

## The Triumphs and Travails of the Jeffersonian Republic, 1800–1812

### Chapter Themes

Theme: Jefferson's effective, pragmatic policies strengthened the principles of two-party republican government, even though the Jeffersonian "revolution" caused sharp partisan battles between Federalists and Republicans over particular issues.

Theme: Despite his intentions, Jefferson became deeply entangled in the foreign-policy conflicts of the Napoleonic era, leading to a highly unpopular and failed embargo that revived the moribund Federalist Party.

Theme: James Madison fell into an international trap, set by Napoleon, that Jefferson had avoided. Western War Hawks' enthusiasm for a war with Britain was matched by New Englanders' hostility.

### Chapter summary

The ideological conflicts of the early Republic culminated in the bitter election of 1800 between Adams and Jefferson. Despite the fierce rhetoric of the campaign, the "Revolution of 1800" demonstrated that the infant Republic could peacefully transfer power from one party to another. The election of 1800 also signaled the decline of the conservative Federalist Party, which proved unable to adjust to the democratic future of American politics.

Jefferson the political theorist came to Washington determined to restore what he saw as the original American revolutionary ideals and to implement his Republican principles of limited and frugal government, strict construction, and an antimilitarist foreign policy. But Jefferson the practical politician had to compromise many of these goals, thereby moderating the Republican-Federalist ideological conflict.

The sharpest political conflicts occurred over the judiciary, where John Marshall worked effectively to enshrine the principles of judicial review and a strong federal government. Against his original intentions, Jefferson himself also enhanced federal power by waging war against the Barbary pirates and by his dramatic purchase of Louisiana from Napoleon. The Louisiana Purchase was Jefferson's greatest success, increasing national unity and pointing to America's long-term future in the West. But in the short term the vast geographical expansion fostered schemes like Aaron Burr's to break the west away from the United States.

Nevertheless, Jefferson became increasingly entangled in the horrific European wars between Napoleonic France and Britain, as both great powers obstructed American trade and violated freedom of the seas. Jefferson attempted to avoid war through his embargo policy, which damaged the American economy and stirred bitter opposition in New England.

Jefferson's successor, James Madison, soon stumbled into a diplomatic trap set by Napoleon, and western "War Hawks" hoping to acquire Canada whooped the United States into a war with Britain in 1812. The nation went to war totally unprepared, bitterly divided, and devoid of any coherent strategy.

## HISTORIC NOTES

- The election of Thomas Jefferson, a Democratic-Republican, represents the first peaceful transfer of power between differing political parties in the nation's history.
- Jefferson's foreign policy is noted for his military challenge against the Barbary pirates and for the LA Purchase, which doubles the size of the U.S.
- Because of violations of neutral U.S. shipping rights and other abuses, the U.S. declares war on Great Britain, precipitating the War of 1812.
- Many historians consider the election of Jefferson a revolution in political ideas, aspirations, and objectives. Others disagree, pointing to his political moderation as president; the fact that he did not seek to destroy the bank, but merely let its charter expire; and the fact that he represented the interests of what northerners would refer to as the "slaveocracy" of the South.
- The Marshall Supreme Court handed down decisions that would not only establish the foundation for the judiciary's responsibilities, such as the power to determine the constitutionality of laws, but also reaffirm the separation of powers among the three branches of government.
- The War of 1812 was unpopular in the New England states because of the cessation of commerce with a major trading partner, Great Britain. The economy was damaged, and during the war the U.S. was invaded, but the end of the war found the nation's worldwide image strengthened – after all, the U.S. had not been defeated by the powerful British military.
- Jefferson's purchase of LA was criticized as a circumvention of the Senate's power to ratify or reject treaties. It also raises questions of political limitations placed on the president by the Constitution, a question that comes up again in American history.

## **The Second War for Independence and the Upsurge of nationalism, 1812–1824**

### Chapter Themes

Theme: The American effort in the War of 1812 was plagued by poor strategy, political divisions, and increasingly aggressive British power. Nevertheless, the United States escaped with a stalemated peace settlement, and soon turned its isolationist back to the Atlantic European world.

Theme: The aftermath of the War of 1812 produced a strong surge of American nationalism that was reflected in economics, law, and foreign policy. The rising nationalistic spirit and sense of political unity was, however, threatened by the first severe sectional dispute over slavery.

Theme: Chief Justice John Marshall's Supreme Court strengthened the federal government by supporting a "loose construction" of the Constitution, asserting the federal judiciary's power over state courts, and enforcing economic provisions in the Constitution (interstate commerce, sanctity of contracts).

