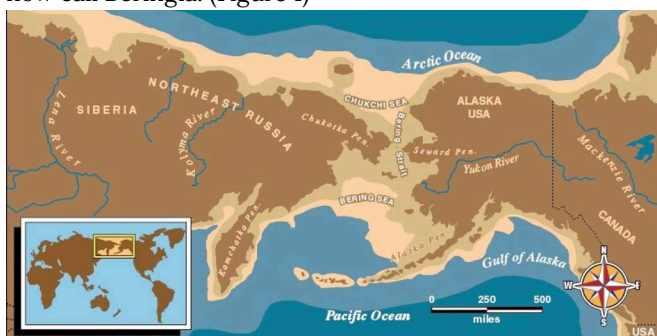


Figure 1-1 – [Beringia Land Bridge](#) by National Park Service is in the [Public Domain](#)

The first inhabitants of what would be named the Americas migrated across this bridge in search of food. When the glaciers melted, water engulfed Beringia, and the Bering Strait was formed. Later settlers came by boat across the narrow strait. (The fact that Asians and American Indians share genetic markers on a Y chromosome lends credibility to this migration theory.) Continually moving southward, the settlers eventually populated both North and South America, creating unique cultures that ranged from the highly complex and urban Aztec civilization in what is now Mexico City to the woodland tribes of eastern North America. Recent research along the west coast of South America suggests that migrant populations may have traveled down this coast by water as well as by land.

Researchers believe that about ten thousand years ago, humans also began the domestication of plants and animals, adding agriculture as a means of sustenance to hunting and gathering techniques. With this agricultural revolution, and the more abundant and reliable food supplies it brought, populations grew and people were able to develop a more settled way of life, building permanent settlements. Nowhere in the Americas was this more obvious than in Mesoamerica.

The First Americans:

The Olmec

Mesoamerica is the geographic area stretching from north of Panama up to the desert of central Mexico. Although marked by great topographic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, this region cradled a number of civilizations with similar characteristics. Mesoamericans were polytheistic; their gods possessed both male and female traits and demanded blood sacrifices of enemies taken in battle or ritual bloodletting. Corn, or maize, domesticated by 5000 BCE, formed the basis of their diet. They developed a mathematical system, built huge edifices, and devised a calendar that accurately predicted eclipses and solstices and that priest-astronomers used to direct the planting and harvesting of crops.

Most important for our knowledge of these peoples, they created the only known written language in the Western Hemisphere; researchers have made much progress in interpreting the inscriptions on their temples and pyramids. Though the area had no overarching political structure, trade over long distances helped diffuse culture. Weapons made of obsidian, jewelry crafted from jade, feathers woven into clothing and ornaments, and cacao beans that were whipped into a chocolate drink formed the basis of

commerce. The mother of Mesoamerican cultures was the Olmec civilization.

Flourishing along the hot Gulf Coast of Mexico from about 1200 to about 400 BCE, the Olmec produced a number of major works of art, architecture, pottery, and sculpture. Most recognizable are their giant head sculptures (Figure 2) and the pyramid in La Venta (Figure 3).



Figure 1-2 – [Olmec Warrior](#) by O.Mustafin, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain, CC0](#)



Figure 3 – [La Venta Pirámide cara norte](#) by Alfonsobouchot, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Olmec built aqueducts to transport water into their cities and irrigate their fields. They grew maize, squash, beans, and tomatoes. They also bred small domesticated dogs which, along with fish, provided their protein. Although no one knows what happened to the Olmec after about 400 BCE, in part because the jungle reclaimed many of their cities, their culture was the base upon which the Maya and the Aztec built. It was the Olmec who worshipped a rain god, a maize god, and the feathered serpent so important in the future pantheons of the Aztecs (who called him Quetzalcoatl) and the Maya (to whom he was Kukulcan). The Olmec also developed a system of trade throughout Mesoamerica, giving rise to an elite class.⁽²⁾

The Maya

After the decline of the Olmec, a city rose in the fertile central highlands of Mesoamerica. One of the largest population centers in pre-Columbian America and home to more than 100,000 people at its height in about 500 CE, Teotihuacan was located about thirty

miles northeast of modern Mexico City. The ethnicity of this settlement's inhabitants is debated; some scholars believe it was a multiethnic city. Large-scale agriculture and the resultant abundance of food allowed time for people to develop special trades and skills other than farming.

Builders constructed over twenty-two hundred apartment compounds for multiple families, as well as more than a hundred temples. Among these were the Pyramid of the Sun (Figure 4) (which is two hundred feet high) and the Pyramid of the Moon (one hundred and fifty feet high). Near the Temple of the Feathered Serpent (Figure 5), graves have been uncovered that suggest humans were sacrificed for religious purposes. The city was also the center for trade, which extended to settlements on Mesoamerica's Gulf Coast.



Figure 4 – [Mayan Pyramid of the Sun](#) by Mike Sharp, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)



Figure 5 – [Temple of the Feathered Serpent](#) by Altevira Vechia, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Maya were one Mesoamerican culture that had strong ties to Teotihuacan. The Maya's architectural and mathematical contributions were significant. Flourishing from roughly 2000 BCE to 900 CE in what is now Mexico, Belize, Honduras, and Guatemala, the Maya perfected the calendar and written language the Olmec had begun. They devised a written mathematical system to record crop yields and the size of the population, and to assist in trade. Surrounded by farms relying on primitive agriculture, they built the city-states of Copan, Tikal, and Chichen Itza (Figure 6) along their major trade routes, as well as temples, statues of gods, pyramids, and astronomical observatories. However, because of poor soil and a drought that lasted nearly two centuries, their civilization declined by about 900 CE and they abandoned their large population centers.



Figure 6 – [El Castillo \(pyramid of Kukulcán\) in Chichén Itzá](#) by Daniel Schwen, Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

The Spanish found little organized resistance among the weakened Maya upon their arrival in the 1520s. However, they did find Mayan history, in the form of glyphs, or pictures representing words, recorded in folding books called codices (the singular is *codex*). In 1562, Bishop Diego de Landa, who feared the converted natives had reverted to their traditional religious practices, collected and burned every codex he could find. Today only a few survive (Figure 7).⁽²⁾



Figure 7 – [A page from the Dresden Codex, one of the few surviving Mayan codices](#), by Akademische Druck, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Aztec

When the Spaniard Hernán Cortés arrived on the coast of Mexico in the sixteenth century, at the site of present-day Veracruz, he soon heard of a great city ruled by an emperor named Moctezuma. This city was tremendously wealthy – filled with gold – and took in tribute from surrounding tribes. The riches and complexity Cortés found when he arrived at that city, known as Tenochtitlán (Figure 8), were far beyond anything he or his men had ever seen.

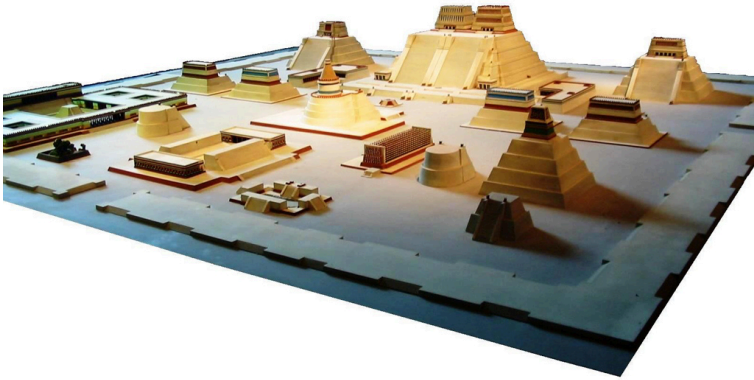


Figure 8 – [Model of the Aztec City of Tenochtitlan at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City](#) by Thelmadatter, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

According to legend, a warlike people called the Aztec (also known as the Mexica) had left a city called Aztlán and traveled south to the site of present-day Mexico City. In 1325, they began construction of Tenochtitlán on an island in Lake Texcoco. By 1519, when Cortés arrived, this settlement contained upwards of 200,000 inhabitants and was certainly the largest city in the Western Hemisphere at that time and probably larger than any European city. One of Cortés’s soldiers, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, recorded his impressions upon first seeing it: “When we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry land we were amazed and said it was like the enchantments... on account of the great towers and cues and buildings rising from the water, and all built of masonry. And 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.”

Unlike the dirty, fetid cities of Europe at the time, Tenochtitlán was well planned, clean, and orderly. The city had neighborhoods for specific occupations, a trash collection system, markets, two aqueducts bringing in fresh water, and public buildings and temples. Unlike the Spanish, Aztecs bathed daily, and wealthy homes might even contain a steam bath. A labor force of slaves from subjugated neighboring tribes had built the fabulous city and the three causeways that connected it to the mainland. To farm, the Aztec constructed barges made of reeds and filled them with fertile soil. Lake water constantly irrigated these *chinampas*, or “floating gardens,” which are still in use and can be seen today in Xochimilco, a district of Mexico City.

Each god in the Aztec pantheon represented and ruled an aspect of the natural world, such as the heavens, farming, rain, fertility, sacrifice, and combat. A ruling class of warrior nobles and priests performed ritual human sacrifice daily to sustain the sun on its long journey across the sky, to appease or feed the gods, and to stimulate agricultural production. The sacrificial ceremony included cutting open the chest of a criminal or captured warrior with an obsidian knife and removing the still-beating heart.

Said Quzatli to the sovereign, “Oh mighty lord, if because I tell you the truth I am to die, nevertheless I am here in your presence and you may do what you wish to me!” He narrated that mounted men would come to this land in a great wooden house [ships] this structure was to lodge many men, serving them as a home; within they would eat and sleep. On the surface of this house they would cook their food, walk and play as if they were on firm land. They were to be white, bearded men, dressed in different colors and on their heads they would wear round coverings.

Ten years before the arrival of the Spanish, Moctezuma received several omens which at the time he could not interpret. A fiery object appeared in the night sky, a spontaneous fire broke out in a religious temple and could not be extinguished with water, a water spout appeared in Lake Texcoco, and a woman could be heard wailing, “O my children we are about to go forever.” Moctezuma

also had dreams and premonitions of impending disaster. These foretellings were recorded after the Aztecs' destruction. They do, however, give us insight into the importance placed upon signs and omens in the pre-Columbian world. ⁽²⁾

The Inca

In South America, the most highly developed and complex society was that of the Inca, whose name means “lord” or “ruler” in the Andean language called Quechua. At its height in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Inca Empire, located on the Pacific coast and straddling the Andes Mountains, extended some twenty-five hundred miles. It stretched from modern-day Colombia in the north to Chile in the south and included cities built at an altitude of 14,000 feet above sea level. Its road system, kept free of debris and repaired by workers stationed at varying intervals, rivaled that of the Romans and efficiently connected the sprawling empire. The Inca, like all other pre-Columbian societies, did not use axle-mounted wheels for transportation. They built stepped roads to ascend and descend the steep slopes of the Andes; these would have been impractical for wheeled vehicles but worked well for pedestrians. These roads enabled the rapid movement of the highly trained Incan army. Also like the Romans, the Inca were effective administrators. Runners called *chasquis* traversed the roads in a continuous relay system, ensuring quick communication over long distances. The Inca had no system of writing, however. They communicated and kept records using a system of colored strings and knots called the *quipu*.

The Inca people worshipped their lord who, as a member of an elite ruling class, had absolute authority over every aspect of life. Much like feudal lords in Europe at the time, the ruling class lived off the labor of the peasants, collecting vast wealth that accompanied them as they went, mummified, into the next life. The Inca farmed corn, beans, squash, quinoa (a grain cultivated for its seeds), and the indigenous potato on terraced land they hacked from the steep

mountains. Peasants received only one-third of their crops for themselves. The Inca ruler required a third, and a third was set aside in a kind of welfare system for those unable to work. Huge storehouses were filled with food for times of need. Each peasant also worked for the Inca ruler a number of days per month on public works projects, a requirement known as the *mita*. For example, peasants constructed rope bridges made of grass to span the mountains above fast-flowing icy rivers. In return, the lord provided laws, protection, and relief in times of famine.

The Inca worshipped the sun god Inti and called gold the “sweat” of the sun. Unlike the Maya and the Aztecs, they rarely practiced human sacrifice and usually offered the gods food, clothing, and coca leaves. In times of dire emergency, however, such as in the aftermath of earthquakes, volcanoes, or crop failure, they resorted to sacrificing prisoners. The ultimate sacrifice was children, who were specially selected and well fed. The Inca believed these children would immediately go to a much better afterlife.

In 1911, the American historian Hiram Bingham uncovered the lost Incan city of Machu Picchu (Figure 9). Located about fifty miles northwest of Cusco, Peru, at an altitude of about 8,000 feet, the city had been built in 1450 and inexplicably abandoned roughly a hundred years later. Scholars believe the city was used for religious ceremonial purposes and housed the priesthood. The architectural beauty of this city is unrivaled. Using only the strength of human labor and no machines, the Inca constructed walls and buildings of polished stones, some weighing over fifty tons, that were fitted together perfectly without the use of mortar. In 1983, UNESCO designated the ruined city a World Heritage Site. ⁽²⁾

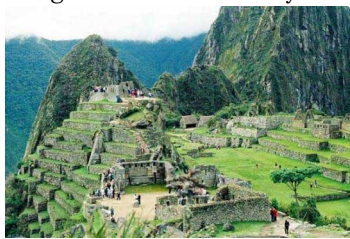


Figure 9 – [Machu Picchu](#) by Diespas, Wikimedia Commons is in

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North American Indians



Figure 10 – [Native American Cultural Areas](#) by Nikater, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

With few exceptions, the North American native cultures were much more widely dispersed than the Mayan, Aztec, and Incan societies, and did not have their population size or organized social structures. Although the cultivation of corn had made its way north, many Indians still practiced hunting and gathering. Horses, first introduced by the Spanish, allowed the Plains Indians to more easily follow and hunt the huge herds of bison. A few societies had evolved

into relatively complex forms, but they were already in decline at the time of Christopher Columbus's arrival.

In the southwestern part of today's United States dwelled several groups we collectively call the Pueblo. The Spanish first gave them this name, which means "town" or "village," because they lived in towns or villages of permanent stone-and-mud buildings with thatched roofs. Like present-day apartment houses, these buildings had multiple stories, each with multiple rooms. The three main groups of the Pueblo people were the Mogollon, Hohokam, and Anasazi.

The Mogollon thrived in the Mimbres Valley (New Mexico) from about 150 BCE to 1450 CE. They developed a distinctive artistic style for painting bowls with finely drawn geometric figures and wildlife, especially birds, in black on a white background. Beginning about 600 CE, the Hohokam built an extensive irrigation system of canals to irrigate the desert and grow fields of corn, beans, and squash. By 1300, their crop yields were supporting the most highly populated settlements in the southwest. The Hohokam decorated pottery with a red-on-buff design and made jewelry of turquoise. In the high desert of New Mexico, the Anasazi, whose name means "ancient enemy" or "ancient ones," carved homes from steep cliffs accessed by ladders or ropes that could be pulled in at night or in case of enemy attack.

Roads extending some 180 miles connected the Pueblos' smaller urban centers to each other and to Chaco Canyon (Figure 11), which by 1050 CE had become the administrative, religious, and cultural center of their civilization. A century later, however, probably because of drought, the Pueblo peoples abandoned their cities. Their present-day descendants include the Hopi and Zuni tribes.



Figure 11 – [Chaco Canyon](#) by National Park Service, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Indian groups who lived in the present-day Ohio River Valley and achieved their cultural apex from the first century CE to 400 CE are collectively known as the Hopewell culture. Their settlements, unlike those of the southwest, were small hamlets. They lived in wattle-and-daub houses (made from woven lattice branches “daubed” with wet mud, clay, or sand and straw) and practiced agriculture, which they supplemented by hunting and fishing. Utilizing waterways, they developed trade routes stretching from Canada to Louisiana, where they exchanged goods with other tribes and negotiated in many different languages. From the coast they received shells; from Canada, copper; and from the Rocky Mountains, obsidian. With these materials they created necklaces, woven mats, and exquisite carvings. What remains of their culture today are huge burial mounds and earthworks. Many of the mounds that were opened by archaeologists contained artworks and other goods that indicate their society was socially stratified.



Figure 12 – [Illustration of Cahokia](#) by Heironymous Rowe, Wikipedia is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Perhaps the largest indigenous cultural and population center in North America was located along the Mississippi River near present-day St. Louis. At its height in about 1100 CE, this five-square-mile city, now called Cahokia (Figure 12), was home to more than ten thousand residents; tens of thousands more lived on farms surrounding the urban center. The city also contained one hundred and twenty earthen mounds or pyramids (Figure 13), each dominating a particular neighborhood and on each of which lived a leader who exercised authority over the surrounding area. The largest mound covered fifteen acres. Cahokia was the hub of political and trading activities along the Mississippi River. After 1300 CE, however, this civilization declined – possibly because the area became unable to support the large population. ⁽²⁾



Figure 13 – [Monk's Mound at the Cahokia Site](#) by Tim Vickers, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Indians of the Eastern Woodland

Encouraged by the wealth found by the Spanish in the settled civilizations to the south, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English, Dutch, and French explorers expected to discover the same in North

America. What they found instead were small, disparate communities, many already ravaged by European diseases brought by the Spanish and transmitted among the natives. Rather than gold and silver, there was an abundance of land, and the timber and fur that land could produce.

The Indians living east of the Mississippi did not construct the large and complex societies of those to the west. Because they lived in small autonomous clans or tribal units, each group adapted to the specific environment in which it lived. These groups were by no means unified, and warfare among tribes was common as they sought to increase their hunting and fishing areas. Still, these tribes shared some common traits. A chief or group of tribal elders made decisions, and although the chief was male, usually the women selected and counseled him. Gender roles were not as fixed as they were in the patriarchal societies of Europe, Mesoamerica, and South America.

Women typically cultivated corn, beans, and squash and harvested nuts and berries, while men hunted, fished, and provided protection. But both took responsibility for raising children, and most major Indian societies in the east were matriarchal. In tribes such as the Iroquois, Lenape, Muscogee, and Cherokee, women had both power and influence. They counseled the chief and passed on the traditions of the tribe. This matriarchy changed dramatically with the coming of the Europeans, who introduced, sometimes forcibly, their own customs and traditions to the natives.

Clashing beliefs about land ownership and use of the environment would be the greatest area of conflict with Europeans. Although tribes often claimed the right to certain hunting grounds – usually identified by some geographical landmark – Indians did not practice, or in general even have the concept of, private ownership of land. A person's possessions included only what he or she had made, such as tools or weapons. The European Christian worldview, on the other hand, viewed land as the source of wealth. According to the Christian Bible, God created humanity in his own image with the command to use and subdue the rest of creation, which

included not only land, but also all animal life. Upon their arrival in North America, Europeans found no fences, no signs designating ownership. Land, and the game that populated it, they believed, were there for the taking. ⁽²⁾

Section Summary

Great civilizations had risen and fallen in the Americas before the arrival of the Europeans. In North America, the complex Pueblo societies including the Mogollon, Hohokam, and Anasazi as well as the city at Cahokia had peaked and were largely memories. The Eastern Woodland peoples were thriving, but they were soon overwhelmed as the number of English, French, and Dutch settlers increased.

Mesoamerica and South America had also witnessed the rise and fall of cultures. The once-mighty Mayan population centers were largely empty. In 1492, however, the Aztecs in Mexico City were at their peak. Subjugating surrounding tribes and requiring tribute of both humans for sacrifice and goods for consumption, the island city of Tenochtitlán was the hub of an ever-widening commercial center and the equal of any large European city until Cortés destroyed it. Further south in Peru, the Inca linked one of the largest empires in history through the use of roads and disciplined armies. Without the use of the wheel, they cut and fashioned stone to build Machu Picchu high in the Andes before abandoning the city for unknown reasons. Thus, depending on what part of the New World they explored, the Europeans encountered peoples that diverged widely in their cultures, traditions, and numbers. ⁽²⁾

6. Europe on the Brink of Change

Europe on the Brink of Change

The fall of the Roman Empire (476 CE) and the beginning of the European Renaissance in the late fourteenth century roughly bookend the period we call the Middle Ages. Without a dominant centralized power or overarching cultural hub, Europe experienced political and military discord during this time. Its inhabitants retreated into walled cities, fearing marauding pillagers including Vikings, Mongols, Arabs, and Magyars. In return for protection, they submitted to powerful lords and their armies of knights. In their brief, hard lives, few people traveled more than ten miles from the place they were born.

The Christian Church remained intact, however, and emerged from the period as a unified and powerful institution. Priests, tucked away in monasteries, kept knowledge alive by collecting and copying religious and secular manuscripts, often adding beautiful drawings or artwork. Social and economic devastation arrived in 1340s, however, when Genoese merchants returning from the Black Sea unwittingly brought with them a rat-borne and highly contagious disease, known as the bubonic plague. In a few short years, it had killed many millions, about one-third of Europe's population. A different strain, spread by airborne germs, also killed many. Together these two are collectively called the Black Death. Entire villages disappeared. A high birth rate, however, coupled with bountiful harvests, meant that the population grew during the next century. By 1450, a newly rejuvenated European society was on the brink of tremendous change. (Figure 14)

tithes (taxes consisting of 10 percent of annual earnings) but also rents on its lands.

A serf's life was difficult. Women often died in childbirth, and perhaps one-third of children died before the age of five. Without sanitation or medicine, many people perished from diseases we consider inconsequential today; few lived to be older than forty-five. Entire families, usually including grandparents, lived in one- or two-room hovels that were cold, dark, and dirty. A fire was kept lit and was always a danger to the thatched roofs, while its constant smoke affected the inhabitants' health and eyesight. Most individuals owned no more than two sets of clothing, consisting of a woolen jacket or tunic and linen undergarments, and bathed only when the waters melted in spring.

In an agrarian society, the seasons dictate the rhythm of life. Everyone in Europe's feudal society had a job to do and worked hard. The father was the unquestioned head of the family. Idleness meant hunger. When the land began to thaw in early spring, peasants started tilling the soil with primitive wooden plows and crude rakes and hoes. Then they planted crops of wheat, rye, barley, and oats, reaping small yields that barely sustained the population. Bad weather, crop disease, or insect infestation could cause an entire village to starve or force the survivors to move to another location.

Early summer saw the first harvesting of hay, which was stored until needed to feed the animals in winter. Men and boys sheared the sheep, now heavy with wool from the cold weather, while women and children washed the wool and spun it into yarn. The coming of fall meant crops needed to be harvested and prepared for winter. Livestock was butchered and the meat smoked or salted to preserve it. With the harvest in and the provisions stored, fall was also the time for celebrating and giving thanks to God. Winter brought the people indoors to weave yarn into fabric, sew clothing, thresh grain, and keep the fires going. Everyone celebrated the birth of Christ in conjunction with the winter solstice. ⁽²⁾

The Church and Society

After the fall of Rome, the Christian Church – united in dogma but unofficially divided into western and eastern branches – was the only organized institution in medieval Europe. In 1054, the eastern branch of Christianity, led by the Patriarch of Constantinople (a title that became roughly equivalent to the western Church's pope), established its center in Constantinople and adopted the Greek language for its services. The western branch, under the pope, remained in Rome, becoming known as the Roman Catholic Church and continuing to use Latin. Following this split, known as the Great Schism (Figure 15), each branch of Christianity maintained a strict organizational hierarchy. The pope in Rome, for example, oversaw a huge bureaucracy led by cardinals, known as “princes of the church,” who were followed by archbishops, bishops, and then priests. During this period, the Roman Church became the most powerful international organization in western Europe.

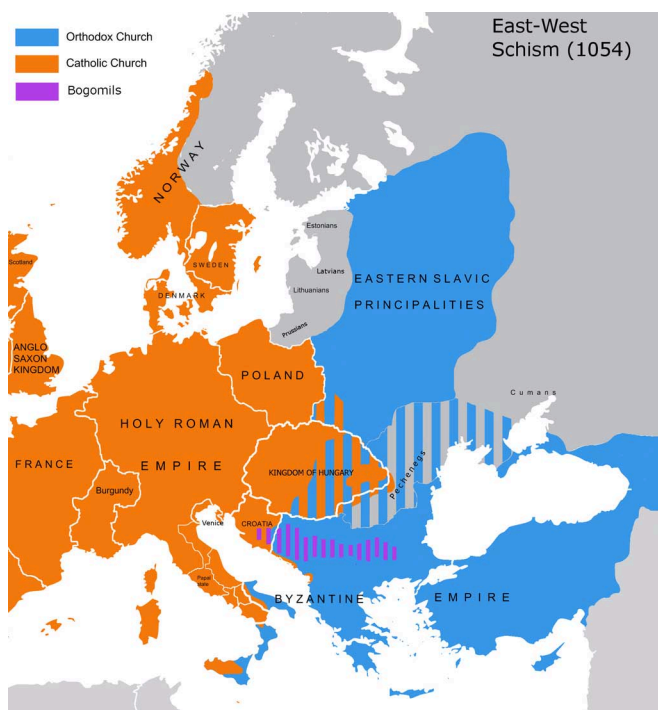


Figure 15 – The Great Schism. A derivative from the [original work](#), “Great Schism 1054 with former borders” by Spiridon Ion Cepleanu, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Just as agrarian life depended on the seasons, village and family life revolved around the Church. The sacraments, or special ceremonies of the Church, marked every stage of life, from birth to maturation, marriage, and burial, and brought people into the church on a regular basis. As Christianity spread throughout Europe, it replaced pagan and animistic views, explaining supernatural events and forces of nature in its own terms. A benevolent God in heaven, creator of the universe and beyond the realm of nature and the known, controlled all events, warring against the force of darkness, known as the Devil or Satan, here on earth. Although ultimately defeated, Satan still had the power to trick humans and cause them to commit evil or sin.

All events had a spiritual connotation. Sickness, for example, might be a sign that a person had sinned, while crop failure could result from the villagers' not saying their prayers. Penitents confessed their sins to the priest, who absolved them and assigned them penance to atone for their acts and save themselves from eternal damnation. Thus the parish priest held enormous power over the lives of his parishioners.

Ultimately, the pope decided all matters of theology, interpreting the will of God to the people, but he also had authority over temporal matters. Because the Church had the ability to excommunicate people, or send a soul to hell forever, even monarchs feared to challenge its power. It was also the seat of all knowledge. Latin, the language of the Church, served as a unifying factor for a continent of isolated regions, each with its own dialect; in the early Middle Ages, nations as we know them today did not yet exist. The mostly illiterate serfs were thus dependent on those literate priests to read and interpret the Bible, the word of God, for them. ⁽²⁾

Christianity Encounters Islam

The year 622 brought a new challenge to Christendom. Near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, a prophet named Muhammad received a revelation that became a cornerstone of the Islamic faith. The Koran, which Muhammad wrote in Arabic, contained his message, affirming monotheism but identifying Christ not as God but as a prophet like Moses, Abraham, David, and Muhammad. Following Muhammad's death in 632, Islam spread by both conversion and military conquest across the Middle East and Asia Minor to India and northern Africa, crossing the Straits of Gibraltar into Spain in the year 711.

The Islamic conquest of Europe continued until 732. Then, at the Battle of Tours (in modern France), Charles Martel, nicknamed the Hammer, led a Christian force in defeating the army of Abdul

Rahman al-Ghafiqi. Muslims, however, retained control of much of Spain, where Córdoba, known for leather and wool production, became a major center of learning and trade. By the eleventh century, a major Christian holy war called the Reconquista, or reconquest, had begun to slowly push the Muslims from Spain. This drive was actually an extension of the earlier military conflict between Christians and Muslims for domination of the Holy Land (the Biblical region of Palestine), known as the Crusades.⁽²⁾

Jerusalem and the Crusades

The city of Jerusalem is a holy site for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It was here King Solomon built the Temple in the tenth century BCE. It was here the Romans crucified Jesus in 33 CE, and from here, Christians maintain, he ascended into heaven, promising to return. From here, Muslims believe, Muhammad traveled to heaven in 621 to receive instructions about prayer. Thus claims on the area go deep, and emotions about it run high, among followers of all three faiths. Evidence exists that the three religions lived in harmony for centuries. In 1095, however, European Christians decided not only to retake the holy city from the Muslim rulers but also to conquer what they called the Holy Lands, an area that extended from modern-day Turkey in the north along the Mediterranean coast to the Sinai Peninsula and that was also held by Muslims. The Crusades had begun.

Religious zeal motivated the knights who participated in the four Crusades. Adventure, the chance to win land and a title, and the Church's promise of wholesale forgiveness of sins also motivated many. The Crusaders, mostly French knights, retook Jerusalem in June 1099 amid horrific slaughter. A French writer who accompanied them recorded this eyewitness account: "On the top of Solomon's Temple, to which they had climbed in fleeing, many were shot to death with arrows and cast down headlong from the

roof. Within this Temple, about ten thousand were beheaded. If you had been there, your feet would have been stained up to the ankles with the blood of the slain. What more shall I tell? Not one of them was allowed to live. They did not spare the women and children.” A Muslim eyewitness also described how the conquerors stripped the temple of its wealth and looted private homes.

In 1187, under the legendary leader Saladin, Muslim forces took back the city. Reaction from Europe was swift as King Richard I of England, the Lionheart, joined others to mount yet another action. The battle for the Holy Lands did not conclude until the Crusaders lost their Mediterranean stronghold at Acre (in present-day Israel) in 1291 and the last of the Christians left the area a few years later.

The Crusades had lasting effects, both positive and negative. On the negative side, the wide-scale persecution of Jews began. Christians classed them with the infidel Muslims and labeled them “the killers of Christ.” In the coming centuries, kings either expelled Jews from their kingdoms or forced them to pay heavy tributes for the privilege of remaining. Muslim-Christian hatred also festered, and intolerance grew.

On the positive side, maritime trade between East and West expanded. As Crusaders experienced the feel of silk, the taste of spices, and the utility of porcelain, desire for these products created new markets for merchants. In particular, the Adriatic port city of Venice prospered enormously from trade with Islamic merchants. Merchants’ ships brought Europeans valuable goods, traveling between the port cities of western Europe and the East from the tenth century on, along routes collectively labeled the Silk Road (Figure 16). From the days of the early adventurer Marco Polo, Venetian sailors had traveled to ports on the Black Sea and established their own colonies along the Mediterranean Coast. However, transporting goods along the old Silk Road was costly, slow, and unprofitable. Muslim middlemen collected taxes as the goods changed hands. Robbers waited to ambush the treasure-laden caravans. A direct water route to the East, cutting out the land portion of the trip, had to be found. As well as seeking a

water passage to the wealthy cities in the East, sailors wanted to find a route to the exotic and wealthy Spice Islands in modern-day Indonesia, whose location was kept secret by Muslim rulers. Longtime rivals of Venice, the merchants of Genoa and Florence also looked west. ⁽²⁾

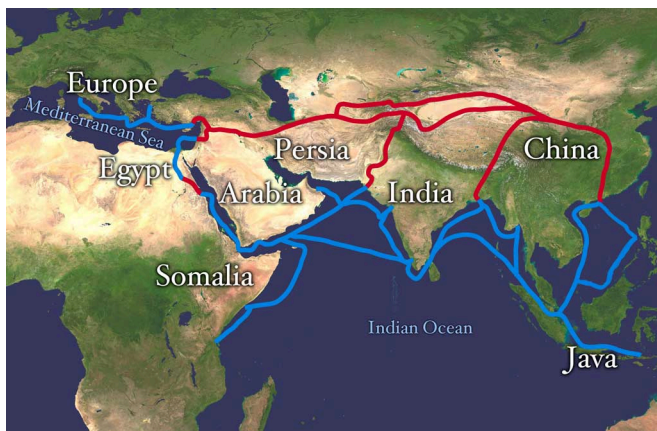


Figure 16 – Extent of Silk Route/Silk Road. Red is the land route and the blue is the sea/water route. A derivative from the [original work](#), “Silk Route” by Splette, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Iberian Peninsula

Although Norse explorers such as Leif Ericson, the son of Eric the Red who first settled Greenland, had reached and established a colony in northern Canada roughly five hundred years prior to Christopher Columbus’s voyage (Figure 17), it was explorers sailing for Portugal and Spain who traversed the Atlantic throughout the fifteenth century and ushered in an unprecedented age of exploration and permanent contact with North America.



Figure 17 – Viking colonization site at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, Newfoundland, Canada. [Viking colonization site](#) by Carlb, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

Located on the extreme western edge of Europe, Portugal, with its port city of Lisbon, soon became the center for merchants desiring to undercut the Venetians' hold on trade. With a population of about one million and supported by its ruler Prince Henry, whom historians call “the Navigator,” this independent kingdom fostered exploration of and trade with western Africa. Skilled shipbuilders and navigators who took advantage of maps from all over Europe, Portuguese sailors used triangular sails and built lighter vessels called caravels that could sail down the African coast.

Just to the east of Portugal, King Ferdinand of Aragon married Queen Isabella of Castile in 1469 (Figure 18), uniting two of the most powerful independent kingdoms on the Iberian peninsula and laying the foundation for the modern nation of Spain. Isabella, motivated by strong religious zeal, was instrumental in beginning the Inquisition in 1480, a brutal campaign to root out Jews and Muslims who had seemingly converted to Christianity but secretly continued to practice their faith, as well as other heretics. This powerful couple ruled for the next twenty-five years, centralizing authority and funding exploration and trade with the East. One of their daughters, Catherine of Aragon, became the first wife of King Henry VIII of England. ⁽²⁾



Figure 18 – [Wedding portrait of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, 1469](#), by Agustinas de Madrigal, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Motives for European Exploration

Historians generally recognize three motives for European exploration – God, glory, and gold. Particularly in the strongly Catholic nations of Spain and Portugal, religious zeal motivated the rulers to make converts and retake land from the Muslims. Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal described his “great desire to make increase in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and to bring him all the souls that should be saved.”

Sailors’ tales about fabulous monsters and fantasy literature about exotic worlds filled with gold, silver, and jewels captured the minds of men who desired to explore these lands and return with untold wealth and the glory of adventure and discovery. They sparked the imagination of merchants like Marco Polo, who made the long and dangerous trip to the realm of the great Mongol ruler Kublai Khan in 1271. The story of his trip, printed in a book entitled *Travels*, inspired Columbus, who had a copy in his possession during his voyage more

than two hundred years later. Passages such as the following, which describes China's imperial palace, are typical of the Travels:

"You must know that it is the greatest Palace that ever was ...The roof is very lofty, and the walls of the Palace are all covered with gold and silver. They are also adorned with representations of dragons [sculptured and gilt], beasts and birds, knights and idols, and sundry other subjects. And on the ceiling too you see nothing but gold and silver and painting. [On each of the four sides there is a great marble staircase leading to the top of the marble wall, and forming the approach to the Palace.]

The hall of the Palace is so large that it could easily dine 6,000 people; and it is quite a marvel to see how many rooms there are besides. The building is altogether so vast, so rich, and so beautiful, that no man on earth could design anything superior to it. The outside of the roof also is all colored with vermilion and yellow and green and blue and other hues, which are fixed with a varnish so fine and exquisite that they shine like crystal, and lend a resplendent lustre to the Palace as seen for a great way round. This roof is made too with such strength and solidity that it is fit to last forever."

Why might a travel account like this one have influenced an explorer like Columbus? What does this tell us about European explorers' motivations and goals?

