CHAPTER 9

An Agrarian Republic

1790–1824
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In mid-October 1804, news arrived at the Mandan villages, prominently situated on bluffs overlooking the upper Missouri River, that an American military party led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark was coming up the river. The principal chiefs, hoping for expanded trade and support against their enemies the Sioux, welcomed these first American visitors. As the expedition’s three boats and forty-three men approached the village, Clark wrote, "Great numbers on both sides flocked down to the bank to view us." That evening, the Mandans welcomed the Americans with an enthusiastic dance and gifts of food.

Since the fourteenth century, when they migrated from the East, the Mandans had lived along the Missouri, on the edge of the Great Plains in what is now North Dakota. They believed their homeland was "the very center of the world," and indeed it is in the heart of the North American continent. Mandan men hunted buffalo and Mandan women kept storage pits full with abundant crops of corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and tobacco grown on the fertile soil of the river bottomlands. The Mandan villages were also the central marketplace of the northern Plains; at trading time in late summer they filled with Crows, Assiniboins, Cheyennes, Kiowas, and Arapahoes. Well before any of these people, or those of other tribes, had met a European, they were trading in kettles, knives, and guns acquired from the French and English to the east and leatherwork, glassware, and horses acquired from the Spanish in the Southwest.

The Mandan women kept storage pits full with abundant crops of corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and tobacco. Mandan lodges were used for community gatherings, and each of the other earth lodges was home to a senior woman, her husband, her sisters (perhaps married to the same man as she, for the Mandans practiced polygamy), their daughters and their unmarried sons, along with numerous grandchildren. Matrilineal clans, the principal institution of the community, distributed food to the sick, adopted orphans, cared for the dependent elderly, and punished wrongdoers. A village council of male clan leaders selected chiefs who led by consensus and lost power when people no longer accepted their opinions.

Lewis and Clark had been sent by President Thomas Jefferson to survey the Louisiana Purchase and to find an overland route to the Pacific Ocean. They were also instructed to inform the Indians that they now owed loyalty—and trade—to the American government, thereby challenging British economic control over the lucrative North American fur trade. Meeting with the village chiefs, the Americans offered the Mandans a military and economic alliance. His people would like nothing better, responded Chief Black Cat, for the Mandans had fallen on hard times over the past decade. [Some twenty years earlier], "the smallpox destroyed the greater part of the nation," the chief said. "All the nations before this malady [were] afraid of them, [but] after they were reduced, the Sioux and other Indians waged war, and killed a great many." Black Cat was skeptical that the Americans would deter the Sioux, but Clark reassured him. "We were ready to protect them," Clark reported in his journal, "and kill those who would not listen to our good talk."

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The eighteenth century had been a golden age for the Mandan, who with their closely related Hidatsa neighbors numbered about 3,000 in 1804. In each of their five villages, earth lodges surrounded a central plaza. One large ceremonial lodge was used for community gatherings, and each of the other earth lodges was home to a senior woman, her husband, her sisters (perhaps married to the same man as she, for the Mandans practiced polygamy), their daughters and their unmarried sons, along with numerous grandchildren. Matrilineal clans, the principal institution of the community, distributed food to the sick, adopted orphans, cared for the dependent elderly, and punished wrongdoers. A village council of male clan leaders selected chiefs who led by consensus and lost power when people no longer accepted their opinions.

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The Mandans spent the winter with the Mandans, joining in their communal life and establishing firm and friendly relations with them. There were dances and joint hunting parties, frequent visits to the earth lodges, long talks around the fire, and, for many of the men, pleasant nights in the company of Mandan women. Lewis and Clark spent many hours acquiring important geographic information from the Mandans, who drew charts and maps showing the course of the Missouri, the ranges of the Rocky Mountains, and places where one could cross the Continental Divide. The information provided by the Mandans and other Indian peoples to the west was vital to the success of
the expedition. Lewis and Clark’s “voyage of discovery” depended largely on the willingness of Indian peoples to share their knowledge of the land with the Americans.

In need of interpreters who could help them communicate with other Indian communities on their way, the Americans hired several multilingual Frenchmen who lived with the Mandans. They also acquired the services of Sacajawea, the fifteen-year-old Lemhi wife of one of the Frenchmen, who became the only woman to join the westward journey. The presence of Sacajawea and her baby son was a signal, as Clark noted, to “all the Indians as to our friendly intentions”; everyone knew that women and children did not go on war parties.

When the party left the Mandan villages in March, Clark wrote that his men were “generally healthy, except venereal complaints which is very common amongst the natives and the men catch it from them.” After an arduous journey across the Rockies, the party reached the Pacific Ocean at the mouth of the Columbia River, where they spent the winter. Overdue and feared lost, they returned in triumph to St. Louis in September 1806. Before long the Americans had established Fort Clark at the Mandan villages, giving American traders a base for challenging British dominance of the western fur trade. The permanent American presence brought increased contact, and with it much more disease. In 1837, a terrible smallpox epidemic carried away the vast majority of the Mandans, reducing the population to fewer than 150. Four Bears, a Mandan chief who had been a child at the time of the Lewis and Clark visit, spoke these last words to the remnants of his people:

“I have loved the whites,” he declared. “I have lived with them ever since I was a boy.” But in return for the kindness of the Mandans, the Americans had brought this plague. “I do not fear death, my friends,” he said, “but to die with my face rotten, that even the wolves will shrink with horror at seeing me, and say to themselves, that is Four Bears, the friend of the whites.” “They have deceived me,” he pronounced with his last breath. “Those that I always considered as brothers turned out to be my worst enemies.”

In sending Lewis and Clark on their “voyage of discovery” to claim the land and the loyalty of the Mandans and other western Indian communities, President Jefferson was motivated by his vision of an expanding American republic of self-sufficient farmers. During his and succeeding presidencies, expansion became a key element of national policy and pride. Yet, as the experience of the Mandans showed, what Jefferson viewed as enlargement of “the empire for liberty” had a dark side—the destruction, from disease and coerced displacement, of the communities created by America’s first peoples. The effects—economic, political, and social—of continental expansion dominate the history of the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century.

### KEY TOPICS

- The development of America’s economy in a world of warring great powers
- The role of Jefferson’s presidency and his agrarian republicanism in forging a national identity
- The ending of colonial dependency by the divisive War of 1812
- The nationalizing force of westward expansion

### NORTH AMERICAN COMMUNITIES FROM COAST TO COAST

In spite of the political turmoil of the 1790s, the young United States entered the new century full of national pride and energy. But the larger issue, America’s place in the world, was still uncertain, beginning with its situation on the North American continent (see Map 9-1).
CHAPTER 9  AN AGRARIAN REPUBLIC, 1790–1824

At first glance, the United States of America in 1800 was little different from the scattered colonies of the pre-Revolution era. Two-thirds of the young nation’s people still lived in a long thin line of settlement within fifty miles of the Atlantic coast. From New Hampshire to Georgia, most people lived on farms or in small towns. Because they rarely traveled far from home, peoples’ horizons were limited and local. Nevertheless, the new nation was already transforming itself between 1790 and 1800, according to the first and second federal censuses, the American population grew from 3.9 million to 5.3 million. Growth by migration was greatest in the trans-Appalachian West, a region that was already home to approximately 100,000 Indians. From 1800 to 1850, in an extraordinary burst of territorial expansion, Americans...
surged westward all the way to the Pacific. In 1800, few people would have predicted that within fifty years the nation would encompass the entire continent. At that time, the United States of America was a new and weak nation sharing a continent with the colonies of many of the world’s great powers.

**Spanish Colonies**

On paper, Spain possessed most of North America, but its control crumbled rapidly in the 1790s, affecting New Spain, the richest colony in Spanish America. Mexico City, with a population of 200,000, was by far the largest and most elegant city on the continent. But there were smoldering problems. Tensions mounted between the Spanish-born *peninsulares*, high officials and bureaucrats, and the native-born *criollos* of Spanish descent, who chafed at their subordination, especially after the success of the American Revolution. In the 1790s, there were two abortive criollo conspiracies on behalf of independence in Mexico City alone. Furthermore, none of New Spain’s northern provinces, created to protect the approaches to Mexico’s fabulously wealthy silver mines, thrived. In all of the older settlements—San Antonio, Santa Fé, and Tucson—only a handful of persons of Spanish descent lived among a preponderantly native population. This was true even in the most recently founded northern province, Alta (Upper) California.

In 1769, in their last effort to protect their rich colony of Mexico, the Spanish established a chain of twenty-one missions in Alta California that stretched north from San Diego (1769) to Sonoma (1823). The largest of these missions was Los Angeles, which in 1800 had a largely mestizo population of 300. The town, which was the social center for the vast countryside surrounding it, functioned chiefly as a center of governmental authority (see Chapter 5). Despite Spain’s desire to seal its territory from commerce with other nations, a brisk but illegal trade in otter skins, hides, and tallow developed between the United States and California after the first American ship, the *Lelia Bird*, arrived in 1803.

American traders were making inroads on Spanish-held territory along the Mississippi River as well. New Orleans, acquired by Spain from France at the end of the Seven Years’ War in 1763, was becoming a thriving international port. In 1801, it shipped more than $3 million worth of tobacco, sugar, rice, cotton, fruits, and vegetables to Europe. Every year, a greater proportion of products for the New Orleans trade was supplied by Americans living some distance up the Mississippi River. Pinckney’s 1795 treaty with Spain guaranteed Americans free navigation of the Mississippi River and the right to deposit goods at the port of New Orleans. Nevertheless, Americans were uncomfortably aware that the city’s crucial location at the mouth of the Mississippi meant that whatever foreign nation possessed New Orleans had the power to choke off the flourishing trade in the vast Mississippi Valley river system.

