

## U.S. Markets Expand

In the early 19th century, rural American workers produced their own goods or traded with neighbors to meet almost all of their needs. Farm families were self-sufficient—they grew crops and raised animals for food and made their own clothing, candles, and soap. At local markets, farmers sold wood, eggs, or butter for cash, which they used to purchase the coffee, tea, sugar, or horseshoes they couldn't produce themselves.

By midcentury, however, the United States had become more industrialized, especially in the Northeast, where the rise of textile mills and the factory system changed the lives of workers and consumers. Now, workers spent their earnings on goods produced by other workers. Farmers began to shift from self-sufficiency to **specialization**, raising one or two cash crops that they could sell at home or abroad.

These developments led to a **market revolution**, in which people bought and sold goods rather than making them for their own use. The market revolution created a striking change in the U.S. economy and in the daily lives of Americans. In these decades, goods and services multiplied while incomes rose. In fact, in the 1840s, the national economy grew more than it had in the previous 40 years.

**THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT** The quickening pace of U.S. economic growth depended on **capitalism**, the economic system in which private businesses and individuals control the means of production—such as factories, machines, and land—and use them to earn profits. For example, in 1813, Francis Cabot Lowell and other Boston merchants had put up \$400,000 to form the Boston Manufacturing Company, which produced textiles. Other businesspeople supplied their own funds to create capital—the money, property, machines, and factories that fueled America's expanding economy.

These investors, called **entrepreneurs** from a French word that means "to undertake," risked their own money in new industries. They risked losing their investment, but they also stood to earn huge profits if they succeeded. Alexander Mackay, a Scottish journalist who lived in Canada and traveled in the United States, applauded the entrepreneurs' competitive spirit. 🌐

**NEW INVENTIONS** Inventor-entrepreneurs began to develop goods to make life more comfortable for more people. For example, Charles Goodyear developed vulcanized rubber in 1839. Unlike untreated India rubber, the new product didn't freeze in cold weather or melt in hot weather. People first used the product to protect their boots, but, in the early 1900s, it became indispensable in the manufacturing of automobile tires.

A natural place for the growth of industrialization was in producing clothing, a process greatly aided by the invention of the sewing machine. Patented by Elias Howe in 1846, the sewing machine found its first use in shoe factories. Homemakers appreciated I. M. Singer's addition of the foot treadle, which drastically reduced the time it took to sew garments. More importantly, the foot-treadle sewing machine led to the factory production of clothing. When clothing prices tumbled by more than 75 percent, increasing numbers of working people could afford to buy store-bought clothes.

**IMPACT ON HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY** While entrepreneurial activity boosted America's industrial output, American agriculture continued to flourish. Workers in industrial cities needed food. To meet this demand, American farmers began to use mechanized farm equipment produced in factories. Farmers, therefore, made significant contributions to the American industrial machine and became important consumers of manufactured items.

Manufactured items grew less expensive as technology advances lowered expenses. For example, a clock that had cost \$50 to craft by hand in 1800 could be turned out by machine for half a dollar by midcentury. Falling prices meant that many workers became regular consumers. They purchased new products not only for work, but for comfort as well. 🌐

These new inventions, many developed in the United States, contributed immensely to changes in American life. Some inventions simply made life more enjoyable. Other inventions fueled the economic revolution of the midcentury, and transformed manufacturing, transportation and communication.

**IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION** Improving on a device developed by Joseph Henry, Samuel F. B. Morse, a New England artist, created the **telegraph** in 1837 to carry messages, tapped in code, across copper wire. Within ten years, telegraph lines connected the larger cities on the East Coast.

Businesses used the new communication device to transmit orders and to relay up-to-date information on

prices and sales. The telegraph was a huge success. The new railroads employed the telegraph to keep trains moving regularly and to warn engineers of safety hazards. By 1854, 23,000 miles of telegraph wire crossed the country.

**IMPACT ON TRANSPORTATION** Better and faster transportation became essential to the expansion of agriculture and industry. Farmers and manufacturers alike sought more direct ways to ship their goods to market. In 1807, Pennsylvanian Robert Fulton had ushered in the steamboat era when his boat, the *Clermont*, made the 150-mile trip up the Hudson River from New York City to Albany, New York, in 32 hours. Ships that had previously only been able to drift southward down the Mississippi with the current could now turn around to make the return trip because they were powered by steam engines. By 1830, 200 steamboats traveled the nation's western rivers, thus slashing freight rates as well as voyage times. Water transport was particularly important in moving heavy machinery and such raw materials as lead and copper. Where waterways didn't exist, workers excavated them. In 1816, America had a mere 100 miles of canals. Twenty-five years later, the country boasted more than 3,300 miles of canals.

The Erie Canal was the nation's first major canal, and it was used heavily. Shipping charges fell to about a tenth of the cost of sending goods over land. Before the first shovel broke ground on the Erie Canal in 1817, for example, freight charges between Buffalo, New York, and New York City averaged 19 cents a ton per mile. By 1830, that average had fallen to less than 2 cents.