### chapter summary

Americans began the War of 1812 with high hopes of conquering Canada. But their strategy and efforts were badly flawed, and before long British and Canadian forces had thrown the United States on the defensive. The Americans fared somewhat better in naval warfare, but by 1814 the British had burned Washington and were threatening New Orleans. The Treaty of Ghent ended the war in a stalemate that solved none of the original issues. But Americans counted the war a success and increasingly turned away from European affairs and toward isolationism.

Despite some secessionist talk by New Englanders at the Hartford Convention, the ironic outcome of the divisive war was a strong surge of American nationalism and unity. Political conflict virtually disappeared during the "Era of Good Feelings" under President Madison. A fervent new nationalism appeared in diverse areas of culture, economics and foreign policy.

The Era of Good Feelings was soon threatened by the Panic of 1819, caused largely by excessive land speculation and unstable banks. An even more serious threat came from the first major sectional dispute over slavery, which was postponed but not really resolved by the Missouri Compromise of 1820.

Under Chief Justice John Marshall, the Supreme Court further enhanced its role as the major force upholding a powerful national government and conservative defense of property rights. Marshall's rulings partially checked the general movement toward states' rights and popular democracy.

Nationalism also led to a more assertive American foreign policy. Andrew Jackson's military adventures in Spanish Florida resulted in the cession of that territory to the U.S. American fears of European intervention in Latin America encouraged Monroe and J. Q. Adams to lay down the Monroe Doctrine.

## HISTORIC NOTES

- Fighting against the military might of Great Britain for the second time in less than 30 years places significant strains on the U.S. politically, economically, and militarily. The Treaty of Ghent leaves in place most of the grievances that precipitated the war.
  
- New Englanders and the Federalist Party strongly condemn the War of 1812. The Federalists meet to discuss their grievances in Hartford, CT in 1814. Many consider discussing secession at a future meeting, which, because the war ended, is never convened.
  
- Following the war, a spirit of increased patriotism and nationalism sweeps the nation in what has been referred to as the Era of Good Feelings.
  
- In order to integrate the sectional economies of the nation, Senator Henry Clay advocates what becomes known as the American System.
  
- As the U.S expands westward, the question of containing slavery takes on an increasingly large role in the nation's political affairs.
  
- Concerned about possible European intervention in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere, President Monroe warns Europe that the U.S. will not tolerate such interference.
  
- Some historians consider the attempt to seize Canada as a reflection of early American imperialism, whereas others view it as a key aspect of American military strategy.
  
- Many historians see the Monroe Doctrine as a defensive and altruistic statement by the U.S. government. On the other hand, some historians view the Monroe Doctrine as the foundation of a hegemonic policy that became the cornerstone of future U.S. foreign policy.

## **The Rise of Mass Democracy, 1824–1840**

### Chapter Themes

Theme: The election to the presidency of the frontier aristocrat and common person's hero, Andrew Jackson, signaled the end of the older elitist political leadership represented by John Quincy Adams. A new spirit of mass democracy and popular involvement swept through American society, bringing new energy as well as conflict and corruption to public life.

Theme: Jackson successfully mobilized the techniques of the New Democracy and presidential power to win a series of dramatic political battles against his enemies. But by the late 1830s, his Whig opponents had learned to use the same popular political weapons against the Democrats, signaling the emergence of the second American party system.

Theme: Amidst the whirl of democratic politics, issues of tariffs, financial instability, Indian policy, and possible expansion in Texas indicated that difficult sectional and economic problems were festering beneath the surface and not being very successfully addressed.

### chapter summary

Beginning in the 1820s, a powerful movement celebrating the common person and promoting the "New Democracy" transformed the earlier elitist character of American politics. The controversial election of the Yankee sophisticate John Quincy Adams in 1824 angered the followers of Andrew Jackson.

Jackson's sweeping presidential victory in 1828 represented the political triumph of the New Democracy, including the spoils-rich political machines that thrived in the new environment. Jackson's simple, popular ideas and rough-hewn style reinforced the growing belief that any ordinary person could hold public office. The "Tariff of Abominations" and the nullification crisis with South Carolina revealed a growing sectionalism and anxiety about slavery that ran up against Jackson's fierce nationalism.

Jackson exercised the powers of the presidency against his opponents, particularly Calhoun and Clay. He made the Bank of the United States a symbol of evil financial power and killed it after a bitter political fight. Destroying the bank reinforced Jacksonians' hostility to concentrated and elite-dominated financial power, but also left the United States without any effective financial system.