More than 600 miles north was the small trading town of St. Louis, founded by the New Orleans trader Pierre Laclède in 1763. By 1800, the town had fewer than a thousand residents, three-quarters of whom were involved in the Indian trade of the Missouri River. Spanish officials tried to supervise that trade from their offices in the town, but real control rested in the hands of the Laclède and other French traders. Americans visiting this shabby little place laughed at Laclède’s prediction that St. Louis would become “one of the finest cities in America,” but he was right.

**Haiti and the Caribbean**

The Caribbean posed other challenges. The rich sugar-producing islands, various colonies of Spain (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Santo Domingo), France (Martinique, Guadalupe, and Saint-Domingue), and Britain (Barbados, Jamaica, and a number
of smaller islands), provided 80 to 90 percent of the European supply of sugar. All the sugar plantations used enslaved Africans as the labor force. Thus, they shared with the slave-holding American South a distinctive Afro–North American society that cut across national boundaries. This world was jolted in 1791 by the revolt of black slaves in Saint-Domingue, France’s richest colony. Under the leadership of Toussaint L’Ouverture, the former colony, renamed Haiti, became North America’s first independent black nation. Its existence struck fear into the hearts of white slave owners at the same time that it served as a beacon of hope to the enslaved.

**British North America**

British North America had been wrested from the French in the Seven Years’ War (see Chapter 6). In 1800, its heart remained the former French colony of Québec (at that time called the province of Lower Canada), with a predominantly French population of about 160,000. Most of the rest of the settlers elsewhere were American, either Loyalists driven out at the time of the Revolution or simply farmers in search of better land. British authorities, fearing civil disturbances, discouraged American immigrants from settling among the French, directing them instead either to the Maritime Provinces, dominated by Nova Scotia’s great port, Halifax, or to Upper Canada, the first inland colony north of the Great Lakes, established in 1791. Farther west (and closed to settlement) lay Rupert’s Land, the great stretch of the Canadian north and west that was administered by the Hudson’s Bay Company. To allay popular demands stimulated by the American Revolution, Britain established legislative assemblies in Upper and Lower Canada and in the Maritimes in 1791, but, learning from its American fiasco, Britain kept the legislatures under strong executive control. British North America dominated the continental fur trade and the great succession of waterways—the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and the rivers beyond—that made it possible. Britain was on friendly terms with many of the native peoples who were part of the trade. This economic grip was a challenge and frustration to many westward-moving Americans. At the same time, the dispersed nature of the Canadian colonies made them, at least in the eyes of some Americans, ripe for conquest.

**Russian America**

Finally, Russian occupation of what is now Alaska posed another, rather remoter threat to the United States. Russian settlement of Alaska was an extension of its conquest of Siberia, which was driven by the fur trade. In 1741, commissioned by Tsar Peter the Great, the Danish-born naval officer Vitus Bering sailed east from Kamchatka across the sea that now bears his name, explored the Aleutian Islands, and made landfall on the southern coast of Alaska. In the aftermath of his voyages, Russian and Siberian fur trappers, known as *promyshleniki*, became regular visitors to the Aleutian Islands and the Alaskan coast. By the late 1750s, they were shipping a steady supply of furs from Russian America.

The Russians sometimes took furs by force, holding whole villages hostage and brutalizing the native Inuit and Aleut peoples. After the Aleut
Revolt of 1766, the Russian authorities promised to end the abuse, but by 1800, the precontact population of 25,000 Aleuts had been greatly reduced. At the same time, sexual relations and intermarriage between fur trappers and Aleut women created a large group of Russian creoles who assumed an increasingly prominent position in the Alaskan fur trade as navigators, explorers, clerks, and traders as the fur trade became permanent.

The Russian-American Company, chartered by the tsar in 1799, first set up American headquarters at Kodiak. When overhunting caused a scarcity of furs, the Russians moved their headquarters south to Sitka, in what is now the southeastern panhandle of Alaska. This was the homeland of the Tlingits, a warrior society, who destroyed the Russians’ first fortress in the Tlingit Revolt of 1802. The Russians reestablished Sitka by force in 1804, and over the next generation established Russian settlements along the Pacific coast as far south as Fort Ross, which was just north of San Francisco Bay and well within Spanish territory. The Russian presence in North America was rapidly expanding even as Spain’s faltered. In 1800, however, this imperial duel was far from the consciousness of most Americans, who were more concerned about the continuing presence of the British to the north in Canada and the nearby racial powder keg in the Caribbean.

**Trans-Appalachia: Cincinnati**

Within the United States itself, the region of greatest growth was territory west of the Appalachian Mountains, and it was this area that was most affected by fears of continuing British influence on regional Indian peoples. By 1800, about 500,000 people (the vast majority from Virginia and North Carolina) had found rich and fertile land along the Ohio River system. Soon there was enough population for statehood. Kentucky (1792) and Tennessee (1796) were the first trans-Appalachian states admitted to the Union.

Migration was a principal feature of American life. Probably 5 to 10 percent of all American households moved each year. In the rural areas of the Atlantic seaboard, a third of the households counted in the 1790 census had moved by 1800; in cities, the proportion was closer to half. Migration to the West was generally a family affair, with groups of kin moving together to a new area. One observer wrote of a caravan moving across the mountains: “They had prepared baskets made of fine hickory withe or splints, and fastening two of them together with ropes they put a child in each basket and put it across a pack saddle.” Once pioneers had managed to struggle by road over the Appalachians, they gladly took to the rivers, especially the Ohio, to move farther west.

Cincinnati, strategically situated 450 miles downstream from Pittsburgh, was a particularly dramatic example of the rapid community growth and development that characterized the trans-Appalachian region. Founded in 1788, Cincinnati began life as a military fort, defending settlers in the fertile Miami River Valley of Ohio from resistance by Shawnee and Miami Indians. Conflict between these Indian peoples and the new settlers was so fierce that the district was grimly referred to as “the slaughterhouse.” After the battle of Fallen Timbers broke Indian resistance in 1794, Cincinnati became the point of departure for immigrants arriving by the Ohio River on their way to settle the interior of the Old Northwest: Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. In 1800, Cincinnati had a population of about 750 people. By 1810, it had tripled in size, confirming its boast to be “the Queen City of the West.”

Cincinnati merchants were soon shipping farm goods from the fertile Miami Valley down the Ohio–Mississippi River system to New Orleans, 1,500 miles away. River hazards such as snags and sandbars made the downriver trip by barge or keelboat
hazardous, and the return trip upriver was slow, more than three months from New Orleans to Cincinnati. Frequently, rivermen simply abandoned their flatboats in New Orleans and traveled home overland, on foot or horseback, by the long and dangerous Natchez Trace, an old Indian trail that linked Natchez on the Mississippi with Nashville, Tennessee. Nevertheless, river traffic increased yearly, and the control of New Orleans became a key concern of western farmers and merchants. If New Orleans refused to accept American goods, Cincinnati merchants and many thousands of trans-Appalachian farmers would be ruined.

**Atlantic Ports: From Charleston to Boston**

Although only 3 percent of the nation’s population lived in cities, the Atlantic ports continued, as in the colonial era, to dominate the nation economically and politically. Seaports benefited from the advantage of relatively quick waterborne trade and communication over much slower land travel. Merchants in the seaboard cities found it easier to cross the Atlantic than to venture into their own backcountry in search of trade. In 1800, the nation’s most important urban centers were all Atlantic seaports: Charleston (which had a population of 20,000), Baltimore (26,000), Philadelphia (70,000), New York (60,000), and Boston (25,000). Each had a distinctive regional identity.

Charleston, South Carolina, was the South’s premier port. In colonial days, Charleston had grown rich on its links with the British West Indies and on trade with England in rice, long-staple cotton, and indigo. The social center for the great low-country plantation owners, Charleston was a multiracial city of whites, African Americans (2,000 of them free), Indian peoples, and the mixed-race offspring of these three groups. One was as likely to hear French, Spanish, or Gullah and Geechee (African-based dialects of low-country slaves) as English. This graceful, elegant city was a center for the slave trade until 1808.

Baltimore was the major port for the tobacco of the Chesapeake Bay region and thus was connected with the slave-owning aristocracy of the Upper South. But proximity to the wheat-growing regions of the Pennsylvania backcountry increasingly inclined the city’s merchants to look westward and to consider ways to tap the trade of the burgeoning Ohio country.

Philadelphia, William Penn’s “City of Brotherly Love,” was distinguished by the commercial and banking skills of Quaker merchants. These merchants had built international trade networks for shipping the farm produce of Pennsylvania’s German farmers. Philadelphia served as the nation’s capital in the 1790s, and was acknowledged as its cultural and intellectual leader as well.

New York, still faintly Dutch in architecture and social customs, was soon to outgrow all the other cities. New York merchants were exceptionally aggressive in their pursuit of trade. Unlike their counterparts in Philadelphia and Boston, New Yorkers accepted the British auction system, which cut out the middleman and offered goods in large lots at wholesale prices at open auctions. Increasingly, British imports entered America through the port of New York. New York’s shipping, banking, insurance, and
supporting industries boomed, and as early as 1800, a quarter of all American shipping was owned by New York merchants.

Boston, the cockpit of the American Revolution, was also the capital of Massachusetts. The handsome State House, built on Beacon Hill, reflected the origins of Boston’s merchant wealth: a carved wooden codfish occupied a place of honor in the new building. By the late eighteenth century, however, Boston’s commercial wealth had diversified into shipbuilding, shipping, banking, and insurance.

Though small in population, these Atlantic cities led the nation socially, politically, and above all economically. In 1800, the merchants in these seaports still primarily looked across the Atlantic to Europe. In the coming half-century, however, it was the cities that developed the strongest ties with the trans-Appalachian West that were to thrive.

A National Economy

In 1800, the United States was a producer of raw materials. The new nation faced the same challenge that developing nations confront today. At the mercy of fluctuating world commodity prices they cannot control, such countries have great difficulty protecting themselves from economic dominance by stronger, more established nations.