The Erie Canal's success led to dozens of other canal projects. Farmers in Ohio no longer depended on Mississippi River passage to New Orleans. They could now ship their grain via canal and river to New York City, the nation's major port. The canals also opened the heartland of America to world markets by connecting the Northeast to the Midwest.

**EMERGENCE OF RAILROADS** The heyday of the canals lasted only until the 1860s, due to the rapid emergence of railroads. Although shipping by rail cost significantly more in the 1840s than did shipping by canal, railroads offered the advantage of speed. In addition, trains could operate in the winter, and they brought goods to people who lived inland.

By the 1840s, steam engines pulled freight at ten miles an hour—more than four times faster than canal boats traveled. Passengers found such speeds exciting, although early train travel was far from comfortable, as Samuel Breck, a Philadelphia merchant, complained.

Eventually, railroads grew to be both safe and reliable, and the cost of rail freight gradually came down. By 1850, almost 10,000 miles of track had been laid, and by 1859, railroads carried 2 billion tons of freight a year. 📍

## New Markets Link Regions

By the 1840s, improved transportation and communication made America's regions interdependent. Arteries like the National Road, whose construction began in 1811, had also opened up western travel. By 1818, the road extended from Cumberland, Maryland, west to Wheeling, Virginia; by 1838, it reached as far west as Springfield, Illinois.

Growing links between America's regions contributed to the development of regional specialties. The South exported its cotton to England as well as to New England. The West's grain and livestock fed hungry factory workers in eastern cities and in Europe. The East manufactured textiles and machinery.

**SOUTHERN AGRICULTURE** Most of the South remained agricultural and relied on such crops as cotton, tobacco, and rice. Southerners who had seen the North's "filthy, overcrowded, heinous factories" looked with disfavor on industrialization. Even if wealthy Southerners wanted to build factories, they usually lacked the capital to do so because their money was tied up in land and the slaves required to plant and harvest the crops.

Though the new transportation and communication lines were less advanced in the South, these improvements helped keep Americans from every region in touch with one another. Furthermore, they changed the economic relationships between the regions, creating new markets and interdependencies.

**NORTHEAST SHIPPING AND MANUFACTURING** Heavy investment in canals and railroads transformed the Northeast into the center of American commerce. After the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, New York City became the central link between American agriculture and European markets. In fact, more cotton was exported through New York City than through any other American city.

The most striking development of the era, however, was the rise in manufacturing. Although most Americans still lived in rural areas and only 14 percent of workers had manufacturing jobs, these workers produced more and better goods at lower prices than had ever been produced before. 📍

work very hard to make the land arable, or fit to cultivate. Many wooded areas had to be cleared before fields could be planted. Then two ingenious inventions allowed farmers to develop the farmland more efficiently and cheaply, and made farming more profitable. In 1837, blacksmith **John Deere** invented the first steel plow. It sliced through heavy soil much more easily than existing plows and therefore took less animal power to pull. Deere's steel plow enabled farmers to replace their oxen with horses.

Once harvest time arrived, the mechanical reaper, invented by **Cyrus McCormick**, permitted one farmer to do the work of five hired hands. The reaper was packed in parts and shipped to the farmer, along with a handbook of directions for assembling and operating. Armed with plows and reapers, ambitious farmers could shift from subsistence farming to growing such cash crops as wheat and corn.

Meanwhile, the rapid changes encouraged Southerners as well as Northerners to seek land in the seemingly limitless West.

## The Frontier Draws Settlers

Many Americans assumed that the United States would extend its dominion to the Pacific Ocean and create a vast republic that would spread the blessings of democracy and civilization across the continent.

**AMERICAN MISSION** Thomas Jefferson had dreamed that the United States would become an "empire for liberty" by expanding across the continent "with room enough for our descendants to the thousandth and thousandth generation."

Toward that end, Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase in 1803 had doubled the young nation's size. For a quarter century after the War of 1812, Americans explored this huge territory in limited numbers. Then, in the 1840s, expansion fever gripped the country. Americans began to believe that their movement westward and southward was destined and ordained by God.

The editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* described the annexation of Texas in 1845 as "the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." Many Americans immediately seized on the phrase "manifest destiny" to express their belief that the United States' destiny was to expand to the Pacific Ocean and into Mexican territory. They believed that this destiny was manifest, or obvious. ❁

**ATTITUDES TOWARD THE FRONTIER** Most Americans had practical reasons for moving west. Many settlers endured the trek because of personal economic problems. The panic of 1837, for example, had dire consequences and convinced many people that they would be better off attempting a fresh start in the West.

The abundance of land in the West was the greatest attraction. Whether for farming or speculation, land ownership was an important step toward prosperity. As farmers and miners moved west, merchants followed, seeking new markets.

While Americans had always traded with Europe, the transportation revolution increased opportunities for trade with Asia as well. Several harbors in the Oregon Territory helped expand trade with China and Japan and also served as naval stations for a Pacific fleet.