The year 1492 witnessed some of the most significant events of Ferdinand and Isabella's reign. The couple oversaw the final expulsion of North African Muslims (Moors) from the Kingdom of Granada, bringing the nearly eight-hundred-year Reconquista to an end. In this same year, they also ordered all unconverted Jews to leave Spain.

Also in 1492, after six years of lobbying, a Genoese sailor named Christopher Columbus persuaded the monarchs to fund his expedition to the Far East. Columbus had already pitched his plan to the rulers of Genoa and Venice without success, so the Spanish monarchy was his last hope. Christian zeal was the prime motivating factor for Isabella, as she imagined her faith spreading to the East.

Ferdinand, the more practical of the two, hoped to acquire wealth from trade.

Most educated individuals at the time knew the earth was round, so Columbus's plan to reach the East by sailing west was plausible. Though the calculations of Earth's circumference made by the Greek geographer Eratosthenes in the second century BCE were known (and, as we now know, nearly accurate), most scholars did not believe they were dependable. Thus Columbus would have no way of knowing when he had traveled far enough around the Earth to reach his goal – and in fact, Columbus greatly underestimated the Earth's circumference.

In August 1492, Columbus set sail with his three small caravels. After a voyage of about three thousand miles lasting six weeks, he landed on an island in the Bahamas named Guanahani by the native Lucayans. He promptly christened it San Salvador, the name it bears today (Figure 19).⁽²⁾

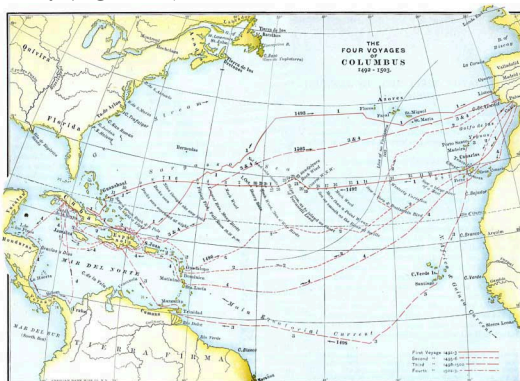


Figure 19 – [The Four Voyages of Columbus 1492-1503](#) by Project Gutenberg, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Section Summary

One effect of the Crusades was that a larger portion of western Europe became familiar with the goods of the East. A lively trade

subsequently developed along a variety of routes known collectively as the Silk Road to supply the demand for these products. Brigands and greedy middlemen made the trip along this route expensive and dangerous. By 1492, Europe – recovered from the Black Death and in search of new products and new wealth – was anxious to improve trade and communications with the rest of the world. Venice and Genoa led the way in trading with the East. The lure of profit pushed explorers to seek new trade routes to the Spice Islands and eliminate Muslim middlemen.

Portugal, under the leadership of Prince Henry the Navigator, attempted to send ships around the continent of Africa. Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile hired Columbus to find a route to the East by going west. As strong supporters of the Catholic Church, they sought to bring Christianity to the East and any newly found lands, as well as hoping to find sources of wealth. ⁽²⁾

7. West Africa and the Role of Slavery

West Africa and the Role of Slavery

It is difficult to generalize about West Africa, which was linked to the rise and diffusion of Islam. This geographical unit, central to the rise of the Atlantic World, stretches from modern-day Mauritania to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and encompasses lush rainforests along the equator, savannas on either side of the forest, and much drier land to the north. Until about 600 CE, most Africans were hunter-gatherers. Where water was too scarce for farming, herders maintained sheep, goats, cattle, or camels. In the more heavily wooded area near the equator, farmers raised yams, palm products, or plantains. The savanna areas yielded rice, millet, and sorghum. Sub-Saharan Africans had little experience in maritime matters. Most of the population lived away from the coast, which is connected to the interior by five main rivers – the Senegal, Gambia, Niger, Volta, and Congo.

Although there were large trading centers along these rivers, most West Africans lived in small villages and identified with their extended family or their clan. Wives, children, and dependents (including slaves) were a sign of wealth among men, and polygyny, the practice of having more than one wife at a time, was widespread. In time of need, relatives, however far away, were counted upon to assist in supplying food or security. Because of the clannish nature of African society, “we” was associated with the village and family members, while “they” included everyone else. Hundreds of separate dialects emerged; in modern Nigeria, nearly five hundred are still spoken.

The Major African Empires

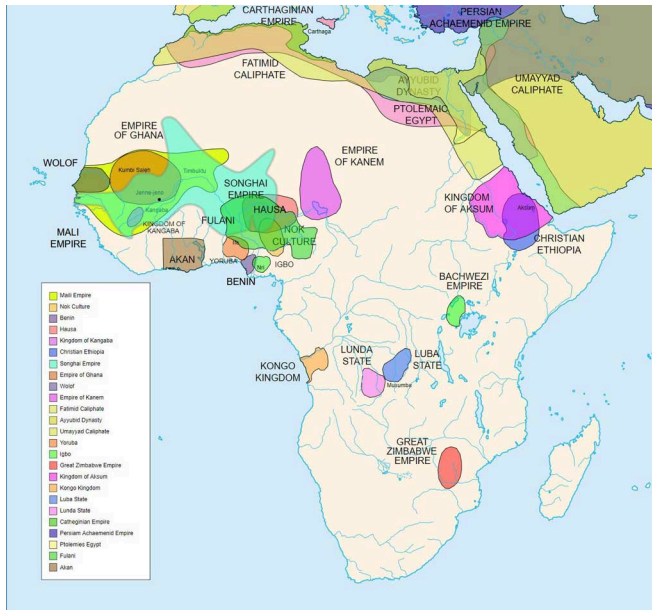


Figure 20 – [“African civilizations map pre-colonial”](#) by Jeff Israel, Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#) Africa History Atlas Diachronic map showing pre-colonial cultures of Africa (spanning roughly 500 BCE to 1500 CE) This map is “an artistic interpretation” using multiple and disparate sources.

Following the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 CE, Islam continued to spread quickly across North Africa, bringing not only a unifying faith but a political and legal structure as well. As lands fell under the control of Muslim armies, they instituted Islamic rule and legal structures as local chieftains converted, usually under penalty of death. Only those who had converted to Islam could rule or be engaged in trade. The first major empire to emerge in West Africa was the Ghana Empire. By 750, the Soninke farmers of the sub-Saharan had become wealthy by taxing the trade that passed through their area. For instance, the Niger River basin supplied gold

to the Berber and Arab traders from west of the Nile Valley, who brought cloth, weapons, and manufactured goods into the interior. Huge Saharan salt mines supplied the life-sustaining mineral to the Mediterranean coast of Africa and inland areas. By 900, the monotheistic Muslims controlled most of this trade and had converted many of the African ruling elite. The majority of the population, however, maintained their tribal animistic practices, which gave living attributes to nonliving objects such as mountains, rivers, and wind. Because Ghana's king controlled the gold supply, he was able to maintain price controls and afford a strong military. Soon, however, a new kingdom emerged.

By 1200 CE, under the leadership of Sundiata Keita, Mali had replaced Ghana as the leading state in West Africa. After Sundiata's rule, the court converted to Islam, and Muslim scribes played a large part in administration and government. (Figure 21) Miners then discovered huge new deposits of gold east of the Niger River. By the fourteenth century, the empire was so wealthy that while on a *hajj*, or pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, Mali's ruler Mansu Musa gave away enough gold to create serious price inflation in the cities along his route. Timbuktu, the capital city, became a leading Islamic center for education, commerce and the slave trade. Meanwhile, in the east, the city of Gao became increasingly strong under the leadership of Sonni Ali and soon eclipsed Mali's power. Timbuktu sought Ali's assistance in repelling the Tuaregs from the north. By 1500, however, the Tuareg empire of Songhay had eclipsed Mali, where weak and ineffective leadership prevailed. ⁽²⁾



Figure 21 – [The Great Mosque of Djenné](#) by Andy Gilham, Wikipedia is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)The Great Mosque of Djenné, in present-day Mali; the original structure dates back to the 13th century, although the current structure depicted in this photograph was built in the early 20th century.

The Role of Slavery

The institution of slavery is not a recent phenomenon. Most civilizations have practiced some form of human bondage and servitude, and African empires were no different. Famine or fear of stronger enemies might force one tribe to ask another for help and give themselves in a type of bondage in exchange. Similar to the European serf system, those seeking protection, or relief from starvation, would become the servants of those who provided relief. Debt might also be worked off through a form of servitude. Typically, these servants became a part of the extended tribal family. There is some evidence of chattel slavery, in which people are treated as personal property to be bought and sold, in the Nile Valley. It appears there was a slave-trade route through the Sahara

that brought sub-Saharan Africans to Rome, which had slaves from all over the world.

Arab slave trading, which exchanged slaves for goods from the Mediterranean, existed long before Islam's spread across North Africa. Muslims later expanded this trade and enslaved not only Africans but also Europeans, especially from Spain, Sicily, and Italy. Male captives were forced to build coastal fortifications and serve as galley slaves. Women were added to the harem.

The major European slave trade began with Portugal's exploration of the west coast of Africa in search of a trade route to the East. By 1444, slaves were being brought from Africa to work on the sugar plantations of the Madeira Islands, off the coast of modern Morocco. The slave trade then expanded greatly as European colonies in the New World demanded an ever-increasing number of workers for the extensive plantations growing tobacco, sugar, and eventually rice and cotton.

In the New World, the institution of slavery assumed a new aspect when the mercantilist system demanded a permanent, identifiable, and plentiful labor supply. African slaves were both easily identified (by their skin color) and plentiful, because of the thriving slave trade. This led to a race-based slavery system in the New World unlike any bondage system that had come before. Initially, the Spanish tried to force Indians to farm their crops. Most Spanish and Portuguese settlers coming to the New World were gentlemen and did not perform physical labor. They came to "serve God, but also to get rich," as noted by Bernal Díaz del Castillo. However, enslaved natives tended to sicken or die from disease or from the overwork and cruel treatment they were subjected to, and so the indigenous peoples proved not to be a dependable source of labor. Although he later repented of his ideas, the great defender of the Indians, Bartolomé de Las Casas, seeing the near extinction of the native population, suggested the Spanish send black (and white) laborers to the Indies. These workers proved hardier, and within fifty years, a change took place: The profitability of the African slave trade, coupled with the seemingly limitless number of potential slaves and the Catholic

Church's denunciation of the enslavement of Christians, led race to become a dominant factor in the institution of slavery.

In the English colonies along the Atlantic coast, indentured servants initially filled the need for labor in the North, where family farms were the norm. In the South, however, labor-intensive crops such as tobacco, rice, and indigo prevailed, and eventually the supply of indentured servants was insufficient to meet the demand. These workers served only for periods of three to seven years before being freed; a more permanent labor supply was needed. Thus, whereas in Africa permanent, inherited slavery was unknown, and children of those bound in slavery to the tribe usually were free and intermarried with their captors, this changed in the Americas; slavery became permanent, and children born to slaves became slaves. This development, along with slavery's identification with race, forever changed the institution and shaped its unique character in the New World. ⁽²⁾

The Beginnings of Racial Slavery

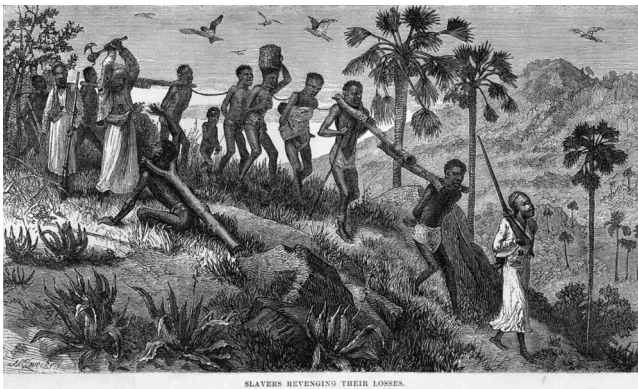


Figure 22 – [Slavers revenging their losses](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Slavery has a long history. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle

posited that some peoples were *homunculi* , or humanlike but not really people – for instance, if they did not speak Greek. Both the Bible and the Koran sanction slavery. Vikings who raided from Ireland to Russia brought back slaves of all nationalities. During the Middle Ages, traders from the interior of Africa brought slaves along well-established routes to sell them along the Mediterranean coast. Initially, slavers also brought European slaves to the Caribbean. Many of these were orphaned or homeless children captured in the cities of Ireland. The question is, when did slavery become based on race? This appears to have developed in the New World, with the introduction of gruelingly labor-intensive crops such as sugar and coffee. Unable to fill their growing need from the ranks of prisoners or indentured servants, the European colonists turned to African laborers. The Portuguese, although seeking a trade route to India, also set up forts along the West African coast for the purpose of exporting slaves to Europe. (Figure 23) Historians believe that by the year 1500, 10 percent of the population of Lisbon and Seville consisted of black slaves. Because of the influence of the Catholic Church, which frowned on the enslavement of Christians, European slave traders expanded their reach down the coast of Africa.



Figure 23 – [First slave market in Europe. Lagos, Portugal](#) by Lacobriga, Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

When Europeans settled Brazil, the Caribbean, and North America, they thus established a system of racially based slavery. Here, the need for a massive labor force was greater than in western Europe. The land was ripe for growing sugar, coffee, rice, and ultimately cotton. To fulfill the ever-growing demand for these crops, large plantations were created. The success of these plantations depended upon the availability of a permanent, plentiful, identifiable, and skilled labor supply. As Africans were already familiar with animal husbandry as well as farming, had an identifying skin color, and could be readily supplied by the existing African slave trade, they proved the answer to this need. This process set the stage for the expansion of New World slavery into North America. ⁽²⁾

Section Summary

Before 1492, Africa, like the Americas, had experienced the rise and fall of many cultures, but the continent did not develop a centralized authority structure. African peoples practiced various forms of slavery, all of which differed significantly from the racial slavery that ultimately developed in the New World. After the arrival of Islam and before the Portuguese came to the coast of West Africa in 1444, Muslims controlled the slave trade out of Africa, which expanded as European powers began to colonize the New World. Driven by a demand for labor, slavery in the Americas developed a new form: It was based on race, and the status of slave was both permanent and inherited. ⁽²⁾

8. Cherokee Creation Myth

Cherokee Creation Myth

In each module of this course, you will find a sound-scape; an audio presentation that ties in with the module content. In Module 1, our sound-scape is a myth from the Cherokee Indians. Native American tribes, as is true with most early civilizations, developed stories to explain natural phenomena, including how the world was made¹.

Use the Audio Player to listen to the sound-scape.



An audio element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can listen to it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/fscjushistory1/?p=25>

“Pre-Contact America, Africa, and Europe sound-scape” by Florida State College at Jacksonville is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#) / A derivative from the [original work](#)

How the World Was Made

The earth is a great floating island in a sea of water. At each of the four corners there is a cord hanging down from the sky. The sky is of solid rock. When the world grows old and worn out, the cords will break, and then the earth will sink down into the ocean. Everything will be water again. All the people will be dead. The Indians are much afraid of this.

In the long time ago, when everything was all water, all the animals lived up above in Galun'lati, beyond the stone arch that made the sky. But it was very much crowded. All the animals wanted more room. The animals began to wonder what was below the water and at last Beaver's grandchild, little Water Beetle, offered to go and find out. Water Beetle darted in every direction over the surface of the water, but it could find no place to rest. There was no land at all. Then Water Beetle dived to the bottom of the water and brought up some soft mud. This began to grow and to spread out on every side until it became the island which we call the earth. Afterwards this earth was fastened to the sky with four cords, but no one remembers who did this.

At first the earth was flat and soft and wet. The animals were anxious to get down, and they sent out different birds to see if it was yet dry, but there was no place to alight; so the birds came back to Galun'lati. Then at last it seemed to be time again, so they sent out Buzzard; they told him to go and make ready for them. This was the Great Buzzard, the father of all the buzzards we see now. He flew all over the earth, low down near the ground, and it was still soft. When he reached the Cherokee country, he was very tired; his wings began to flap and strike the ground. Wherever they struck the earth there was a valley; whenever the wings turned upwards again, there was a mountain. When the animals above saw this, they were afraid that the whole world would be mountains, so they called him back, but the Cherokee country remains full of mountains to this day. [This was the original home, in North Carolina.

When the earth was dry and the animals came down, it was still dark. Therefore they got the sun and set it in a track to go every day across the island from east to west, just overhead. It was too hot this way. Red Crawfish had his shell scorched a bright red, so that his meat was spoiled. Therefore the Cherokees do not eat it.

Then the medicine men raised the sun a handsbreadth in the air, but it was still too hot. They raised it another time; and then another time; at last they had raised it seven handsbreadths so that it was just under the sky arch. Then it was right and they left it so. That

is why the medicine men called the high place “the seventh height.” Every day the sun goes along under this arch on the under side; it returns at night on the upper side of the arch to its starting place.

There is another world under this earth. It is like this one in every way. The animals, the plants, and the people are the same, but the seasons are different. The streams that come down from the mountains are the trails by which we reach this underworld. The springs at their head are the doorways by which we enter it. But in order to enter the other world, one must fast and then go to the water, and have one of the underground people for a guide. We know that the seasons in the underground world are different, because the water in the spring is always warmer in winter than the air in this world; and in summer the water is cooler.

We do not know who made the first plants and animals. But when they were first made, they were told to watch and keep awake for seven nights. This is the way young men do now when they fast and pray to their medicine. They tried to do this. The first night, nearly all the animals stayed awake. The next night several of them dropped asleep. The third night still more went to sleep. At last, on the seventh night, only the owl, the panther, and one or two more were still awake. Therefore, to these were given the power to see in the dark, to go about as if it were day, and to kill and eat the birds and animals which must sleep during the night.

Even some of the trees went to sleep. Only the cedar, the pine, the spruce, the holly, and the laurel were awake all seven nights. Therefore they are always green. They are also sacred trees. But to the other trees it was said, “Because you did not stay awake, therefore you shall lose your hair every winter.”

After the plants and the animals, men began to come to the earth. At first there was only one man and one woman. He hit her with a fish. In seven days a little child came down to the earth. So people came to the earth. They came so rapidly that for a time it seemed as though the earth could not hold them all.

[“Myths and Legends of the Great Plains”](#) by Katharine B. Judson, [Project Gutenberg](#) is in the [Public Domain](#)

PART III

MODULE 2: COLONIAL PERIOD

9. Module Introduction

Colonial Period

Module Introduction

Module 2 explores the impact of exploration and colonization on the Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans. It also examines the economic, religious, and social developments that led Europeans to colonize new lands; the differences between Spanish, French, and English colonization; and the challenges that each European power faced in their efforts to establish American empires.

As you read this module, look for the disconnect between European countries' motives for colonization and the motives of the colonists themselves. This will be very important as we build up to the American Revolution. Also, think about how the major European powers might have conducted colonization differently in order to avoid conflict with the Native Americans as well as keep their colonists from rebelling (this especially applies to Britain).

Module 2 goes on to explore England's efforts to create an empire based on mercantilist principles and the conflicts that these efforts to assert control created between the English government and the colonists. It also examines changes that took place in the colonies during the 18th century, including population growth, economic transformation, the Enlightenment, and the Great Awakening, and how these changes contributed to the development of a clearly American identity among the colonists.

As you read this module, think about how it relates to the current or recent uprisings, such as the Arab Spring, the Syrian Civil War, and the civil war in Ukraine. Do you see similar causes for

revolutions and civil wars, regardless of time period or geographic location? ¹

Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Students will be able to articulate an understanding of the individual in society.
- Students will be able to think critically about institutions, cultures, and behaviors in their local and/or national environment.
- Students will understand the social, political, and economic development of the United States.
- Students will integrate U.S. history into global history. ¹

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the motivations of the English, Spanish, and French to explore and colonize the New World.
- Compare and contrast the experiences of the English, Spanish, and French in their efforts to establish American empires.
- Discuss the reasons why many British came to the colonies. ¹

Readings and Resources

- Module 2 Learning Unit

10. Spanish America

Spanish America

Click [here](#) to watch the video on the motivations for English colonization.

[“Motivations for English Colonization”](#) by Kahn Academy is licensed under [CC BY-NC 3.0](#)

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 Leon 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.

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 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).



Figure 1 — Spanish Colonization of the Americas; Spanish territory appears in red. A derivative from the [original work](#), “Spanish colonization of the Americas” by Kjetil Ree, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.

Further west, Juan de Oñate led 400 settlers, soldiers, and missionaries from Mexico into New Mexico in 1598. 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 of every surviving male over 15 and he enslaved the remaining women and children.

Santa Fe, the first permanent European settlement in the Southwest, was established in 1610. Few Spaniards relocated to the southwest due to 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 3,000 colonists called Spanish New Mexico home. There, they traded with and exploited the local Puebloan peoples. The region's Puebloan population had plummeted from as many as 60,000 in 1600 to about 17,000 in 1680.

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 established dozens of missions along the Rio Grande, in New Mexico, and in California. ⁽³⁾

Spain's Rivals Emerge

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 nombre 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.”

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 Saint Lawrence River at first glance 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).

The first successful permanent French colony, Quebec, received funding from a private fur trading company. 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 may have compromised their access to skilled trappers, and therefore wealth. Few Frenchmen traveled to the New World to settle permanently. In fact, few traveled at all. The French crown, eager to maintain its population advantage over its European rivals, actively discouraged migration and encouraged rumors that New France was a frozen deathtrap. Many persecuted French Protestants (Huguenots) sought to emigrate after France criminalized Protestantism in 1685, but all non-Catholics were forbidden in New France.

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. 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, for instance, were decimated by the ravages of

European disease, and entanglements in French and Dutch conflicts proved disastrous. Despite this, some native peoples maintained distant alliances with the French.

Pressure from the powerful Iroquois in the east pushed many Algonquian-speaking peoples toward French territory in the mid-seventeenth century and together they crafted what historians have called a “middle ground,” where Europeans and natives crafted 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 and natives engaged the impersonal European market and submitted — 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.⁽³⁾

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. Radical Protestants, Catholics, and Jews flocked to the Netherlands. The English Pilgrims, for instance, fled first to Holland 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 even Dutch liberties 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.



Figure 2 — [New Amsterdam \(New York City\) in 1671](#), by Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 Netherlands, an essential part of the Netherlands' 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 from which 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 Netherlands that conformed to the ideas of Hugo Grotius, a legal philosopher who believed 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. Despite the honorable intentions, it is very likely that the Munsee and the Dutch understood their 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 Netherlands’s central economic activity. Dutch traders carried wampum along pre-existing 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 were 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.

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 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. 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 11 company-owned slaves the same year that Minuit purchased Manhattan. Slaves were tasked with building New Amsterdam (modern-day New York City). 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 500 African slaves in the colony. By 1660 New Amsterdam had the largest urban slave population on the continent.

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 Dutch, who so proudly touted their liberties, grappled with the reality of African slavery. European colonists, for instance, debated slaves' rights and questioned whether slaves should be baptized, taught skilled trades, or later manumitted. ⁽³⁾

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 any other colony in the Atlantic World. Gold mines emerged in greater number throughout the eighteenth century, but still never rivaled the profitability of sugar or slave-trading.

Jesuit missionaries succeeded in bringing 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.

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. ⁽³⁾

II. English Colonization

English Colonization

Spain had a one-hundred year head start on New World colonization and a jealous England eyed the enormous wealth that Spain gleaned from the new World. The Protestant Reformation had shaken England but Elizabeth I assumed the English crown in 1558 and oversaw the expansion of trade and exploration — and the literary achievements of Shakespeare and Marlowe — during England's so-called “golden age.” English mercantilism, a state-assisted manufacturing and trading system, created and maintained markets, ensured 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. The skyrocketing cost of land coincided with plummeting farming income. Rents and prices rose but wages stagnated. Moreover, the so-called “enclosure” movement — 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.

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 English colonization supporters always touted more than economic gains and mere national self-interest. They claimed to be doing God's work.

Many cited spiritual concerns and argued 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. Moreover, promoters promised that the conversion of New World Indians would satisfy God and glorify England's "Virgin Queen," Elizabeth I, who was verging on a near-divine image among the English. 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, may 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.

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 the 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." 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. 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 upon 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. 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 upon its dominance over North America.



Figure 3 — [“Roanoke map 1584”](#) by John White, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

1585 map of the east coast of North America from the Chesapeake Bay to Cape Lookout by John White.

English colonization would look very different from Spanish or French colonization, as was indicated by early experiences with the

Irish. England had long been trying to conquer Catholic Ireland. The English used a model of forcible segregation with the Irish that would mirror their future relationships with Native Americans. 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.

English colonization, however, began haltingly. Sir Humphrey Gilbert labored throughout the late-sixteenth century to establish a colony in New Foundland 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 (Figure 3). 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," the name of a nearby island and Indian people, carved into a tree or a post in the abandoned colony. Historians presume the colonists, short of food, may have fled for the nearby island and 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 Cortes 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.⁽³⁾

Jamestown

In April 1607, Englishmen aboard three ships — the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *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 upon 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 uninhabited but still located close enough to many Indian villages and their potentially lucrative trade networks. But the location was a disaster. Indians ignored the peninsula because of its terrible soil and its brackish tidal water that 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 10,000 Algonquian-speaking Indians in the Chesapeake. They burned vast acreage to clear brush and create sprawling artificial park-like grasslands so that 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 achieved a remarkable number of calories cheaply and efficiently.



Figure 4 — [Jamestown, 1607](#) by David H. Montgomery, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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. The peninsula’s location was poisonous and supplies from

England were sporadic or spoiled. As John Smith later complained, they “Would rather starve than work.” And so they did. Disease and starvation ravaged the colonists. 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 their manufactured goods. The Powhatan placed a high value on metal axe-heads, kettles, tools, and guns and eagerly traded furs and other abundant goods for them. With 10,000 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.

Despite reinforcements, the English continued to die. Four hundred settlers arrived in 1609 and 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 do those things which seem incredible, as to dig up dead corpses out of graves and to eat them.” Archaeological excavations in 2012 exhumed the

bones of a fourteen-year-old girl that exhibited the telltale signs of cannibalism. All but 60 settlers would die by the summer of 1610.

Little improved over the next several years. By 1616, 80 percent of all English immigrants that arrived in Jamestown had perished. England's first American colony was a catastrophe. The colony was reorganized and in 1614 the marriage of Pocahontas (Figure 5) 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 they still depended upon 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. “Tobacco created a gold rush society in Virginia,” wrote one historian. Within fifteen years American colonists were exporting over 500,000 pounds of tobacco per year. Within forty, they were exporting fifteen million.

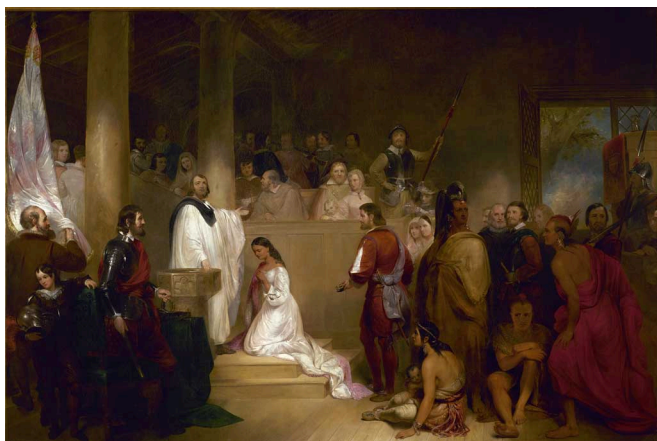


Figure 5 – [“Baptism of Pocahontas”](#) by John Gadsby Chapman, Wikimedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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. But even the rough terms of servitude were no match for the promise of land and potential profits that beckoned ambitious and dispossessed English farmers alike. 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 exponentially 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 50 acres of land and any immigrant whose passage they paid would entitle them to 50 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 20 Africans to the Virginia colonists (Figure 6). Southern slavery was born.

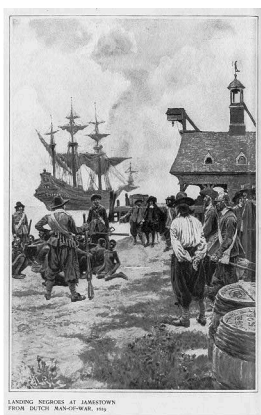


Figure 6 – [Illustration titled “Landing Negroes at Jamestown from](#)

[Dutch man-of-war, 1619](#)” by H. Pyle, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 347 colonists, or one-fourth of all the colonists in Virginia (Figure 7). The colonists retaliated and revisited the massacres upon 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.” War and disease destroyed the remnants of the Chesapeake Indians and tilted the balance of power decisively toward the English colonizers, whose foothold in the New World would cease to be as tenuous and challenged.

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, trans-Atlantic 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.



Figure 7 – “[1622 Jamestown massacre](#)” by Matthaeus Merian, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

A 1628 woodcut by Matthaeus Merian published along with Theodore de Bry’s earlier engravings in 1628 book on the New World. The engraving shows the March 22, 1622 massacre when Powhatan Indians attacked Jamestown and outlying Virginia settlements. Merian relied on de Bry’s earlier depictions of the Indians, but the image is largely considered conjecture.

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.” 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.” 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 blacks 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.

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. By 1650 over 15,000 colonists called Virginia home, and the colony began to turn a profit for the Crown.⁽³⁾

New England

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 mankind was redeemed by God's Grace alone, and that the fate of an individual's immortal soul was predestined. The happy minority 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 (they argued) corrupt priesthood obscured God's message. They believed that reading the Bible promised 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 20,000 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 (Figure 8) insisted they were not separating from, or abandoning, England, but were rather forming a godly community in America, that would be a “Shining City on a Hill” and an example for reformers back home. 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.

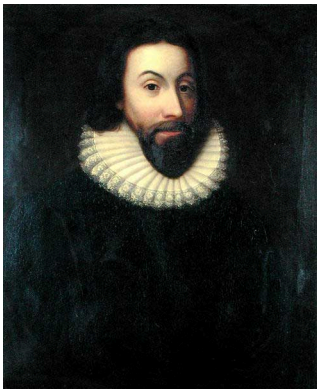


Figure 8 — [John Winthrop](#) by Charles Osgood, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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. The majority of 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 comprised 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, then, New England society was much less stratified than any of Britain's other seventeenth-century colonies.

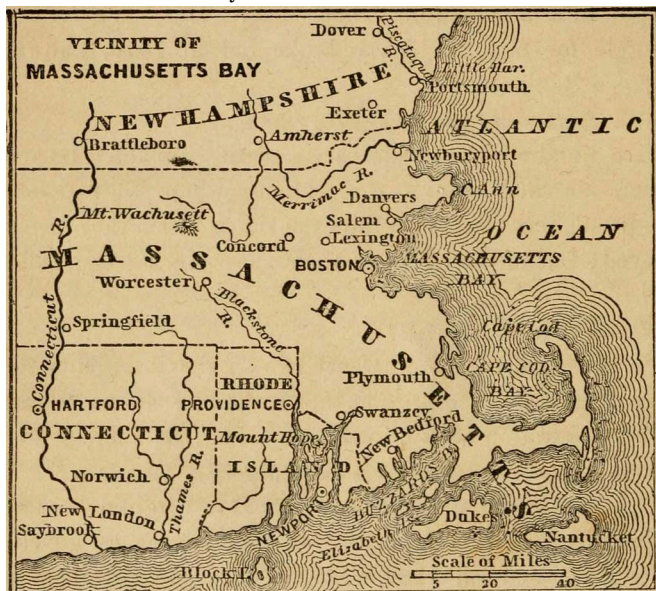


Figure 9 – [Colonial New England Map](#) from AN INTRODUCTORY SCHOOL HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES by J. Anderson, Internet Archive Book Images is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 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.

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, which averaged 36 square miles. 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 and corrected before coercion.

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!" 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 Jeremiads could not stop the effects of the prosperity that the early Puritans achieved. The population spread and grew more diverse as New England prospered. 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 Braintree: people flock thither." Previously forbidden holidays like Christmas were celebrated only in Church. Puritan divine Cotton Mather discovered on the Christmas of 1711, "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."

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." ⁽³⁾

12. Slavery and the Making of Race

Slavery and the Making of Race

Arriving in Charles Town, Carolina in 1706, Reverend Francis Le Jau was horrified almost immediately. 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.

Still, Le Jau's stiffest complaints were reserved for his own countrymen, the English. White servants lazed about, "good for nothing at all." Elites were no better, unwilling to concede "that Negroes and Indians are otherwise than Beasts." Although the minister thought otherwise and baptized several hundred slaves after teaching them to read, his angst was revealing.

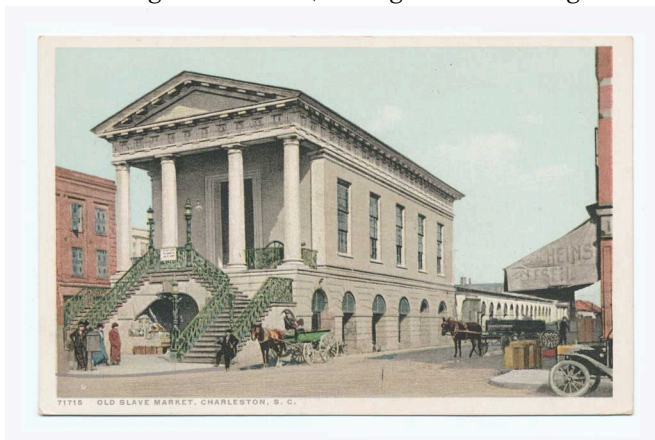


Figure 10 — [Old Slave Market, Charleston, S.C.](#) by Detroit Publishing Company, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The 1660s marked a turning point for black men and women in southern colonies like Virginia. New laws created the expectation that African-descended peoples would remain enslaved for life. The permanent deprivation of freedom facilitated the maintenance of strict racial barriers. Skin color became more than superficial difference; it became the marker of a transcendent, all-encompassing division between two distinct peoples, two races, white and black.

Racial prejudice against African-descended peoples co-evolved with Anglo-American slavery, but blacks were certainly not the only slaves, nor whites the only slaveholders. For most of the seventeenth century, as it had been for many thousands of years, Native Americans controlled almost the entire North American continent. Only after more than a century of Anglo-American contact and observations of so many Indians decimated by diseases did settlers come to see themselves as somehow more naturally “American” than the continent’s first human occupiers.

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.” For Phillips, the profitability of slavery was the only justification he needed.

British colonists in the Caribbean made extensive use of Indian slaves as well as imported Africans. Before the intrusion of colonists, warring indigenous societies might take prisoners of war from enemy tribes to be ceremonially killed, traded to allied Indian groups as gifts, or incorporated into the societies of their captors. Throughout the colonial period, Europeans exploited these systems of indigenous captivity in many parts of the Americas. Colonists purchased captives from Indian traders with guns, knives, alcohol, or other manufactured goods. Colonists turned the purchased Indian captives into slaves who served on plantations in diverse functions: as fishermen, hunters, field laborers, domestic workers,

and concubines. As the Indian slave trade became more valuable, illegal raids, rather than purchases, became more common. Courts might also punish convicted Indians by selling them into slavery.

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 to the West Indies. A few years later, Dutch colonists in New Netherland (New York and New Jersey) enslaved Algonquian Indians during both Governor Kiefts War (1641-1645) and the two Eposus Wars (1659-1664). The Dutch similarly sent these Indians 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 Phillip's War from 1675-1678, a pan-Indian rebellion against the encroachments of the New England colonies. Hundreds of defeated 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 enslaved throughout the South between 1670 and 1715. While some Indians stayed in the southern colonies, many were exported through Charlestown, South Carolina, to other ports in the British Atlantic, most likely to Barbados, Jamaica, and Bermuda. Slave raids and Indian slavery threatened the many settlers who wished to claim land in frontier territories. 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.