Cotton and the Economy of the Young Republic

In 1800, the United States was predominantly rural and agricultural. According to the census, 94 of 100 Americans lived in communities of fewer than 2,500 people, and four of five families farmed the land. Farming families followed centuries-old traditions of working with hand tools and draft animals, producing most of their own

WHAT WERE the most important strengths of the American economy in the early 1800s?

Class Discussion Question 9.3

AP* Guideline 6.1

Class Discussion Question 9.8

Built for speed, the narrow beamed, many-sailed American clipper ships were the technological marvel of their age. In 1854, the most famous clipper ship, Flying Cloud, shown here, made the voyage from New York to San Francisco in 89 days.

© Museum of the City of New York/CORBIS.
food and fiber. Crops were grown for subsistence (home use) rather than for sale. Commodities such as whiskey and hogs (both easy to transport) provided small and irregular cash incomes or items for barter. As late as 1820, only 20 percent of the produce of American farms was consumed outside the local community.

In contrast, in the South, plantation agriculture based on enslaved workers was wholly commercial and international. The demand for cotton was growing rapidly in response to the boom in the industrial production of textiles in England and Europe, but extracting the seeds from the fibers of the cotton that grew best in the southern interior required an enormous investment of labor. The cotton gin, which mechanized this process, was invented in 1793; soon cotton, and the slave labor system that produced it, assumed a commanding place in southern life and in the foreign trade of the United States.

In 1790, however, increasing foreign demand for American goods and services hardly seemed likely. Trade with Britain, still the biggest customer for American raw materials, was considerably less than it had been before the Revolution. Britain and France both excluded Americans from their lucrative West Indian trade and taxed American ships with discriminatory duties. It was difficult to be independent in a world dominated by great powers.

**Shipping and the Economic Boom**

Despite these restrictions on American commerce, the strong shipping trade begun during the colonial era and centered in the Atlantic ports became a major asset in the 1790s, when events in Europe provided America with extraordinary opportunities. The French Revolution, which began in 1789, soon initiated nearly twenty-five years of warfare between Britain and France. All along the Atlantic seaboard, urban centers thrived as American ships carried European goods that could no longer be transported on British ships without danger of French attack (and vice versa). Because America was neutral, its merchants had the legal right to import European goods and promptly reexport them to other European countries. Despite British and French efforts to prevent the practice (see Chapter 8), reexports amounted to half of the profits in the booming shipping trade (see Figure 9-1).

The vigorous international shipping trade had dramatic effects within the United States. The coastal cities all grew substantially from 1790 to 1820. This rapid urbanization was a sign of real economic growth (rather than a sign that poverty was pushing rural workers off the farms, as occurs in some developing countries today), for it reflected expanding opportunities in the cities. In fact, the rapid growth of cities stimulated farmers to produce the food to feed the new urban dwellers.

The long series of European wars also allowed enterprising Americans to seize lucrative international opportunities such as the China trade. In 1784, the Empress of China set sail from New York for Canton with forty tons of ginseng. When it returned in 1785 with a cargo of teas, silks, and chinaware, the sponsors of the voyage made a 30 percent profit. Other merchants were quick to follow. In 1787, Robert Gray left Boston in the Columbia, sailing south around Cape Horn, then north to the Pacific Northwest, where he bought sea otter skins cheaply from the coastal Indians. Then Gray sailed west across the Pacific to China, where he sold the furs at fabulous profits before rounding the Cape of Good Hope and returning to Boston laden with tea. In his second voyage in 1792, Gray discovered the mouth of a major Northwest river, which he named for his ship.
Lewis and Clark ventured west in 1804, part of their task was to chart the exact path of Gray’s “Columbia’s River.” Soon New England so dominated the seaborne trade in furs to China that the Pacific Northwest Indians called all Americans “Bostons.”

The active American participation in international trade fostered a strong and diversified shipbuilding industry. All the major Atlantic ports boasted expanding shipbuilding enterprises. Demands for speed increased as well, resulting in what many people have regarded as the flower of American shipbuilding, the clipper ship. The narrow-hulled, many-sailed clipper ships of the 1840s and 1850s set records for ships of their size. In 1854, *Flying Cloud*, built in the Boston shipyards of Donald McKay, sailed from New York to San Francisco—a 16,000-mile trip that usually took 150 to 200 days—in a mere 89 days.

The Jefferson Presidency

At noon on March 4, 1801, Thomas Jefferson walked from his modest boardinghouse through the swampy streets of the new federal city of Washington to the unfinished Capitol. George Washington and John Adams had ridden in elaborate carriages to their inaugurals. Jefferson, although accepting a military honor guard, demonstrated by his actions that he rejected the elaborate, quasi-monarchical style of the two Federalist presidents and their (to his mind) autocratic style of government as well.

For all its lack of pretension, Jefferson’s inauguration as the third president of the United States was a momentous occasion in American history, for it marked the peaceful transition from one political party, the Federalists, to their hated rivals, the Jeffersonian Republicans. Beginning in an atmosphere of exceptional political bitterness, Jefferson’s presidency was to demonstrate that a strongly led party system could shape national policy without leading to either dictatorship or revolt. Jefferson’s own moderation may have been the crucial factor: setting a tone of conciliation in his inaugural address, he announced, “We are all republicans; we are all federalists” and during his eight years in office he paid close attention to ways to attract moderate Federalists to the Jeffersonian Republican Party.

Republican Agrarianism

Jefferson brought to the presidency a clearly defined political philosophy. Behind all the events of his administration (1801–09) and those of his successors, in what became known as the Virginia Dynasty (James Madison, 1809–17; James Monroe, 1817–25), was a clear set of beliefs that embodied Jefferson’s interpretation of the meaning of republicanism for Americans.

Jefferson’s years as ambassador to France in the 1780s were particularly important in shaping his political thinking. Recoeiling from the extremes of wealth and poverty he saw there, he came to believe that it was impossible for Europe to achieve a just society that could guarantee to most of its members the “life, liberty and . . . pursuit of happiness” of which he had written in the Declaration of Independence. Only America, he believed, provided fertile earth for the true citizenship necessary to a republican form of government. What America had, and Europe lacked, was room to grow.

Jefferson’s thinking about growth was directly influenced by Englishman Thomas Malthus’s deeply pessimistic and widely influential
Essay on the Principle of Population, published in 1798. Warning of an impending population explosion, Malthus predicted that unless population growth was checked, misery and poverty would soon be widespread throughout Europe and even, Malthus warned, in America. Malthus’s prediction alarmed many Americans, who had taken pride in having one of the fastest rates of population growth in the world, close to 40 percent per decade. Thomas Jefferson was not worried. He used Malthus to underline the opportunity created by America’s vast land resources. The Malthusian prediction need not trouble the United States, Jefferson said, as long as the country kept expanding.

Jefferson envisaged a nation of small family farms clustered together in rural communities—an agrarian republic. He believed that only a nation of roughly equal yeoman farmers, each secure in his own possessions and not dependent on someone else for his livelihood, would exhibit the concern for the community good that was essential in a republic. Indeed, Jefferson said that “those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God,” and so he viewed himself, though his “farm” was the large slave-owning plantation of Monticello.

Jefferson’s vision of an expanding agrarian republic remains to this day one of our most compelling ideas about America’s uniqueness and special destiny. But expansionism contained some negative aspects. The lure of the western lands fostered constant mobility and dissatisfaction rather than the stable, settled communities of yeoman farmers that Jefferson envisaged. Expansionism caused environmental damage, in particular soil exhaustion—a consequence of abandoning old lands, rather than conserving them, and moving on to new ones. Jefferson’s expansionism encouraged the spread of plantations based on slave labor in the South (see Chapter 10). Finally, it bred a ruthlessness toward Indian peoples, who were pushed out of the way for white settlement or who, like the Mandans, were devastated by the diseases that accompanied European trade and contact. Jefferson’s agrarianism thus bred some of the best and some of the worst traits of the developing nation.

**Jefferson’s Government**

Thomas Jefferson came to office determined to reverse the Federalist policies of the 1790s and to ensure an agrarian “republic of virtue.” Accordingly, he proposed a program of “simplicity and frugality,” promising to cut all internal taxes, to reduce the size of the army (from 4,000 to 2,500 men), the navy (from twenty-five ships to seven), and the government staff, and to eliminate the entire national debt inherited from the Federalists. He kept all of these promises, even the last, though the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 cost the Treasury $15 million. This diminishment of government was a key matter of republican principle to Jefferson. If his ideal yeoman farmer was to be a truly self-governing citizen, the federal government must not, Jefferson believed, be either large or powerful. His cost-cutting measures simply carried out the pledge he had made in his inaugural address for “a wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, [and] shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits.”

Perhaps one reason for Jefferson’s success was that the federal government he headed was small and unimportant by today’s standards. For instance, Jefferson found only 130 federal officials in Washington (a grand total of nine in the State Department, including the secretary of state). The national government’s main service to ordinary people was mail delivery, and already in 1800 there were persistent complaints about slowness, unreliability, and expense in the postal service! Everything else—law and order, education, welfare, road maintenance, economic control—rested with state or
local governments. Power and political loyalty were still local, not national.

This small national government also explains why for years, the nation’s capital was so unimpressive. The French designer Pierre L’Enfant had laid out a magnificent plan of broad streets and sweeping vistas reminiscent of Paris. Congress had planned to pay for the grand buildings with money from land sales in the new city, but few people besides politicians and boardinghouse keepers (a largely female occupation) chose to live in Washington. Construction lagged: the President’s House lacked a staircase to the second floor until 1808, and although the House and Senate chambers were soon completed, the central portion of the Capitol was missing. Instead of the imposing dome we know so well today, the early Capitol consisted of two white marble boxes connected by a boardwalk. It is a telling indicator of the true location of national power that a people who had no trouble building new local communities across the continent should have had such difficulty establishing their federal city.

**AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY**

Although determined to reverse Federalist fiscal policies, Jefferson was much more moderate concerning Federalist officeholders. He resisted demands by other Jeffersonian Republicans that “the board should be swept” and all Federalist officeholders replaced with party loyalists. During his term of office, Jefferson allowed 132 Federalists to remain at their posts, while placing Jeffersonian Republicans in 158 other posts. Jefferson’s restraint, however, did not extend to the most notorious Federalist appointees, the so-called midnight judges.

In the last days of the Adams administration, the Federalist-dominated Congress passed several acts that created new judgeships and other positions within the federal judiciary. Jeffersonian Republicans feared that the losing Federalist Party was trying to politicize the judiciary by appointing Federalists who would use their positions to strengthen the powers of the federal government, a policy the Jeffersonians opposed. In one of his last acts in office, President Adams appointed Federalists—quickly dubbed the “midnight judges”—to these new positions. William Marbury, whom President Adams had appointed Justice of the Peace for Washington, D.C., and three other appointees sued James Madison, Jefferson’s secretary of state, to receive their commissions for their offices. Before the case came to trial, however, Congress, controlled by Jeffersonian Republicans, repealed the acts. This case, *Marbury v. Madison*, provoked a landmark decision from the U.S. Supreme Court.

At issue was a fundamental constitutional point: Was the judiciary independent of politics? In his celebrated 1803 decision in *Marbury v. Madison*, Chief Justice John Marshall, a strong Federalist and an Adams appointee, managed to find a way to please both parties. On the one hand, Marshall proclaimed that the courts had a duty “to say what the law is,” thus unequivocally defending the independence of the judiciary and the principle of judicial review. On the other hand, Marshall conceded that the Supreme Court was not empowered by the Constitution to force the executive branch to give Marbury his commission. At first glance, Jefferson’s government appeared to have won the battle over Adams’s last-minute action...
appointees. But in the long run, Marshall established the principle that only the federal judiciary could decide what was constitutional. This was a vital step in realizing the three-way balance of power among the branches of the federal government—executive (president), legislative (Congress), and judiciary (courts)—envisaged in the Constitution. Equally important, during his long tenure in office (1801–35), Chief Justice Marshall consistently led the Supreme Court in a series of decisions that favored the federal government over state governments. Under Marshall’s direction, the Supreme Court became a powerful nationalizing force, often to the dismay of defenders of states’ rights, Jefferson’s Republicans among them.

**Opportunity: The Louisiana Purchase**

In 1800, the United States was a new and fragile democracy in a world dominated by two contending great powers: Britain and France. In 1799, the young general Napoleon Bonaparte seized control of France and began a career of military conquests. Great Britain promptly went to war against him. Following one year of peace, Britain and France were again at war in 1803, beginning a twelve-year duel that ended only with Napoleon’s defeat at the battle of Waterloo in 1815. Once again, Europe was a battleground. America was protected, not by its own military might, which was puny compared to that of the great powers, but by the distance from the fighting provided by the Atlantic Ocean. If England and France fought in North America, as they had in the Seven Years’ War (see Chapter 6), America’s national security would be directly threatened. Jefferson, who had once ardently supported the goals of the French Revolution, viewed Napoleon’s ambitions with increasing apprehension. He feared a resumption of the political animosity of the 1790s, when Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans had so bitterly disagreed on policy toward France (see Chapter 8).

As had his predecessors, Napoleon considered North America a potential battleground on which to fight the British. He looked first at the Caribbean where he planned to reconquer Haiti, the world’s first independent black nation, reenslave its people, and use the rich profits from sugar to finance his European wars. As a first step, in 1800, France secretly reacquired the Louisiana Territory, the vast western drainage of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, from Spain, which had held the region since 1763. Napoleon planned to use Louisiana to grow food for sugar-producing Haiti (once it was reconquered), to act as a counterpoise to the British in Canada, and to check any American expansion that might threaten Spain’s North American colonies. In 1802, he launched the plan by sending an army of 30,000 to reconquer Haiti.

In 1801, when President Jefferson first learned of the French–Spanish secret agreement about Louisiana, he was alarmed. He did not oppose the attack on the liberty of independent black Haiti, but he was concerned about the threat to American commerce on the Mississippi River. In fact, in 1802, the Spanish commander at New Orleans (the French had not yet taken formal control) closed the port to American shippers, thus disrupting commerce as far away as Cincinnati. As Jefferson feared, Federalists in Congress clamored for military action to reopen the port.

In the summer of 1802, Jefferson instructed Robert Livingston, the American ambassador to France, to negotiate to buy New Orleans and the surrounding area for $2 million (or up to $10 million, if necessary). The initial bargaining was not promising, but suddenly, in early 1803, Napoleon was ready to sell. His army of 30,000 men had been forced to withdraw from Haiti, defeated by yellow fever and
by an army of former slaves led by Toussaint L’Ouverture. Expecting the British to declare war against him again, and in need of money for European military campaigns, Napoleon suddenly offered the entire Louisiana Territory, including the crucial port of New Orleans, to the Americans for $15 million. In an age when it took at least two months for messages to cross the Atlantic, special American envoy James Monroe and Ambassador Livingston could not wait to consult Jefferson. They seized the opportunity: they bought the entire Louisiana Territory from Napoleon in Paris in April 1803. President Jefferson first learned the news two months later, on July 3, the eve of Independence Day. Overnight, the size of the United States more than doubled. It was the largest peaceful acquisition of territory in U.S. history.

At home, Jefferson suffered brief qualms. The Constitution did not authorize the president to purchase territory, and Jefferson had always rigidly insisted on a limited interpretation of executive rights. But he had also long held a sense of destiny about the West and had planned the Lewis and Clark expedition before the Louisiana Purchase was a reality. In any case, the prize was too rich to pass up. Jefferson now argued that Louisiana was vital to the nation’s republican future. “By enlarging the empire of liberty,” Jefferson wrote, “we . . . provide new sources of renovation, should its principles, at any time, degenerate, in those portions of our country which gave them birth.” In other words, expansion was essential to liberty. But for African American slaves and Native Americans, the Louisiana Purchase simply increased the scope of their enslavement and destruction. By 1850, four of the six states in the Louisiana Purchase had entered the Union as slave states (see Chapter 10), and Indian Territory, envisaged by Jefferson as a distant refuge for beleaguered eastern Indian peoples, was surrounded by new settlements (see Chapter 15). No matter how noble Jefferson’s rhetoric, neither African Americans nor American Indians shared in his “empire of liberty” (see Map 9-2).

**INCORPORATING LOUISIANA**

The immediate issue following the Louisiana Purchase was how to treat the French and Spanish inhabitants of the Louisiana Territory. In 1803, when the region that is now the state of Louisiana became American property, it had a racially and ethnically diverse population of 43,000 people, of whom only 6,000 were American. French and French-speaking people were numerically and culturally dominant, especially in the city of New Orleans. New Orleans itself had a population of about 8,000, half white and half black. Two-thirds of the black population were slaves; the remainder were “free persons of color,” who under French law enjoyed legal rights equal to those of white people. The white population was a mixture of French people of European and West Indian origin. Among them were French-speaking exiles from Acadia, who became known in New Orleans as Cajuns (see Chapters 6 and 8). But there were also Spanish, Germans, English, Irish, Americans, and native-born creoles (persons of French descent), causing one observer to call the community “a veritable tower of Babel.”

Many people thought that the only way to deal with a population so “foreign” was to wipe out its customs and laws and to impose American ones as quickly as possible. But the French forestalled this outcome by insisting, in the final treaty, that the inhabitants of Louisiana not only should be given the “rights, advantages and immunities of [American] citizens” as soon as possible, but that “in the mean time they shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property and the Religion which they profess.” Consequently, the incorporation of Louisiana into the American federal system became a remarkable story of adaptation between two different communities—American and French.
The effort of mutual adaptation was difficult for both sides. At a public ball held in New Orleans in January 1804, for example, American and French military officers almost came to blows over whether an English country dance or a French waltz would be played first. Officials in Washington dismissed the reported conflict as a mere frivolity, but the U.S. representative in New Orleans and governor of Lower Louisiana Territory, William Claiborne, did not. Over the next four years, Claiborne came to accept the value of French institutions to the region. As a result, with Claiborne’s full support, Louisiana adopted a legal code in 1808 that was based on French civil law rather than English common law. This was not a small concession. French law differed from English law in many fundamental respects, such as in family property (communal versus male ownership), in inheritance (forced heirship versus free disposal), and even in contracts, which were much more strictly regulated in the French system. Remnants of the French legal system remain part of Louisiana state law to this day.
day. In 1812, with the required 60,000 free inhabitants, Louisiana was admitted to the Union, becoming the first slave state in the territory of the Louisiana Purchase. New Orleans remained for years a distinctively French city, illustrating the flexibility possible under a federal system.

**Texas and the Struggle for Mexican Independence**

Spain objected, in vain, to Napoleon’s 1803 sale of Louisiana to America. For years, Spain had attempted to seal off its rich colony of Mexico from commerce with other nations. Now, American Louisiana shared a vague and disputed boundary with Mexico’s northern province of Texas (a parcel of land already coveted by some Americans).

Soon Napoleon brought turmoil to all of Mexico. In 1808, having invaded Spain, he installed his brother Joseph Bonaparte as king, forcing Spain’s king, Charles IV, to renounce his throne. For the next six years, as warfare convulsed Spain, the country’s long-prized New World empire slipped away. Mexico, divided between royalists loyal to Spain and populists seeking social and economic justice for mestizos and Indians, edged bloodily toward independence. Two populist revolts—one in 1810 led by Father Miguel Hidalgo and the other in 1813 led by Father José María Morelos—were suppressed by the royalists, who executed both revolutionary leaders. In 1812, a small force, led by Mexican republican Bernardo Gutiérrez but composed mostly of American adventurers, invaded Texas, captured San Antonio, assassinated the provincial governor Manuel Salcedo, and declared Texas independent. A year later, however, the Mexican republicans were defeated by a royalist army, which then killed suspected collaborators and pillaged the province so thoroughly that the local economy was devastated. The Mexican population declined to fewer than 2,000. Under these circumstances, Mexico’s difficult path toward independence seemed, at least to some Americans, to offer yet another opportunity for expansion.