Jackson's presidency also focused on issues of westward expansion. Pursuing paths of "civilization," Native Americans of the Southeast engaged in extensive agricultural and educational development. But pressure from white settlers and from the state governments proved overwhelming, and Jackson finally supported the forced removal of all southeastern Indians to Oklahoma along the "Trail of Tears."

In Texas, American settlers successfully rebelled against Mexico and declared their independence. Jackson recognized the Texas Republic but, because of the slavery controversy, he refused its application for annexation to the United States.

Jackson's political foes soon formed themselves into the Whig party, but in 1836 they lost to his handpicked successor, Van Buren. Jackson's ill-considered economic policies came home to roost under the unlucky Van Buren, as the country plunged into a serious depression following the panic of 1837.

The Whigs used these economic troubles and the political hoopla of the new mass democratic process to elect their own hero in 1840, following the path of making a western aristocrat into a democratic symbol. The Whig victory signaled the emergence of a new two-party system, in which the two parties' genuine philosophical differences and somewhat different constituencies proved less important than their widespread popularity and shared roots in the new American democratic spirit.

### HISTORIC NOTES

- Andrew Jackson handily wins the popular vote in the 1824 but fails to win the necessary electoral votes. The U.S. House of Representatives selects his opponent, John Quincy Adams. But in 1828, Jackson easily defeats Adams, ushering in what many see as a period of democratic growth. Claiming he is attacking entrenched political forces, Jackson rewards his political supporters with patronage positions in government.
- The tariff of 1832 nearly leads to military confrontation between the federal government and South Carolina. Though resolved peacefully, the conflict pits two powerful political figures against each other, President Andrew Jackson and Senator John C. Calhoun of SC.
- Cherokee Indians are forced to leave their land and travel west in what becomes known as the Trail of Tears. Also, Sauk Fox Indians are beaten in the Black Hawk War and Seminoles in FL are defeated and removed to reservations in the West.
- Opponents of Jackson and the Democrats form a new political party in the early 1830s, the Whigs.
- Martin Van Buren succeeds Jackson. His presidency is seriously damaged by a severe depression brought on in part by Jackson's Specie Circular, which ends the Bank of the U.S.
- The conflict over the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 revealed deepening sectional differences. Opponents of the tariff claimed that individual states could nullify federal laws deemed harmful to their interests. Jackson disagreed and threatened to use the military to enforce federal acts and laws. Calhoun in essence was making the claim that the U.S. was a confederation of states.
- Seeing the Bank of the U.S. as a vestige of elite eastern control of the economy, Jackson did battle with its president, Nicholas Biddle. Jackson finally defeated the Bank of the U.S. with the Specie Circular. Even though the Supreme Court, in *McCulloch v. MD* had ruled the Bank constitutional, Jackson had his way, but it precipitated an economic collapse.

## **Forging the National Economy, 1790–1860**

### Chapter Themes

Theme: The importance of the West grew in the early nineteenth century. Cheap land attracted immigrants and natives alike, and, after some technological innovations, the West became an agricultural giant. The increased output also spurred transportation developments to tie this developing region to the rest of the United States.

Theme: In the era of Jacksonian democracy, the American population grew rapidly and changed in character. More people lived in the raw West and in the expanding cities, and immigrant groups like the Irish and Germans added their labor power to America's economy, sometimes arousing hostility from native-born Americans in the process.

Theme: In the early nineteenth century, the American economy developed the beginnings of industrialization. The greatest advances occurred in transportation, as canals and railroads bound the Union together into a continental economy with strong regional specialization.

### chapter summary

The youthful American republic expanded dramatically on the frontier in the early nineteenth century. Frontier life was often crude and hard on the pioneers, especially women.

Westward-moving pioneers often ruthlessly exploited the environment, exhausting the soil and exterminating wildlife. Yet the wild beauty of the West was also valued as a symbol of American national identity, and eventually environmentalists would create a national park system to preserve pieces of the wilderness.

Other changes altered the character of American society and its workforce. Old cities expanded, and new cities sprang up in the wilderness. Irish and German immigrants poured into the country in the 1830s and 1840s, and the Irish in particular aroused nativist hostility because of their Roman Catholic faith.

Inventions and business innovations like free incorporation laws spurred economic growth. Women and children were the most exploited early factory laborers. Male workers made some gains in wages and hours but generally failed in unionization attempts.

The most far-reaching economic advances before the Civil War occurred in agriculture and transportation. The early railroads, despite many obstacles, gradually spread their tentacles across the country. Foreign trade remained only a small part of the American economy, but changing technology gradually created growing economic links to Europe. By the early 1860s the telegraph, railroad, and steamship had gone far toward replacing older means of travel and communication like the canals, clipper ships, stagecoach, and pony express.