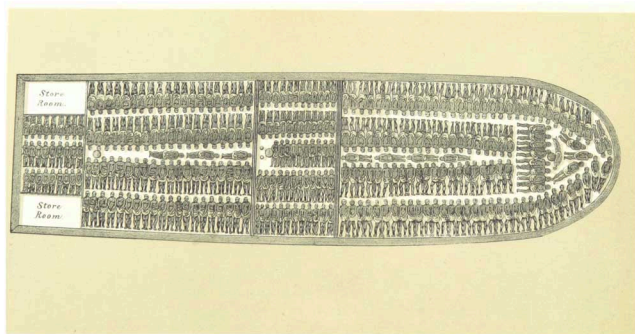


Figure 11 — [Drawing of a slave ship](#) by Andrew Hull Foote, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Native American slaves died quickly, mostly from disease, but others were murdered or died from starvation. The demands of colonial plantation economies required a more reliable labor force, and the transatlantic slave trade met the demand. European slavers transported millions of Africans across the ocean in a horrific 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 and collected memories of the Middle Passage from African-born slaves.



Figure 12 — [African Slaves Transport in Africa](#) from book: "LEHRBUCH DER WELTGESCHICHTE ODER DIE GESCHICHTE DER MENSCHHEIT" by William Rednbacher, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.

"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 semi-finished American goods, manufactured European goods, 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 to a coastal slave-trading factory, often a trek of hundreds of miles (Figure12). 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 mine, plantation, or other location where new slaves were forced into labor.

Recent estimates count between 11 and 12 million Africans forced across the Atlantic, with about 2 million deaths at sea as well as an

additional several million dying in the trade's overland African leg or during seasoning. Conditions in all three legs of the slave trade were horrible, but the first abolitionists focused especially on the abuses of the Middle Passage.

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 only as domestic servants given Western Europe's surplus of peasant labor. 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 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.

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. Sugar and tobacco boomed in Europe in the early colonial period, but rice, indigo, and rum were also profitable plantation exports. In the middle of the eighteenth century, after trade wars with the Dutch, English slavers became the most active carriers of Africans across the Atlantic. Brazil was the most common destination for slaves — more than four million slaves ended up in Brazil. English slavers, however, brought approximately two million slaves to the British West Indies. About 450,000 Africans landed in British North America, seemingly a small portion of the 11 to 12 million victims of the trade. Females were more likely to be found in North America than in other slave populations. These enslaved African women bore more children than their counterparts in the Caribbean or South America. A 1662 Virginia law stated that an enslaved woman's

children inherited the “condition” of their mother. This meant that all children born to slave women would be slaves for life, whether the father was white or black, enslaved or free.

American culture contains many resonances of the Middle Passage and the Atlantic slave trade. Many foods associated with Africans, such as cassava, were imported to West Africa as part of the slave trade, 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.

Most fundamentally, the modern notion of race emerged as a result of the slave trade. Before the Atlantic slave trade, neither Europeans nor West Africans had a strong notion of race. Indeed, African slave traders lacked a firm category of race that might have led them to think that they were selling their own people. Similarly, most English citizens felt no racial identification with the Irish or the even the Welsh. Modern notions of race emerged only after Africans of different ethnic groups were mixed together in the slave trade and as Europeans began enslaving Africans and Native Americans exclusively.

In the early years of slavery, especially in the South, the distinction between indentured servants and slaves was, at first, unclear. In 1643, a law was passed in Virginia that made African women “tithable.” This, in effect, associated African women’s work with hard, agricultural labor. There was no similar tax levied on white women. This law was an attempt to disassociate white and 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, due to 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 white colonists, the association of a gendered division of labor with Englishness was a key formulation in determining that Africans would be enslaved and subordinate to whites.

Ideas about the rule of the household were informed by legal 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. White men could expect to rule over their subordinates. In contrast, slaves were not legally seen as masters of a household, and were therefore subject to the authority of the white master. Slave marriages were not legally recognized. 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. In addition to distance that might have separated family members, the work of keeping children fed and clothed often fell to enslaved women. They performed essential work during the hours that they were not expected to work for the master. They produced clothing and food for their husbands and children and often provided religious and educational instruction.⁽³⁾

13. Turmoil in Britain

Turmoil in Britain

Religious violence plagued sixteenth-century England. While Spain plundered the New World and built an empire, England struggled as Catholic and Protestant 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 Puritans 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 conflicts between Parliament and the Crown merged with long-simmering religious tensions. 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.

The outbreak of civil war between the King and Parliament in 1642 opened an opportunity for the English state to consolidate its hold over the American colonies. The conflict erupted as Charles I (Figure 13) called a parliament in 1640 to assist him in suppressing a rebellion in Scotland. The Irish rebelled the following year, and by 1642 strained relations between Charles and Parliament produced a civil war in England. Parliament won, Charles I was executed, and England transformed into a republic and protectorate under Oliver Cromwell. These changes redefined England's relationship with its American colonies.



Figure 13 — [Portrait of Charles I in 1629](#) by Daniël Mijtens, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

In 1642, no permanent British North American colony was more than 35 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 left the colonies to their own devices.

The English civil war 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.

Charles's execution in 1649 altered that neutrality. Six colonies, including Virginia and Barbados, declared open allegiance to the dead monarch's son, Charles II (Figure 14). 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 in the Act 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. 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 deny other European nations, especially the Dutch, from interfering with its American possessions.

Over the next few years colonists' unease about Parliament's actions reinforced their own sense of English identity, one that was predicated on notions of rights and liberties. When the colonists declared allegiance to Charles II after the Parliamentary state collapsed in 1659 and England became a monarchy the following year, however, the new king dashed any hopes that he would reverse Parliament's consolidation efforts. The revolution that had killed his father enabled Charles II to begin the next phase of empire building in English America.



Figure 14 — [Portrait of Charles II painted in 1675](#) by Peter Lely, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Charles II ruled effectively, but his successor, James II, made several crucial mistakes. Eventually, Parliament again overthrew the authority of their king, this time turning to the Dutch Prince William of Holland and his English bride, Mary, the daughter of James II (Figure 15). This relatively peaceful coup was called the Glorious Revolution. English colonists in the era of the Glorious Revolution experienced religious and political conflict that reflected transformations in Europe. It was a time of great anxiety for the colonists. In the 1670s, King Charles II tightened English control over America, creating the royal colony of New Hampshire in 1678, and transforming Bermuda into a crown colony in 1684.

The King's death in 1685 and subsequent rebellions in England and Scotland against the new Catholic monarch, James II, threw Bermuda into crisis. Irregular reports made it unclear who was winning or who would protect their island. Bermudians were not alone in their wish for greater protection. On the mainland, Native Americans led by Metacom (Figure 16) — or as the English called him, King Philip — devastated New England between 1675 and 1678 while Indian conflicts helped trigger Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia in 1676. Equally troubling, New France loomed, and many remained wary of Catholics in Maryland. In the colonists' view, Catholics and Indians sought to destroy English America.



Figure 15 — [Portrait of William and Mary](#) by Gerard van Honthorst, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public sDomain](#)



Figure 16 — [Metacom \(King Philip\)](#) by S. Drake, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

James II worked to place the colonies on firmer defensive footing by creating the Dominion of New England in 1686. Colonists had accepted him as king despite his religion but began to suspect him of possessing absolutist ambitions. The Dominion consolidated the New England colonies plus New York and New Jersey into one administrative unit to counter French Canada, but colonists decried

the loss of their individual provinces. The Dominion's governor, Sir Edmund Andros, did little to assuage fears of arbitrary power when he impressed colonists into military service for a campaign against Maine Indians in early 1687.

In England, James's push for religious toleration brought him into conflict with Parliament and the Anglican establishment. Fearing that James meant to destroy Protestantism, a group of bishops and Parliamentarians asked William of Orange, the Protestant Dutch Stadtholder, and James's son-in-law, to invade the country in 1688. When the king fled to France in December, Parliament invited William and Mary to take the throne, and colonists in America 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." A declaration of allegiance was therefore a means toward stability.

More importantly, colonists declared for William and Mary because they believed their ascension marked the rejection of absolutism and confirmed the centrality of Protestantism 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. ⁽³⁾

14. New Colonies

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 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 dashed. Most colonists were Protestants relocating from Virginia. These Protestants were radical Quakers and Puritans who were tired of Virginia's efforts to force adherence to the Anglican faith. 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 would not be successful until 1658. Two years after the Glorious

Revolution (1688-1689), the Calverts lost control of Maryland and the colony became a royal colony.

Religion was implicated in the creation of several other colonies as well, including the New England colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island. The settlements that would eventually comprise 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. 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 rogues similarly founded Rhode Island. Roger After his exile from Massachusetts, Roger Williams (Figure 17) 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 castoff, Anne Hutchinson, and her followers settled near Providence. Soon, others followed, and were granted a charter by the Long Parliament in 1644. Persistently independent, the settlers refused a governor and instead elected a president and council. These separate plantations 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.

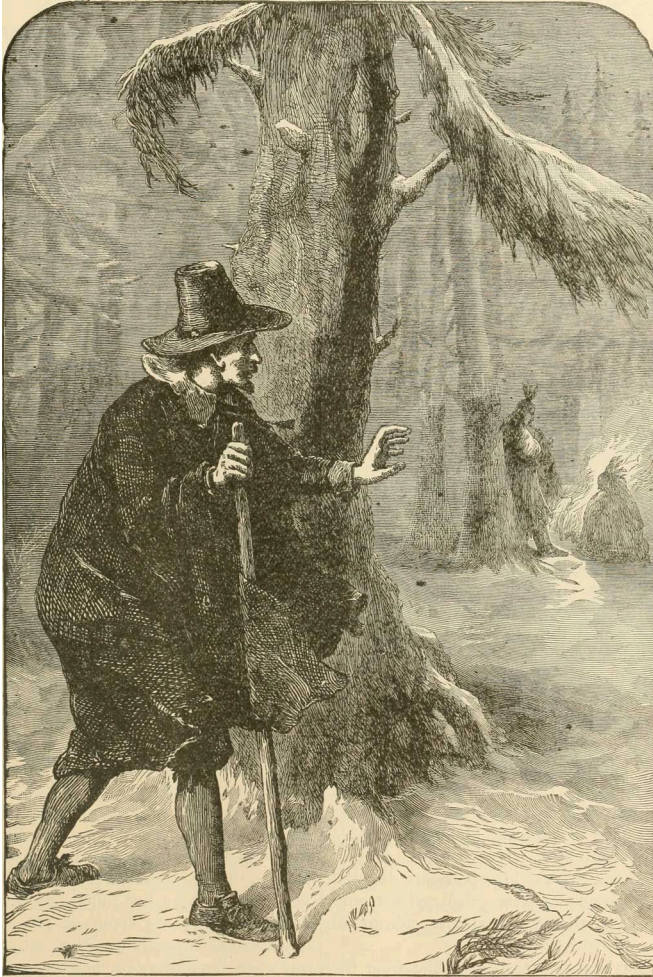


Figure 17 — [Roger Williams seeking refuge among the Indians](#) by Henry Davenport Northrop, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Until the middle of the seventeenth century, the English neglected

the settlement of 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, Delaware, and Hudson. Because the English failed to colonize the area, the Swedes and Dutch established their own colonies: 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 the colony. 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 eventual hand-over of New Netherland to England in 1667. The new colony of New York was named for the proprietor, James, the Duke of York, brother to Charles I and funder of the expedition against the Dutch in 1664. The Dutch 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.”

After the acquisition of New Netherland, Charles I 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 (Figure 18). 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 45,000 square miles west of the Delaware River and the former New Sweden. Penn was a Quaker, and he intended his colony to be a “colony of Heaven for the children of Light.” 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....” 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 the pacifist Quakers of Pennsylvania on the grounds that it required violence. In 1688, Quakers of the Germantown Meeting signed a petition protesting the institution of slavery.

The Pennsylvania soil did not lend itself to the slave-based agriculture of the Chesapeake, but other colonies would depend 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 I’s scheme to strengthen the English hold on the eastern seaboard and pay off political and cash debts. The Lords Proprietor of Carolina—eight very 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 claim to the area signified England’s growing confidence as a colonial power.



Figure 18 — [William Penn](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)



Figure 19 — The 1750 possessions of Britain (pink and purple), France (blue), and Spain (orange) in contrast to the borders of contemporary Canada and the United States. A derivative from the [original work](#), “Nouvelle France map-en” by Pinpin, Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

To attract colonists, the Lords Proprietor offered alluring incentives: religious tolerance, political representation by assembly, exemption from quitrents, and large land grants. These incentives worked and Carolina grew quickly, attracting not only middling farmers and artisans but also wealthy planters. Settlers 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, which were more stable commodities than the deerskin and Indian slave trades. Because of the size of Carolina, the authority of the Lords Proprietor was especially weak in the northern reaches on the 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.⁽³⁾

Consumption and Trade in the British Atlantic

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

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century, 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."

Britain relied on the colonies as 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 non-traditional 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, allowing 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 colony, as well as the first place in the Western world, to issue paper bills to be used as money. These notes, called bills of credit, were issued for finite periods of time on the colony's credit and varied in denomination from quite small to large enough to cover major transactions.

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 back in Britain debated whether or not 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 made use of 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. Trade between colonies was greatly hampered by the lack of standardized money. Currency that worked in Virginia might be worthless in Pennsylvania.

To encourage consumers, businesses on both sides of the Atlantic advertised the variety of goods, their quality, and the ease 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 think of themselves as lords and ladies of their own communities through

their ability to purchase and display 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 Think I have seen.” But many Americans worried about the consequences of rising consumerism. A writer for *The Boston Evening Post* remarked on this new practice 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.” 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. Though separated from the continent by the Caribbean Sea, these British colonies were inextricably connected to the continental colonies through commerce. Caribbean plantations dedicated nearly all of their land to the wildly profitable crop of sugar cane, 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 where planters transported them to their plantations. Caribbean colonists also relied on the continental colonies for livestock, purchasing cattle and horses.

Connections between the Caribbean and North America benefitted 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. 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. To meet this newfound demand, furniture makers from North America traveled to the Caribbean to acquire mahogany that was then transformed into exquisite furniture.

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 called Navigation Acts. Through these taxes, consumption became intertwined 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 trade on their own terms, whether that was 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 of illicit goods was brought into the American colonies annually. Pirates, or what colonists considered privateers, 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 Duties, Parliament levied taxes on sugar, paper, lead, glass, and tea, all products that contributed to colonists' sense of gentility. In response, patriots organized non-importation agreements. They reverted to their domestic products, making items such as homespun cloth 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.”



Figure 20 — [Boston Harbor in 1764](#), by Richard Byron, is in the [Public Domain](#)

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. Some cities grew organically over time, while others were planned from the start. New York and Boston’s seventeenth-century street plans reflected the haphazard arrangement of medieval cities in Europe. In other cities like Philadelphia (Figure 21) 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.

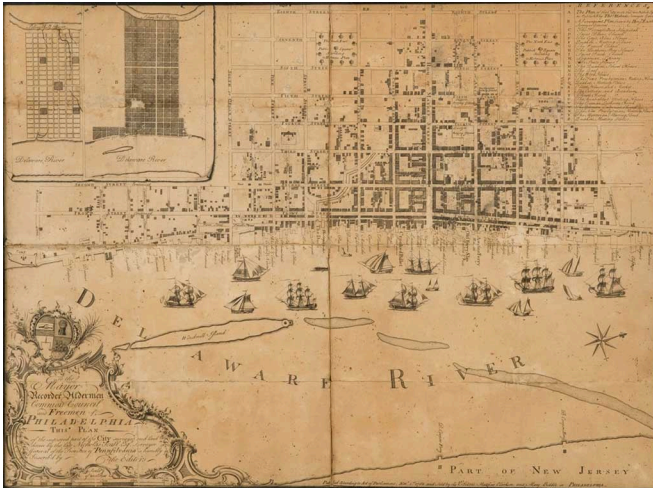


Figure 21 — [1762 Clarkson Biddle Map of Philadelphia](#) by Matthew Clarkson, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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. Urban society was highly stratified. At the base of the social ladder were the laboring classes, which included both enslaved and free persons 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.

In port cities, slaves often worked 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% of the city's population in 1770. 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. ⁽³⁾

Slavery Anti-Slavery and Atlantic Exchange

Slavery was a transatlantic institution. However, it developed distinct characteristics in British North America. By 1750, slavery was legal in every North American English 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 (where 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 100,000 African slaves in Virginia, at least 40% of the colony's total population. The majority 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 of slavery. Georgia was founded by the philanthropist George 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, co-authored 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.

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. The expertise of these slaves contributed to one of the most lucrative economies in the colonies. Rice production soared from 20 million pounds in 1720 to nearly 80 million pounds by 1780. 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 townhouses 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, but once those tasks were complete, slaves often had time to grow some crops of their own on garden plots allotted by plantation owners. These slaves participated in a thriving underground market that allowed them a degree of economic autonomy. Carolina slaves also had an unparalleled degree of cultural autonomy. Carolina's black majority, most of whom were imported directly from West Africa and relative lack of direct oversight allowed for the retention of many African cultural and religious practices. Syncretic languages like Gullah and Geechee contained many borrowed African terms, and traditional African basket weaving (often combined with Native American techniques) survive in the region to this day.

This unique Low Country slave culture contributed to the Stono Rebellion in September 1739. On a Sunday morning while planters attended church, a group of about 80 slaves set out for Spanish Florida under a banner that read "Liberty!" burning plantations and killing at least 20 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. Though the Stono Rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful – 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 – it was a violent reminder to South Carolina planters that their 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% of its population was enslaved by 1700, while 15-20% of Pennsylvania's colonial population was enslaved by 1750. 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 9 white colonists. In retribution, 21 slaves were executed and 6 others committed suicide before they could be burned alive. In 1741, another planned rebellion by African slaves, free blacks, and poor whites was uncovered, unleashing a witch-hunt that only stopped after 32 slaves and free blacks and 5 poor whites were executed. Another 70 slaves were deported, likely to the sugar cane fields of the West Indies.

Increasingly uneasy about the growth of slavery in the region, Quakers were the first group to turn against slavery. Quaker beliefs in radical non-violence 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% of the population was enslaved as late as the 1760s. The few slaves in the colony were concentrated in Boston along with a sizeable free black community that made up about 10% of the city's population. 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. ⁽³⁾

15. Pursuing Political, Religious, and Individual Freedom

Pursuing 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 approximately 1% of males could vote. In the North American colonies, by contrast, white male suffrage was nearly universal. 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.

As far as political structure, colonies fell under one of three main categories: provincial, proprietary, and charter. The provincial colonies included New Hampshire, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The proprietary colonies included Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland. The charter colonies included Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. The provincial colonies were the most tightly controlled by the crown. The British king appointed all of the provincial governors. These crown governors could veto any decision made by the legislative assemblies in the provincial colonies. The 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. This generally led to proprietary colonies having more freedoms and liberties than other colonies in colonial America. The charter colonies had the most complex system of government, formed by political corporations or interest groups who drew up a charter that clearly delineated powers between executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of government. As opposed to having governors appointed, the charter colonies elected their own governors from among the property-owning men in the colony.

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 of the colony. The governor appointed these men, 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 or not African Americans, Native Americans, and women would also be included in this notion of equality before the law was far less clear. In particular, women's role in the family became more complicated. Many historians view this period as a significant time of transition. Importantly, 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 to change the nature of husband-wife relationships. Deriving from the sentimental 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.” While away from his wife, John felt a “vacuum in my existence,” a sentiment returned by Mary’s “Doting Heart.” Indeed, after independence, wives began to not only provide emotional sustenance to their husbands, but to inculcate the principles of republican citizenship as “republican wives.”

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 of 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 publicly. Known as “elopement notices,” they catalogued the various sorts of misbehavior 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 how her partner “presented his gun at my breast... and swore he would kill me.”

That couples would turn to newspapers as a source of expression illustrates the importance of what historians call print culture. 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 regarded either as unnecessary within such harsh living conditions or it was

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." Ironically, the circulation of hand-written 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 an established respect for print from the very 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. The first book was not issued until 1640, the Bay Psalm Book, of which 11 known copies survive. His contemporaries recognized the significance of Daye's 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, published 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 in 1723, equal parts scholar and businessman, and second, waves of

German immigrants created a demand for German-language press. From the mid 1730s, Christopher Sauer, and later his son, wholly met this demand with 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 print shop available. Given the flurry of newspapers, pamphlets, and books for sale in Franklin's Philadelphia, it is little wonder that in 1775 Thomas Paine had his Common Sense printed in hundreds of thousands of copies with the Philadelphia printer Robert Bell.



Figure 22 — [“Franklin the printer”](#) by Charles Mills, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Reproduction of a Charles Mills painting by the Detroit Publishing Company. Depicts Benjamin Franklin at work on a printing press.

Debates on religious expression continued throughout the 18th century. In 1711, a group of New England ministers published a collection of sermons entitled Early Piety. The most famous of them, Increase Mather, wrote the preface. In it he asked the question “What did our forefathers come into this wilderness for?” 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 1730's and then spread through the 1740's and 1750's to Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists in the other 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' (Figure 23) congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards was a theologian who shared the faith of the early Puritans settlers. In particular, he believed in the idea called predestination that God had decided in advance who was damned and who was saved. However, he 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 inwards for signs of God's saving grace. His most famous sermon was called "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 amongst known sinners in the community. Over the next 6 months, the physical symptoms spread to half of the 600 person-congregation. Edwards shared the work of his revival in a widely- circulated pamphlet.

Over the next decade itinerant preachers were more successfully 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 up the congregation into an emotional frenzy that might reveal evidence of saving grace. Many religious leaders were suspicious of the enthusiasm and message of these revivals, but colonists flocked to the spectacle.

The most famous itinerant preacher was George Whitefield. According to Whitefield the only type of faith that pleased God was heartfelt. The established churches only encouraged apathy. “The Christian World is dead asleep,” Whitefield explained, “Nothing but a loud voice can awaken them out of it.” 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 1730’s 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.” 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.” The number of people trying to hear Whitefield’s message were 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 20,000 in Philadelphia. Whitefield and the other itinerant preachers had achieved what Edwards could not, making the revivals popular.

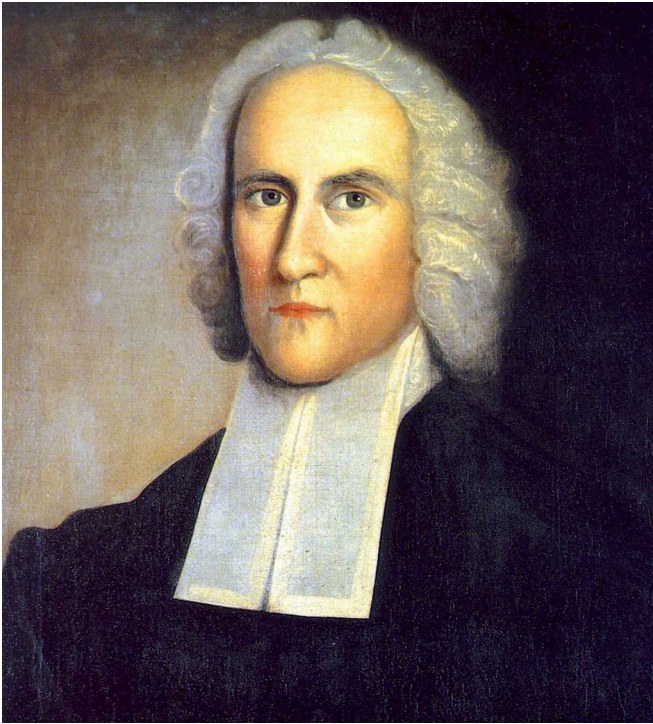


Figure 23 — [Jonathan Edwards](#) by Unknown, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#) /p>

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, whilst screaming and laughing. Or, they could burn the books he disapproved of. Either way, this type of extremism demonstrated to many that revivalism had gone wrong. 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 pre-revolutionary 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. ⁽³⁾

Seven Years' War

Of the 87 years between the Glorious Revolution (1688) and the American Revolution (1775), Britain was at war with France and French-allied Native Americans for 37 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 would destroy houses and burn crops, but they would also take 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 literally capture Protestant lands and souls.

In 1754, a force of British colonists and Native American allies, led by young George Washington, attacked and 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.

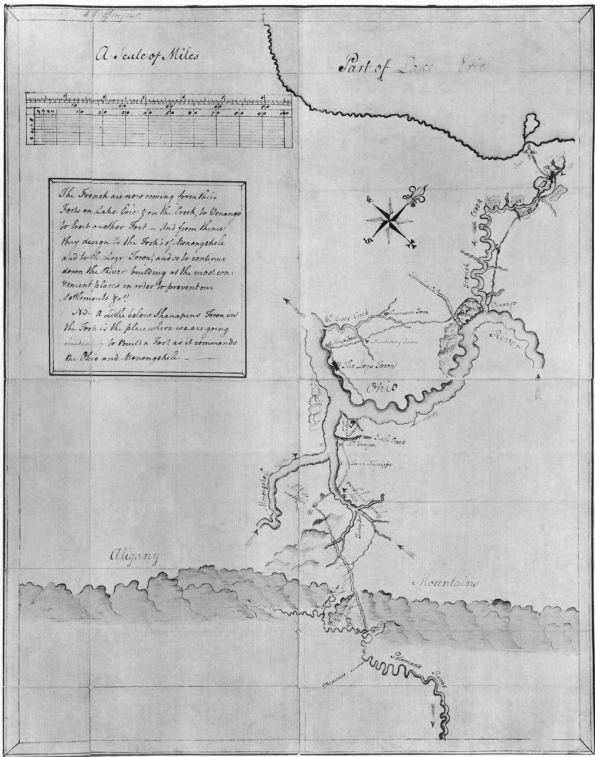


Figure 24 — [Washington's Pennsylvania Map](#) by George Washington, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#).

Washington's map of the Ohio River and surrounding region containing notes on French intentions, 1753 or 1754

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-Wolfenbüttele. 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. The Austrians defeated the Prussians in the Battle of Kolin, also in 1757. However, Frederick of Prussia defeated the French at the Battle of Rossbach in November of 1757. This battle allowed the British to rejoin the war in Europe. Just a month later, 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. Robert Clive and his Indian allies defeated the French at the Battle of Plassey in 1757. With the sea firmly in their control, the British could send more 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 Montcalm in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, outside of 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 for all intents and purposes, the 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 in 1762 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 leading 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."

American colonists rejoiced over the defeat of Catholic France and felt secure that the Catholics in Quebec could no longer threaten them. Of course, the American colonies had been a haven for religious minorities since the seventeenth century. Early religious pluralism served as evidence of an "American melting pot" that included Catholic Maryland. 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 and of a variety of Protestant sects cohered around a pan-Protestant interest. British ministers in England called for a coalition to fight French and Catholic empires that imperiled Protestantism. Missionary organizations such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Society for Propagation of the Gospel were founded at the turn of the seventeenth century to evangelize Native Americans and limit Jesuits advances in converting them to Catholicism. The previously mentioned 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 knit the Anglophone Protestant Atlantic together through commerce. ⁽³⁾

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." 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 against British soldiers, traders, and settlers. At its height, the pan-Indian uprising included native peoples from the territory between the Great Lakes, 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 300 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, Saint 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

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 Line of 1763 (Figure 26), which marked the Appalachian Mountains as the boundary between Indian country and the British colonies.



Figure 26 – A derivative from the [original work](#), Royal Proclamation Line of 1763 by Florida State College at Jacksonville is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Coinciding with the end of the Seven Year's War, 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 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. The Seven Years’ War pushed the thirteen American colonies closer together politically and culturally than ever before. In 1754, Benjamin Franklin suggested a plan of union to coordinate colonial defenses on a continental scale. Tens of thousands of colonials fought during the war. Of the 11,000 British soldiers present for the French surrender of Montreal in 1760, 6,500 were colonials from every colony north of Pennsylvania. 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 millennial 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.

The war was tremendously expensive and precipitated imperial reforms on taxation, commerce, and politics. Britain spent over £140 million, an astronomical figure for the day. Tens of thousands of British soldiers served in America, and 10,000 were left to garrison the conquests in Canada and the Ohio Valley at a cost of £100,000. 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, following increasing imperial involvement in trade and commerce, would soon be attacked. The moratorium on new settlements in the west after Pontiac's War was yet another disappointment.⁽³⁾

16. Shakespeare's The Tempest

Sound-Scape

The Module 2 sound-scape features an excerpt from Shakespeare's THE TEMPEST, which was inspired in part by the sinking of the Sea Venture while it was en route to Jamestown in 1609. The text accompanying the sound-scape gives you a brief synopsis of the Sea Venture's real-life story.¹

Listen to an excerpt from William Shakespeare's play, THE TEMPEST — Act 2, Scene 1, and follow along with the text on this page.

Click on the audio player to listen.



An audio element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can listen to it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/fscjushistory1/?p=35>

GONZOLO:

I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things. For no kind of traffic
Would I admit. No name of magistrate.
Letters should not be known. Riches, poverty,
And use of service—none. Contract,
succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard—none.
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil.

No occupation. All men idle, all.
And women too, but innocent and pure.
No sovereignty—

SEBASTIAN:

Yet he would be king on 't.

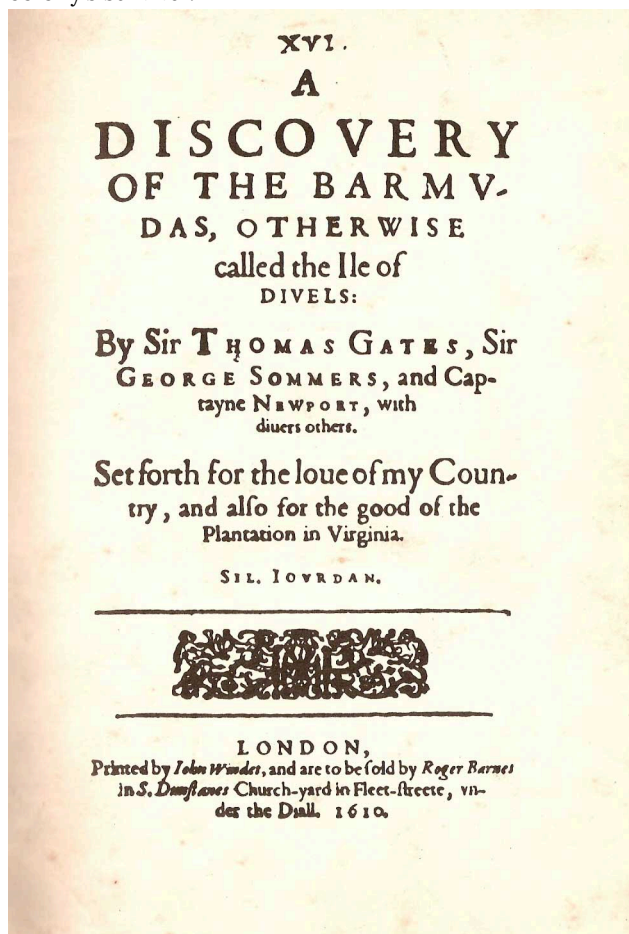
ANTONIO:

The latter end of his commonwealth forgets
the beginning.

THE TEMPEST by William Shakespeare is in the [Public Domain](#)

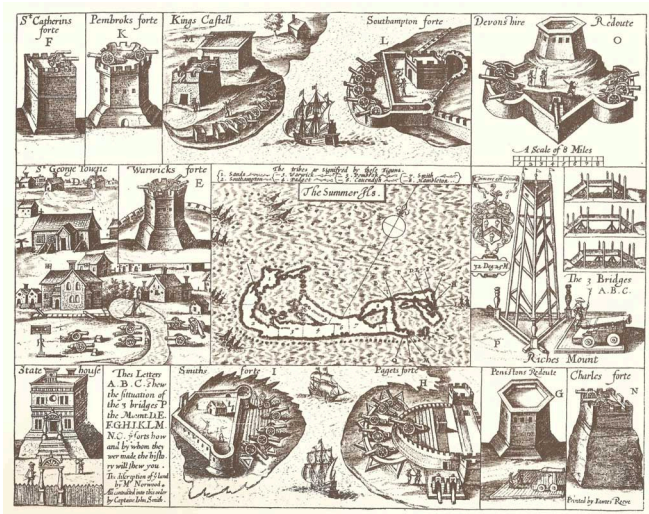
The establishment of the colony of Virginia captivated the imagination of people in England. At the time, it was rare for people to travel more than a few miles from home, so they were fascinated by stories of far-away places. Virginia made its way into popular culture as well. Shakespeare's, THE TEMPEST, written in 1610 or 1611 and first performed in November 1611, is an example of this. According to many scholars, Shakespeare based this play in part on the shipwreck of the Sea Venture, which was part of a convoy sent from England in 1609 to resupply the struggling settlement at Jamestown. In July 1609, en route to Jamestown, the Sea Venture encountered a hurricane which separated it from the rest of the convoy. The Sea Venture was badly damaged, but the 153 passengers and crew were able to evacuate and save some of the supplies before it sank near the coast of Bermuda. The castaways made it to shore, and spent the following ten months living on Bermuda, which at this time had not been settled by Europeans. They managed to build two small boats which they sailed to Jamestown, arriving in May 1610. The castaways had been given up for dead, so you can imagine what a surprise their arrival in Jamestown was! The

people of England were fascinated and inspired by their exciting story of survival in an exotic land. The story reinvigorated interest in Virginia and England's commitment to ensure the floundering colony's survival.



[SYLVESTER JORDAIN – DISCOVERY OF THE BARMUDAS](#) by Sylvester Jourdain

Excerpts from the book A PLAINE DESCRIPTION OF THE BARMUDAS.
You can read the full text on [Archive.org](#)



JOHN SMITH 1624 MAP OF BERMUDA WITH FORTS 01 by John Smith

PART IV

MODULE 3: REVOLUTION

17. Module Introduction

Revolution

Module Introduction

This module explores the series of events that led to the outbreak of war between the British and the colonists, and the American Declaration of Independence. It also examines the lengthy and difficult war for independence, and the reasons behind the American victory.

As you read this module, think about the challenges that the U.S. faced in Vietnam and Iraq. The British in the Revolution were essentially fighting against an insurgency. How can current military planners learn from the mistakes made by the British in the Revolution? ¹

Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Students will understand the social, political, and economic development of the United States.
- Students will develop a historical context for understanding current issues and events. ¹

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Discuss the ideas and events that made the American Revolution preventable or inevitable.
- Evaluate the significance of religious, cultural, and intellectual developments on the coming of the Revolution.
- Discuss the reasons why the Americans won the revolution in 1781.¹

Readings and Resources

- Module 3 Learning Unit

18. The Origins of the American Revolution

Introduction

North American colonists had just helped to win a world war and most 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.

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 only further secured slavery. Resistance to centralized authority tied disparate colonies ever closer together under new governments. A government founded to protect a republican establishment fueled new democratic urges and politicians eager to foster republican selflessness and protect the public good instead encouraged individual self-interest and personal gain. The Revolution unleashed many new, unforeseen forces in a new, unforeseen nation.⁽³⁾

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 eighteenth century that set the context for the crisis of the 1760s and 1770s.

Britain 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 engaged in costly wars from the War of the Spanish Succession at the start of the century through the Seven Years' War in 1763. Constant war was politically 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 the 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 an equal status with that of the mother country. The debate between the two sides raged throughout the eighteenth century, and the lack of consensus prevented coherent reform.