**Renewed Imperial Rivalry in North America**

Fresh from the triumph of the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson scored a major victory over the Federalist Charles Cotesworth Pinckney in the presidential election of 1804, garnering 162 electoral votes to Pinckney’s 14. Jefferson’s shrewd wooing of moderate Federalists had been so successful that the remaining Federalists dwindled to a highly principled but sectional group, unable to attract voters outside of its home base in New England. Jefferson’s Louisiana success was not repeated, however, and few other consequences of the ongoing struggle between Britain and France were so easy to solve.

**Problems with Neutral Rights**

In his first inaugural address in 1801, Jefferson had announced a foreign policy of “peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.” This was a difficult policy to pursue after 1803, when the Napoleonic Wars resumed. By 1805, Napoleon had conquered most of Europe, but Britain, the victor at the great naval battle of Trafalgar, controlled the seas. The United States, trying to profit from trade with both countries, was caught in the middle. The British did not look kindly as their former colonists tried to evade their blockade of the French by claiming neutrality. Beginning in 1805, the British targeted
the American reexport trade between the French West Indies and France by seizing American ships that were bringing French West Indian goods to Europe. Angry Americans viewed these seizures as violations of their rights as shippers of a neutral nation.

An even more contentious issue arose from the substantial desertion rate of British sailors. Many deserters promptly signed up on American ships, where they drew better pay and sometimes obtained false naturalization papers as well. The numbers involved were large: as many as a quarter of the 100,000 seamen on American ships were British. Soon the British were stopping American merchant vessels and removing any man they believed to be British, regardless of his papers. The British refusal to recognize genuine naturalization papers (on the principle "once a British subject, always a British subject") was particularly insulting to the new American sense of nationhood.

At least 6,000 innocent American citizens suffered forced impressment into the British navy from 1803 to 1812. In 1807, impressment turned bloody when the British ship *Leopard* stopped the American ship *Chesapeake* in American territorial waters and demanded to search for deserters. When the American captain refused, the *Leopard* opened fire, killing three men, wounding eighteen, and removing four deserters (three with American naturalization papers) from the damaged ship. An indignant public protested British interference and the death of innocent sailors.

The Embargo Act

Fully aware that commerce was essential to the new nation, Jefferson was determined to insist on America’s right as a neutral nation to ship goods to Europe. He first tried diplomatic protests, then negotiations, and finally threats, all to no avail. In 1806, Congress passed the Non-Importation Act, hoping that a boycott of British goods, which had worked so well during the Revolutionary War, would be effective once again. It was not. Finally, in desperation, Jefferson imposed the **Embargo Act** in December 1807. This act forbade American ships from sailing to any foreign port, thereby cutting off all exports as well as imports. The intent of the act was to force both Britain and France to recognize neutral rights by depriving them of American-shipped raw materials.

But the results were a disaster for American trade. The commerce of the new nation, which Jefferson himself had done so much to promote, came to a standstill. Exports fell from $108 million in 1807 to $22 million in 1808, and the nation was driven into a deep depression. There was widespread evasion of the embargo. A remarkable number of ships in the coastal trade found themselves “blown off course” to the West Indies or Canada. Other ships simply left port illegally. Smuggling flourished. Pointing out that the American navy’s weakness was due largely to the deep cuts Jefferson had inflicted on it, the Federalists sprang to life with a campaign of outspoken opposition to Jefferson’s policy, and they found a ready audience in New England, the area hardest hit by the embargo.

**Madison and the Failure of “Peaceable Coercion”**

In this troubled atmosphere, Jefferson despondently ended his second term, acknowledging the failure of what he called “peaceable coercion.” He was followed in office by his friend and colleague James Madison of Virginia. Although Madison defeated the Federalist candidate—again Charles Cotesworth Pinckney—by 122 electoral votes to 47, Pinckney’s share of the votes was three times what it had been in 1804.
Ironically, the Embargo Act had almost no effect on its intended victims. The French used the embargo as a pretext for seizing American ships, claiming they must be British ships in disguise. The British, in the absence of American competition, developed new markets for their goods in South America. And at home, as John Randolph sarcastically remarked, the embargo was attempting "to cure corns by cutting off the toes." In March 1809, Congress admitted failure, and the Embargo Act was repealed. But the struggle to remain neutral in the confrontation between the European giants continued. The next two years saw passage of several acts—among them the Non-Intercourse Act of 1809 and Macon’s Bill Number 2 in 1810—that unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit trade with Britain and France unless they ceased their hostile treatment of U.S. shipping. Frustration with the ineffectiveness of government policy mounted.

**A Contradictory Indian Policy**

The United States faced other conflicts besides those with Britain and France over neutral shipping rights. In the West, the powerful Indian nations of the Ohio Valley were determined to resist the wave of expansion that had carried thousands of white settlers onto their lands. North of the Ohio River lived the Northwest Confederation of the Shawnees, Delawares, Miamis, Potawatomis, and several smaller tribes. To the south of the Ohio were the so-called “Five Civilized Tribes,” the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and (in Florida) the Seminoles.

According to the Indian Intercourse Act of 1790, the United States could not simply seize Indian land; it could only acquire it when the Indians ceded it by treaty. But this policy conflicted with the harsh reality of westward expansion. Commonly, settlers pushed ahead of treaty boundaries. When Indian peoples resisted the invasion of their lands, the pioneers fought back and called for military protection. Defeat of an Indian people led to further land cessions. The result for the Indians was a relentless cycle of invasion, resistance, and defeat.

Thomas Jefferson was deeply concerned with the fate of the western Indian peoples. Convinced that Indians had to give up hunting in favor of the yeoman-farmer lifestyle he so favored for all Americans, Jefferson directed the governors of the Northwest Territories to “promote energetically” his vision for civilizing the Indians, which included Christianizing them and teaching them to read. Many Indian peoples actively resisted these efforts at conversion. In addition, Jefferson’s Indian civilization plan was never fully supported by territorial governors and settlers.

After the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson offered traditionalist Indian groups new lands west of the Mississippi River, where they could live undisturbed by white settlers. But he failed to consider the pace of westward expansion. Less than twenty years later, Missouri, the first trans-Mississippi state, was admitted to the Union. Western Indians like the Mandans, who had seemed so remote, were now threatened by further westward expansion.

In fact, Jefferson’s Indian policy, because it did nothing to slow down the ever-accelerating westward expansion, offered little hope to Indian peoples. The alternatives they faced were stark: acculturation, removal, or extinction. Deprived of hunting lands, decimated by disease, increasingly dependent on the white economy for trade goods and annuity payments in exchange for land cessions, many Indian peoples despair. Like the Mandans after Lewis and Clark’s visit, they came to dread the effects of white contact. Nearly every tribe found itself bitterly split between accommodationists and traditionalists. Some, like groups of Cherokees and associated tribes in the South, advocated adapting their traditional agricultural lifestyles and pursuing a pattern of peaceful accommodation. In the Northwest Territory, however, many Indians chose the path of armed resistance.
Indian Resistance

The Shawnees, a seminomadic hunting and farming tribe (the men hunted, the women farmed) of the Ohio Valley, had resisted white settlement in Kentucky and Ohio since the 1750s. Anthony Wayne’s decisive defeat of the Indian Confederacy led by Little Turtle at Fallen Timbers (1794) and the continuing pressure of American settlement, however, had left the Shawnees divided. One group, led by Black Hoof, accepted acculturation. The rest of the tribe tried to maintain traditional ways. Most broke into small bands and tried to eke out a living by hunting, but their numbers were reduced by disease and the survivors were further demoralized by the alcohol offered to them illegally by private traders. One group of traditional Shawnees, however, led by the warrior Tecumseh, sought refuge farther west.

But there was no escape from white encroachment. Between 1801 and 1809, William Henry Harrison, governor of Indiana Territory, concluded fifteen treaties with the Delawares, Potawatomis, Miamis, and other tribes. These treaties opened eastern Michigan, southern Indiana, and most of Illinois to white settlement and forced the Indians onto ever-smaller reservations. Many of these treaties were obtained by coercion, bribery, and outright trickery, and most Indians did not accept them.

In 1805, Tecumseh’s brother, Tenskwatawa, known as The Prophet, began preaching a message of Indian revitalization: a rejection of all contact with the Americans, including the use of American alcohol, clothing, and trade goods, and a return to traditional practices of hunting and farming. He preached an end to quarreling, violence, and sexual promiscuity and to the accumulation of private property. Wealth was valuable only if it was given away, he said. If the Northwest Indians returned to traditional ways, Tenskwatawa promised, “the land will be overturned so that all the white people will be covered and you alone shall inhabit the land.”

This was a powerful message, but it was not new. Just six years earlier, Handsome Lake had led the Seneca people of upstate New York in a similar revitalization movement. Tecumseh, however, succeeded in molding his brother’s religious following into a powerful pan-Indian military resistance movement. With each new treaty that Harrison concluded, Tecumseh gained new followers among the Northwest Confederation tribes. Significantly, he also had the support of the British, who, after 1807, began sending food and guns to him from Canada.

The pan-Indian strategy was at first primarily defensive, aimed at preventing further westward expansion. But the Treaty of Fort Wayne in 1809, in which the United States gained 3 million acres of Delaware and Potawatomi land in Indiana, led to active resistance. Confronting Harrison directly, Tecumseh argued that the land belonged to the larger community of all the Indian peoples; no one tribe could give away the common property of all. He then warned that any surveyors or settlers who ventured into the 3 million acres would risk their lives.