The new means of transportation and distribution laid the foundations for a continental market economy. The new national economy created a pattern of sectional specialization and altered the traditional economic functions of the family. There was growing concern over the class differences spawned by industrialization, especially in the cities. But the general growth of

opportunities and the increased standard of living made America a magnetic “land of opportunity” to many people at home and abroad.

## **The Ferment of Reform and Culture, 1790–1860**

### Chapter Themes

Theme: The spectacular religious revivals of the Second Great Awakening reversed a trend toward secular rationalism in American culture, and helped to fuel a spirit of social reform. In the process, religion was increasingly “feminized,” while women in turn took the lead in movements of reform, including those designed to improve their own condition.

Theme: The attempt to improve Americans’ faith, morals, and character affected nearly all areas of American life and culture, including education, the family, literature, and the arts—culminating in the great crusade against slavery.

Theme: Intellectual and cultural development in America was less prolific than in Europe, but they did earn some international recognition and became more distinctly American, especially after the War of 1812.

### chapter summary

In early nineteenth century America, movements of moral and religious reform accompanied the democratization of politics and the creation of a national market economy. After a period of growing rationalism in religion, a new wave of revivals beginning about 1800 swept out of the West and effected great change not only in religious life but also in other areas of society.

Existing religious groups were further fragmented, and new groups like the Mormons emerged. Women were especially prominent in these developments, becoming a major presence in the churches and discovering in reform movements an outlet for energies that were often stifled in masculinized political and economic life.

Among the first areas to benefit from the reform impulse was education. The public elementary school movement gained strength, while a few women made their way into still tradition-bound colleges. Women were also prominent in movements for improved treatment of the mentally ill, peace, temperance, and other causes. By the 1840s some women also began to agitate for their own rights, including suffrage. The movement for women’s rights, closely linked to the antislavery crusade, gained adherents even while it met strong obstacles and vehement opposition.

While many reformers worked to improve society as a whole, others created utopian experiments to model their religious and social ideals. Some of these groups promoted radical sexual and economic doctrines, while others appealed to high-minded intellectuals and artists.

American culture was still quite weak in theoretical sciences and the fine arts, but a vigorous national literature blossomed after the War of 1812. In New England the literary renaissance was closely linked to the philosophy of transcendentalism promoted by Emerson and others. Many of the great American writers like Walt Whitman reflected the national spirit of utopian optimism, but a few dissenters like Hawthorne and Melville explored the darker side of life and of their own society.



## **The South and the Slavery Controversy, 1793–1860**

### Chapter Themes

Theme: The explosion of cotton production fastened the slave system deeply upon the South, creating a complex, hierarchical racial and social order that deeply affected whites as well as blacks.

Theme: The economic benefits of an increasing production of cotton due to the cotton gin and slavery was shared between the South, the North, and Britain. The economics of cotton and slavery also led to bigger and bigger plantations, since they could afford the heavy investment of human capital.

Theme: The emergence of a small but energetic radical abolitionist movement caused a fierce proslavery backlash in the South and a slow but steady growth of moderate antislavery sentiment in the North.

### chapter summary

Whitney's cotton gin made cotton production enormously profitable, and created an ever-increasing demand for slave labor. The South's dependence on cotton production tied it economically to the plantation system and racially to white supremacy. The cultural gentility and political domination of the relatively small plantation aristocracy concealed slavery's great social and economic costs for whites as well as blacks.

Most slaves were held by a few large planters. But most slaveowners had few slaves, and most southern whites had no slaves at all. Nevertheless, except for a few mountain whites, the majority of southern whites strongly supported slavery and racial supremacy because they cherished the hope of becoming slaveowners themselves, and because white racial identity gave them a sense of superiority to the blacks.

The treatment of the economically valuable slaves varied considerably. Within the bounds of the cruel system, slaves yearned for freedom and struggled to maintain their humanity, including family life.

The older black colonization movement was largely replaced in the 1830s by a radical Garrisonian abolitionism demanding an immediate end to slavery. Abolitionism and the Nat Turner rebellion caused a strong backlash in the South, which increasingly defended slavery as a positive good and turned its back on many of the liberal political and social ideas gaining strength in the North.

Most northerners were hostile to radical abolitionism, and respected the Constitution's evident protection of slavery where it existed. But many also gradually came to see the South as a land of oppression, and any attempt to extend slavery as a threat to free society.