The colonies developed their own notions of their place in 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." Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, the colonies had experienced significant economic and demographic growth. Their success, they believed, was partly a result of Britain's hands-off approach to the colonies. That success had made them increasingly important to the economy of the mother country and the empire as a whole. By mid-century, colonists believed that they held a special place in the empire, which justified Britain's hands-off policy. In 1764, James Otis Jr. (Figure 1) 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."



Figure 1 — [James Otis Jr.](#) by Joseph Blackburn, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

In this same period, the colonies developed their own local political institutions. Samuel Adams (Figure 2) 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, elite colonial leaders lobbied unsuccessfully to get the Ministry to recognize their assemblies’ legal standing but the Ministry was too occupied with European wars. In the first half of the eighteenth century, royal governors tasked by the Board of Trade made attempts to limit the power of the assemblies, but they were largely unsuccessful. The assemblies’ power only grew. Many colonists came to see the 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 British Ministry and Parliament, however, saw the issue as deferred until the Ministry chose to directly address the proper role of the assemblies. Conflict was inevitable, but a revolution was not.

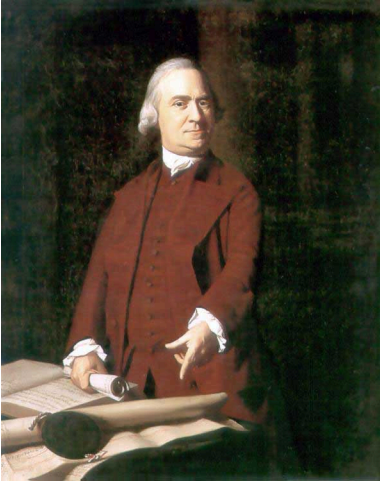


Figure 2 – [Samuel Adams](#) by John Singleton Copley, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

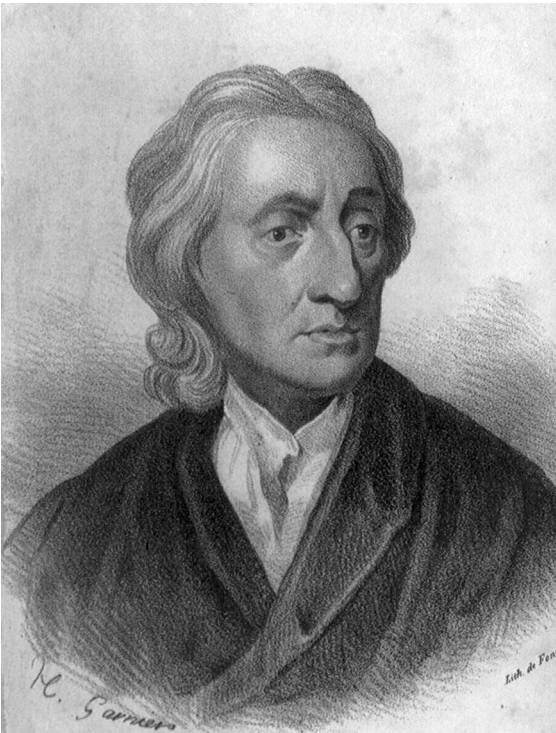


Figure 3 – [John Locke](#) by H. Garnier, Wikimedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 portion of 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 on the individual, the need for those involved in self-governing to be virtuous (i.e., putting the “public good” over their own self-interest) and 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.

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.

At the same time as Locke’s ideas about knowledge and education spread in North America, the colonies also experienced an unprecedented wave of evangelical Protestant revivalism. In

1739-40, 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 which 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 itinerant preachers picked up his message and many congregations split. Both Locke and Whitefield had the effect of empowering individuals to question authority and to take their lives into their own hands.

Despite these political and intellectual differences, eighteenth-century colonists were in some ways becoming more culturally similar to Britons, a process often referred to as "Anglicization." As the colonial economies grew, they quickly became an important market destination 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.

These political, intellectual, cultural, and economic developments created fundamental differences between the colonies and the mother country. Together, they combined to create latent tensions that would rise 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.⁽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, for the ministry, the jubilation was short-lived. The realities and responsibilities of the post-war 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. In addition to the costs incurred in securing victory, Britain was also looking at significant new costs required to secure and defend its far-flung empire, especially 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 (Figure 4) took the crown in 1760 and brought Tories into his Ministry after three decades of Whig rule. They represented an authoritarian vision of empire where colonies would be subordinate. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was Britain's first postwar imperial action. The King forbade settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains in 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.



Figure 4 – [King George III](#) by Allan Ramsay, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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, like 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 see a pattern of restriction and taxation.

In March 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act. The Sugar Act 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, internal 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."

Stamps were to be required on all printed documents, including newspapers, pamphlets, diplomas, legal documents, and even playing cards. Unlike the Sugar Act, which primarily affected merchants, the Stamp Act directly affected numerous groups including printers, lawyers, college graduates, and even sailors who played cards. This led, in part, to broader, more popular resistance.

Resistance took three forms, distinguished largely by class: legislative resistance by elites, economic resistance by merchants, and popular protest by common colonists. Colonial elites responded with legislative resistance initially by passing resolutions in their assemblies. The most famous of the anti-Stamp Act resolutions were the "Virginia Resolves" that declared that the colonists were entitled to "all the liberties, privileges, franchises, and immunities... possessed by the people of Great Britain." When the resolves were printed throughout the colonies, however, they often included three extra, far more radical resolves 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." The spread of these extra

resolves throughout the colonies helped radicalize the subsequent responses of other colonial assemblies and eventually led to the calling of the Stamp Act Congress in New York City in October 1765. Nine colonies sent delegates, including Benjamin Franklin, John Dickinson, Thomas Hutchinson, Philip Livingston, and James Otis.

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 native Britons. Those rights included trial by jury, which had been abridged by the Sugar Act, and the right to only be taxed 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.” Benjamin Franklin called it the “prime Maxim of all free Government.” 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 Ministry 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.”

The second type of resistance to the Stamp Act was economic. While the Stamp Act Congress deliberated, merchants in major port cities were preparing non-importation agreements, hoping that their refusal to import British goods would lead British merchants to lobby for the repeal of the Stamp Act. The plan worked. As British exports to the colony dropped considerably, merchants did pressure Parliament to repeal.

The third, and perhaps, most crucial type of resistance was popular protest. Violent riots broke out in Boston, during which crowds, led by the local Sons of Liberty, burned the appointed stamp collector for Massachusetts, Peter Oliver, in effigy and pulled a building he owned “down to the Ground in five minutes.” Oliver resigned the position of stamp collector the next day. A few days

later a crowd also set upon the home of his brother-in-law, Lt. Gov. 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.



Figure 5 – [The Bostonians Paying the Excuse-man, or Tarring and Feathering](#) by Phillip Dawe, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 stamp paper, let him take care of his house, person, and effects. Vox Populi. We

dare.” By November 16, all of the original twelve stamp collectors had resigned, and by 1766, Sons of Liberty (Figure 6) groups formed in most of the colonies to direct and organize further popular 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.

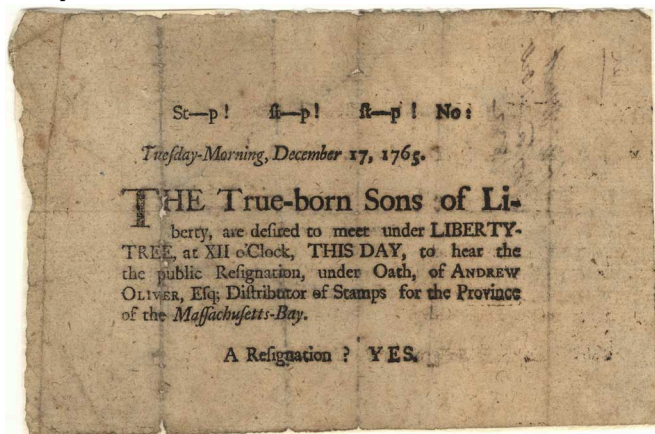


Figure 6 — [Sons of Liberty Broadside, 1765](#) by Sons of Liberty, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Pressure on Parliament grew until, in March of 1766, they 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.

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 gave 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 Pennsylvania Farmer," 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?

New forms of resistance emerged in which elite, middling, and working class colonists participated together. Merchants re-instituted non-importation 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 newspaper essays written by women appeared. 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 their homes and spin cloth for homespun clothing for their families and even for the community.

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. Non-importation, and especially, non-consumption agreements changed colonists' cultural relationship with the mother country. Committees of inspection that monitored merchants and residents to make sure that no one broke the agreements. Offenders could expect to have their names and offenses shamed in the newspaper and in broadsides.

Non-importation and non-consumption helped forge colonial unity. Colonies formed Committees of Correspondence to update the progress of resistance in each colony. 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 Crispus Attucks (Figure 7), 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 attributed to Paul Revere (Figure 8) 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 7 – [Crispus Attucks](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Resistance again led to repeal. In March of 1770, Parliament repealed all of the new duties except the one on tea, which, like the Declaratory Act, was left 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.

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. ⁽³⁾



Figure 8 – [Boston Massacre](#) by Paul Revere, Wikimedia Commons
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19. Independence

Independence

Following the Boston Massacre in 1770, the conflict between the colonies and the mother country cooled. 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. And so April 1770 to the spring of 1773 passed largely without incident. But Britain's desire and need to reform imperial administration remained.

In 1773, Parliament passed the Tea Act 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 15 million pounds of it in stored in warehouses from India to England. So, in 1773, the 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 because they deplored the East India Company's monopoly status that made it harder for them to compete. But, like the Sugar Act, it only affected a small, specific group of people. The widespread support for resisting the Tea Act had more to do with principles. By buying the 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 Massachusetts Gazette, 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.”

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.” 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.”



Figure 9 – [Boston Tea Party](#) by W.D. Cooper, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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

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 Ministry, and Parliament acted decisively to end the rebellion.

The other colonies came 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. In Massachusetts, patriots created the “Provincial Congress,” and, throughout 1774, they seized control of local and county governments and courts. 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 extra-legal assemblies were established in all of the colonies except Georgia. And throughout the year, they followed Massachusetts' example by seizing the powers of the royal governments.

Popular protest spread across the continent and down through all levels of colonial society. The ladies of Edenton, North Carolina, for example, signed an agreement to “follow the laudable example of their husbands” in avoiding boycotted items from Britain. 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 consumer and producers. Because women were often making decisions regarding which household items to purchase, their participation in consumer boycotts held particular weight. 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 empowered an emboldened response from elites.

Committees of Correspondence agreed to send delegates to a Continental Congress to coordinate an inter-colonial 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 trials-by-juries.

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 non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation 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.

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 from their relationship with Britain. Initially, they sought to exert a moderating influence on the resistance committees but, following the Association, many 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.

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 (Figure 10). 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 (Figure 11). 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 20,000 colonial militiamen lay 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.

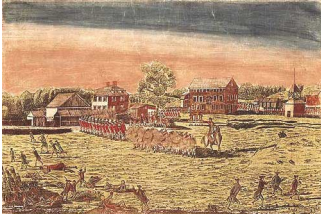


Figure 10 — [Battle of Lexington](#) by Amos Doolittle, Ralph Earl, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

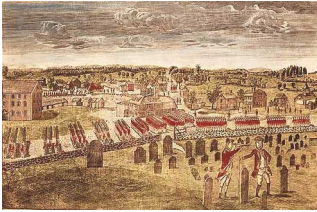


Figure 11 — [British Army in Concord](#) by Amos Doolittle, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 then laying siege to Boston with little to no supplies. 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 this decision. At the same time, the moderates drafted an “Olive Branch Petition” (Figure 12) 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.” Congress was in the strange position of attempting reconciliation while publicly raising an army.

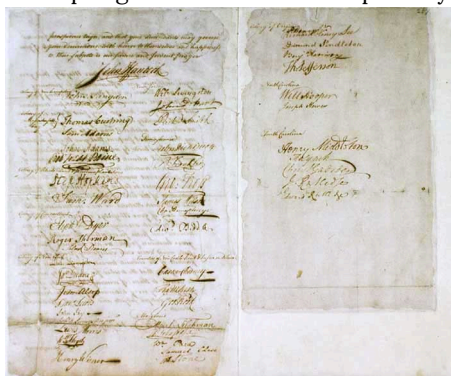


Figure 12 — [Olive Branch Petition](#) by Second Continental Congress, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.” 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* (Figure 13) 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." 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.

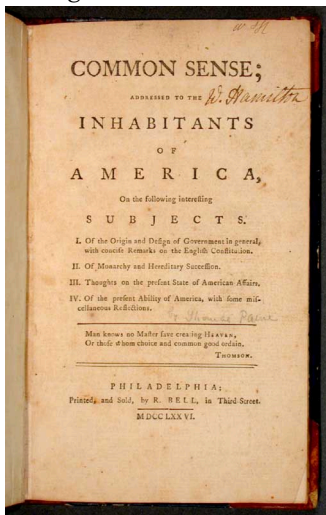


Figure 13 — [Common Sense](#) by Thomas Payne, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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, Negroes, and others" if they would leave their masters and join the British.

Though only about 500-1000 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 as laborers, skilled workers, and spies, in companies called "Black Pioneers." 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.

Dunmore's Proclamation (Figure 14) had the additional effect of pushing many white Southerners into rebellion. After the Somerset case in 1772 ruled that slavery would not be allowed on the British mainland, some American slave-owners began to worry about the growing abolitionist movement in the mother country. 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.

By His Excellency the Right Honorable JOHN Earl of DUNMORE, His
MAJESTY's Lieutenant and Governor General of the Colony and Dominion of
VIRGINIA, and Vice Admiral of the fleet

A PROCLAMATION.

AS I have ever entertained Hopes, that an Accommodation might have
taken Place between GREAT-BRITAIN and this Colony, without being
compelled by my Duty to this most disagreeable but now absolutely necessary
Step, rendered so by a Body of armed Men unlawfully assembled, firing on His
MAJESTY's Tenders, and the formation of an Army, and that Army now on
their March to attack His MAJESTY's Troops and destroy the well disposed Sub-
jects of this Colony. To defeat such reasonable Purposes, and that all such
Traitors, and their Abettors, may be brought to Justice, and that the Peace, and
good Order of this Colony may be again restored, which the ordinary Course
of the Civil Law is unable to effect; I have thought fit to issue this my Pro-
clamation, hereby declaring, that until the aforeaid good Purposes can be ob-
tained, I do in Virtue of the Power and Authority to ME given, by His MAJE-
STY, determine to execute Martial Law, and cause the same to be executed
throughout this Colony; and to the end that Peace and good Order may the
sooner be restored, I do require every Person capable of bearing Arms, to resort
to His MAJESTY's STANDARD, or be looked upon as Traitors to His
MAJESTY's Crown and Government, and thereby become liable to the Penalty
the Law inflicts upon such Offences; such as forfeiture of Life, confiscation of
Lands, &c. &c. And I do hereby further declare all indentured Servants, Negroes,
or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms,
they joining His MAJESTY's Troops as soon as may be, for the more speedily
reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to His MAJESTY's
Crown and Dignity. I do further order, and require, all His MAJESTY's Leige
Subjects, to retain their Quitrents, or any other Taxes due or that may become
due, in their own Custody, till such Time as Peace may be again restored to this
at present most unhappy Country, or demanded of them for their former salu-
tary Purposes, by Officers properly authorised to receive the same.

GIVEN under my Hand on board the Ship WILLIAM, of NORFOLK,
the 7th Day of NOVEMBER, in the SIXTEENTH Year of His MAJESTY's Reign.

DUNMORE.

(GOD save the KING.)

Figure 14 — [Dunmore's Proclamation](#) by John Murray 4th Earl
Dunmore, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

On May 10, 1776, nearly two months before the Declaration of
Independence, the Congress voted a resolution calling on all

colonies that had not already established revolutionary governments to do so and to wrest control from royal officials. 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 connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.”



Figure 15 – [Writing the Declaration of Independence, 1776](#) by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 was passed 12-0 with New York abstaining.

Between the proposal and vote, a committee had been named to draft a 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 (Figure 15), 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.”

The majority of the document outlined a list of specific grievances that the colonists had with the many actions taken by the British during the 1760s and 1770s to reform imperial administration. 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.

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. ⁽³⁾



Figure 16 — [Crowd pulls down King George III Statue, NYC, 1776](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

New York City. After a public reading of the Declaration of Independence on 9 July, 1776, crowd pulls down statue of King George III to be melted into bullets

20. The War for Independence

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 in Boston, the new nation faced the daunting task of taking on the world's largest military.

In the summer of 1776, the forces that had been at 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 isolate New England from the rest of the continent. Also, New York contained many loyalists, particularly among the 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. 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 (Figure 17). The victory won the Continental Army much needed supplies and a morale boost following the disaster at New York.



Figure 17 — [Washington Crossing the Delaware](#) by Emanuel Leutze, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

An even greater success followed in upstate New York. In 1777, in an effort to secure the Hudson River, British General John Burgoyne led an army from Canada through upstate New York. There, he was to meet up with a detachment of General 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 (Figure 18). 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.



Figure 18 — [The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga, October, 1777](#) by John Trumbull, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 match up in head-on battles with the professional British army. So he developed his own logic of warfare, which involved smaller, more frequent skirmishes and avoided any 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 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.

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 Gen. 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 (Figures 19 and 20). 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.

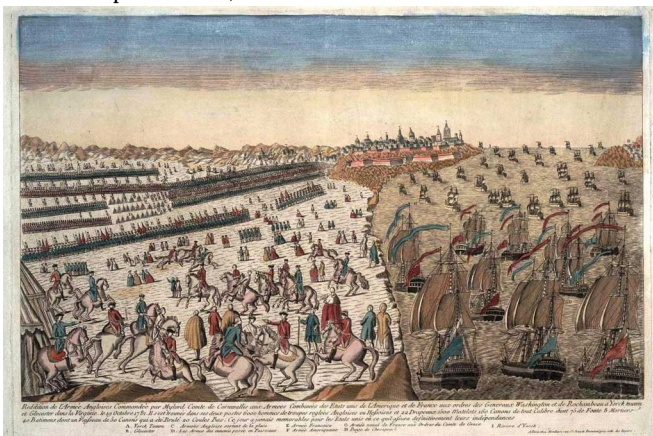


Figure 19 — [Siege of Yorktown, 1781](#) by Artiste Inconnu, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)



Figure 20 – [Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, 1781](#) by John Trumbull, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 (Figure 21), 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 (Figure 22) 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.

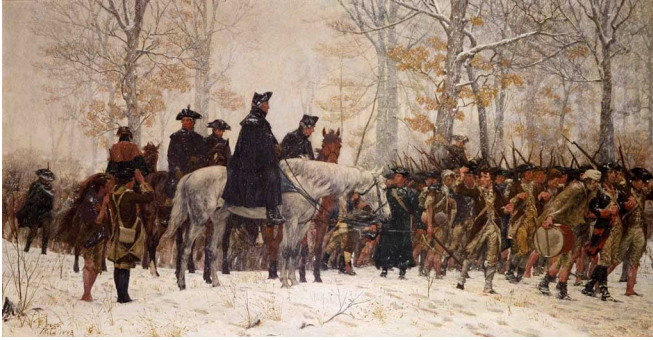


Figure 21 — [The March to Valley Forge](#) by William Trego, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)



Figure 22 — [Abigail Adams](#) by Benjamin Blyth, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

While Abigail remained safely out of the fray, other women were not so fortunate. The Revolution was, in essence, a civil war; 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 and secure his release. When such appeals were ineffectual, Mary spearheaded an effort to capture a prominent Tory leader to exchange for her husband's freedom.

Men and women together struggled through years of war and hardship. But even victory brought uncertainty. The Revolution created as many opportunities as it did corpses, and it was left to the survivors to determine the future of the new nation.⁽³⁾

2I. The Consequences of the American Revolution

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 post-Revolution politics and society, including increased participation in politics and governance, the legal institutionalization of religious toleration, and the growth and diffusion of the population. The Revolution also had significant short-term effects on the lives of women in the new United States of America. In the long-term, the Revolution would also have significant effects on the lives of slaves and free blacks as well as the institution of slavery itself. It also 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. Most created weak governors and strong legislatures with regular elections and moderately increased the size of the electorate. A number of states followed the example of Virginia, which 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' constitution, passed in 1780, was less democratic 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. Unlike some other states, it also offered the executive veto power over legislation. 1776 was the year of independence, but it was also the beginning of 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 post-war Congress rather impotent.

Political and social life changed drastically after independence. Political participation grew as more people gained the right to vote. In addition, more common citizens (or “new men”) played increasingly important roles in local and state governance. Hierarchy within the states underwent significant changes. Locke's ideas of “natural law” had been central to the Declaration of Independence and the state constitutions. 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 manufacturers, 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 post-war period, women became incorporated into the polity to some degree as “republican mothers.” These new 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.

Slaves and free blacks 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 free blacks and former slaves 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, but he earned the ability to determine his own life after his enlistment ended. Salem was not alone, but many more slaves seized upon the tumult of war to run away and secure their own freedom directly.

Between 30,000 and 100,000 slaves deserted their masters during the war. 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. But black loyalists continued to face social and economic marginalization, including restrictions on land ownership. In 1792, Black loyalist and Baptist preacher David George resisted discrimination, joining a colonization project that led nearly 1,200 former black Americans from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone, in Africa.

The fight for liberty led some Americans to manumit their slaves, and most of the new northern states soon passed gradual emancipation laws. Manumission 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 blacks 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.

Native Americans, too, participated in and were affected by the Revolution. Many Native American tribes and confederacies, such as the Shawnee, Creek, Cherokee, and Iroquois, 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 the rapid, and often brutal expansion into the western territories. Native American tribes would continue to be displaced and pushed further west throughout the nineteenth century. Ultimately, American independence marked the beginning of the end of what had remained of Native American independence. ⁽³⁾

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. 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.” But at home, the Revolution created the United States of America.

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 ideals or by economic self-interest? Was the Revolution radical or conservative? But such questions are hardly limited to historians. From Abraham Lincoln quoting the Declaration of Independence in his “Gettysburg Address” to modern-day “Tea Party” members wearing knee breeches, the Revolution has remained at the center of American political culture. How one understands the Revolution often dictates how one defines what it means to be “American.”

The Revolution hardly ended all social and civic inequalities in the new nation, but the rhetoric of equality encapsulated in the Declaration of Independence has spanned American history. The rhetoric was used to highlight inequalities, eventually aiding the abolitionist movement of the early nineteenth century and the women’s rights movements of the 1840s and 1910s. And yet it was also used to justify secession and oppose civil rights movements. American revolutionaries broke new ground. They had to make it up as they went along. And in many ways, Americans have been doing the same ever since.⁽³⁾

Sound-Scape

The Declaration of Independence, adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, has inspired both political and social revolutions around the world ever since. This powerful document was written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, who was inspired by John Locke's vision of limited government and his concept of the social contract. As you listen to the words of the Declaration of Independence, reflect on what they mean to you, and why they continue to inspire people who fight for freedom.¹

Listen to the Declaration of Independence and follow along with the text on this page.

Click on the audio player to listen.



An audio element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can listen to it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/fscjushistory1/?p=42>

“Pre-Contact America, Africa, and Europe Sound-scape” by Florida State College at Jacksonville is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#) / A derivative from the [original work](#)

The Declaration of Independence

In Congress, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to

dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. —Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

(This text is not in the soundscape)

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to

encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, 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 connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which

Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

[DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: A TRANSCRIPTION](#) by [National Archives](#) is in the [Public Domain](#)

PART V

MODULE 4: EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD

22. Module Introduction

Early National Period

Module Introduction

Introduction

This module evaluates the Americans' initial attempt to establish a government under the Articles of Confederation, and why the Articles were eventually replaced by the Constitution. It then traces the development of the Constitution, and the compromises that had to be reached by the Founding Fathers as they created our system of government. The presidencies of George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson are discussed. Module 4 culminates with the War of 1812, the buildup to which dominated foreign policy during the early national period, and the ending of which was a major turning point in America's development of a national identity.

As you read this module, think about how the writing of the Constitution illustrates the art of political compromise. Why do you think that the Founding Fathers were able to reach compromises, in a very short period of time, while compromise is so difficult for politicians today? What motivated our Founding Fathers to work for the good of the entire country? What lessons can we learn from them? ¹

Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Students will be able to articulate an understanding of the individual in society.
- Students will be able to think critically about institutions, cultures, and behaviors in their local and/or national environment.
- Students will understand the social, political, and economic development of the United States.
- Students will integrate U.S. history into global history.¹

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Discuss the early development of the American government, including the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution.
- Discuss the challenges faced by George Washington as he served as America's first president.
- Evaluate the presidency of John Adams.
- Evaluate the presidency of Thomas Jefferson.¹

Readings and Resources

- Module 4 Learning Unit

23. Shay's Rebellion

Introduction

Click [here](#) to watch the video on The Birth of the U.S. Constitution. You can also

[“Birth of the US Constitution”](#) by Kahn Academy is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

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.

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.

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.

Thomas Jefferson's electoral victory over John Adams in 1800 — 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, but in some form all Americans were involved. 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 of liberty." They would all, in their own way, lay claim to the ideals of freedom and equality heralded, if not fully realized, by the Revolution.⁽³⁾

Shay's Rebellion

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. 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 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 protestors 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.

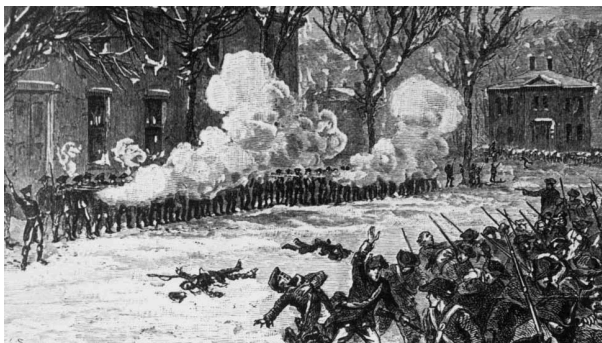


Figure 1 – “[Shay's Rebellion](#)” by Shockabrah, Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Shays' troops are repulsed from the armory at Springfield, Massachusetts in early 1787.

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.” 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.”⁽³⁾

24. The Constitutional Convention

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 — only Rhode Island declined to send a representative — met at the Pennsylvania state house in Philadelphia (Figure 2) in the summer of 1787. The delegates arrived at the convention with instructions to revise the Articles of Confederation.



Figure 2 — [The clock tower at Independence Hall. Philadelphia, PA.](#) by Albert E. Theberge, Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

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.

James Madison (Figure 3) 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.

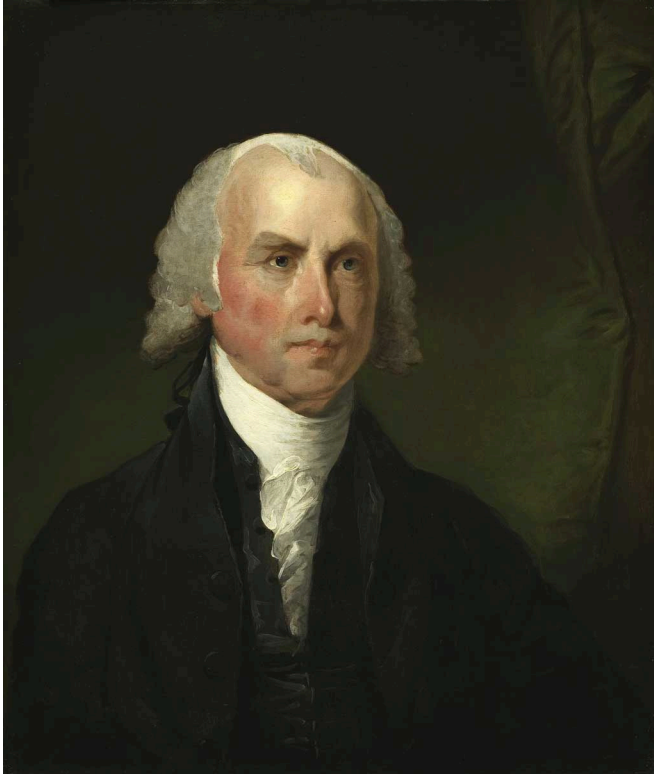


Figure 3 — [James Madison](#) by Gilbert Stuart, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Virginia Plan was daring. Traditional scholarship said that a republican form of government required a small and homogenous state. 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.

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. Other issues they debated — including how the national executive branch should work, what specific powers the federal government should have, or even what to do about the divisive issue of slavery — revolved around the issue of representation.

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. 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."

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. 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.⁽³⁾



Figure 4 – [Washington at Constitutional Convention of 1787, signing of U.S. Constitution](#) by Junius Brutus Stearns, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.

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.

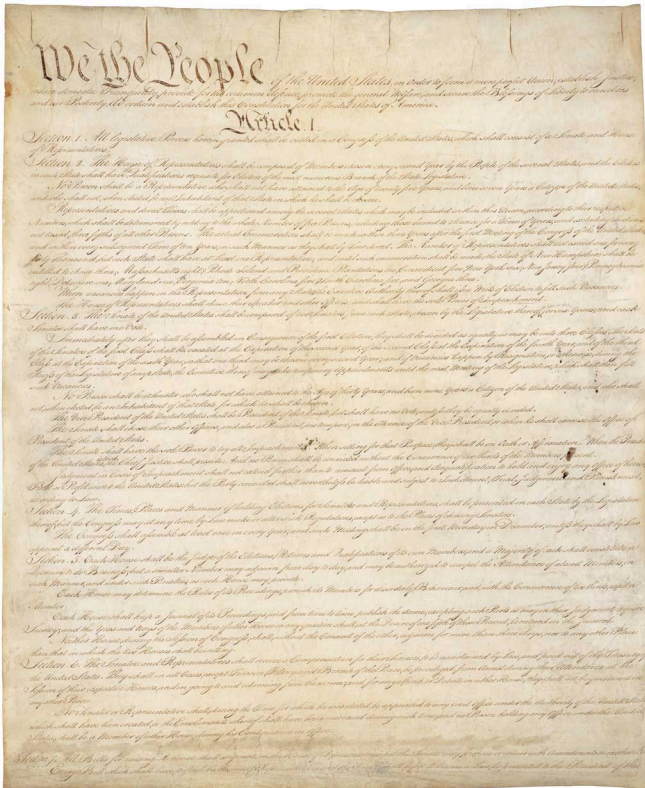


Figure 5 – [Constitution of the United States, page 1](#) by Constitutional Convention, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Over the next months, citizens debated the merits of the Constitution in newspaper articles, letters, sermons, and coffeehouse quarrels across America. 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 approve the Constitution narrowly. 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.

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. ⁽³⁾

Rights and Compromises

Although debates continued, Washington's election as president (Figure 6), and the first eight years of functioning government during his administration, 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 to the Constitution 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.



Figure 6 — [Official Presidential portrait of George Washington](#) by Gilbert Stuart, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

There was much the Bill of Rights did not cover. Women found here no special protections or guarantee of a voice in government. Many states would continue 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 Atlantic slave trade (the process of shipping enslaved Africans to the Western Hemisphere) 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 slaves in America. States like South Carolina and Georgia, however, were dependent upon 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 harder 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. ⁽³⁾

25. Hamilton's Financial System and The Whiskey Rebellion

Hamilton's Financial System

Meanwhile, during George Washington's presidency, political trouble was already brewing. Washington's cabinet choices reflected continuing tension between politicians who wanted and who feared a powerful national government. The vice president was John Adams, and Washington chose Alexander Hamilton (Figure 7) 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. From almost the beginning, Washington struggled to reconcile the "Federalist" and "Republican" (or Democratic-Republican) factions within his own administration.

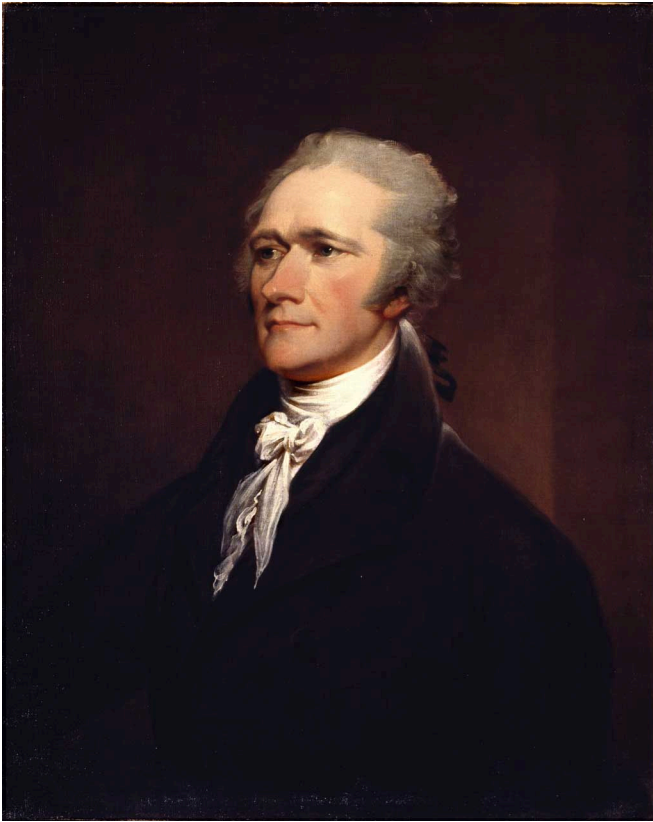


Figure 7 – [Alexander Hamilton](#) by John Trumbull, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.” 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 “the great & fundamental distinction in Society,” and Hamilton saw no reason to change this reality. 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.

Hamilton, therefore, believed that the federal government must be “a Repository of the Rights of the wealthy.” As the nation’s first secretary of the treasury, he proposed an ambitious financial plan to achieve 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.” 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.

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 twenty 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-chartered 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.⁽³⁾

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 western Pennsylvania in the fall of 1791, sixteen men, 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.



Figure 8 – [The Whiskey Rebellion](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 7,000, 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 due to 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 had demonstrated that some citizens, especially poor westerners, viewed it as their enemy.

Around the same time, another national issue also aroused fierce protest. Along with his vision of a strong national financial system, Hamilton also had a vision of an America 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. Most obvious and galling to American citizens was the "impressment" of seized American sailors into Britain's powerful navy, which made American trade risky and expensive — not to mention humiliating. 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. With his blessing, Hamilton's political ally John Jay (Figure 9), 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 wanted America to favor France instead. 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.



Figure 9 – [John Jay](#) by Gilbert Stuart, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.

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.⁽³⁾

26. The French Revolution and the Limits of Liberty

The French Revolution and the Limits of Liberty

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. And 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 (Figure 10). Most Americans had imagined that the idea of liberty was spreading from America to Europe, carried there by the returning French heroes who had taken part in the American Revolution. "The light of freedom which America hath struck out," a Philadelphia newspaper had declared, "has reflected to France, and kindled a blaze which lays despotism in ashes, and is illuminating the world."