Tecumseh took his message of common land ownership and military resistance to all the Indian peoples of the Northwest Confederacy. He was not uniformly successful, even among the Shawnees. Black Hoof, for example, refused to join. Tecumseh also recruited, with mixed success, among the tribes south of the Ohio River. In councils with Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Cherokees, he promoted active resistance (see Map 9-3).
In November 1811, while Tecumseh was still recruiting among the southern tribes, Harrison marched to the pan-Indian village of Tippecanoe with 1,000 soldiers. The 600 to 700 Indian warriors at the town, urged on by Tenskwatawa, attacked Harrison’s forces before dawn on November 7, hoping to surprise them. The attack failed, and in the battle that followed, the Americans inflicted about 150 Indian
casualties, while sustaining about as many themselves. Although Harrison claimed victory, the truth was far different. Dispersed from Tippecanoe, Tecumseh’s angry followers fell on American settlements in Indiana and southern Michigan, killing many pioneers and forcing the rest to flee to fortified towns. Tecumseh himself entered into a formal alliance with the British. For western settlers, the Indian threat was greater than ever.

The War of 1812

Many Westerners blamed the British for Tecumseh’s attacks on pioneer settlements in the Northwest. British support of western Indians and the long-standing difficulties over neutral shipping rights were the two grievances cited by President Madison when he asked Congress for a declaration of war against Britain on June 1, 1812. Congress obliged him on June 18. But the war had other, more general causes as well.

The War Hawks

A rising young generation of political leaders, first elected to Congress in 1810, strongly resented the continuing influence of Britain, the former mother country, on American affairs. These War Hawks, who included such future leaders as Henry Clay of Kentucky and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, were young Jeffersonian Republicans from the West and South. They found all aspects of British interference, such as impressment of sailors and support for western Indians, intolerable. Eager to assert independence from England once and for all, these young men saw themselves finishing the job begun by the aging revolutionary generation. They also wanted to occupy Florida to prevent runaway slaves from seeking refuge with the Seminole Indians. Westerners wanted to invade Canada, hoping thereby to end threats from
British-backed Indians in the Northwest, such as Tecumseh and his followers. As resentments against England and frustrations over border issues merged, the pressure for war—always a strong force for national unity—mounted.

Unaware that the British, seriously hurt by the American trade embargo, were about to adopt a more conciliatory policy, President James Madison yielded to the War Hawks’ clamor for action in June 1812, and his declaration of war passed in the U.S. Senate by the close vote of 19 to 13, the House by 79 to 49. All the Federalists voted against the war. (The division along party lines continued in the 1812 presidential election, in which Madison garnered 128 electoral votes to 89 for his Federalist opponent, DeWitt Clinton.) The vote was sectional, with New England and the Middle States in opposition and the West and South strongly prowar. Thus, the United States entered the War of 1812 more deeply divided along sectional lines than during any other foreign war in American history.

As a result of Jefferson’s economizing, the American army and navy were small and weak. In contrast, the British, fresh from almost ten years of Napoleonic Wars, were in fighting trim. At sea, the British navy quickly established a strong blockade, harassing coastal shipping along the Atlantic seaboard and attacking coastal settlements at will. In the most humiliating attack, the British burned Washington in the summer of 1814, forcing the president and Congress to flee. Dolley Madison, the president’s wife, achieved a permanent footnote in history by saving a portrait of George Washington from the White House as she fled. The indignity of the burning of Washington was somewhat assuaged in September, when Americans beat back a British attack on Baltimore and Fort McHenry. Watching the “rockets’ red glare” in the battle, onlooker Francis Scott Key was moved to write the words to the “Star-Spangled Banner.” There were a few American naval successes. The American frigate Constitution, known as “Old Ironsides,” destroyed two British men-of-war, the Guerrière and the Java, in classic naval battles, but these failed to lift the British blockade (see Map 9-4).

**The Campaigns Against Northern and Southern Indians**

The American goal of expansion fared badly as well. Americans envisaged a quick victory over sparsely populated British Canada that would destroy British support for Tecumseh and his Northwest Indian allies, but instead the British–Indian alliance defeated them. In July 1812, an American foray into western Canada was repulsed. A joint British and Indian force went on, in August, to capture Detroit and Fort Dearborn (site of Chicago). In September 1813, at the battle of Put-in-Bay, Captain Oliver H. Perry established American control over Lake Erie, leading to the recapture of Detroit by William Henry Harrison. Assisted by

**MAP 9-4**

The War of 1812  War fought between the United States and Britain from June 1812, to January 1815 largely over British restrictions on American shipping.

Audio-Visual Aid, “The War of 1812”
naval forces commanded by Perry. Harrison defeated British and Indian defenders in the battle of the Thames in October 1813. Among those slain in the battle was Tecumseh, fighting on the British side. Later attempts by the United States to invade Canada in the Niagara area failed, but so too did British attempts to invade the United States in the same area.

One reason for the abortive Canadian invasion, aside from failure to appreciate the strength of the British–Indian forces, was that the New England states actively opposed the war. Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut refused to provide militia or supplies, and other New England governors turned a blind eye to the flourishing illegal trade across the U.S.–Canadian border. Another reason was the reaction of Canadians themselves, the majority of whom were former Americans. Ironically, the most decisive effect of the American attacks was the formation of a Canadian sense of national identity and a determination never to be invaded or absorbed by the United States.

In the South, warfare similar to that waged against Tecumseh’s pan-Indian resistance movement in the Northwest dramatically affected the southern Indian peoples. The first of the southern Indian peoples to battle the Americans were the Creeks, a trading nation with a long history of contacts with the Spanish and French. When white settlers began to occupy Indian lands in northwestern Georgia and central Alabama early in the nineteenth century, the Creeks, like the Shawnees in the Northwest, were divided in their response. Although many Creek bands argued for accommodation, a group known as the Red Sticks were determined to fight. During the War of 1812, the Red Sticks, allied with the British and Spanish, fought not only the Americans but other Indian groups.

In August 1813, the Red Sticks attacked Fort Mims on the Alabama River, killing more than 500 Americans and mixed-race Creeks who had gathered there for safety. Led by Andrew Jackson, troops from the Tennessee and Kentucky militias combined with the Creeks’ traditional foes—the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws—to exact revenge. Jackson’s troops matched the Creeks in ferocity, shooting the Red Sticks “like dogs,” one soldier reported. At the battle of Horseshoe Bend in March 1814, the Creeks were trapped between American cannon fire and their Indian enemies: more than 800 were killed, more than in any other battle in the history of Indian–white warfare.

At the end of the Creek War in 1814, Jackson demanded huge land concessions from the Creeks (including from some Creek bands that had fought on his side): 23 million acres, or more than half the Creek domain. The Treaty of Fort Jackson (1814), confirming these land concessions, earned Jackson his Indian name, Sharp Knife. In early 1815 (after the peace treaty had been signed but before news of it arrived in America), Andrew Jackson achieved his best-known victory, an improbable win over veteran British troops in the Battle of New Orleans.

**The Hartford Convention**

America’s occasional successes failed to diminish the angry opposition of New England Federalists to the War of 1812. Opposition to the war culminated in the Hartford
Convention of 1814, where Federalist representatives from the five New England states met to discuss their grievances. At first the air was full of talk of secession from the Union, but soon cooler heads prevailed. The convention did insist, however, that a state had the right "to interpose its authority" to protect its citizens against unconstitutional federal laws. This nullification doctrine was not new; Madison and Jefferson had proposed it in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolves opposing the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798 (see Chapter 8). In any event, the nullification threat from Hartford was ignored, for peace with Britain was announced as delegates from the convention made their way to Washington to deliver their message to Congress. There, the convention’s grievances were treated not as serious business but as an anticlimactic joke.

**The Treaty of Ghent**

By 1814, the long Napoleonic Wars in Europe were slowly drawing to a close, and the British decided to end their war with the Americans. The peace treaty, after months of hard negotiation, was signed at Ghent, Belgium, on Christmas Eve in 1814. Like the war itself, the treaty was inconclusive. The major issues of impressment and neutral rights were not mentioned, but the British did agree to evacuate their western posts, and late in the negotiations they abandoned their insistence on a buffer state for neutral Indian peoples in the Northwest.

For all its international inconsequence, the war did have an important effect on national morale. Andrew Jackson’s victory at New Orleans allowed Americans to believe that they had defeated the British. It would be more accurate to say that by not losing the war the Americans had ended their own feelings of colonial dependency. Equally important, they convinced the British government to stop thinking of America as its colony.

The War of 1812 was one of America’s most divisive wars, arousing more intense opposition than any other American conflict, including Vietnam. Today, most historians regard the war as both unnecessary and a dangerous risk to new and fragile ideas of national unity. Fortunately for its future, the United States as a whole came out unscathed, and the Battle of New Orleans provided last-minute balm for its hurt pride.

The only clear losers of the war were the Northwestern Indian nations and their southern allies. With the death of Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames in 1813 and the defeat of the southern Creeks in 1814, the last hope of a united Indian resistance to white expansion perished forever. Britain’s abandonment of its Indian allies in the Treaty of Ghent sealed their fate. By 1815, American settlers were on their way west again.

**Defining the Boundaries**

With the War of 1812 behind them, Americans turned, more seriously than ever before, to the tasks of expansion and national development. The so-called Era of Good Feelings (1817–23) found politicians largely in agreement on a national agenda, and a string of diplomatic achievements forged by John Quincy Adams gave the nation sharper definition. But the limits to expansion also became clear: the Panic of 1819 showed the dangers in economic growth, and the Missouri Crisis laid bare the sectional split that attended westward expansion.

**Another Westward Surge**

The end of the War of 1812 was followed by a westward surge to the Mississippi River that populated the Old Northwest (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin).
and the Old Southwest (western Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana). The extent of the population redistribution was dramatic: in 1790, about 95 percent of the nation’s population lived in states bordering the Atlantic Ocean; by 1820, fully 25 percent of the population lived west of the Appalachians (see Map 9-5).