## Settlers and Native Americans

The increasing number of U.S. settlers moving west inevitably affected Native American communities. Most Native Americans tried to maintain strong cultural traditions, even if forced to move from ancestral lands. Some began to assimilate—or become part of—the advancing white culture. Still others, although relatively few in number, fought hard to keep whites away from their homes.

### THE BLACK HAWK WAR

In the early 1830s, white settlers in western Illinois and eastern Iowa placed great pressure on the Native American people there to move west of the Mississippi River. Consequently, representatives from several Native American tribes visited Chief Black Hawk of the Sauk tribe, and one told of a prophet who had a vision of future events involving Black Hawk.

The story convinced Black Hawk to lead a rebellion against the United States. The Black Hawk War started in Illinois and spread to the Wisconsin Territory. It ended in August 1832, when Illinois militia members slaughtered more than 200 Sauk and Fox people. As a result, the Sauk and Fox tribes were forcibly removed to areas west of the Mississippi. ❁

**MIDDLE GROUND** The place that neither the Native Americans nor the settlers dominated, according to historian Richard White, was the middle ground. As long as settlers needed Native Americans as trading partners and guides, relations between settlers and Native Americans could be beneficial. Amelia Stewart Knight described such an encounter on the middle ground.

By the 1840s, the middle ground was well west of the Mississippi, because the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and other Indian removal treaties had pushed Native Americans off their eastern lands to make room for the settlers.

**FORT LARAMIE TREATY** As settlers moved west, small numbers of displaced Native Americans occasionally fought them. The U.S. government responded to the settlers' fears of attack by calling a conference near what is now Laramie, Wyoming. The Cheyenne, Arapaho, Sioux, Crow, and others joined U.S. representatives in swearing "to maintain good faith and friendship in all their mutual intercourse, and to make an effective and lasting peace."

The 1851 **Treaty of Fort Laramie** provided various Native American nations control of the Central Plains, land east of the Rocky Mountains that stretched roughly from the Arkansas River north to Canada. In turn, these Native Americans promised not to attack settlers and to allow the construction of government forts and roads. The government pledged to honor the agreed-upon boundaries and to make annual payments to the Native Americans. Still the movement of settlers increased. Traditional Native American hunting lands were trampled and depleted of buffalo and elk. The U.S. government repeatedly violated the terms of the treaty. Subsequent treaties demanded that Native Americans abandon their lands and move to reservations. ❁

## Trails West

While the westward movement of many U.S. settlers had disastrous effects on the Native American communities there, the experience was also somewhat perilous for traders and settlers. Nevertheless, thousands made the trek, using a series of old Native American trails and new routes.

**THE SANTA FE TRAIL** One of the busiest and most well-known avenues of trade was the **Santa Fe Trail**, which led 780 miles from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Each spring between 1821 and the 1860s, Missouri traders loaded their covered wagons with cloth, knives, and guns, and set off toward Santa Fe. For about the first 150 miles—to Council Grove, Kansas—wagons traveled alone. After that, fearing attacks by Kiowa and Comanche, among others, the traders banded into

organized groups of up to 100 wagons. Scouts rode along the column to check for danger. At night the traders formed the wagons into squares with their wheels interlocked, forming a corral for horses, mules, and oxen.

Teamwork ended when Santa Fe came into view. Traders charged off on their own as each tried to be the first to enter the Mexican province of New Mexico. After a few days of trading, they loaded their wagons with silver, gold, and furs, and headed back to the United States. These traders established the first visible American presence in New Mexico and in the Mexican province of Arizona.

**THE OREGON TRAIL** In 1836, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, Methodist missionaries, made their way into Oregon Territory where they set up mission schools to convert Native Americans to Christianity and educate them. By divvying their wagon as far as Fort Boise, they proved that wagons could travel on the **Oregon Trail**, which started in Independence, Missouri, and ended in Portland, Oregon, in the Willamette Valley. Their letters east praising the fertile soil and abundant rainfall attracted hundreds of other Americans to the Oregon Trail. The route from Independence to Portland traced some of the same paths that Lewis and Clark had followed several decades earlier.

Following the Whitmans' lead, some of the Oregon pioneers bought wooden-wheeled covered Conestoga wagons. But most walked, pushing handcarts loaded with a few precious possessions. The trip took months. Fever, diarrhea, and cholera killed many travelers, who were then buried alongside the trail.

Caravans provided protection against possible attack by Native Americans. They also helped combat the loneliness of the difficult journey, as Catherine Haun, who migrated from Iowa, explained.

### A PERSONAL VOICE CATHERINE HAUN

*"We womenfolk visited from wagon to wagon or congenial friends spent an hour walking, ever westward, and talking over our home life back in 'the states'; telling of the loved ones left behind; voicing our hopes for the future . . . and even whispering a little friendly gossip of emigrant life."*

—quoted in *Frontier Women*

By 1844, about 5,000 American settlers had arrived in Oregon and were farming its green and fertile Willamette Valley. 