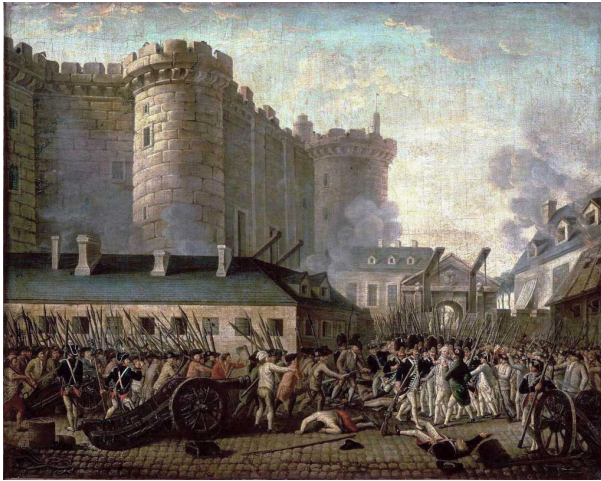


Figure 10 — [The Storming of the Bastille](#) by Anonymous, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Storming of the Bastille in July 1789 is widely regarded as the most iconic event of the Revolution.

Initially, nearly all Americans had sung the French Revolution's praises. Towns all over the country had hosted speeches and parades on July 14 to commemorate the day it began. Women had worn neoclassical dress in honor of its 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.

In April 1793, a new French ambassador, "Citizen" Edmond-Charles Genêt, had arrived in the United States. During his tour of several cities, Americans had greeted him with wild enthusiasm. Citizen Genêt had encouraged Americans to act against Spain, a British ally, by attacking its colonies of Florida and Louisiana. When President Washington had refused, Genêt had threatened to appeal to the American people directly. In response, Washington had 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.

Gen^l's intuition was correct. A radical coalition of revolutionaries had seized power in France. They had initiated a bloody purge of their enemies, the "Reign of Terror." (Figure 11) As Americans learned not only about Gen^l's impropriety but also the mounting body count in France, many of them began to have second thoughts about the French Revolution.

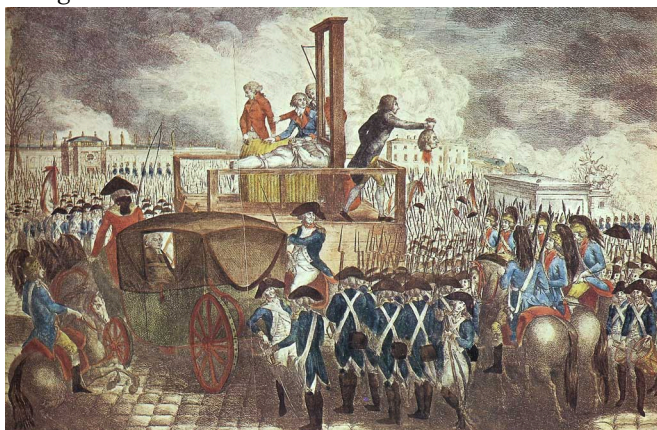


Figure 11 – [Execution of Louis XVI – copperplate engraving 1793](#) by Georg Heinrich Sieveking, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.” 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.

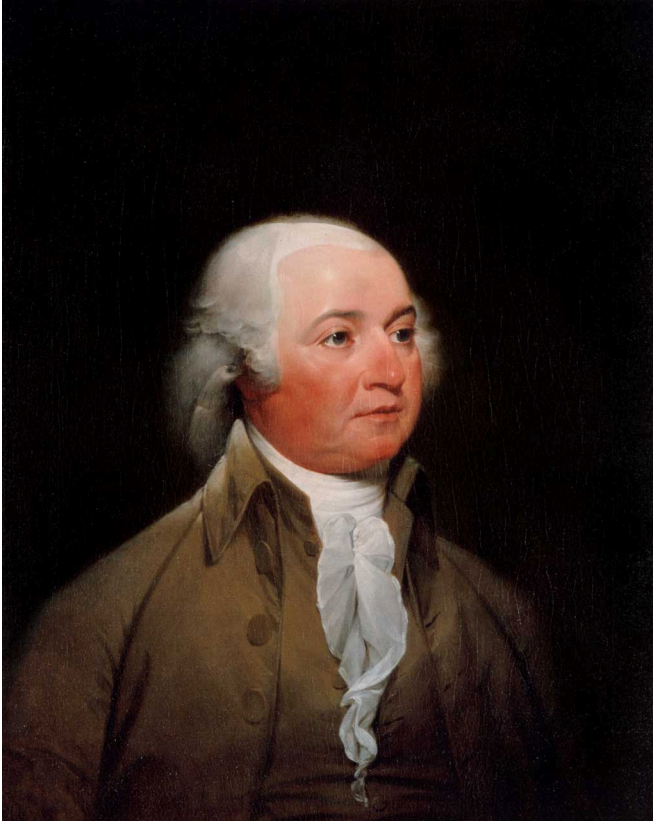


Figure 12 — [John Adams official presidential portrait](#) by John Trumbull, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The new president was John Adams (Figure 12), Washington's vice president. Adams was less beloved than the old general, and he governed a nation that was deeply divided. 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 “X.Y.Z. 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.”

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.

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.

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.

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 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.”

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. Likewise, the Virginia judge George Hay called for “any publication whatever criminal” to be exempt from legal punishment. 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. Nevertheless, both men now opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts on constitutional grounds. In 1798, Jefferson made this point in a resolution that the Kentucky state legislature adopted. A short time later, the Virginia legislature adopted a similar document that Madison wrote.

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 towards 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 upon this cracked foundation that many of conflicts of the nineteenth century would rest.⁽³⁾

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 was underway.

In 1776, none of the American state governments observed the separation of church and state. On the contrary, all thirteen states either had established (that is, official and tax-supported) state churches or 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.

Thus, 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 would fall outside of this definition. The new denominations would challenge the assumption that all Americans were Christians.

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."

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, with its guarantee of religious liberty, was ratified. 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 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? ⁽³⁾

The Election of 1800

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." 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.

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 73 electoral votes. (Adams had 65.) 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. Public alarm mounted as the deadlock dragged on, and Burr and his political allies conspired behind the scenes to win key state votes. In the end, however, Alexander Hamilton, believing that Burr was a dishonorable man, persuaded a few Federalists to stop supporting him. On the thirty-sixth ballot, Thomas Jefferson emerged victorious.

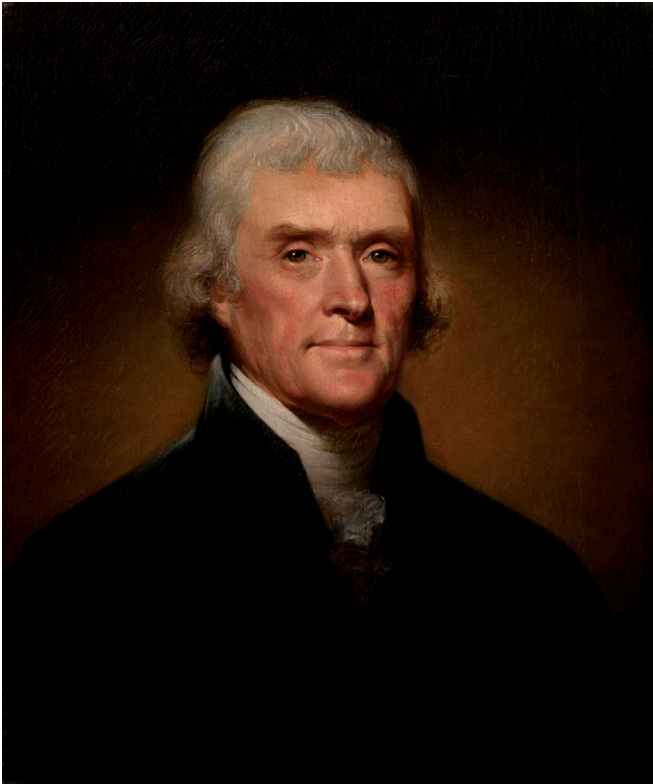


Figure 13 — [Official Presidential portrait of Thomas Jefferson](#) by Rembrandt Peale, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.

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. And his election set an important precedent. Adams accepted his electoral defeat and left the White House peacefully. “The revolution of 1800,” Jefferson would write 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.” 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. Upon 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.”⁽³⁾

27. Free and Enslaved Black Americans and the Challenge to Slavery

Free and Enslaved Black Americans and the Challenge to Slavery

Led by the slave Gabriel, close to one thousand slaves planned to attack Richmond in late August 1800 and end slavery in Virginia. 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 30th, 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, sent several messages to Virginia's white residents. 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 (Figure 14) — had failed. Not only did some literate slaves read accounts of the successful attack in Virginia's newspapers, others

heard about the rebellion firsthand after July 1793 when slaveholding refugees from Haiti arrived in Virginia with their slaves.



Figure 14 — [Toussaint L'Ouverture, leader of the Haitian Revolution](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Haitian Revolt (1791-1804) inspired free and enslaved blacks, and terrified whites throughout the United States. Port cities in the United States were flooded with news and refugees. Free people of color embraced the revolution, understanding it as 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. 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.” 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.” 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 whites scrambled to use the violence of the Haitian revolt to reinforce pro-slavery, white supremacy 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. These tropes divided white citizens and black non-citizens. 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.

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.” Something, somehow, was “curing” Moss of his blackness. And in that 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. As 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 the 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 blacks 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 (Figure 15), 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.” 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.



Figure 15 — [Benjamin Banneker at work](#) by Peter Waddell , Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

Artist's rendering of Benjamin Banneker working with George Washington on the design of Washington, DC. A Vision Unfolds by Peter Waddell (2005) in 2009 exhibition entitled “The Initiated Eye: Freemasonry and the Architecture of Washington, D.C.” at the National Heritage Museum (now the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library) in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Jefferson had his defenders. 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. ⁽³⁾

28. Jeffersonian Republicanism and the Democratization of America

Jeffersonian Republicanism and the Democratization of America

Free and enslaved black Americans were not the only ones pushing against political hierarchies. Jefferson's election to the presidency in 1800 represented a victory for ordinary white Americans in their bid to assume more direct control over the government. Elites had made no secret of their hostility toward pure democracy, that is 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. "The power of the people, if uncontroverted, is licentious and mobbish," Massachusetts Federalist Fisher Ames maintained in language echoed by many of his colleagues. Ames believed that the writers of the Constitution intended for the government to be a republic, rather than a democracy, since the latter depended upon public opinion, which he argued "shifts with every current of caprice." Jefferson's election, for Federalists like Ames, heralded a slide "down into the mire of a democracy."

Indeed, many political leaders and non-elite citizens believed Jefferson embraced the politics of the masses. "[I]n 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. 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." 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, proving 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 imaged 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. A contributor to the *Alexandria Expositor* argued that the Federalists had abused their power in the administration by raising "a large army" and naval force, which exemplified the ways they had appeared to be "hastily swallowing up all that remained of our liberties." 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 (Figure 16) 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.” American women were more than mothers to soldiers; they were mothers to liberty.



Figure 16 — [Mercy Otis Warren](#) by John Singleton Copley, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 a 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.” 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. ⁽³⁾

Jefferson as President

Buttressed by robust public support, Jefferson sought to implement policies that reflected this rhetoric and political activity. He worked to reduce taxes and cut the government’s budget believing that this would cause the economy to expand and prosper. 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 successfully 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. During the massive reorganization of North American property following the Seven Years’ War, France ceded Louisiana to Spain in exchange for West Florida. Jefferson was concerned about the American use of Spanish-held 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 U.S. Minister to France, Robert R. Livingston, tried to strike a compromise.

Fortunately for the U.S., 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 his 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.



Figure 17 – A derivative from the [original work](#), Louisiana Purchase by William Morris, Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

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. He believed that a strong executive was essential to a lasting republican nation.

Jefferson's foreign policy, especially the Embargo 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.'" 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 America's economy and Jefferson's personal finances even 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."

Criticism of Jefferson's policies began to use the same rhetoric that his supporters trumpeted. 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 (confirmed much later by DNA evidence) that Jefferson was involved in a sexual relationship with Sally Hemings, one of his slaves. Callender referred to Jefferson as "our little mulatto president,"

suggesting that sex with a slave had somehow compromised Jefferson's racial integrity. 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.

Arguments lamenting the democratization of America were far less effective than those that borrowed from democratic language and demonstrated how Jefferson's actions were, in fact, undermining the sovereignty of the people. Historian David Hackett Fischer has written that the Federalists set out to "defeat Jefferson with his own weapons." As Alexander Hamilton argued in 1802: "[W]e must consider whether it be possible for us to succeed without in some degree employing the weapons which have been employed against us." Indeed, when Federalists attacked Jefferson, they often accused him of acting against the interests of the very public he claimed to serve. In response to the Embargo, a citizen going by the pseudonym "A True Republican" wrote to the president: "You are a friend to the disturber of the peace & greatest enemy of the whole world."

The Federalists' appropriation of this language to critique Jefferson's administration 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 where 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 the Congress or the presidency; the last Federalist to run for president, Rufus King, lost to Monroe in 1816. ⁽³⁾

29. Native American Power and the United States

Native American Power and the United States

The rhetoric of equality was far removed from the reality of inequality along gender, class, racial and ethnic lines that permeated Jeffersonian America, as the diplomatic relations between Native Americans and local, state, and national governments illustrates. Prior to the Revolution, many Indian nations had balanced a delicate diplomacy between European empires, which scholars have called the 'Play-off System.' Moreover, in many parts of North America, indigenous peoples dominated social relations.

While Americans pushed for land cessions in all their interactions with Native diplomats and leaders, cessions (and boundaries) were only one source of tension. Trade, criminal jurisdiction, roads, the sale of liquor, and alliances were also key negotiating points. Yet the diplomatic negotiations in Paris that ended the Revolutionary War, in which Native peoples fought on each side or struggled desperately to maintain neutrality, were strikingly absent of Native American negotiators. 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. Encounters between different peoples or neighbors could require informal diplomacy. Formal diplomatic negotiations included Native rituals to reestablish relationships and open communication at treaty conferences that took place in Native towns, neutral sites in Indian-American borderlands, and in state and federal capitals. While chiefs were politically important, skilled orators, such as Red Jacket, 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.

Throughout the early republic, diplomacy was the common recourse between Native nations and between Native peoples and the federal government. 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.” At the same time, Euro-Americans heralded the natural wonders of North America as evidence of colonial superiority over Europe, even referring to themselves as “Native” to differentiate themselves from recent emigrants from Europe. History books depicted the North American continent as a vast, untamed wilderness, either portraying the Native peoples as hostile or simply omitting them completely. Poor treatment like this inspired hostility and calls for pan-Indian alliances from leaders of distinct Native nations, including the Shawnee leader Tecumseh.

Tecumseh (Figure 18) and his brother, Tenskwatawa (Figure 19), the Prophet, helped envision an alliance of North America’s indigenous populations to halt the encroachments of the United States and the resulting conditions. 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 in places ranging from Canada to Georgia, calling for unification, resistance, and the restoration of sacred power.

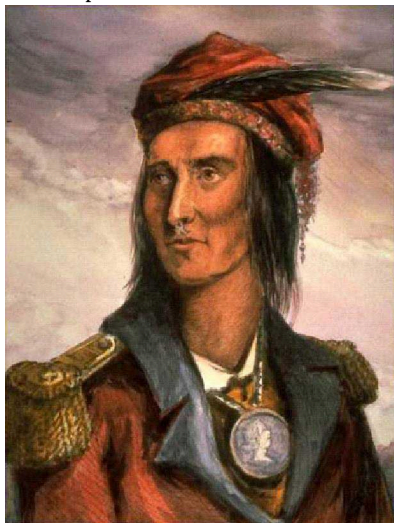


Figure 18 — A derivative of an [original work](#), Tecumseh by Benson John Lossing, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)



Figure 19 — [Shawnee Prophet, Tenskwatawa](#) by Charles Bird King, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Tecumseh's and Tenskwatawa's pan-Indian confederacy was the

culmination of the many nativist and revitalization movements that swept 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 to cooperate with one another against the "White people's ways and nature." 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, 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 (the "Northwest Indian War"). 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 a cultural and religious renewal, which coincided with his blending the various tenets, traditions, and rituals of indigenous religions and Christianity. In particular, Tenskwatawa emphasized apocalyptic elements that contributed to a belief that he and his followers would usher in a new world that would 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.

Tecumseh's confederacy drew heavily from indigenous communities in the Old Northwest as he capitalized upon a festering hatred for the land-hungry American republic. Tecumseh attracted a wealth of allies in his adamant refusal to concede any more land to the republic, in a sense professing a pan-Indian sovereignty that eluded Native communities during the eighteenth-century. 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, the spiritual underpinnings of Tecumseh's confederacy provided the cohesive glue to the diverse communities that comprised Tecumseh's resistance movement. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa were not above using this nativist and pan-Indian rhetoric to legitimate their own authority within indigenous communities at the expense of other Native leaders, which manifested most visibly during Tenskwatawa's witch-hunts of the 1800s as he accused his opponents and other "accommodationists" of witchcraft.

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 as well as 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 U.S., in contrast, believed 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 nativist and militant 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 at the Treaty of Fort Jackson. As historian Adam Rothman argues, the defeat of the Red Sticks provided the means for the

United States to expand westward beyond the Mississippi, guaranteeing the continued existence and profitability of a slave economy.

Similar to the Red Sticks, Tecumseh found that many Native leaders refused to join him and maintained their loyalties to the American republic, which diminished the potential for a truly pan-Indian resistance movement. Coupled with the losses that his forces sustained at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 on account of Tenskwatawa's recklessness (an event that created an antagonistic divide between the brothers), Tecumseh's confederation floundered as their conflict with the United States was soon swept up in the larger war between the American republic and British Empire in 1812. While Tecumseh and his confederated army seized several American forts on their own initiative, Tecumseh eventually solicited British aid after sustaining heavy losses from American fighters at Fort Wayne and Fort Harrison.



Figure 20 — [Death of Tecumseh, part of a frieze in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol](#) by Architect of the Capitol, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Even then, Tecumseh's 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 their encirclement by American forces. As Tecumseh intimated to 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." Not soon thereafter, Tecumseh fell on the battlefields of Moraviantown (Ontario) in October 1813 and his death dealt a severe blow to the pan-Indian

front against the United States (Figure 20). Men like Tecumseh and Pontiac, however, left behind a legacy of pan-Indian unity against white land encroachment. ⁽³⁾

30. The War of 1812

The War of 1812

Soon after Jefferson retired from the presidency in 1808, Congress ended the Embargo, as the British relaxed their policies toward American ships. Although it was unpopular, Jefferson still believed that more time would have proven that peaceable coercion truly was an effective weapon of international diplomacy. Yet war with Britain loomed — a war that would galvanize the young American nation and convince many citizens that the many voices now inhabiting the national political arena all spoke with one voice.

The War of 1812 stemmed from the United States' 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 and goals conflicted with those of the British Empire. And each time, British leaders showed little interest in accommodating the Americans.

Impressments, that is 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 6,000 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 carried 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 900 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. Within fifteen months Congress repealed the Embargo, replacing it with smaller restrictions on trade with Britain and France. Although, the Republican efforts to stand against Great Britain had failed, resentment of British trade policy remained widespread in American society.

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 began to preach a new religious doctrine that rejected the Europeans and their way of life. By 1809, Tecumseh, had turned the movement into a military and political alliance when he attempted to unite the tribes against the encroaching Americans.

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 38,000 of whom had populated Upper Canada after the Revolution and sought to establish a counter to the radical experiment of the United States.

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,” who one historian has described as “too young to remember the horrors of the last British war and thus willing to run the risks of another to vindicate the nation’s rights.” 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 U.S. launched their second offensive against Canada and the Great Lakes. In this period, the Americans, having gained some experience in 1812 and early 1813, won its first successes. The third stage, the Southern Theater, concluded with Andrew Jackson's January 1815 victory at Chalmette outside of New Orleans, Louisiana.

During the war, the Americans were greatly interested in Canada and the Great Lakes borderlands. In July 1812, the U.S. launched their first offensive against Canada. By August, however, the British and their allies defeated the Americans in Canada, costing the U.S. 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.

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 Phillip Broke, of the HMS Shannon attacked the USS Chesapeake captained by James Lawrence on June 1, 1813. Within six minutes, the Chesapeake was destroyed (Figure 21) 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!" 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.



Figure 21 — [USS Chesapeake](#) by Benson Lossing, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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. "Huzza! 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 destroyed 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 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 (Figure 23) penned the verses of what would become the national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner." (Figure 22)



Figure 22 — [“Star Spangled Banner Flag on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of History and Technology](#) by Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The large Star Spangled Banner Flag that inspired the lyrics of the US national anthem when it flew above Fort McHenry in the 1814 Battle of Baltimore. Shown here on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of History and Technology, around 1964. Many pieces were cut off the flag and given away as souvenirs early during its history. A linen backing, attached in 1914, shows the original extent of the flag.

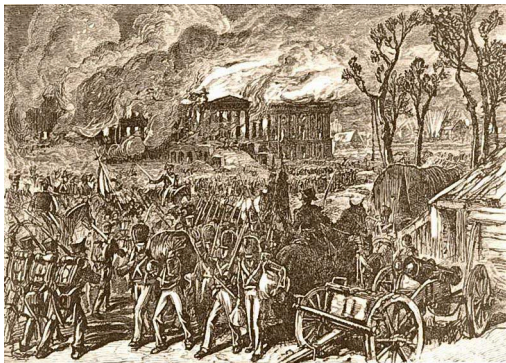


Figure 23 — [“By Dawn’s Early Light, 1912”](#) by Edward Percy Moran, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Francis Scott Key standing on boat, with right arm stretched out toward the United States flag flying over Fort McHenry, Baltimore, Maryland.

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 their blockade of the East coast. Thanks to the blockade, the British were able to burn

Washington D.C. on August 24, 1814 (Figure 24) 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 (Figure 25). 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.



CAPTURE AND BURNING OF WASHINGTON BY THE BRITISH, IN 1814.

Figure 24 — A derivative of an original work, [Burning of Washington](#) by Gwillhickers, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Drawing, "Capture and burning of Washington by the British, in 1814." 1876 publication.



Figure 25 — [Battle of New Orleans](#) by Jean Hyacinthe de Laclotte, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Painting by Jean Hyacinthe de Laclotte (1766 — 1829), a member of the Louisiana Militia who participated in the battle; painted by him after the victory based on his sketches made at the scene. — New Orleans Museum of Art

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.

These proposals were sent to Washington, but unfortunately for the Federalists, the victory at New Orleans buoyed popular support

for the 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 in 1824, would emerge not from within the Federalist fold, but after serving as Secretary of State under President James Monroe, the last leader of the Virginia Republicans.

The Treaty of Ghent essentially returned relations between the U.S. and Britain to their pre-war 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. In the Great Lakes borderlands, wartime propaganda fueled Americans fear of Britain's Native American allies, who 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." 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 6,000 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.” 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.



Figure 26 — [James Monroe, Official White House Portrait](#) by Samuel Morse, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

These projects were controversial. Many people believed they were unconstitutional or that they 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 (Figure 26) 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." As Federalists had attempted two decades earlier, Republican leaders after the War of 1812 advocated strengthening the state in order to strengthen the nation.⁽³⁾

Sound-Scape

The Module 4 sound-scape features an 1809 letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Madison. As you'll see in your reading for this module, American foreign policy at the time had to focus on preventing war between the U.S. and Britain and/or France. Jefferson's letter addresses this issue. At the end of the letter,

Jefferson writes about the U.S. creating an “empire for liberty,” which will become a very important concept for the rest of the century.¹

Listen to the letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Madison and follow along with the text.

Click on the speaker to listen.



An audio element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can listen to it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/fscjushistory1/?p=53>

Letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Madison

Dear Sir

Yours of the 24th. came to hand last night. the correspondence between mr Smith & mr Erskine had been recieved three days before. I sincerely congratulate you on the change it has produced in our situation. it is the source of very general joy here, & could it have arrived one month sooner would have had important effects, not only on the elections of other states, but of this also, from which it would seem that wherever there was any considerable portion of federalism it has been so much reinforced by those of whose politics

the price of wheat is the sole principle, that federalists will be returned from many districts of this state. the British ministry has been driven from it's Algerine system, not by any remaining morality in the people but by their unsteadiness under severe trial. but whencesoever it comes, I rejoice in it as the triumph of our forbearing & yet persevering system. it will lighten your anxieties, take from cabal it's most fertile ground of war, will give us peace during your time, & by the compleat extinguishment of our public debt open upon us the noblest application of revenue that has ever been exhibited by any nation. I am sorry they are sending a minister to attempt a treaty. they never made an equal commercial treaty with any nation, & we have no right to expect to be the first. it will place you between the injunctions of true patriotism & the clamors of a faction devoted to a foreign interest in preference to that of their own country. it will confirm the English too in their practice of whipping us into a treaty. they did it in Jay's case; were near it in Monroe's, & on failure of that, have applied the scourge with tenfold vigour, & now come on to try it's effect. but it is the moment when we should prove our consistence, by recurring to the principles we dictated to Monroe, the departure from which occasioned our rejection of his treaty, and by protesting against Jay's treaty being ever quoted, or looked at, or even mentioned. that form will for ever be a millstone round our

necks unless we now rid ourselves of it once for all. the occasion is highly favorable, as we never can have them more in our power. As to Bonaparte, I should not doubt the revocation of his edicts, were he governed by reason. but his policy is so crooked that it eludes conjecture. I fear his first object now is to dry up the sources of British prosperity by excluding her manufactures from the continent. he may fear that opening the ports of Europe to our vessels will open them to an inundation of British wares. he ought to be satisfied with having forced her to revoke the orders on which he pretended to retaliate, & to be particularly satisfied with us by whose unyielding adherence to principle she has been forced into the revocation. he ought the more to conciliate our good will, as we can be such an obstacle to the new career opening on him in the Spanish colonies. that he would give us the Floridas to withhold intercourse with the residue of those colonies cannot be doubted. but that is no price; because they are ours in the first moment of the first war, & until a war they are of no particular necessity to us. but, altho' with difficulty, he will consent to our recieving Cuba into our union to prevent our aid to Mexico & the other provinces. that would be a price, & I would immediately erect a column on the Southernmost limit of Cuba & inscribe on it a Ne plus ultra as to us in that direction. we should then have only to include the North in our confederacy, which

would be of course in the first war, and we should have such an empire for liberty as she has never surveyed since the creation: & I am persuaded no constitution was ever before so well calculated as ours for extensive empire & self government. as the Mentor went away before this change, & will leave France probably...

[THOMAS JEFFERSON TO JAMES MADISON](#) by [Library of Congress](#) is in the [Public Domain](#)

PART VI

MODULE 5: GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

31. Module Introduction

Growth and Development

Module Introduction

This module begins with the return of the two-party system after the end of the “Era of Good Feelings.” It then moves onto a discussion of the controversial presidency of Andrew Jackson. It also includes coverage of American economic development, as well as religion, culture, and reform prior to the Civil War. Be aware that the readings for this module are fairly extensive, so budget your time accordingly.

As you read this module, think of how the reform movements and utopian communities of the 19th century are similar to organizations that exist today. Notice that reform movements and utopian communities tend to arise during times of great change or turmoil regardless of time period. Do you see any long-term impact of the groups covered in this module? Also, consider the popularity of Andrew Jackson during his own time period, as contrasted with the criticism he receives today. Can you think of any recent American leaders who were popular during their time but might be viewed unfavorably by history? ¹

Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Students will be able to think critically about institutions, cultures, and behaviors in their local and/or national environment.
- Students will understand the social, political, and economic development of the United States.
- Students will develop a historical context for understanding current issues and events.¹

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the experiences of workers in the North and in the South.
- Discuss sectionalism in the early years following independence.
- Evaluate the successes, failures, and long-term impact of mid-19th century reform movements.
- Evaluate the successes and failures of Andrew Jackson.¹

Readings and Resources

- Module 5 Learning Unit

32. Early Republic Economic Development

Introduction

Click on [here](#) to watch the video on The Market Revolution.

[“The Market Revolution – impact and significance”](#) by Kahn Academy is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

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. 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” was busy remaking 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 the institution of American slavery accelerated. Northern subsistence farmers became laborers bound to the whims of markets and bosses. The market revolution sparked not only explosive economic growth and new personal wealth but also devastating depressions — “panics” — and a growing lower class of property-less workers. 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 that ensured the profitability and continued existence of the American slave system.⁽³⁾

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. With a larger exchange network connected by improved transportations, the introduction of labor-saving technology, and 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 forged new urban cultures.

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. 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 30 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.” 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.

State legislatures meanwhile pumped capital into the economy by chartering banks and the number of state-chartered banks skyrocketed from 1 in 1783, 266 in 1820, 702 in 1840, to 1,371 in 1860. European capital also helped to 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.”

Economic growth, however, proceeded unevenly. Depressions devastated the economy in 1819, 1837, and 1857. Each followed rampant speculation — bubbles — in various commodities: land in 1819, land and slaves in 1837, and railroad bonds in 1857. 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 for Americans the vast lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. In 1810, for instance, 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 500 miles but took six full weeks to complete. The journey was a terrible ordeal, she said. The roads were “so rocky & so gullied as to be almost impassable.” 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.” 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 National Road was to her “a garden.”

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 (Figure 1). The 350 mile-long manmade waterway linked the Great Lakes with the Hudson River—and thereby to 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.

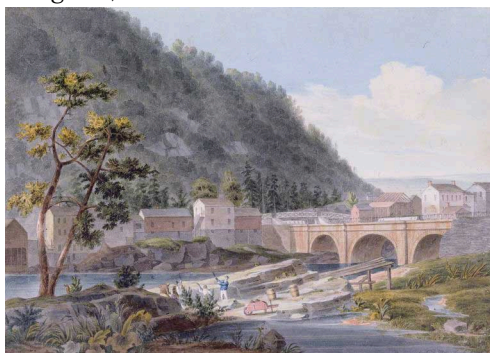


Figure 1 — [View on the Erie Canal, 1831](#) by John William Hill, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Robert Fulton established the first commercial steam boat 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 200 steamboats moved up and down western rivers.

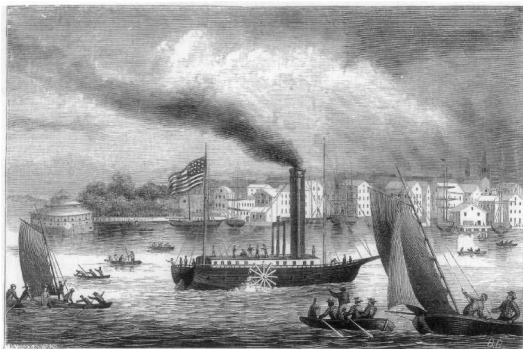


Figure 2 — [The steamboat Clermont](#), by G.F. and E.B. Bensell, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The United States' first long-distance rail line launched from Maryland in 1827 (Figure 3). 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 (Figure 4). 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.

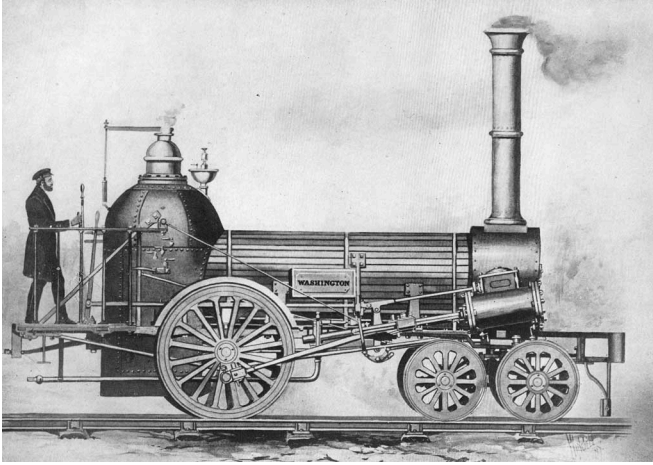


Figure 3 — [Willian Norris Locomotive Works, Philadelphia, 4-2-0 steam locomotive “George Washington” 1836](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

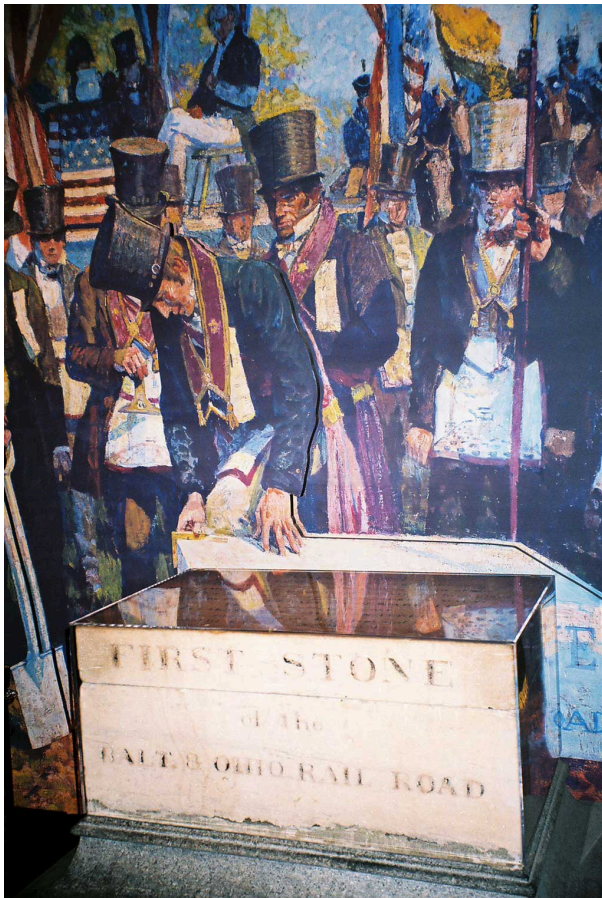


Figure 4 — [“B&O Railroad cornerstone”](#) by JG Howes, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Cornerstone of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, laid on 4 July 1828 by Charles Carroll of Carrollton, last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence. Displayed at the B&O; Railroad Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.

By 1860 Americans laid more than 30,000 miles of railroads. 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 (Figure 5) 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, in stark contrast to 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.

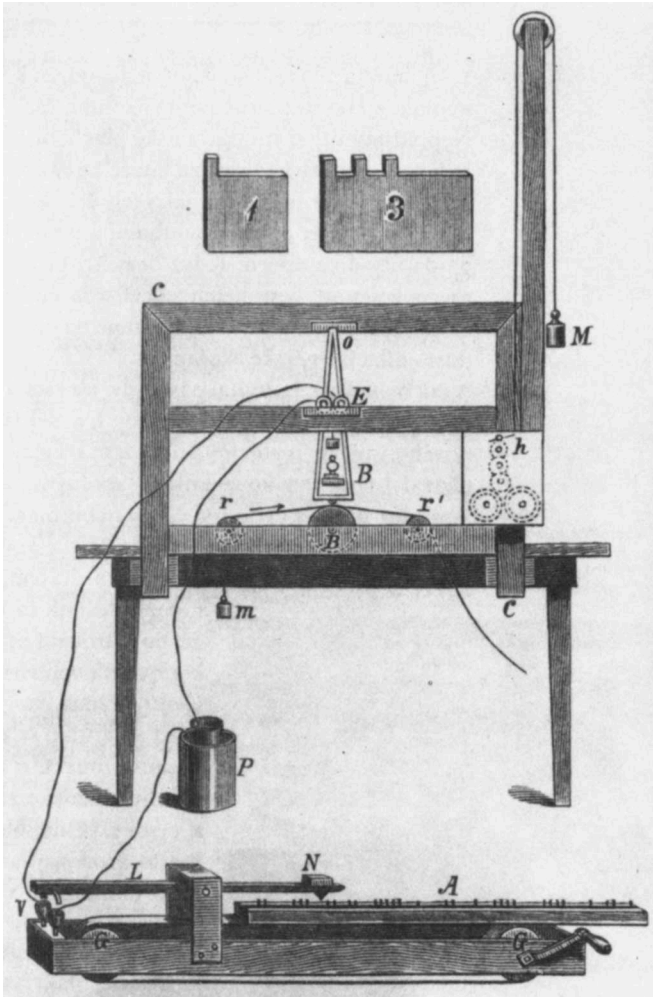


Figure 5 – [Original Samuel Morse telegraph](#) by Unknown, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 by eastern banks, which provided them with both the opportunity to expand their enterprise but left them prone before the risk of catastrophic failure wrought by distant and impersonal 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 (Figure 6), which partially mechanized wheat harvesting, and John Deere's steel-bladed plough, which more easily allowed for the conversion of unbroken ground into fertile farmland.