What accounted for this extraordinary westward surge? There were both push and pull factors. Between 1800 and 1820, the nation’s population almost doubled, increasing from 5.3 million to 9.6 million. Overpopulated farmland in all of the seaboard states pushed farmers off the land, while new land pulled them westward. The defeat and removal of Indians in the War of 1812 was another important pull factor.

The most important pull factor, however, was the attractive price of western land. The Land Ordinance of 1785 priced western lands too high for all but speculators and the wealthy (see Chapter 7), but subsequent realities had slowly forced Congress to enact land laws more favorable to the small farmer. The most sustained challenge came from “squatters,” who repeatedly took up land before it was officially open for sale and then claimed a “preemption” right of purchase at a lower price that reflected the value of improvements they had made to the land. Congress sought to suppress this illegal settlement and ordered the expulsion of squatters on several occasions, but to no avail. When federal lands were officially opened for sale in Illinois in 1814, for example, there were already 13,000 settlers, forcing Congress to reverse itself and grant them all preemption rights.

Finally, in the Land Act of 1820, Congress set the price of land at $1.25 an acre, the minimum purchase at eighty acres (in contrast to the 640-acre minimum in 1785), and a down payment of $100 in cash. This was the most liberal land law yet passed in American history, but the cash requirement still favored speculators, who had more cash than most small farmers (see Figure 9-2 on page 296).

There were four major migration routes. In upstate New York, the Mohawk and Genesee Turnpike led New England migrants to Lake Erie, where they traveled by boat to northern Ohio. In the Middle States region, the turnpike from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh led to the Ohio River, as did the National Road that began in Baltimore and led to Wheeling. In the South, the Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap led to Kentucky, and passes in the mountains of North and South Carolina led to Tennessee. The Federal Road skirted the southern edge of the Appalachians and allowed farmers from South Carolina and eastern Georgia to move directly into Alabama and Mississippi. In this way, geography facilitated lateral westward movement (northerners tended to migrate to the Old Northwest, southerners to the Old Southwest). Except in southern Ohio and parts of Kentucky and Tennessee, there was very little contact among regional cultures. New Englanders carried their values and lifestyles west and settled largely with their own communities; southerners did the same.

One section of northern Ohio along Lake Erie, for example, had been Connecticut’s western land claim since the days of its colonial charter. Rather than give up the land when the Northwest Territory was established in 1787, Connecticut held onto the Western Reserve (as it was known) and encouraged its citizens to move there. Group settlement was common. General Moses Cleaveland of the Revolutionary War led one of the first groups of Yankees, fifty-two in all. In 1795, they settled the community that bears his name (though not his spelling of it). Many other groups followed, naming towns such as Norwalk after those they had
left in Connecticut. These New Englanders brought to the Western Reserve their religion (Congregational), their love of learning (tiny Norwalk soon boasted a three-story academy), and their adamant opposition to slavery.

Western migration in the South was very different. On this frontier, the people clearing the land were not doing it for themselves but to create plantations for slave owners. Even before the war, plantation owners in the Natchez district of Mississippi had made fortunes growing cotton, which they shipped to Britain from New Orleans. After the war, as cotton growing expanded, hopeful slave owners from older parts of the South (Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia) flooded into the region, bringing their slaves with them or, increasingly, purchasing new ones supplied by the internal slave trade. The migration was like a gold rush, characterized by high hopes, land speculation, and riches—for a few. Most of the white settlers in the Old Southwest were small farm families who did not own slaves, but they hoped to, for ownership of slaves was the means to wealth. More than half of the migrants to the Old Southwest after 1812 were involuntary—enslaved African Americans. This involuntary migration of slaves tore African American families apart at the same time that white families viewed migration as a chance to replicate the lifestyle and values of older southern states on this new frontier (see Chapter 10).

The western transplantation of distinctive regional cultures explains why, although by 1820 western states accounted for more than a third of all states (eight out of twenty-three), the West did not form a third, unified political region. Although there were common western issues—in particular, the demand for better roads and other transportation routes—communities in the Old Northwest, in general, shared New England political attitudes, whereas those in the Old Southwest shared southern attitudes.

**The Election of 1816 and the Era of Good Feelings**

In 1816, James Monroe, the last of the Virginia Dynasty, was easily elected president over his Federalist opponent Rufus King (183 to 34 electoral votes). This was the last election in which Federalists ran a candidate. Monroe had no opponent in 1820 and was reelected nearly unanimously (231 to 1). The triumph of the Jeffersonian Republicans over the Federalists seemed complete.

Tall, dignified, dressed in the old-fashioned style of knee breeches and white-topped boots that Washington had worn, Monroe looked like a traditional figure. But his politics reflected changing times. When he visited Boston, which was as recently as 1815 the heart of a secession-minded Federalist region, he received an enthusiastic welcome, prompting the Federalist *Columbian Centinel* to proclaim an “Era of Good Feelings.” The phrase has been applied to Monroe’s presidency (1817–25) ever since.

**The American System**

Monroe sought a government of national unity, and he chose men from North and South, Jeffersonian Republicans and Federalists, for his cabinet. He selected John Quincy Adams, a former Federalist, as his secretary of state, virtually assuring that Adams, like his father, would become president. To balance Adams, Monroe picked John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, a prominent War Hawk, as secretary of war. And Monroe supported the **American System**, a program of national economic development that

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**MAP 9-5**

**Spread of Settlement: Westward Surge, 1800–1820**

Within a period of twenty years, a quarter of the nation’s population had moved west of the Appalachian Mountains. This westward surge was a dynamic source of American optimism.

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**Class Discussion Question 9.9**

- **Era of Good Feelings** The period from 1817 to 1823 in which the disappearance of the Federalists enabled the Republicans to govern in a spirit of seemingly nonpartisan harmony.
- **American System** The program of government subsidies favored by Henry Clay and his followers to promote American economic growth and protect domestic manufacturers from foreign competition.
became identified with Westerner Henry Clay, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

In supporting the American System, Monroe was following President Madison, who had proposed the program in his message to Congress in December 1815. Madison and Monroe broke with Jefferson’s agrarianism to embrace much of the Federalist program for economic development, including the chartering of a national bank, a tax on imported goods to protect American manufacturers, and a national system of roads and canals. All three of these had first been proposed by Alexander Hamilton in the 1790s (see Chapter 8). At the time, these proposals had met with bitter Jeffersonian Republican opposition. The support that Madison and Monroe gave to Hamilton’s ideas following the War of 1812 was a crucial sign of the dynamism of the American commercial economy. Many Republicans now acknowledged that the federal government had a role to play in fostering the economic and commercial conditions in which both yeoman farmer and merchant could succeed.

In 1816, Congress chartered the Second Bank of the United States for twenty years. Located in Philadelphia, the bank had a capital of $35 million, of which the government contributed $7 million. The bank was to provide the large-scale financing that the smaller state banks could not handle, and to create a strong national currency. Because they feared concentrated economic power, Jeffersonian Republicans had allowed the charter of the original Bank of the United States, founded in 1791, to expire in 1811. The Republican about-face in 1816 was a sign that the strength of commercial interests had grown to rival that of farmers, whose distrust for central banks persisted.

The Tariff of 1816 was the first substantial protective tariff in American history. In 1815, British manufacturers, who had been excluded for eight years (from the Embargo Act of 1807 to the end of the War of 1812), flooded the United States market with their products. American manufacturers complained that the British were dumping goods below cost in order to prevent the growth of American industries. Congress responded with a tariff on imported woolens and cottons, iron, leather, hats, paper, and sugar. The measure had southern as well as northern support, although in later years, differences over the passage of higher tariffs would become one of the most persistent sources of sectional conflict.

The third item in the American System, funding for roads and canals—internal improvements, as they came to be known—was more controversial. Monroe and Madison both supported genuinely national (that is, interstate) projects such as the National Road from Cumberland, Maryland, to Vandalia, Illinois. Congressmen, however, aware of the urgent need to improve transportation in general and sensing the political advantages that could accrue to them from directing funds to their districts, proposed spending federal money on local projects. Both Madison and Monroe vetoed such local proposals, believing them to be unconstitutional. Thus it happened that some of the most famous projects of the day, such as the Erie Canal, which lay wholly within New York state, and the early railroads, were financed by state or private money (see Chapter 12).

The support of Madison and Monroe for measures initially identified with their political opposition was an indicator of their realism. The three aspects of the American System—bank, tariff, roads—were all parts of the basic infrastructure that the American economy needed in order to develop. Briefly, during the Era of Good
Feelings, politicians agreed about the need for all three. Later, each would be a source of heated partisan argument.

**THE DIPLOMACY OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS**

The diplomatic achievements of the Era of Good Feelings were due almost entirely to the efforts of one man, John Quincy Adams, Monroe’s secretary of state. Adams set himself the task of tidying up the borders of the United States. Two accords with Britain—the [Rush-Bagot Treaty of 1817](#) and the Convention of 1818—fixed the border between the United States and Canada at the 49th parallel and resolved conflicting U.S. and British claims to Oregon with an agreement to occupy it jointly for ten (eventually twenty) years. The American claim to Oregon (present-day British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, northern Idaho, and parts of Montana) was based on China trader Robert Gray’s discovery of the Columbia River in 1792 and on the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804–06.

Adams’s major diplomatic accomplishment was the Adams-Onís or [Transcontinental Treaty of 1819](#), in which he skillfully wrested concessions from the faltering Spanish empire. Adams convinced Spain not only to cede Florida but also to drop all previous claims it had to the Louisiana Territory and Oregon. In return, the United States relinquished claims on Texas and assumed responsibility for the $5 million in claims that U.S. citizens had against Spain.

This 1816 painting by Thomas Birch shows two improvements that aided westward expansion: the lightweight but sturdy Conestoga wagon that made it possible to carry heavy loads for long distances, and the improved road—the Pennsylvania Turnpike—built by a private company that charged tolls to cover its cost.