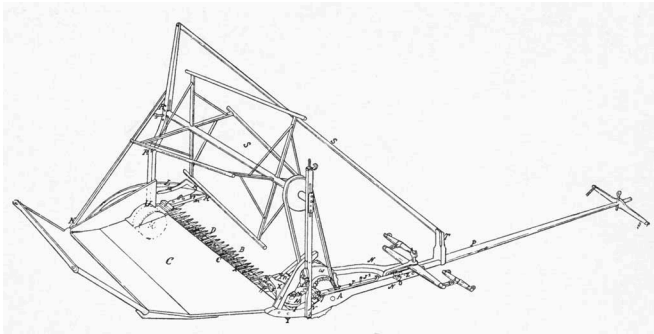


Figure 6 – [Sketch from 1845 patent of an improved grain reaper by Cyrus Hall McCormick](#), by Cyrus McCormick, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Most visibly, the market revolution encouraged the growth of cities and reshaped the lives of urban workers. In 1820, only two cities in the United States — New York and Philadelphia — had over 100,000 inhabitants. By 1850, six American cities met that threshold, including Chicago (Figure 7), which had been founded fewer than two decades earlier. 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 (Figure 8). 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 stream power and the exploitation of Pennsylvania coalfields shifted the focus of American manufacturing. By the 1830s, for instance, New England was losing its competitive advantage as new sources and locations of power opened up in other regions.



Figure 7 – [Bird's Eye View of Chicago, 1857](#) by Christian Inger, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

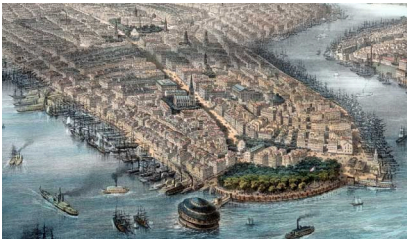


Figure 8 – [New York, 1850](#) by Théodore MÅller, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.

To protect the fortunes and liabilities of entrepreneurs who invested in early industrial endeavors, states offered the privileges of incorporation. 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 upon 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.” But in *Dartmouth v. Woodward* (1819) the Supreme Court upheld the rights of private corporations when it denied the government of New Hampshire’s attempt 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.”⁽³⁾

The Decline of Northern Slavery and the Rise of the Cotton Kingdom

The market revolution economy depended upon not just free-labor

factories in the north, but slave-labor plantations in the south. By 1832, textile companies made up 88 out of 106 American corporations valued at over \$100,000. These textile mills, worked by free labor, nevertheless depended upon 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. 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. Pennsylvania's emancipation act of 1780 stipulated that freed children serve an indenture term of twenty-eight years. Gradualism prompted emancipation but defended the interests of Northern masters and controlled still another generation of black Americans.

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 by 1793. Hopes for manumission were even slimmer, as few Northern slaveholders emancipated their own slaves. For example, roughly one-fifth of the white families in New York City owned slaves and yet fewer than 80 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 until after the Civil War.

Emancipation proceeded slowly, but proceeded nonetheless. A free black population of fewer than 10,000 at the time of the

Revolution increased to 200,000 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 to a total of 700,000 in the early years of the nineteenth century. The growth of abolition in the north and the acceleration of slavery in the South created growing divisions between North and South. Slavery declined in the North, but became more deeply entrenched in the South, owing in great part to the development of a new profitable staple crop: cotton. Eli Whitney's cotton gin (Figure 9), 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. Technological innovations elsewhere — water-powered textile factories in England and the American northeast, which could rapidly turn raw cotton into cloth — increased demand for southern cotton and encouraged white Southerners to expand cultivation farther west, to Mississippi River and beyond. Slavery's profitability had lagged in tobacco planting, but cotton gave it new life. Eager cotton planters invested their new profits in new slaves.

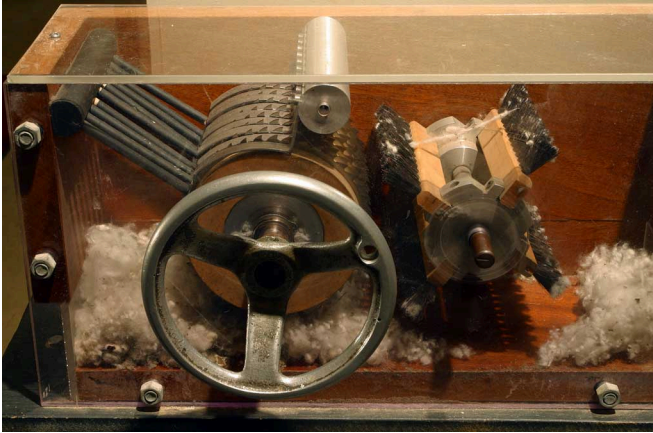


Figure 9 – [A cotton gin on display at the Eli Whitney Museum](#) by Tom Murphy VII, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.”

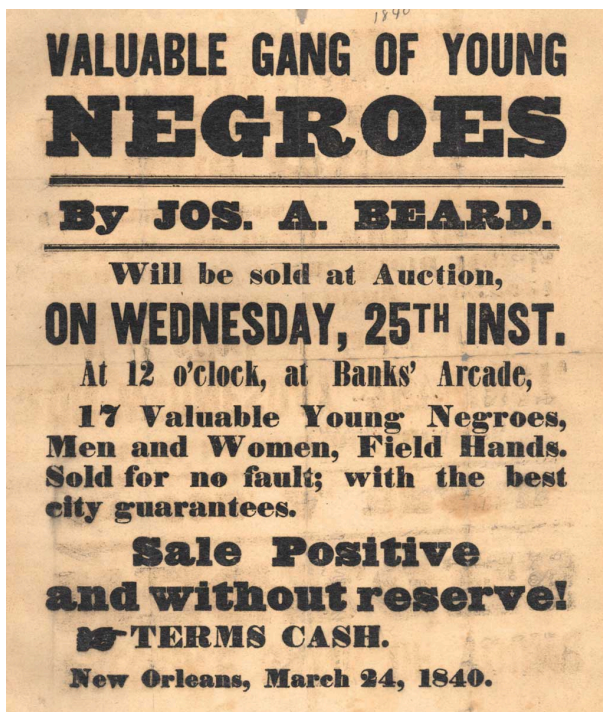


Figure 10 — [Valuable Gang Of Young Negroes, 1840](#) by [Wikimedia Commons](#) is in the [Public Domain](#)

1840 poster advertising slaves for sale, New Orleans. “Valuable Gang of Young Negroes”, 17 men and women, to be sold at auction 25 March 1840 at Banks’ Arcade. Note: Banks Arcade now known as Picayune Place

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.” Slave owners shipped their cotton north to textile manufacturers and to northern financiers 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 1,000,000 slaves from the tobacco-producing Upper South to cotton fields in the Lower South between 1790 and 1860, generating upwards of \$12,000,000 annually. This harrowing trade in human flesh supported middle-class occupations North and South: bankers, doctors, lawyers, insurance brokers, and shipping agents all profited. And of course it facilitated the expansion of northeastern textile mills.⁽³⁾

33. Changes in Labor Organization and Gender Roles

Changes in Labor Organization

While industrialization bypassed much 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, “piece work,” 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 because he had apprenticed in an English mill and was familiar with English machinery.

The fruits of American industrial espionage peaked in 1813 when Francis Cabot Lowell and Paul Moody recreated 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 (Figure 11), 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." Working conditions were harsh for the many desperate "mill girls" who operated the factories relentlessly from sun-up to sun-down. One worker complained that "a large class of females are, and have been, destined to a state of servitude." Women struck. 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." With a large supply of eager workers, Lowell's vision brought a rush of capital and entrepreneurs into New England and the first manufacturing boom in the new republic.

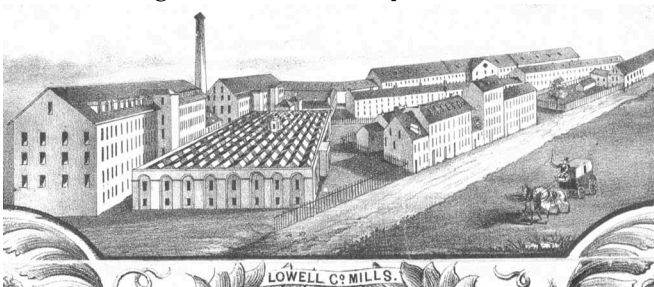


Figure 11 — [Plan of the city of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1850](#) by Sidney & Neff, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 workshop 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 upon 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.” 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 a 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, untrammelled...by unwise laws,” as Reverend Alonzo Potter rosily proclaimed in 1840. 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.”

Americans embarked upon 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 upon 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.

But the commercial economy often failed in its promise of social mobility. Depressions and downturns might destroy businesses and reduce owners to wage work, but even in times of prosperity unskilled workers might perpetually lack good wages and economic security and therefore had to forever depend upon 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 upon 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." 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 their wide decision-making and hard work. There were not classes of capitalists and laborers in America, they said, there was simply a steady ladder carrying laborers upward into management and ownership. One group of master carpenters denounced their striking journeyman 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." 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." It was this essential belief that undergirded the northern commitment to "free labor" and won the market revolution much widespread acceptance.⁽³⁾

Changes in Gender Roles and Family Life

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, and as Americans purchased more goods in stores and produced fewer at home, the activities 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." 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. 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.”

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.” 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 “arm[ed] her reason as well as her virtue.” Middling young women also utilized their education to take positions as school teachers in the expanding common school system. Bristol Academy in Tauton, Maine, for instance, advertised “instruction...in the art of teaching” for female pupils. 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.”



Figure 12 – Mary Lyon (1797-1849) founded the first woman's college, Mount Holyoke College in western Massachusetts in 1837. A derivative from the [original work](#), Mary Lyon by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

As middle-class youths found opportunities for respectable employment through formal education, 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 as 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. 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.”

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. This ideal was available to families that could survive without their children's labor. And as such sheltered boys and girls matured, their early experiences often determined whether they entered respectable, well-paying positions or remained as dependent workers with little prospects for social mobility.

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 only feasible in households where women did not need to engage in paid labor. In poorer households, women engaged in wage labor as factory workers, piece-workers producing items for market consumption, tavern and inn keepers, 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. Martha, her daughters, and 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 their husbands' money 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 it was worth the £130 price. 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 feminine 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 boarding house. 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.

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 slaves, the majority of 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.



Figure 13 — [Unidentified Bride, c. 1850](#) by George Eastman House, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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, raising children, and 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. ⁽³⁾



Figure 14 — [A household scene depicted in “Godey’s Lady’s Book,”](#) a women’s magazine, 1840 by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

34. The Rise of Industrial Labor in Antebellum America

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 of 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 and the booming American economy pulled Irish immigrants towards ports along the eastern United States. Between 1820 and 1840, over 250,000 Irish immigrants arrived in the United States. 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 to either 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. 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 nativist newspapers portrayed them with ape-like features. Despite hostility, Irish immigrants retained their social, cultural, and religious beliefs and left an indelible mark on American culture.

W. COLE, No. 8 Ann-st.

GROCERY CART AND HARNESS FOR SALE—In good order, and one chestnut horse, 8 years old excellent saddle horse; can be ridden by a lady. Also, young man wanted, from 16 to 18 years of age, able to work. No Irish need apply. CLUFF & TUNIS, No. 270 W. 11th-st., corner of Myrtle-av., Brooklyn.

BILLIARD TABLE FOR SALE—Of Leona manufacture; been used about nine months. Also, fixtures of a Bar-room. Inquire on the premises. No.

Figure 15 — [New York Times help wanted ad](#) specifying that Irish need not apply, 1854. by New York Times, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.

Most German immigrants were Catholics, but many were Jewish. Although records are sparse, New York's Jewish population rose from approximately 500 in 1825 to 40,000 in 1860. 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.



Figure 16 — [Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue](#), (founded 1740s) Charleston, South Carolina, 1840 building by John P. O'Neill, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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,” (Figure 17) 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.



Figure 17 — [Citizen Know Nothing](#) by Sarony & Co, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Uncle Sam's youngest son, Citizen Know Nothing. "A bust portrait of a young man representing the nativist

ideal of the Know Nothing party. He wears a bold tie and a fedora-type hat tilted at a rakish angle. The portrait is framed by intricate carving and scrollwork surmounted by an eagle with a shield, and is draped by an American flag. Behind the eagle is a gleaming star. The flag hangs from a staff at left which has a liberty cap on its end. The Citizen Know Nothing figure appears in several nativist prints of the period (for instance "The Young America Schottisch," no. 1855-5) and is probably an idealized type rather than an actual individual. The publishers, Williams, Stevens, Williams & Company, were art dealers with a gallery on Broadway." 1854

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 the Philadelphia's Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers or the Carpenters' Union of Boston operated in within specific industries in major American cities and 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 — and then only haltingly — 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."

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 day 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.” After a city-wide 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.

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?” Despite the widespread support for a ten-hour day, the movement achieved only partial success. President Van Buren established a ten-hour-day policy for laborers on federal public works projects. New Hampshire passed a state-wide law in 1847 and Pennsylvania following 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 (Figure 18). The protection of child laborers gained more middle-class support, especially in New England, 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.” Massachusetts quickly passed a law prohibiting

children under the age of twelve from working more than ten hours a day. By the mid-nineteenth century, every state in New England had followed Massachusetts' 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 nine and twelve years) should be prevented from working in dangerous occupations, and older children (between twelve and fifteen years) should balance their labor with education and time for leisure.

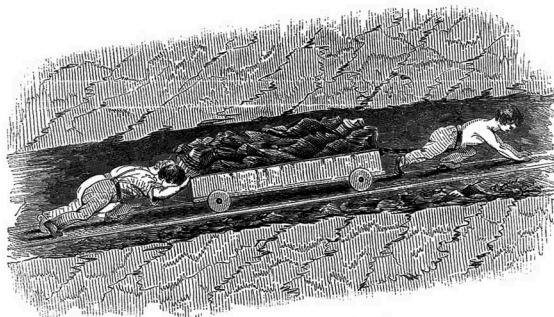


Figure 18 — [Children working in mines, 1843](#) published by J.W. Parker, Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#)

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 movement itself 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 supported the northern free soil movement, which challenged the spread of slavery, that emerged during 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.⁽³⁾

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." 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.

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 [the people’s] ignorance and licentiousness.”

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. 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.³

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 was shifting 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. Five of the first six 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 10,000 slaves and was poised to join the southern slave states in Congress.

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 due to 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 (Figure 19), contained three parts. 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.

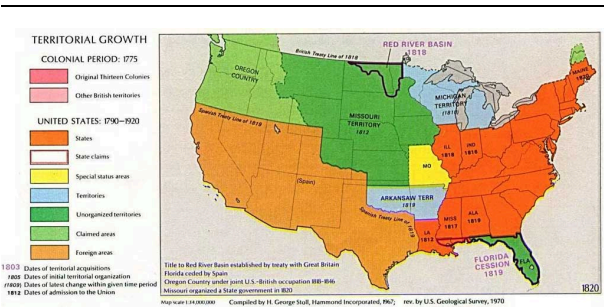


Figure 19 — A derivative of an [original work](#) , USA Territorial Growth 1820 by USGS, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The United States in 1819. The Missouri Compromise prohibited slavery in the unorganized territory of the Great Plains (upper dark green) and permitted it in Missouri (yellow) and the Arkansas Territory (lower blue area).

Not everyone, however, felt relieved. The Missouri Crisis made the sectional nature of American politics impossible to ignore. Until

now, although the Republicans had been strongest in southern states, there had been many northern Republicans as well. The Missouri Crisis split them almost 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.”

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, an issue that would cause worse trouble in years ahead. ⁽³⁾

35. The Rise of Andrew Jackson

The Rise of Andrew Jackson

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, returned fire, and 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.”

The duel in Logan County, Kentucky, was one of many that Jackson fought during the course of his long and highly controversial career. And 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.

The career of Andrew Jackson (1767–1845) 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.

A child of Irish immigrants, Andrew Jackson was born on March 17, 1767, on the border between North and South Carolina. He grew up during dangerous times. At age thirteen, he joined an American

militia unit in the Revolutionary War, but was soon captured, and a British officer slashed at his head with a sword after he refused to shine the officer's shoes (Figure 20). 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.



Figure 20 – [Young Jackson Refusing to Clean Major Coffin's Boots](#) (1876 lithograph) by Currier & Ives, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 won a spectacular victory over a 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 2,000 casualties against the British, sustaining barely 300 casualties of their own (Figure 21). 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.



Figure 21 — [Battle of New Orleans](#) by Edward Percy Moran, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Battle of New Orleans. General Andrew Jackson stands on the parapet of his makeshift defenses as

his troops repulse attacking Highlanders, by painter Edward Percy Moran in 1910.

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. 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.

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 (Figure 22). Each came from different parts 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 he accused of engineering a “corrupt bargain” with Clay to circumvent the popular will.

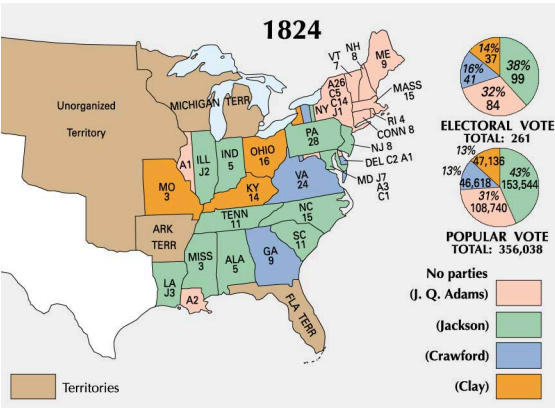


Figure 22 — [1824 Presidential Election](#) by National Atlas of the United States, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

Four years later, in 1828, Adams and Jackson squared off in one of the dirtiest presidential elections to date. 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 (Figure 23) before the divorce on her prior marriage was complete. This time, Andrew Jackson won the election easily (Figure 24), but Rachel Jackson died suddenly before his inauguration. Jackson would never forgive the people who attacked his wife’s character during the campaign.



Figure 23 — [Portrait of Rachel Donelson Jackson](#), wife of U.S. President Andrew Jackson by Ralph Eleaser Whiteside Earl, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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. In office 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. ⁽³⁾

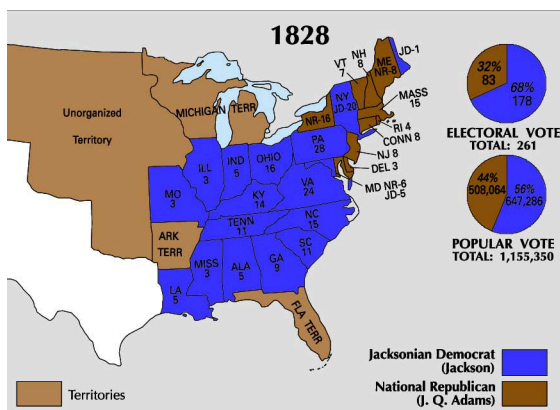


Figure 24 — [1828 Presidential Election](#) by National Atlas of the United States, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Nullification Crisis

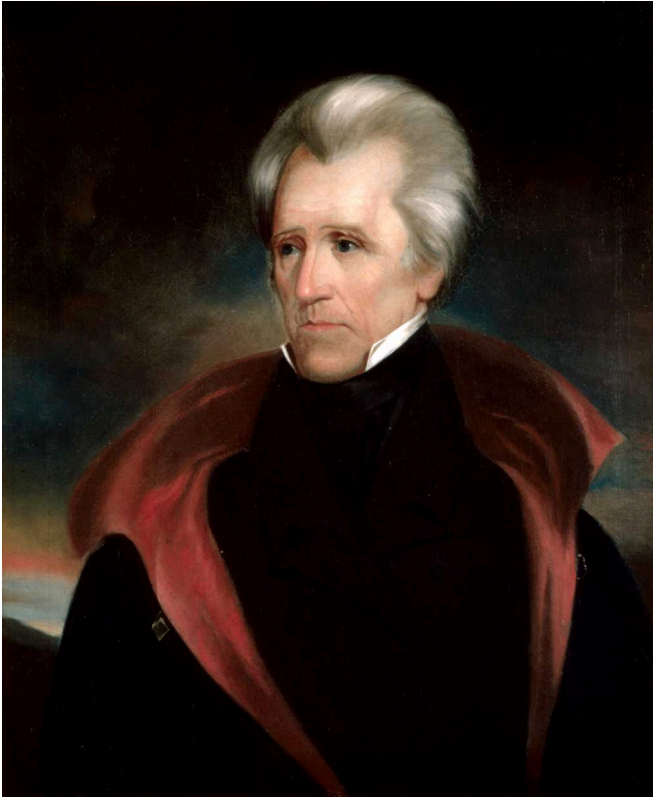


Figure 25 — [Andrew Jackson Presidential Portrait](#) by Ralph Eleaser Whiteside Earl, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 (Figure 26). 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.



Figure 26 — [Political cartoon depicting Andrew Jackson as a king](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 (Figure 27), 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 institutions of the Southern States” — meaning slavery. When Jackson failed to act against the tariff, Vice President Calhoun was caught in a tight position.

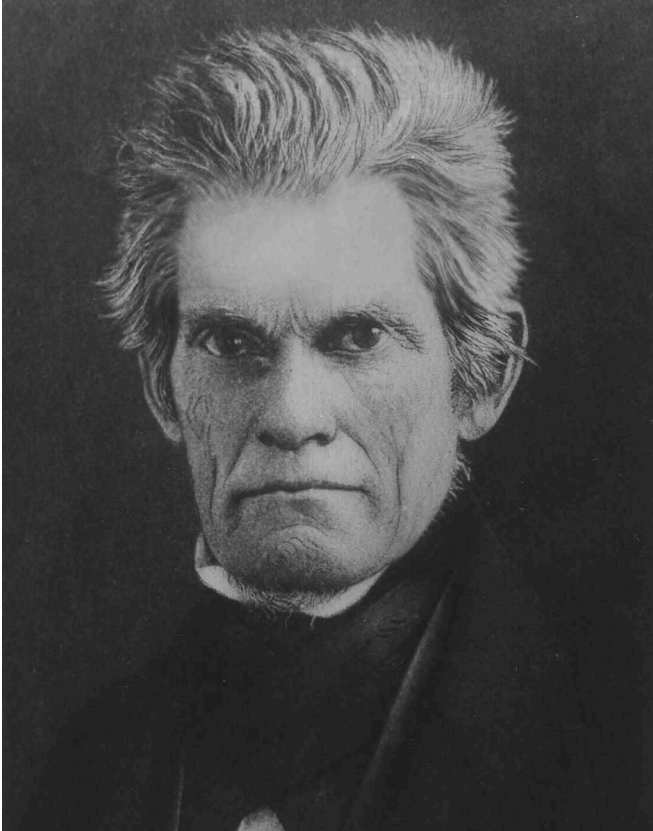


Figure 27 — [John C. Calhoun, c. 1835](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

In 1828, Calhoun secretly drafted the South Carolina Exposition and Protest, a pamphlet that laid out the doctrine of “nullification.” 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 had 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 pamphlet 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 liberty, most dear." 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. 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," 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. ⁽³⁾

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.

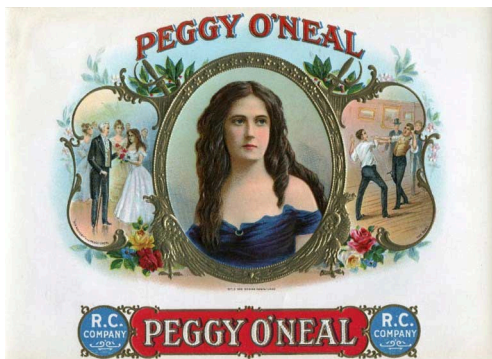


Figure 28 — [Old Cigar box lid depicting Margaret \(Peggy\) O'neal](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Old Cigar box lid depicting Margaret (Peggy) O'neal who became the wife of the Secretary of the Navy under Andrew Jackson.

On the left we can see the President Jackson offering flowers to Margaret O'neal after the scandal with the Washington wives. On the right picture, we can see her husband during a duel with a man who insulted her.

A few months earlier, Eaton 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 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."

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, and 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. They helped hold official Washington together. And according to one local society woman, "the ladies" had "as much rivalry and party

spirit, desire of precedence and authority” as male politicians had. 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.” 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.”

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. ⁽³⁾

36. The Bank War and Rise of the Whigs

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 had established as part of Alexander Hamilton's financial plan 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 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 (Figure 29). 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" that 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!"



Figure 29 — [Portrait of Nicholas Biddle, c. 1830s](#) by William Inman, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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

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." 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.”

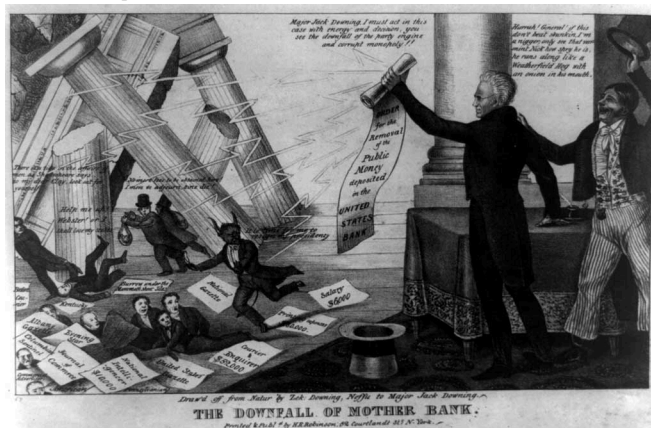


Figure 30 — [The Downfall of Mother Bank, 1833](#) by H.R. Robinson, Flickr is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.” A newspaper editor in Maine said that Jackson was trying to set “the poor against the rich,” perhaps in order to take over as a military tyrant. But Jackson's supporters praised him. Pro-Jackson newspaper editors wrote that he had kept a “monied aristocracy” from conquering the people.

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.⁽³⁾

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.

For a while, to be sure, the signs were good. 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 forty 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 to \$220 million over the same two years.

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 that 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."

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 of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, denouncing banking as a "system of fraud and oppression."

The Panic of 1837 led to a general economic depression. Between 1839 and 1843, the total capital held by American banks dropped by forty percent as prices fell and economic activity around the nation slowed to a crawl. The price of cotton in New Orleans, for instance, dropped fifty percent.

Travelling through New Orleans in January 1842, a British diplomat reported that the country "presents a lamentable appearance of exhaustion and demoralization." Over the previous decade, the American economy had soared to fantastic new heights and plunged to dramatic new depths.

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, seven states and a territorial government defaulted on loans made by British banks to finance internal improvements. ⁽³⁾

Rise of the Whigs

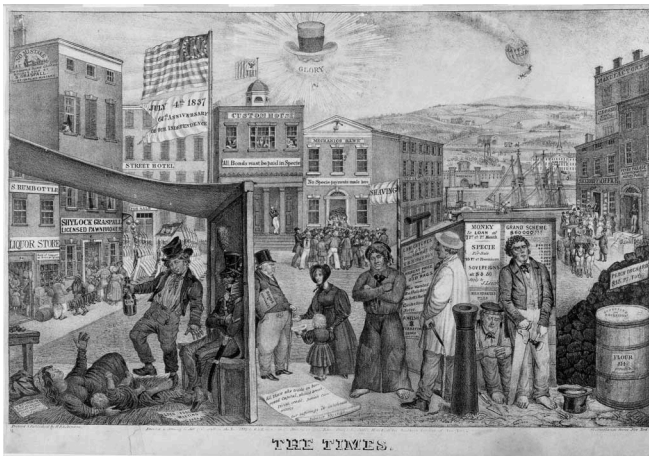


Figure 31 — [An 1837 caricature blames Andrew Jackson for hard times](#) by Edward Williams Clay, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Whig Party, which had been created to oppose Andrew Jackson and the Democratic Party, benefitted from the disaster of the Panic of 1837.

The Whig Party had grown partly out of the political coalition of John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay. 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 proslavery southerners angry about Jackson's behavior during the Nullification Crisis as well as antislavery Yankees.



Figure 32 – [U.S. Whig poster showing unemployment in 1837](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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.” 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 (Figure 33), 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.

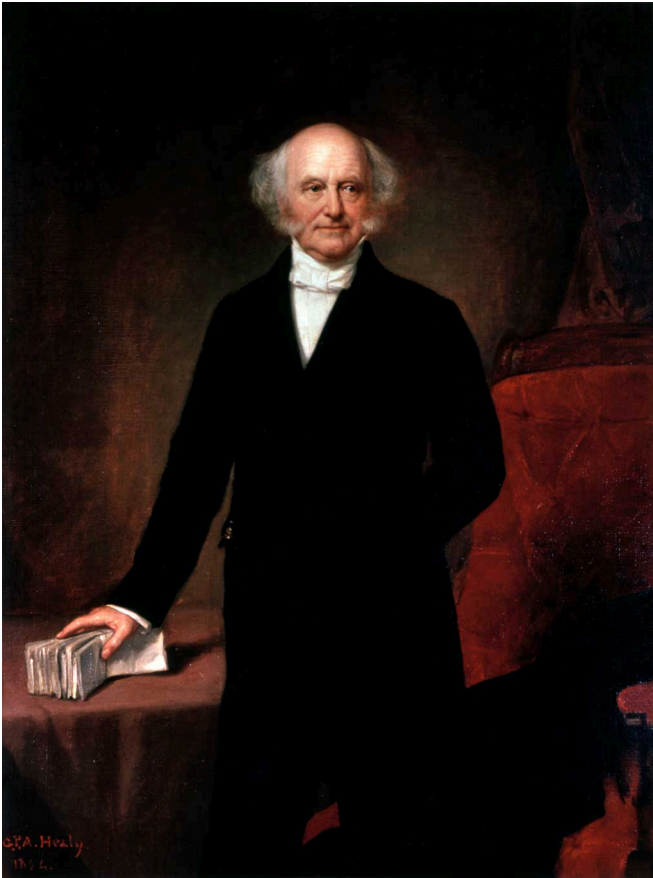


Figure 33 — [Martin Van Buren Official White House Portrait](#) by G.P.A. Healy, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

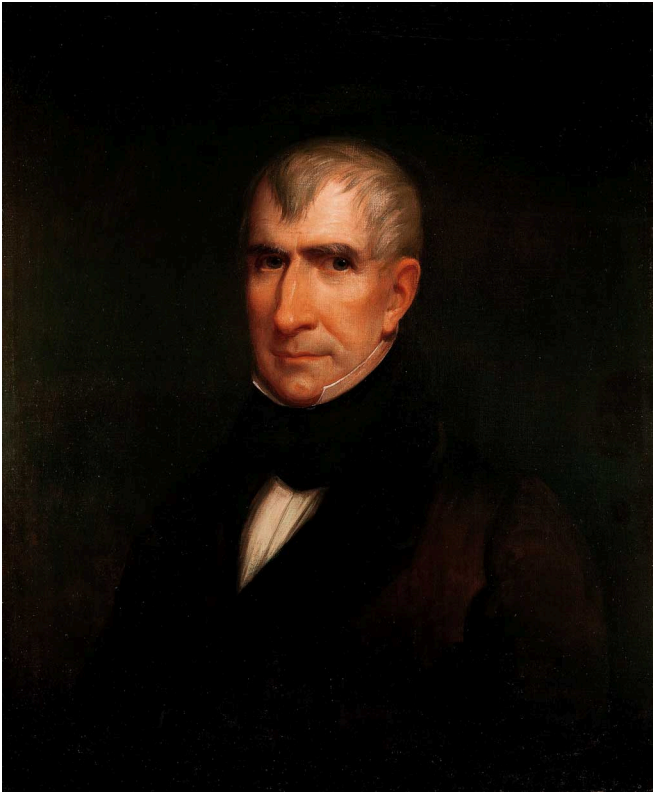


Figure 34 – [William Henry Harrison Official White House Portrait](#) by James Reid Lambdin, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

To Henry Clay's disappointment, the convention voted to nominate not him but General William Henry Harrison (Figure 34) of Ohio as the Whig candidate for president in 1840. Harrison was known primarily for defeating Shawnee warriors in the Northwest 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, as vice president. Tyler had been a Jackson supporter but had broken with him over states' rights during the Nullification Crisis.



Figure 35 — [Tip and Ty banner](#) by Ross Country Historical Society, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

A campaign banner with a variation of the Tippecanoe and Tyler too slogan, used in the 1840 U.S. presidential campaign.

Although “Tippecanoe and Tyler, too” (Figure 35) 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 (Figure 36). Harrison thus holds the ironic honor of having the longest inaugural address and the shortest term in office of any American president. Vice President Tyler became president (Figure 37) 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.



Figure 36 — [Death of Harrison, April 4 1841](#) by N. Currier, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)



Figure 37 — [John Tyler Official White House Portrait](#) by George Peter Alexander Healy, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 would succeed in electing two more presidents, but it would remain deeply divided. Its problems would grow as the issue of slavery strained the Union in the 1850s. Unable to agree upon a consistent national position on slavery, and unable to find another national issue to rally around, the Whigs would break apart by 1856. ⁽³⁾

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 offices 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 (Figure 38), 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.



Figure 38 — [The Masonic symbol Square and Compass](#) by Mu5ti, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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, by One of the Fraternity Who Has Devoted Thirty Years to the Subject*. 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 twelve percent of the vote for governor.

In 1830, the Anti-Masons held a national convention in Philadelphia. 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. The convent attack was among many eruptions of "nativism," especially in New England and other parts of the Northeast, during the early nineteenth century.



Figure 39 — [Burning of St. Augustine Church during the Philadelphia nativist riots in 1844](#) by John B. Perry, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 had the potential to 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.” 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?ⁱ ⁽³⁾

37. Race and Jacksonian Democracy

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 (Figure 40), 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 now 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."



Figure 40 — [James Forten](#) by Robert Douglass, Jr (probable), Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Watercolor by an unknown artist of abolitionist James Forten (1766-1842) believed to have been painted during his lifetime. The image comes from The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

During the 1830s, furthermore, the social tensions that had promoted Andrew Jackson's rise also worsened race relations. Almost 400,000 free blacks lived in America by the end of the decade. 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?”

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.” (Figure 41) 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.



Figure 41 — [Thomas Dartmouth Rice as “Jim Crow,” 1832](#) by Unknown, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 (Figure 42) 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 fundraising fairs. For many of them, the antislavery movement was a way to participate more in “respectable” middle-class culture—a way for both men and women to have a say in American life.

**Preamble to the Constitution of the Boston Female
Anti-Slavery Society.**

Believing slavery to be a direct violation of the laws of God,
and productive of a vast amount of misery and crime; and convinced
that its abolition can only be effected by an acknowledgement of
"the justice and necessity of immediate emancipation,—we hereby
agree to form ourselves into a Society **TO AID AND AS-**
SIST IN THIS RIGHTEOUS CAUSE AS FAR
AS LIES WITHIN OUR POWER.

Figure 42 — [From the constitution of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, ca. 1836](#) by Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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. ⁽³⁾

Sound-Scape

An excerpt from Andrew Jackson's first inaugural address, delivered in 1829, is the focus of the Module 5 sound-scape. In it, Jackson reflects on the overwhelming responsibilities that come with the presidency, as well as his views on what the role of president entails. ¹

Listen to President Andrew Jackson's first inaugural address as the 7th President of the United States and follow along with the text.

Click on the audio player to listen.



An audio element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can listen to it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/fscjushistory1/?p=62>

President Andrew Jackson's First Inaugural Address

Fellow citizens,

About to enter upon the duties to which as President of the United States, I have been called by voluntary suffrages of my country, I avail myself of this occasion to express the deep and heartfelt gratitude with which a testimonial of such distinguished favor has been received. To be elected under the circumstances which have marked the recent contest of opinion to administer the affairs of a government deriving all its powers from the will of the people, a government whose vital principle is the right of the people to control its measures, and whose only object and glory are the equal happiness and freedom of all the members of the confederacy, cannot but penetrate me with the most powerful and mingled emotions of thanks, on the one hand, for the honor conferred on me, and on the other, of solemn apprehensions for the safety of the great and important interests committed to my charge.

Under the weight of these emotions, unaided by any confidence inspired by past experience, or by any strength derived from the conscious possession of powers equal to the station, I confess, fellow citizens, that I

approach it with trembling reluctance. But my Country has willed it, and I obey, gathering hope from the reflection that the other branches of the Govt. with whom the constitutional will associates me, will yield those resources of Patriotism and intelligence, by which the administration may be rendered useful, and the honor and independence of our widely extended Republic guarded from encroachment; but above all, trusting to the smiles of that overruling Providence, “in the hollow of whose hand,” is the destiny of nations, for that animation of common council and harmonizing effort, which shall enable us to steer, the Bark of liberty, through every difficulty.

[JACKSON'S FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS: A TRANSCRIPT](#) by [Library of Congress is in the Public Domain](#)

PART VII

MODULE 6: PRE-CIVIL WAR

38. Module Introduction

Pre-Civil War

Module Introduction

This module addresses the events and issues that led to the Civil War. For forty years, attempts were made to resolve conflicts between North and South, with Henry Clay as the major architect of these compromises. Despite Clay's efforts, however, the compromises failed to address the deeper issues separating North and South, and did not provide permanent solutions to the debate over slavery. Abraham Lincoln hoped to keep the country together, but his election as president in 1860 ended up being the fatal blow to the country's unity.

As you read this module, try to identify the point of no return regarding the coming of the Civil War – at what point was it too late to prevent? Consider this module in the context of current events as well; even though the country's current division is based on political differences and not regional differences. What lessons can we learn from the mistakes that led to the Civil War that can help us avoid further division? ¹

Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Students will be able to articulate an understanding of the individual in society.
- Students will be able to think critically about institutions, cultures, and behaviors in their local and/or national environment.
- Students will understand the social, political, and economic development of the United States.
- Students will develop a historical context for understanding current issues and events.
- Students will integrate U.S. history into global history.¹

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Discuss the prevention or inevitability of the American Civil War.
- Assess the causes of the Civil War in addition to the debate over slavery.¹

Readings and Resources

- Module 6 Learning Unit

39. Sectionalism in the Early Republic

Introduction

Click [here](#) to watch the video on increasing political battles over slavery in the mid-1800s.

[“Increasing political battles in the mid-1800s”](#) by Kahn Academy is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

Slavery divided Americans from the beginning, but Americans demonstrated a shrewd ability to maintain unity in spite of division. In the 1770s, all of England’s North American colonies employed slave labor. Enslaved workers grew food, cultivated cash crops, worked in ports, and manufactured goods. Within a couple decades, however, slavery disappeared from half of the nation and an antislavery movement began to challenge the ancient institution. Battles emerged over the institution’s westward expansion. 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.

As the antislavery movement grew, slaveholders managed to survive a range of challenges to their legitimacy in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s. But 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 in 1860-1861, fears, nearly a century in the making, at last devolved into bloody war. ⁽³⁾

Sectionalism in the Early Republic

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. 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, ideals that in time became the ideological foundations of the sectional crisis. English political theorists, in particular, began to re-think natural law justifications for slavery. They rejected the longstanding 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 man.

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 un-freedom, while in the process shattering the longstanding assumption that African 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.

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 in its search for new land and resources after its victory in the Revolution, 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. Many whites 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 framer's 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. The Louisiana Purchase signaled the beginning of rising sectional feelings, but a truly sectional national debate did not yet emerge.

That debate, however, came quickly. Sectional differences tied to the expansion of plantation slavery in the West were especially important after 1803. The Ohio 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. These laws often banned African American voting, denied black Americans access to public schools, and made it impossible for non-whites 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. Saint 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 stirred up the trouble by proposing 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.

Congress reached a "compromise" on Missouri's admission, largely through the work of Kentuckian Henry Clay (Figure 1). 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.

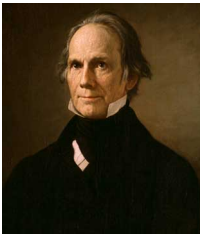


Figure 1 – [Henry Clay](#) by Henry F. Darby, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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. Anti-slavery 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 or not, 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 1, Section 2, for example, the Constitution enabled representation in the South to be based on rules defining enslaved people as 3/5 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.” Anti-slavery arguers also pointed out that while the Congress could not pass a law limiting the slave trade by 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. 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, debates over slavery unleashed during the Missouri Compromise did not yet develop into hardened defenses of either slave or free labor as positive good. Those would come in the coming decades, but 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 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. ⁽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 wherever 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. 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 during the 1828 Presidential election behind Andrew Jackson. Slavery's aristocratic culture was a prickly issue of potential contradiction for the workingman's party, but Democrats nonetheless had broad appeal in the South, where most men did not own slaves. The Democratic Party tried to avoid the issue of slavery and instead sought to unite Americans around shared racial anxieties and desires to expand the nation.

Democrats were not without their critics during their decade of dominance in the 1830s. In time, the slavery issue again gained energy over ongoing dilemmas about what to do with western lands. 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 lap-dogs for southern slaveholders had tremendous power.

The major party challenge to the Democrats arose with the Whigs. Whig strongholds often mirrored the patterns of westward migrations out of New England. With an odd coalition of wealthy merchants, middle and upper class farmers, planters in the Upland South, and settlers in the Great Lakes, Whigs struggled to bring a cohesive message to voters during 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.

Whig leaders stressed Protestant culture, federal-sponsored internal improvements, and courted the support of a variety of reform movements, including of course temperance, Nativism, and even anti-slavery, 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 developing Whig. A veteran of the Black Hawk War, Lincoln had re-located 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, a small town located outside of Buffalo, went to work and organized the anti-slavery Liberty Party in 1839. Liberty leaders demanded the end of slavery in the District of Columbia, the ending the interstate slave trade, and the prohibition of slavery's further 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, however, and 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. 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 had at last moved in a clear pro-slavery direction. Texas President Sam Houston managed to secure a deal with Polk, and gained admission to the Union for Texas in 1845. Anti-slavery northerners were also worried about the admission of Florida, which also entered the Union as slave state in 1845. The year 1845 became a pivotal year in the memory of anti-slavery leaders. As Americans embraced calls to pursue their "Manifest Destiny," anti-slavery 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 anti-slavery leaders. The 1842 Supreme Court case *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* ruled that the federal government's Fugitive Slave Act trumped Pennsylvania's personal liberty law. 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 (Figure 2). Douglass's entrance into northern politics marked an important new development in the nation's coming sectional crisis, as the nation's beleaguered community of freed black northerners gained perhaps its most powerful voice. 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 pluck 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*. The book launched his life-long career as an advocate for the enslaved and the oppressed and helped further raise the visibility of black politics nationally. Other former slaves, including Sojourner Truth (Figure 3) joined Douglass in rousing support for antislavery, as did free blacks like Maria Stewart, James McCune Smith, Martin Delaney and numerous others. 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 (Figure 4) is one of the more dramatic examples. But the forces of slavery had powerful allies at every level of government.

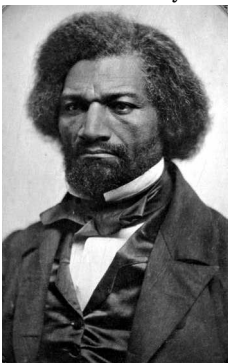


Figure 2 – [Frederick Douglass](#) by Unidentified photographer, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)



Figure 3 — [Sojourner Truth](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)



Figure 4 – [Harriet Tubman](#) by H.B. Lindsley, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The year 1846 signaled new reversals to the anti-slavery 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 the slaveholders. Events in early 1846 seemed to justify anti-slavery 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, after campaigns conquering all or most of present-day California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming and Arizona (lands west of the Louisiana Purchase excepting for Pacific Northwest) United States forces entered Mexico City. Whigs, like Abraham Lincoln, found their protests sidelined, but anti-slavery 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 in the Senate it failed. ⁽³⁾

40. Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men

Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men

The conclusion of the Mexican War gave rise to the 1848 Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo. The treaty infuriated anti-slavery leaders in the United States. The spoils gained from the Mexican War were impressive, but it was clear they would help expand slavery. In the end, the United States brokered a deal to purchase the California and New Mexico Territories for \$15 million dollars. This acquisition included lands that would become the future states of California, Utah, Nevada, most of Arizona, and well as parts of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. Also in 1848, the administration worked to create the Oregon Territory.



Figure 5 — [Mexican Cession](#) by United States federal government, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

The Mexican Cession agreed by Mexico (white) and the Gadsden Purchase (brown). Part of the area marked as Gadsden Purchase near modern-day Mesilla, New Mexico, was disputed after the Treaty.

The acquisition of so much land made it imperative to anti-slavery leaders that these lands not be opened to slavery. But knowing that the Liberty Party was not likely to provide a home to many moderate voters, leaders instead hoped to foster a new and more competitive party, which they called the Free Soil Party (Figure 6). Anti-slavery leaders came into the 1848 election hoping that their vision of a federal government divorced from slavery might be heard. But both the Whigs and the Democrats, nominated pro-slavery southerners. Left unrepresented, anti-slavery Free Soil leaders swung into action.

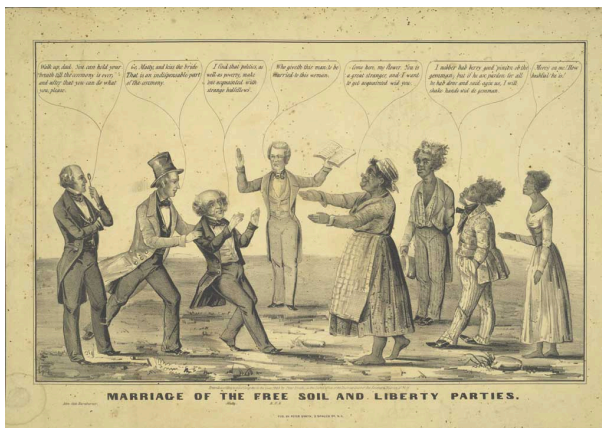


Figure 6 — [Marriage of the Free Soil and Liberty Parties](#) by Nathaniel Currier, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

1848 political caricature which savagely satirizes the fact that though the presidential nominee of the newly-formed Free Soil Party, Martin Van Buren, was not himself an abolitionist, he was receiving the support of many abolitionists who had formerly been involved with the Liberty Party. To represent this, Martin van Buren (left of center) is shown symbolically marrying a black woman. The figure on the far left is presumably Van Buren's son, John Van Buren, while the presiding clergyman in the center ("BFB") is probably Benjamin F. Butler.

Demanding an alternative to the pro-slavery status quo, Free Soil leaders assembled so-called "Conscience Whigs," like those found in Massachusetts under Charles Francis Adams, alongside western ex-Liberty Party leaders like Salmon P. Chase of Ohio. 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 the western leadership together and called for an end to slavery in Washington DC and a halt on slavery's expansion in the territories.

The Free Soil movement hardly made a dent in the 1848 Presidential election, but it drew more than four times the popular vote that the Liberty Party had won earlier. It was a promising start. In 1848, Free Soil leaders claimed just 10% 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. 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. But news from a number of failed revolutions in Europe alarmed American reformers. As exiled radicals filtered out of Europe and into the United States, a women's rights movement also got underway in July at Seneca Falls, New York. Representing the first of such meetings ever held in United States history, it was led by figures like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, women with deep ties to the abolitionist cause (Figure 7). Frederick Douglass also appeared at the convention and took part in the proceedings, where participants debated the Declaration of Sentiments, Grievances and Resolutions. 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.



Figure 7 — [Seneca Falls Convention U.S. postage stamp](#) by United States federal government, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

U.S. postage stamp commemorating the Seneca Falls Convention titled 100 Years of Progress of Women: 1848-1948 (Elizabeth Cady Stanton on left, Carrie Chapman Catt in middle, Lucretia Mott on right.)

The upheavals signaled by 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, threatening the whole country with sickness. While he was alive, Taylor and 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 slave state. With so many competing dynamics underway, 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 the Congress, which he in fact did. Legislators rallied behind the "Compromise of 1850," an assemblage of bills passed late in 1850, managed to keep the promises of the Missouri Compromise alive.



Figure 8 — [Henry Clay in the Old Senate Chamber](#) by Peter F. Rothermel/Robert Whitechurch, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

This engraving depicts the Golden Age of the United States Senate in the Old Senate Chamber, site of many of the institution's most memorable events. Here, Henry Clay, “the Great Compromiser,” introduces the Compromise of 1850 in his last significant act as a senator. In a desperate attempt to prevent war from erupting, the “Great Triumvirate,” of Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, and Clay of Kentucky struggled to balance the interests of the North, South, and West. This image shows all three men, with Clay at center stage, presenting his compromise to the Senate. Daniel Webster is seated to the left of Clay and John C. Calhoun to the left of the chair of the presiding officer, Vice President Millard Fillmore.

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 assisting with the arrest of runaways. The New Mexico territory, meanwhile,

newly buttressed by additional lands from the nearby State of Texas, (Texas gave away some of its lands to erase some of its debts) 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 its 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 did not fully satisfy many northerners. 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 strived for. Texas, which had already come into the Union as a slave state, was asked to give its lands up and give them to New Mexico. This, proponents argued, might limit the number of representatives Texas could send as a slave state, and in the process help perhaps bolster the number of free state voters in New Mexico. But the Compromise debates soon grew ugly.

After the Compromise of 1850 debates, anti-slavery 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 use its representative advantages, built into the 3/5 compromise of the Constitution, to make slavery a national institution. This idea had floated around anti-slavery circles for years, but in the 1850s anti-slavery leaders increasingly argued that Washington worked on behalf of slaveholders while ignoring the interests of white working men.

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 in place, with plenty of new lands for white settlers to improve, everything seemed in its right place for a peaceful consensus to re-emerge. Anti-slavery 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 anti-slavery ideas came in 1852 when Harriet Beecher Stowe (Figure 9) published her bestselling anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Figure 10). 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. 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 9 — [Daguerreotype of Harriet Beecher Stowe c. 1850](#) by Southworth & Hawes, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN;
OR,
LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY.

BY
HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.



VOL. I.

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH THOUSAND.

BOSTON:
JOHN P. JEWETT & COMPANY
CLEVELAND, OHIO:
JEWETT, PROCTOR & WORTHINGTON.
1852.

Figure 10 — [Uncle Tom's Cabin First Edition: Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852](#) by Hammatt Billings, Wikimedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 (Figure 11) 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.

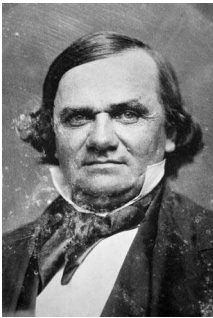


Figure 11 — [Stephen Douglas](#) by Unattributed author, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 (Figure 12) 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, 20-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' capture spread rapidly through Boston, and a mob gathered outside of the courthouse demanding Burns' release. Two days after the arrest, the crowd stormed the courthouse and stabbed a Deputy U.S. Marshall 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 United States Government had successfully reenslaved Anthony Burns. The outrage among Bostonians only grew. Anthony Burns was only one of hundreds of highly publicized episodes of the federal governments 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."

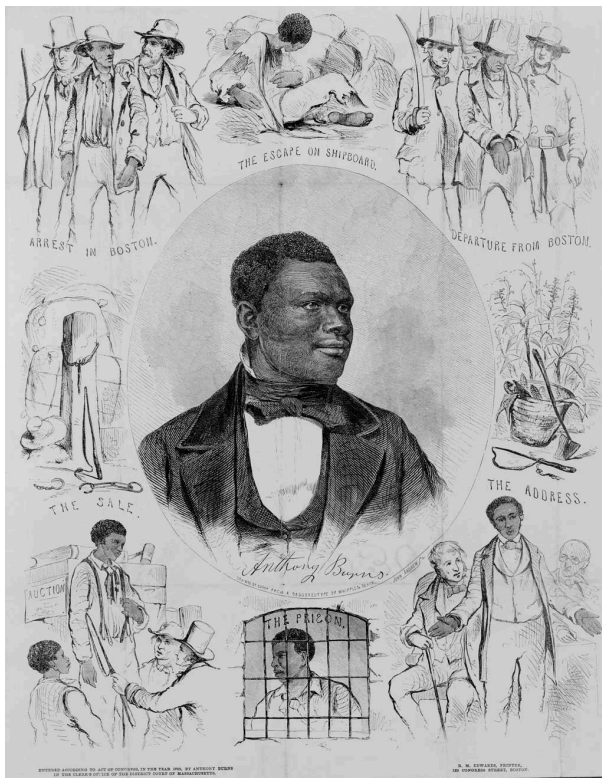


Figure 12 — [Anthony Burns](#) by John Andrews, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

A portrait of the fugitive slave Anthony Burns, whose arrest and trial under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 touched off riots and protests by abolitionists and citizens of Boston in the spring of 1854. A bust portrait of the twenty-four-year-old Burns, “Drawn by Barry from a daguerotype [sic] by Whipple and Black,” is surrounded by scenes from his life. These include (clockwise from lower left): the sale of the youthful Burns at auction, a whipping post with bales of cotton, his arrest in Boston on May 24, 1854, his escape from Richmond on shipboard, his departure from Boston escorted by federal marshals and troops, Burns’s “address” (to the court?), and finally Burns in prison. Copyrighting works such as prints and pamphlets

under the name of the subject (here Anthony Burns) was a common abolitionist practice. This was no doubt the case in this instance, since by 1855 Burns had in fact been returned to his owner in Virginia.

As northerners radicalized, organizations like the New England Emigrant Aid Society provided guns and other goods for pioneers willing to go to Kansas and establish the territory as anti-slavery through the doctrines of popular sovereignty. On all sides of the slavery issue, politics became increasingly militarized.

The year 1855 nearly derailed the northern anti-slavery 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 then flooding 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, particularly in New England and the Middle Atlantic, in races throughout 1854 and 1855. But the anti-immigrant movement simply could not capture the nation’s attention in the ways the anti-slavery movement already had.

The anti-slavery political movements that started in 1854 and 1855 coalesced as the coming Presidential election of 1856 accelerated the formation of a political party. Harkening back to the founding fathers, this new party called itself the Republican Party. After a thrilling convention that helped launch the national party at Pittsburgh in February, Republicans moved into a highly charged summer expecting great things for their cause. Following an explosive speech before Congress on May 19-20, Charles Sumner was beaten by congressional representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina right on the floor of the Senate chamber. Among other accusations, Sumner accused Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina of defending slavery so he could have sexual access to

black women. Butler's cousin, representative Brooks felt that he had to defend his relative's honor, and nearly killed Sumner as a result.

The violence in Washington pales before the many murders occurring in Kansas. Proslavery raiders attacked Lawrence, Kansas. Radical abolitionist John Brown (Figure 13) 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 re-elected by his constituents later in the year. He received new canes emblazoned with the words "Hit him again!"



Figure 13 — [John Brown \(abolitionist\) in 1859. He was hanged in December 1859.](#) by Martin M. Lawrence, Wikimedia Commons is in

the [Public Domain](#)

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 national convention at Philadelphia, and selected Californian John Charles Frémont. Frémont's anti-slavery 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. Lincoln himself was slow to join the coalition, yet by the summer of 1856, Lincoln had fully committed to the Frémont campaign.

Despite a tremendous outpouring of support, John Frémont went down in defeat in the 1856 Presidential Election. Republicans took comfort in pointing out that Frémont had in fact won 11 of the 16 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 free black circles, Frémont's defeat was more than a disappointment. Believing their fate had been sealed as permanent non-citizens, 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.⁽³⁾

4I. From Sectional Crisis to National Crisis

From Sectional Crisis to National Crisis

White anti-slavery leaders in the North were left to wonder what happened in November 1856, but few took the news too hard. They 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 anti-slavery 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, 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 (Figure 14) 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 (Figure 15) decision, *Scott v. Sandford*, ruled that black Americans could not be citizens of the United States. 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 14 — [James Buchanan](#) by Mathew Brady, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

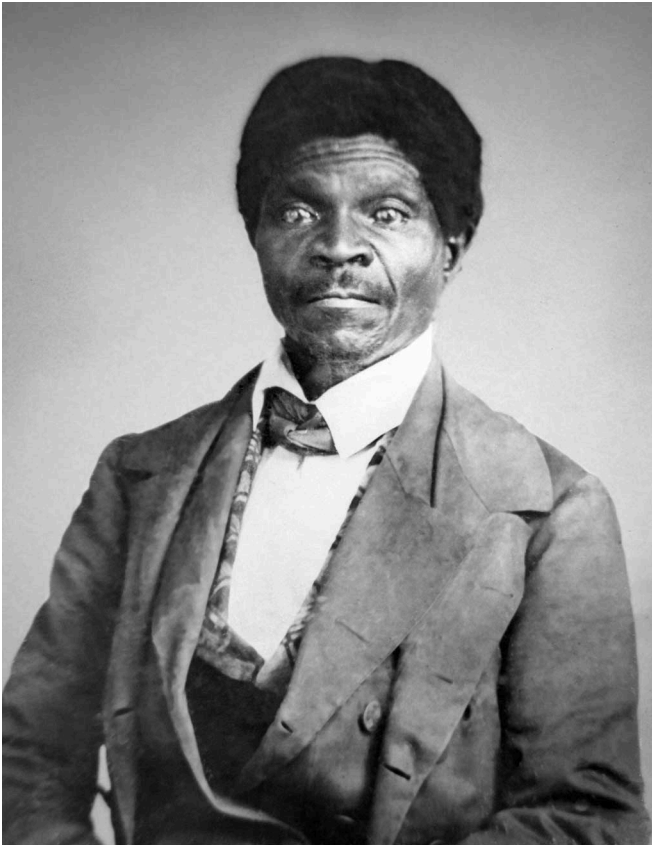


Figure 15 — [Photograph of Dred Scott, taken around the time of his court case in 1857](#) by uncredited photographer, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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, was 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. 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 anti-slavery 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 the Congress, and by the middle 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 further 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 Canada West, Brown hatched a plan to attack Harper’s Ferry, a federal weapon’s 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 (Figure 16). 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 16 — [‘The Last Moments of John Brown’, oil on canvas painting](#) by Thomas Hovenden, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Republicans wanted little to do with Brown and instead tried to portray themselves as moderates opposed to both abolitionists and proslavery 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 anti-slavery 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. Abraham Lincoln (Figure 17), a candidate few outside of 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.

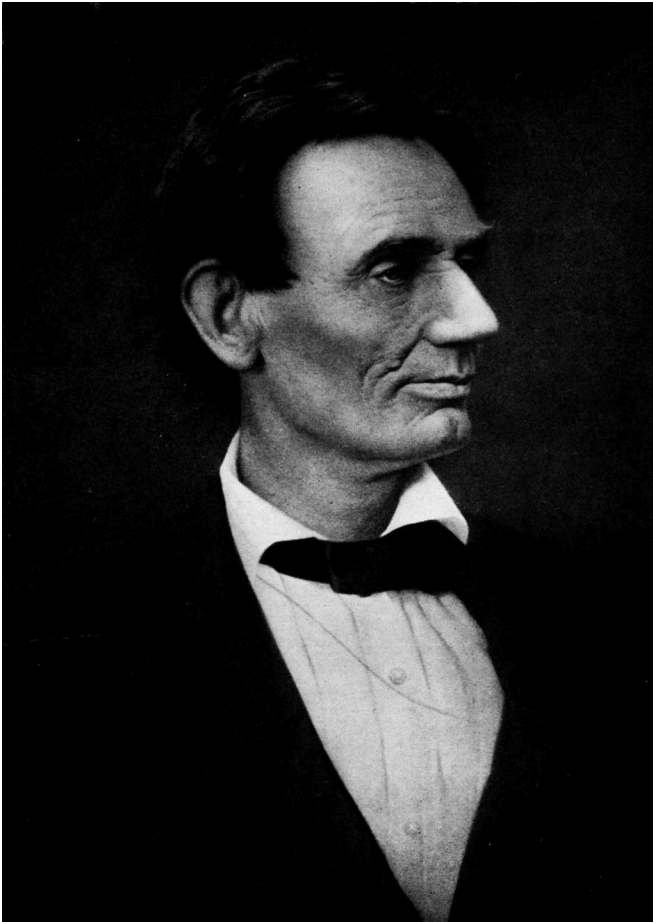


Figure 17 — [Abraham Lincoln. Photographed in Springfield, IL on June 3, 1860, two weeks after Lincoln's nomination.](#) by Alexander Hessler, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 contest on November 6, gaining just 40% of the popular vote and not a single southern vote in the Electoral College (Figure 18). 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.

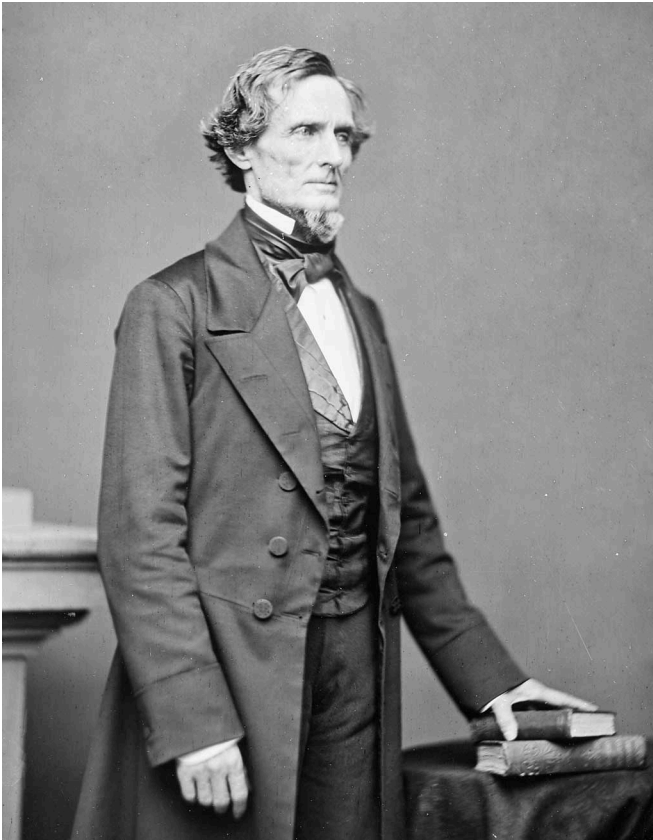


Figure 19 — [Jefferson Davis, 1861](#) by Matthew Brady, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 way, 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 a westerner, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi (Figure 19), as their President. When Abraham Lincoln acted upon his constitutional mandate as Commander in Chief following his inauguration as President of the United States in Washington on March 4, rebels calling themselves members of the Confederate States of America opened fire. Within days, Abraham Lincoln would demand 75,000 volunteers from the North to crush the rebellion, and the American Civil War began. ⁽³⁾

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. As the country seemed to teeter ever closer to a full-throated endorsement of slavery, however, an anti-slavery coalition arose in the middle 1850s calling itself the Republican Party. Eager to cordon off slavery and confine it to where it already existed, such sentiment won presidential election of 1860 and threw the nation on the path to war.

Throughout this period, the mainstream of the anti-slavery 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 depended upon war.⁽³⁾

Sound-Scape

Enslaved African Americans used songs not only to get through the workday but also as a form of resistance and to communicate plans for escape. The Module 6 sound-scape presents one such song. For more information about slave songs, see [this article](#) from the Library of Congress:¹

Listen to the Roxy Work Song. An incomplete text for this audio. Click on the audio player to listen.



An audio element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can listen to it online here:

<https://library.achievingthedream.org/fscjushistory1/?p=68>

This work song is sung in a typical work song format, with one voice beginning and several additional voices taking up the tune and adding embellishments. The beat would have matched the motion of using an axe or some other tool to strike something repeatedly. The words describe a plea to whom they wish to carry them home.

In particular, this work song is sung by a group of convicts with ax-cutting.

Roxy Work Song

NOTE: *Text is incomplete.*

Roxy in Greenville but she got my mind
My own pardner tryin' to roll the time
Well, you better come git me 'fore dey carry
me home
Oh, Roxy, Roxy leave me 'lone
Well, if I call you Annie
Would come to see but you want a man too bad
'bout de good time

PART VIII

MODULE 7: CIVIL WAR

42. Module Introduction

Civil War

Module Introduction

This module examines the impact of the election of 1860, the secession of the Southern states following Lincoln's victory, the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Union and the Confederacy, the military history of the war, as well as the economic and social changes that resulted from the war.

As you read this module, take note of the mistakes made by the South in particular, and think back to the way the colonists fought the American Revolution. What could the South have done differently to give them a better chance of winning? What lessons can our current military leaders learn from the South's mistakes? ¹

Learning Outcomes

This module addresses the following Course Learning Outcomes listed in the Syllabus for this course:

- Students will be able to think critically about institutions, cultures, and behaviors in their local and/or national environment.
- Students will understand the social, political, and economic development of the United States.
- Students will develop a historical context for understanding

current issues and events.¹

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses each side had going into the Civil War.
- Evaluate the reasons for the Union victory.
- Evaluate the long-term significance of the Union victory.¹

Readings and Resources

- Module 7 Learning Unit

43. The Election of 1860 and Secession

Introduction

Click [here](#) to watch the video on the big takeaways from the Civil War. [“Big takeaways from the Civil War”](#) by Kahn Academy is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

The American Civil War, the bloodiest in the nation's history, resulted in approximately 750,000 deaths, the abolition of slavery, and the dissolution of the Confederate States of America. Although the vast majority of northerners considered preservation of the Union to be the paramount object of the Civil War, emancipation emerged as a crucial war aim of the North. For Confederates, the war represented an opportunity to defend not only the institution of slavery but their communities, families, and ways of life. African Americans, both enslaved and free, refused to simply watch the conflict unfold and they participated in a variety of ways. 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: hope and despair arrived with the dawning of each new day.⁽³⁾

The Election of 1860 and Secession

As the fall of 1860 approached, a four-way race for the Presidency — and the future of America — emerged. The ghost of John Brown, the militant abolitionist hung after his actions at Harper's Ferry,

loomed large in early 1860. In April, the Democratic Party convened in Charleston, South Carolina, acknowledged bastion of secessionist thought in the South. The goal was to nominate a single candidate for the party ticket, but it became very clear that the Democratic convention would be one marked by hostility and division. The northern and southern wings of the party could not agree on any one man. 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 failure 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. A subsequent convention in Baltimore nominated Douglas for the Democratic ticket, while southerners nominated current Vice President John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky as their presidential candidate. The nation's oldest party had split into two over differences in policy toward slavery.

Certainly, few Americans expected a strong showing from the Republican Party. Indeed, the Republicans were hardly unified themselves. The leading men of the party all vied for their party's nomination at the Chicago convention in May 1860. There was a growing recognition among the conveners that the party's nominee would need to be someone who would be able to carry all the free states — only in that situation could a Republican nominee potentially win. Such an electoral reality meant that the early favorite, New York Senator William Seward, came under attack during the convention. Some believed his pro-immigrant position would prevent him from carrying Pennsylvania and New Jersey in a general election. Abraham Lincoln, 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. Lincoln carried all free states with the exception of New Jersey (which he split with Douglas). 81.2% of

the voting electorate came out to vote — at that point the highest ever for a presidential election. But, Lincoln's 180 electoral votes came with under 40% of the popular vote. Lincoln was trailed by Breckenridge with his 72 electoral votes, carrying 11 of the 15 slave states, Bell came in third with 39 electoral votes, with Douglas coming in last, only able to garner twelve electoral votes despite carrying almost 30% of the popular vote. All future Confederate states, with the exception of Virginia, excluded Lincoln's name from their ballots, making the victory even more remarkable.

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. The other states across the Deep South soon followed suit. Mississippi adopted their own resolution on January 9, 1861, Florida followed on January 10, Alabama January 11, Georgia on January 19, Louisiana on January 26, and Texas on February 1. While Texas was the only state to put the issue up for vote amongst the entire voting population, most other states hovered around an 80% vote in favor of secession at their respective conventions.

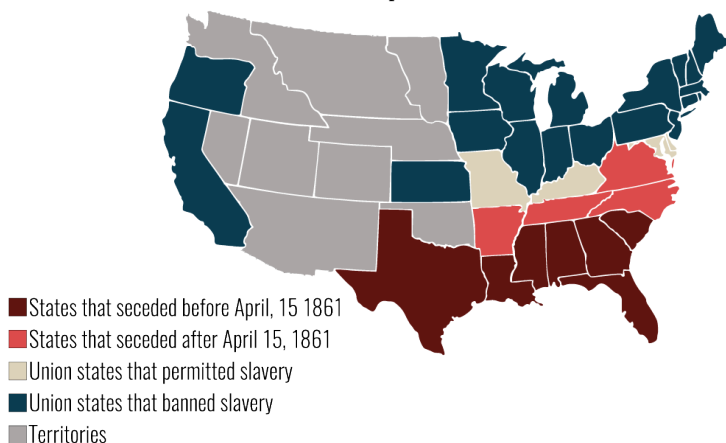


Figure 1 — A derivative from the [original work](#), Status of the states, 1861 by Florida State College at Jacksonville, is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

President James Buchanan would not directly address the issue of secession prior to his term's end in early March. Any effort to try and 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 states/territories, denied the Federal Government interstate slave trade regulatory power, and offered to compensate slave 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). Prospects for reconciliation appeared grim.



Figure 2 – [Davis giving his 1861 inaugural address at the Alabama capitol in Montgomery](#) by Archibald Crossland McIntyre, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The seven seceding states met in Montgomery, Alabama on February 4th 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). When Davis received the telegram, his wife later wrote, “he looked so grieved that I feared some evil had befallen our family. After a few minutes he told me like a man might speak of a sentence of death.” Out of a sense of duty, Davis accepted.

Whether the 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 others in Virginia, Missouri, and Arkansas initially voted down secession. Despite this 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 situation facing Abraham Lincoln on his inauguration in March 4, 1861.⁽³⁾



Figure 3 — [Abraham Lincoln inauguration 1861](#) by Unknown, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Photograph shows participants and crowd at the first inauguration of President Abraham Lincoln, at the U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. Lincoln is standing under the wood canopy, at the front, midway between the left and center posts. His face is in shadow but the white shirt front is visible. (Source: Ostendorf, p. 87)

“A distant photograph from a special platform by an unknown photographer, in front of the Capitol, Washington, D.C., afternoon of March 4, 1861. ‘A small camera was directly in front of Mr. Lincoln,’ reported a newspaper, ‘another at a distance of a hundred yards, and a third of huge dimensions on the right... The three photographers present had plenty of time to take pictures, yet only the distant views have survived.” (Source: Ostendorf, p. 86-87) The 1861 inauguration is believed to be the first ever photographed, and some sources credit it to Scottish photographer, Alexander Gardner[1]

44. From Soil to Shore: Military War on the Ground and in the Water

From Soil to Shore: Military War on the Ground and in the Water

In his inaugural address, Lincoln declared secession “legally void.” While he did not intend to invade Southern states, he would use force to maintain possession of federal property within seceded states. Union forces, led by U.S. Army Major Robert Anderson, held Charleston, South Carolina’s Ft. Sumter in April 1861. The fort was in need of supplies, and Lincoln intended to resupply it.

South Carolina called for U.S. soldiers to evacuate the fort. Major Anderson refused. “The firing on that fort will inaugurate a civil war greater than any the world has yet seen...you will lose us every friend at the North. You will wantonly strike a hornet’s nest which extends from mountains to ocean. Legions now quiet will swarm out and sting us to death. It is unnecessary. It puts us in the wrong. It is fatal,” cautioned Georgia senator Robert Toombs to Jefferson Davis prior to an attack on Fort Sumter.

After decades of sectional tension, official hostilities erupted on April 12, 1861, when Confederate Brig. Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard fired on the fort (Figure 4). Anderson surrendered on April 13th and the Union troops evacuated. In response to the Confederate attack, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers. The American Civil War had begun.

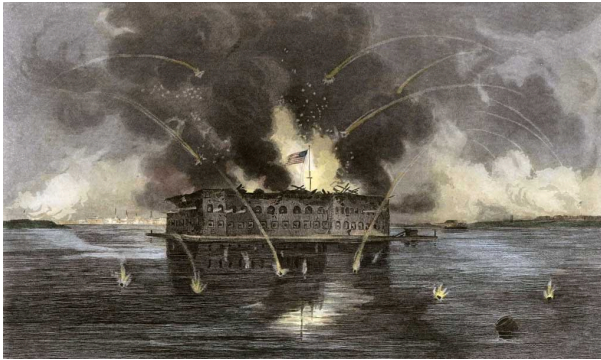


Figure 4 — [Bombardment of Fort Sumter](#) by Unknown artist, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

“The bombardment of Fort Sumter,” engraving by unknown artist, 1863. Courtesy of the United States National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

The assault on Fort Sumter, and subsequent call for troops, provoked the Upper South into alliance with the Confederacy. In total, eleven states joined the new nation. Unionists refused to accept this new southern nation and responded with a vigorous military campaign to reduce its armies, property, and economy.

Shortly after Lincoln’s call for troops, the Union adopted General-in-Chief Winfield Scott’s Anaconda Plan and established a naval blockade around the Confederate states (Figure 5). This strategy intended to strangle the Confederacy by cutting off access to coastal ports and inland waterways. Like an anaconda snake, they planned to surround and squeeze the Confederacy.

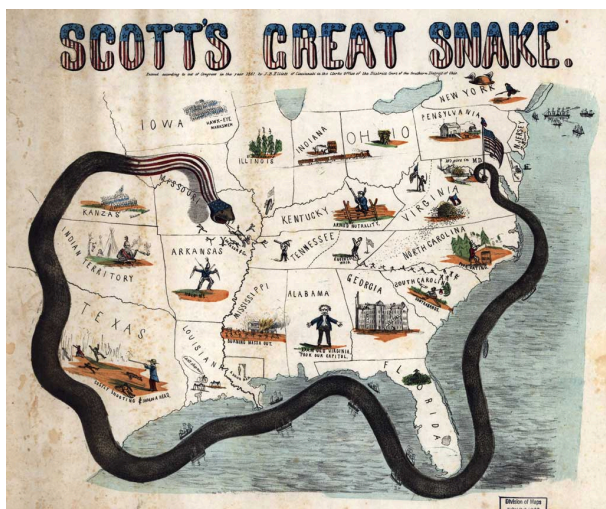


Figure 5 — [Scott's great snake](#) by J.B. Elliott, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Scott's great snake. Cartoon map illustrating Gen. Winfield Scott's plan to crush the Confederacy economically. It is sometimes called the "Anaconda plan."

With geographic, social, political, and economic connections to both the North and the South, the Border States—Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky — were critical to the outcome of the war. Lincoln and his military advisors realized that the loss of the Border States could mean a significant decrease in Union resources. Consequently, Lincoln hoped to foster loyalty among their citizens, so that Union forces could minimize their occupation in the regions. In spite of terrible guerrilla warfare in Missouri and Kentucky, the four Border States remained loyal to the Union throughout the war.

Also that spring, Confederate strategists, like their Federal counterparts, prepared for what they believed would be a short war. This belief crumbled on July 21, 1861. Three months after the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, Union and Confederate forces met at the Battle of Bull Run, near Manassas, Virginia, officially

opening the war's Eastern Theater. 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 Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell of command and promoted Maj. Gen. 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. Skirmishes only resulted in a bloody stalemate. Unlike the First Battle of Bull Run, ensuing campaigns resulted in major casualties.

Union military leaders sought to expand the war into the West in hopes of crushing the rebellion. In February 1862, Union Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's capture of Confederate Forts Henry and Donelson along the Tennessee River marked the opening of the Western Theater. 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 a key tenet 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 23,000 casualties, a number that exceeded casualties from all of the United States' previous wars combined.

In the fall of that year, casualty numbers would again shock the nation as Lee's Army of Northern Virginia invaded Maryland (a border state loyal to the Union) on September 3, 1862. 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 and Lee's forces collided at the Battle of Antietam near the town of Sharpsburg (Figure 6). This battle was the first major battle of the Civil War to occur on Union soil and it remains the

bloodiest single day in American history with over 20,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing in just twelve hours.



Figure 6 — [“Antietam Battle, Bloody Lane, 1862”](#) by Alexander Gardner, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Battle of Antietam, 1862; Confederate dead at Bloody Lane, looking northeast from the south bank; the Union soldiers looking on were likely members of the 130th Pennsylvania, who were assigned burial detail

Despite the Confederate withdrawal and the high death toll, the Battle of Antietam was not a decisive Union victory. It did, however, result in two significant events. First, McClellan's failure to crush Lee resulted in his removal. Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside replaced McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac. Second, and more importantly, the Confederate withdrawal gave Lincoln the confidence to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed all the slaves in the ten states in rebellion. Framing it as a war measure, Lincoln and his Cabinet hoped that stripping the Confederacy of their labor force would not only debilitate the Southern economy,

but also weaken Confederate morale. Nevertheless, Confederates continued fighting; and Union and Confederate forces clashed again at Fredericksburg, Virginia in December 1862. The Battle of Fredericksburg was a Confederate victory that resulted in staggering Union casualties.

Following their success at Fredericksburg, 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 (Figure 7) was an outstanding Confederate victory against Union Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker (who replaced Burnside as the commander of the Army of the Potomac after his defeat at the Battle of Fredericksburg), it also resulted in heavy casualties and the mortal wounding of Major General "Stonewall" Jackson.



Figure 7 — [Photograph taken shortly after the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863](#) — Major-General Joseph Hooker and staff by Eaton, Edward Bailey Brady, Mathew B., Gardner, Alexander, Miller, Francis Trevelyan, Martyrs on altar of civilization, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

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 (Figure 8). 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 as the bloodiest battle of the war, and in American history, with 51,000 casualties (Figure 9).



Figure 8 — [Battle of Gettysburg](#) by Timothy H. O'Sullivan, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Incidents of the war. A harvest of death, Gettysburg, PA. Dead Federal soldiers on battlefield. Negative by Timothy H. O'Sullivan. Positive by Alexander Gardner.



Figure 9 – [Gettysburg national cemetery](#) by Henry Hartley, Wikimedia Commons is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Soldiers National Monument at the center of
Gettysburg National Cemetery

Concurrently in the West, Union forces continued their movement along the Mississippi River and its tributaries, capturing New Orleans on May 1, 1862. With New Orleans occupied and with help from the U. S. Navy, Grant launched his campaign against Vicksburg, Mississippi in the winter of 1862. His Vicksburg Campaign, which lasted until July 4, 1863, ended with the city's surrender and split the Confederacy in two.

The Union and Confederate navies helped or hindered army movements around the many marine environments of the southern United States. And 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 Union blockade initially struggled to contain the Confederate blockade runners, especially at ports like Charleston, South Carolina and Wilmington, North Carolina. The blockade was not particularly effective until halfway through the war. Major Confederate ports

and financial trade centers, including those on the Mississippi River like New Orleans, had come under Union control by mid-1863.

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 not only allowed for Grant's second-in-command, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman to launch his infamous March to the Sea, in which his men devastated Georgia and the Carolinas, but it also resulted in some of the bloodiest battles of the Eastern Theater. These battles, such as the Battle of the Wilderness, the Battle of Cold Harbor (Figure 10), and the siege of Petersburg (Figure 11), as part of Grant's Overland Campaign would earn Grant his nickname "The Butcher."



Figure 10 — [Collecting bones after the Battle of Cold Harbor](#) by John Reekie, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

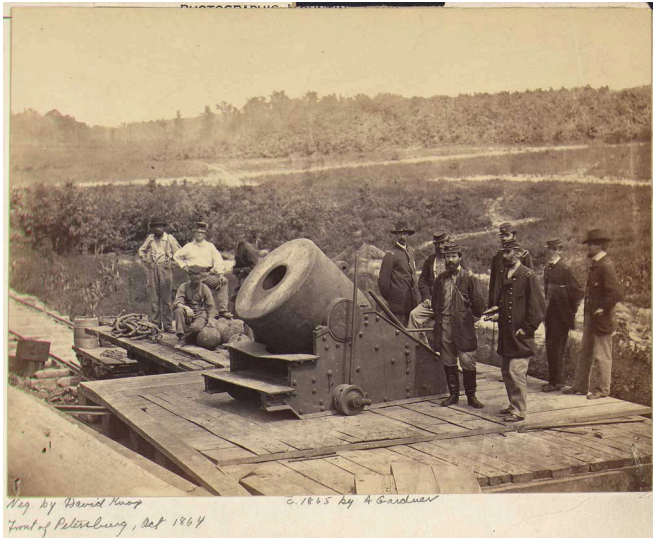


Figure 11 – [“The Dictator” mortar at Petersburg](#) by David Knox, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Incredibly deadly for both sides, these Union campaigns in both the West and the East, destroyed Confederate infrastructure and demonstrated the efficacy of the Union’s strategy of attrition and hard war. As a result of Sherman’s “March to the Sea,” a devastating hard war campaign through Georgia (Figure 12) and the Carolinas, and Grant’s dogged pursuit of the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865 (Figures 13 and 14). The remaining Confederate forces surrendered that summer.⁽³⁾



Figure 12 — [Last Train To Leave Atlanta](#) by Unknown photographer, Wikipedia is in the [Public Domain](#)

Civilians of Atlanta scramble to board the last train to leave under the mandatory evacuation order. Many wagons and belongings had to be abandoned.

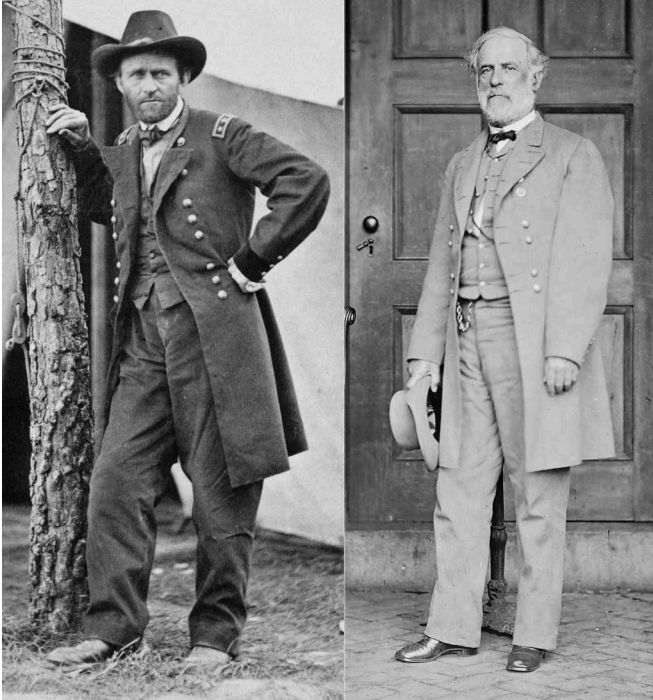


Figure 13 — Grant and Lee. A derivative of this [original work](#) and this [original work](#), Grant Lee by Hal Jesperse, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

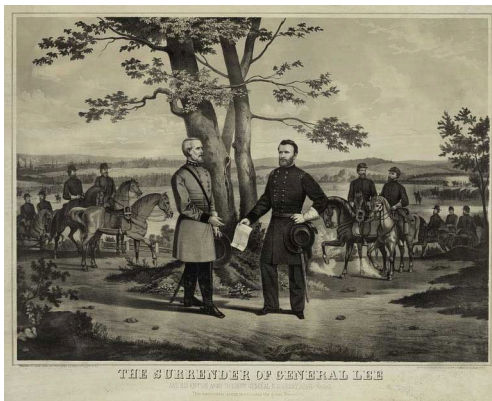


Figure 14 — [Surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee](#) attributed to Curz and Allison, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

This image provided by the Library of Congress shows an artist's rendering of the surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee to Union General Ulysses S. Grant

Confederate Nationalism and Union War Aims

Elite southerners began conceiving of the South as distinct from the rest of the United States long before secession. Elite antebellum southerners feared that abolitionism would threaten slavery, leading southern politicians to advance the position of states' rights. They argued that the ultimate power rested in the states rather than in the federal government. Cultural theories followed politics, as southern intellectuals developed the myth of the cavalier, which claimed that elite southerners, unlike northerners, descended from aristocratic Englishmen, and thus northerners and southerners were distinct and separate peoples. Although most antebellum southerners' loyalty was still to the U.S., as early as 1850, radical secessionists known as fire-eaters called for a separate southern nation. The majority of southerners remained loyal to the Union until the fall of 1860, when Abraham Lincoln, representing the new antislavery Republican Party, was elected president.

New Confederates quickly shed their American identity and adopted a new southern nationalism. Confederate nationalism was based on several ideals. Foremost among these was slavery. As Confederate Vice President Andrew Stephens stated in his "Cornerstone Speech," 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."

The election of Lincoln in 1860 demonstrated that the South's

was politically overwhelmed. Slavery was omnipresent in the pre-war 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 and identity, 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.

It is a common misconception that Civil War soldiers enlisted and fought for largely personal reasons such as camaraderie rather than for more abstract notions such as honor, patriotism, or their rights. However, to Americans during the mid-nineteenth century, these were not abstract concepts. This was an age of romanticism in literature and philosophy, and ideas like honor and duty held great sway. The men who fought in the Union and Confederate placed as much value on fighting and possibly dying for the cause as they did on unit cohesion and comradeship.

The heritage of the American Revolution provided an additional source of southern nationalism. Confederates claimed that northerners had betrayed the original intent of the Founding Fathers. The Confederacy was thus supposedly the true heir of the American Revolution, a belief that was made visibly apparent by the inclusion of an image of George Washington on the Great Seal of the Confederacy.

On March 4, 1861, when newly-elected President Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office, he directly addressed the southern portion of his splintering constituency:

"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

In the process of preserving the Union, friendship and diplomacy

gave way to war. Like Lincoln, most northerners in the late-1850s and 1860s viewed the Union — that is, the constitutional compact between the states to form a federal government — as permanent. As such, the vast majority of men that answered President Lincoln's call for troops did so with the fervent belief that they were taking up arms to save the Union. By saving the Union, these northern soldiers also viewed themselves as direct descendants of the Founding Fathers and protectors of their Revolutionary legacy.

For Union soldiers, the need to preserve the Union was paramount. The Revolution had purchased something truly unique with dear blood; a representative democracy. They feared that if a minority could dissolve part of the country whenever they lost a fair and open election, then this great experiment would collapse. By splitting over the 1860 election, the fear was a precedent would be established, and soon there would be another split, and another, until nothing remained of the United States but a series of small, warring factions. So many social commentators in Europe would be proven right and the Founders would have been proven wrong; a democratic people could not govern themselves. Additionally, Union soldiers viewed themselves as guardians of law and order. A rebellion and attempted secession against a properly elected government was treason.

Not all southerners participated in Confederate nationalism. Unionist southerners, most common in the upcountry, retained their loyalty to the Union, joining the Union army and working to defeat the Confederacy. Although sacrifice could enhance devotion to the Confederacy for some southerners, the suffering of war, combined with unpopular measures such as the draft, also weakened morale. Black southerners, most of whom were slaves, overwhelmingly supported the Union, often running away from plantations to follow the Union army. The weakening of southern nationalism, along with southern support for the Union, ultimately aided the eventual Union victory.

Cut off from their southern brethren, the northern branches of the Democratic Party divided. War Democrats largely stood behind

President Lincoln and their support was necessary for passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery. “Peace Democrats”—also known as “Copperheads”—clashed frequently with both War Democrats and Republicans. Copperheads were sympathetic to the Confederacy; they exploited public anti-war 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 while the institution of slavery would have remained intact. With a Union victory in sight following General William T. Sherman’s successful Atlanta Campaign in 1864, Copperhead support largely evaporated. ⁽³⁾

45. Experiences of Soldiers and Civilians

Experiences of Soldiers and Civilians

Daily life for a Civil War soldier was one of routine. A typical day began around 6am 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 9 or 9:30 pm. Soldiers in both armies grew weary of the routine. Picketing or foraging afforded welcome distractions to the monotony.

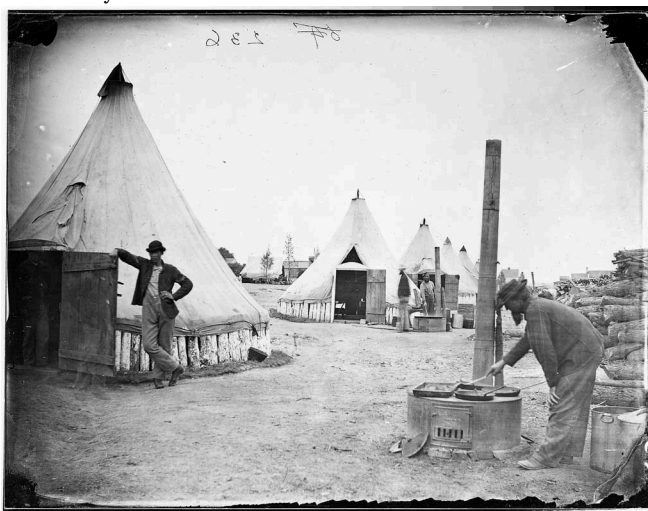


Figure 15 — [Civil War soldiers preparing a meal](#) by Matthew Brady, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Soldiers devised clever ways of dealing with the boredom of camp life. The most common activity was writing. These were highly

literate armies; nine out of every ten Federals and four out of every five Confederates could read and write. Letters home served as a tether linking soldiers to their loved ones. Soldiers also read; newspapers were in high demand. News from other theatres of war, 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.

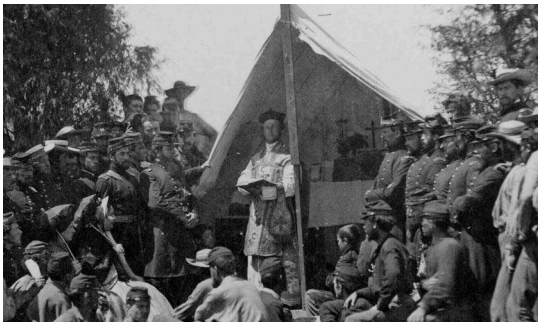


Figure 16 — [American Civil War Chaplain](#) by Unknown photographer, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Sunday morning mass in camp of 69th N.Y.S.M. Photograph shows Father Thomas H. Mooney, Chaplain of the 69th Infantry Regiment of the New York State Militia and Irish American soldiers at a Catholic Mass at Fort Cocoran, Arlington Heights, Virginia on June 1, 1861. (Source: *The Irish American*, June 22, 1861)

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.

As early as 1861, black Americans implored the Lincoln administration to serve in the army and navy. Lincoln, who initially waged a conservative, limited war, believed that the presence of African American troops would threaten the loyalty of slaveholding Border States, and white volunteers who 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. As the number of refugees ballooned, some generals considered commissioning African Americans as laborers and cooks.

As United States armies penetrated deeper into the Confederacy, requiring increased numbers of troops to occupy the South and battle rebel armies, politicians and the Union high command came to understand the necessity, and benefit, of enlisting African American men into 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."



Figure 17 — [Recruiting poster for the Massachusetts 54th regiment](#) by J. E. Farwell & Co,Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Recruiting poster for the Massachusetts 54th regiment, first published by J. E. Farwell & Co, Boston, 1863

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 July 1863 about black soldiering. 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 non-combat roles. Inequality, more than glory, defined the black soldiering experience.



Figure 18 — [Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters](#) by Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Photograph showing soldier in uniform, wife in dress and hat, and two daughters wearing matching coats and hats. In May 1863, U.S. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton issued General Order No. 143 creating the Bureau of U. S. Colored Troops. This image was found in Cecil County, Maryland, making it likely that this soldier belonged to one of the seven U.S.C.T. regiments raised in Maryland. (Source: Matthew R. Gross and Elizabeth T. Lewin, 2010) This is the only known photograph of an African American Union soldier with his family.

African American soldiers in the Union army endured rampant discrimination and earned less pay than white soldiers. Black soldiers also faced the possibility of being murdered or sold into slavery if captured by Confederate forces. 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 and to enter the army, they should be treated “as American SOLDIERS, not as menial hirelings.”

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 USCT had once been enslaved, and their presence as armed, blue-clad soldiers sent shockwaves 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!”

In addition to a majority of USCT garrisoning and occupying the South, other African American 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 400 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, African American 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.”



Figure 19 — [26th US Colored Troops Regiment](#) by U.S. GOvernemtn, Dept. of War, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

This is an image of the 26th Regiment, US Colored Troops, organized at Riker's Island, New York City, to fight in the U.S. Civil War. Organized Feb. 26, 1864. Mustered out Aug. 28, 1865. The source is an agency of the government.

Women also played a major role in the Civil War. According to a Congressional Report, “Franklin Thompson shar[ed] in all [the regiment’s] toils and privations, marching and fighting in the various engagements in which it participated... [he was] never absent from duty, obeying all orders with intelligence and alacrity, his whole aim and desire to render zealous and efficient aid to the Union cause.” It was not until after the war that the government and Thompson’s comrades in arms discovered that “he” was actually a woman by the name of Sarah Emma Edmonds (Figure 20). Edmonds was not the only woman who joined the army during the Civil War. Cousins Mary and Mollie Bell served in the Confederate Army under the aliases Tom Parker and Bob Martin. An article in the Indianapolis Daily Ledger stated that “romantic young ladies of late are frequently found in the military service,” indicating that these cases were not isolated incidents.



Figure 20 — [Sarah Edmonds](#) by Unknown artist, Wikimedia

Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Sarah Emma Edmonds (December 1841 – September 5, 1898), was a Canadian-born woman who is known for serving as a man with the Union Army during the American Civil War. A purported master of disguise, Edmonds exploits were described in the book “Nurse, Soldier, and Spy.”

When South Carolinians fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, Mary Chesnut was in Charleston. She reported in her diary that after the cannons began to fire, “The women were wild there on the housetop.” This excitement increased the willingness of women to do what they could for the war effort, including strongly encouraging their husbands to join the army. Gertrude Clanton Thompson wrote that “When Duty and Honor called him it would be strange if I would influence him to remain ‘in the lap of inglorious ease’ when so much is at stake. Our country is invaded – our homes are in danger – We are deprived or they are attempting to deprive us of that glorious liberty for which our Fathers fought and bled and shall we tamely submit to this? Never!” However, there were many women who did not support the war, particularly as it wore on. One of these women wrote a letter to North Carolina Governor, Zebulon Vance, saying “Especially for they sake of suffering women and children, do try and stop this cruel war.”

For some women, the best way to support their cause was spying on the enemy. When the war broke out, Rose O’Neal Greenhow (Figure 21) was living in Washington D.C., where she travelled 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 (Figure 22) sacrificed her social standing for the Union. Van Lew was from a very 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.” 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.



Figure 21 — [Rose O'Neal Greenhow](#) with daughter little Rose at Old Capitol Prison, 1862 by Matthew Brady, Wikimedia Commons is in

the [Public Domain](#)

Van Lew was not alone in nursing wounded or ill soldiers. 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." Mary Chesnut wrote, "Every woman in the house is ready to rush into the Florence Nightingale business." 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." 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, travelled with the Army of Tennessee. However, all but one of the women who volunteered with Cumming quit within a week.



Figure 22 — [Portrait of Elizabeth Van Lew](#) by National Park Service, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

In the North, the conditions in hospitals were somewhat superior. This was partly due to the organizational skills of women like Dorothea Dix (Figure 23), 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, helping to prevent supply shortages more often than in southern hospitals.



Figure 23 — [Dorothea Dix](#) by Unknown artist, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

There were other women who travelled with the armies as well. Some of them were the wives or daughters of officers, while others were cooks or laundresses. A third group, prostitutes, sometimes

travelled with the army, and sometimes congregated in nearby cities, making them relatively easy for the men in both armies to patronize. In Washington D.C. alone, there were at least 450 brothels, with names like “Headquarters U.S.A.,” “The Wolf’s Den,” and “Madam Russel’s Bake Oven.” Many prostitutes suffered from venereal diseases, including syphilis and gonorrhea, which they transmitted to soldiers. The treatment for these diseases in the 1860s was a urethral shot of salts of mercury – leading to the saying “A night with Venus, a lifetime with Mercury.”

Northern women often found it difficult to prove their loyalty, since the enemy was far away. 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.

Many women who were enthusiastic at the beginning of the war became increasingly disillusioned by death and destruction. Others spent four years supporting the war effort. There was no single, unified women’s experience during the Civil War.

Most African Americans pragmatically hoped that a Union victory would result in their freedom. Though generally suspicious of whites, slaves reasoned that their enemy’s enemy was their friend. Slaves overheard their masters cursing the North and the Republican Party; why would their masters speak that way unless the North somehow threatened slavery? Rumors of sectional crisis, the 1860 election, secession, and civil war spread along the “grapevine telegraph,” an informal chain of communication that brought news to even the remotest slave communities. Many slaves rightly doubted that the white North had their interests at heart, but they hoped the North would liberate them to deprive the South of a huge source of capital, labor, and status.

Though the U.S. government and military understood the war was about slavery in the abstract, they did not intend for the war

to involve actual slaves. Their intentions, however, did not matter, because African American forced the Union army to deal with them. Almost as soon as the war began, runaway slaves appeared at Union camps, asking for refuge.

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 impressing slaves to work on fortifications. Every slave who escaped to Union lines was a loss to the Confederate war effort.

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.

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 huddled together in "contraband camps," where disease and malnutrition were rampant. The men were impressed 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. Panicked slaveholders abandoned their land at the news of an approaching Union army, while their slaves awaited Yankee liberators. One slave, beloved by her owners as their "mammy," helped her owners load their belongings and then, to their surprise, told them she was not

coming with them. Some slaves moved out of their small cabins and into their old masters' homes. Others simply left, perhaps to search for a long-lost child, parent, or spouse.

It would be untrue, however, to say that every slave welcomed the Union army with open arms. War brought destruction and chaos, and many slaves preferred the devil they knew to the devil they didn't. Yankee soldiers raided plantations for food and other supplies, leaving slaves without many of the necessities of life. For slaves living far from the war and Union lines, the northern army loomed like a distant stormcloud; it could bring death or freedom, and slaves could only guess at the outcome.

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.

A different picture emerges when we examine the slave's impact

on Union decision making. Slaves forced the Union to see them as people rather than property. Their very presence in contraband camps and fortification works drove the federal government to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and call for black soldiers and sailors. The enslaved people of the South refused to let the United States ignore them. ⁽³⁾

Music, Medicine, and Mourning

In 1862, a New York Herald reporter wrote that “All history proves that music is as indispensable to warfare as money; and money has been called the sinews of war.” 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, including “Lorena,” “Home, Sweet Home,” and “Just Before the Battle, Mother,” often reminded the soldiers of home. Dances held in camp offered another way to enjoy music. Since there were often very 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.

Music was intrinsic to both soldiers’ and civilians’ lives throughout the war. In 1863, “When This Cruel War Is Over,” sometimes referred to by part of its chorus, “weeping, sad and lonely,” became popular as both soldiers and civilians recognized the probability that they would never see their loved ones again. Referring to the “lonely,

wounded, even dying, calling but in vain,” the song dwelled on battlefield horrors, causing some commanders to restrict its use. The themes of popular songs changed over the course of the war, as feelings of inevitable success alternated with feelings of terror and despair.

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 there was less exposure to diseases, meaning that these soldiers lacked immunities. Vaccines for diseases such as smallpox were largely unavailable to those not in 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.

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. They ate food that was improperly cooked and handled, and practiced what we would consider poor personal hygiene. They didn’t take appropriate steps to ensure that the water they drank 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 upon the local

waterways. Burying human and animal waste 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 48 hours of injury. A skilled surgeon could amputate a limb around 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 24 — [Amputation being performed in a hospital tent](#) by Unknown photogrpaher, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

At the headquarters of the U.S. Sanitary Commission at Camp Letterman in Gettysburg, PA, a physician wields a liston knife (center) as a patient (in white) is held down on a table for an amputation, 1863

It is a common misconception that amputation was accompanied without anesthesia and against a patient's wishes. Since the 1830s Americans understood the benefits of Nitrous Oxide and Ether on easing pain. Chloroform and opium were also used to either render patients unconscious or to 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 US. 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. The majority of 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.

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. Casualty reporting was inconsistent, so women were 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. After her husband's death at Sharpsburg, Sally received the label of she

would share with more than 200,000 other white 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. Silk black 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. ⁽³⁾

46. The Election of 1864 and Emancipation

The Election of 1864 and Emancipation

The presidential contest of 1864 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 President, Andrew Johnson (Tennessee), ran as nominees of the National Union Party. 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 ’64 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 T. Sherman’s military victories in Georgia, which included the fall 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 (such as John C. Fremont and members of the Radical Democracy Party) that demanded the end of slavery.

In the popular vote, Lincoln crushed McClellan by a margin of 55.1% to 44.9%. In the Electoral College, Lincoln’s victory was even more pronounced at a margin of 212 to 21. As Lincoln won twenty-

two states, McClellan only managed to carry three: New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky.

In the wake of reelection, Abraham Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address on March 5, 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."



Figure 25 — [Abraham Lincoln giving his second Inaugural Address](#) by Alexander Gardner, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

The second inaugural address of Abraham Lincoln, given on 4 March 1865 on the east portico of the U.S. Capitol.

Emancipation played a major role in the election and the war. Yet, Abraham Lincoln did not abolish slavery with the stroke of his pen, nor should he be celebrated with the title of the "Great

Emancipator.” While Lincoln played a leading role, the accolades bestowed upon him by contemporaries and subsequent generations obscure the elaborate process by which numerous actors in the Congress, the military, and enslaved people themselves brought about emancipation.

Of course, abolitionists had long struggled to obtain freedom for enslaved persons, but the war brought them unexpected allies. Politically, the roots of emancipation can be found in the First Confiscation Act of 1861. Republicans in Congress authorized military officials to do the actual work of freeing enslaved persons, a process called military emancipation. With each military victory, beginning with naval actions along the Atlantic seaboard, the U.S. military deployed constitutional measures to seize contraband. In August, General John C. Fremont declared all enslaved people in Missouri to be free, while General Benjamin Butler emancipated hundreds at Fortress Monroe in Virginia. Lincoln condemned Fremont’s actions, but Butler’s became military policy.

Rank-and-file soldiers and sailors pushed beyond the mandate of the law. Most Union soldiers had never before encountered enslaved people. In their diaries and their sketchbooks, soldiers and sailors recorded their interactions with newly freed African Americans, legitimating an essential humanity that would find popular reverberations in newspapers and magazines. Moreover, the increasingly visual culture of the 1860s in the North relied on photographs and sketches of the freedmen to provide evidence not only of their abuse at the hand of southern slaveholders, but also of their resilience and determination to resist them.



Figure 26 – [Thomas Nast, “Emancipation,” 1865](#) by Thomas Nast, Wikimedia Commons is in the [Public Domain](#)

Perhaps most important to bringing about emancipation were the enslaved people themselves, who remained ever vigilant for opportunities to gain freedom. This process unfolded unevenly and violently, with African American women often playing leading roles in community organization. In a sense, these efforts can be seen as extensions of earlier tactics of resistance, but the events of the Civil War presented unprecedented opportunities for new and more lasting forms of fighting back. Once free, African Americans continued to work of freedom by enlisting in the Union army, supporting military efforts of their liberators, and, in time, supporting political measures that enabled their full civil rights.

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 persisted long after emancipation.⁽³⁾

Conclusion

As battlefields fell silent in 1865, the question of secession had been answered, 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 ever 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, reunited family members, 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.⁽³⁾

Sound-Scape

The Module 7 sound-scape presents an excerpt from Charles Anderson Dana's *Recollections of Civil War*. Dana, a journalist who served as Assistant Secretary of War for the Union, wrote the book from which this excerpt was taken shortly before his death in 1897.¹

Listen to an excerpt from Charles Anderson Dana's *Recollections of Civil War* and follow along with the text.

Click on the audio player to listen.



An audio element has been excluded from this version of the

text. You can listen to it online here:
<https://library.achievingthedream.org/fscjushistory1/?p=75>

Excerpt from RECOLLECTIONS OF CIVIL WAR

[Charles Anderson Dana \(1819–1897\)](#)

Just before one o'clock the men moved out of their intrenchments, and remained in line for three quarters of an hour in full view of the enemy. The spectacle was one of singular magnificence. Our point of view was Fort Wood. Usually in a battle one sees only a little corner of what is going on, the movements near where you happen to be; but in the battle of Chattanooga we had the whole scene before us. At last, everything being ready, Granger gave the order to advance, and three brigades of men pushed out simultaneously. The troops advanced rapidly, with all the precision of a review, the flags flying and the bands playing. The first sign of a battle one noticed was the fire spitting out of the rifles of the skirmishers. The lines moved steadily along, not halting at all, the skirmishers all the time advancing in front, firing and receiving. The first shot was fired at two o'clock, and in five minutes Hazen's skirmishers were briskly engaged, while the artillery of Forts Wood and Thomas

was opening upon the rebel rifle-pits and camps behind the line of fighting.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CIVIL WAR: WITH THE LEADERS AT WASHINGTON AND IN THE FIELD IN THE SIXTIES by Charles Anderson Dana is in the [Public Domain](#)

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CIVIL WAR records the events that took place during the American Civil war. It forms one of the most remarkable volumes of historical, political, and personal reminiscences which have been given to the public. Mr. Dana wrote these Recollections of the civil war according to a purpose which he had entertained for several years. They were completed only a few months before his death on October 17, 1897.

PART IX

ATTRIBUTIONS

47.

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