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**Rush-Bagot Treaty of 1817** Treaty between the United States and Britain that effectively demilitarized the Great Lakes by sharply limiting the number of ships each power could station on them.

**Transcontinental Treaty of 1819** Treaty between the United States and Spain in which Spain ceded Florida to the United States, surrendered all claims to the Pacific Northwest, and agreed to a boundary between the Louisiana Purchase territory and the Spanish Southwest.
Finally, Adams picked his way through the remarkable changes occurring in Latin America, developing the policy that bears his president’s name, the **Monroe Doctrine**. The United States was the first country outside Latin America to recognize the independence of Spain’s former colonies. When the European powers (France, Austria, Russia, and Prussia) began talk of a plan to help Spain recover the lost colonies, what was the United States to do? The British, suspicious of the European powers, proposed a British–American declaration against European intervention in the hemisphere. Others might have been flattered by an approach from the British empire, but Adams would have none of it. Showing the national pride that was so characteristic of the era, Adams insisted on an independent American policy. He therefore drafted for the president the hemispheric policy that the United States has followed ever since.

On December 2, 1823, the president presented the Monroe Doctrine to Congress and the world. He called for the end of colonization of the Western Hemisphere by European nations (this was aimed as much at Russia and its Pacific coast settlements as at other European powers). Intervention by European powers in the affairs of the independent New World nations would be considered by the United States a danger to its own peace and safety. Finally, Monroe pledged that the United States would not interfere in the affairs of European countries or in the affairs of their remaining New World colonies.

All of this was a very loud bark from a very small dog. In 1823, the United States lacked the military and economic force to back up its grand statement. In fact, what kept the European powers out of Latin America was British opposition to European intervention, enforced by the Royal Navy. The Monroe Doctrine was however useful in Adams’s last diplomatic achievement, the Convention of 1824, in which Russia gave up its claim to the Oregon Territory and accepted 54° 40’ north latitude as the southern border of Russian America. Thus Adams had contained another possible threat to American continental expansion (see Map 9-6).

In the short space of twenty years, the position of the United States on the North American continent had been transformed. Not only was America a much larger nation, but the Spanish presence was much diminished, Russian expansion on the West coast contained, and peace prevailed with Britain. This string of diplomatic achievements—the treaties with Russia, Britain, and Spain and the Monroe Doctrine—represented a great personal triumph for the stubborn, principled John Quincy Adams. A committed nationalist and expansionist, he showed that reason and diplomacy were in some circumstances more effective than force. Adams’s diplomatic achievements were a fitting end to the period dominated by the Virginia Dynasty, the trio of enlightened revolutionaries who did so much to shape the new nation.

**The Panic of 1819**

Across this impressive record of political and economic nation building fell the shadow of the Panic of 1819. A delayed reaction to the end of the War of 1812 and the Napoleonic Wars, the panic forced Americans to come to terms with their economic place in a peaceful world. As British merchant ships resumed trade on routes they had abandoned during the wars, the American shipping boom ended. And as European farm production recovered from the wars, the international demand for American foodstuffs declined and American farmers and shippers suffered.

Domestic economic conditions made matters worse. The western land boom that began in 1815 turned into a speculative frenzy. Land sales, which had totaled 1 million acres in 1815, mushroomed to 3.5 million in 1818. Some lands in Mississippi and Alabama, made valuable by the international demand for cotton, were selling for
$100 an acre. Many settlers bought on credit, aided by loans from small and irresponsible “wildcat” state banks. This was not the first—or the last—speculative boom in western lands. But it ended like all the rest—with a sharp contraction of credit, begun on this occasion by the Second Bank of the United States, which in 1819 forced state banks to foreclose on many bad loans. Many small farmers were ruined, and they blamed the faraway Bank of the United States for their troubles. In the 1830s, Andrew Jackson would build a political movement on their resentment.

Urban workers suffered both from the decline in international trade and from manufacturing failures caused by competition from British imports. As they lobbied for local relief, they found themselves deeply involved in urban politics, where they could express their resentment against the merchants and owners who had laid them off. Thus developed another component of Andrew Jackson’s new political coalition.

Another confrontation arose over the tariff. Southern planters, hurt by a decline in the price of cotton, began to actively protest the protective tariff, which kept the price of imported goods high even when cotton prices were low. Manufacturers, hurt by British competition, lobbied for even higher rates, which they achieved in 1824 over southern protests. Southerners then began to express doubts about the fairness of a political system in which they were always outvoted.
The Panic of 1819 was a symbol of this transitional time. It showed how far the country had moved since 1800, from Jefferson’s republic of yeoman farmers toward a nation dominated by commerce. And the anger and resentment expressed by the groups harmed by the depression—farmers, urban workers, and southern planters—were portents of the politics of the upcoming Jackson era.

**The Missouri Compromise**

In the Missouri Crisis of 1819–21, the nation confronted the momentous issue that had been buried in the general enthusiasm for expansion: as America moved west, would the largely southern system of slavery expand as well? Until 1819, this question was decided regionally. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 explicitly banned slavery in the northern section of trans-Appalachia but made no mention of it elsewhere. Because so much of the expansion into the Old Northwest and Southwest was lateral (northerners stayed in the North, southerners in the South), there was little conflict over sectional differences. In 1819, however, the sections collided in Missouri, which applied for admission to the Union as a slave state (see Map 9-7).

**MAP 9-7**

The Missouri Compromise Before the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the Ohio River was the dividing line between the free states of the Old Northwest and the slaveholding states of the Old Southwest. The compromise stipulated that Missouri would enter the Union as a slave state (balanced by Maine, a free state), but slavery would be prohibited in the Louisiana Territory north of 36° 30’ (Missouri’s southern boundary). This awkward compromise lasted until 1846, when the Mexican-American War reopened the issue of the expansion of slavery.
The northern states, all of which had abolished slavery by 1819, looked askance at the extension of slavery. In addition to the moral issue of slavery, the Missouri question raised the political issue of sectional balance. Northern politicians did not want to admit another slave state. To do so would tip the balance of power in the Senate, where the 1819 count of slave and free states was eleven apiece. For their part, southerners believed they needed an advantage in the Senate; because of faster population growth in the North, they were already outnumbered (105 to 81) in the House of Representatives. But above all, southerners did not believe Congress had the power to limit the expansion of slavery. They were alarmed that northerners were considering national legislation on the matter. Slavery, in southern eyes, was a question of property, and therefore a matter for state rather than federal legislation. Thus, from the very beginning, the expansion of slavery raised constitutional issues. Indeed, the aging politician of Monticello, Thomas Jefferson, immediately grasped the seriousness of the question of the expansion of slavery. As he prophetically wrote to a friend, “This momentous question like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once the [death] knell of the Union.”

In 1819, Representative James Tallmadge Jr. of New York began more than a year of congressional controversy when he demanded that Missouri agree to the gradual end of slavery as the price of entering the Union. At first, the general public paid little attention, but religious reformers (Quakers prominent among them) organized a number of antislavery rallies in northern cities that made politicians take notice. Former Federalists in the North who had seen their party destroyed by the achievements of Jefferson and his successors in the Virginia Dynasty eagerly seized on the Missouri issue. This was the first time that the growing northern reform impulse had intersected with sectional politics. It was also the first time that southern threats of secession were made openly in Congress.

The Senate debate over the admission of Missouri, held in the early months of 1820, was the nation’s first extended debate over slavery. Observers noted the high proportion of free African Americans among the listeners in the Senate gallery. But the full realization that the future of slavery was central to the future of the nation would not become apparent to the general public until the 1850s.

In 1820, Congress achieved compromise over the sectional differences. Henry Clay forged the first of the many agreements that were to earn him the title of “the Great Pacifcat” (peacemaker). The Missouri Compromise maintained the balance between free and slave states: Maine (which had been part of Massachusetts) was admitted as a free state in 1820 and Missouri as a slave state in the following year. A policy was also enacted with respect to slavery in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase: slavery was prohibited north of 36° 30’ north latitude—the southern boundary of Missouri—and permitted south of that line. This meant that the vast majority of the Louisiana Territory would be free. In reality, then, the Missouri Compromise could be only a temporary solution, because it left open the question of how the balance between slave and free states would be maintained.

**Conclusion**

In complex ways a developing economy, geographical expansion, and even a minor war helped shape American unity. Local, small, settled, face-to-face communities in both the North and the South began to send their more mobile, expectant members to new occupations in urban centers or west to form new settlements, displacing Indian communities in the process.
"A Scene on the Frontiers as Practiced by the ‘Humane’ British and their ‘Worthy’ Allies"

This American cartoon, published during the War of 1812, shows a British officer paying for a scalp from an Indian, while another man is shown in the act of scalp- ing a dead American soldier. The cartoon may have been prompted by an actual event: the offer of bounties for scalps made by British Colonel Proctor at Fort Dearborn (Chicago) in August 1815. In any case, the cartoon evoked horror at Indian barbarity and indignation at the British for using them as pawns in the war. Similar charges had been made against the British and their Indian allies during the American Revolution.

In reality, Indian resistance in the War of 1812 was different from the earlier war. The western Indians were not British pawns. The Shawnee leader Tecumseh and other western Indian groups allied with him claimed that they had been deprived of their lands by fraudulent treaties and stripped of the ability to maintain their traditional culture. Tecumseh began organizing resistance long before the outbreak of war between the United States and Britain. He did accept arms from the British in Canada, and once the war broke out he formally allied with them and became an officer in their army. By allying with the British, the Indians hoped to retain their homelands, but at the peace negotiations the British failed to insist on a buffer state for neutral Indians as they had promised.
The westward movement was the novel element in the American national drama. Europeans believed that large size and a population in motion bred instability and political disintegration. Thomas Jefferson thought otherwise, and the Louisiana Purchase was the gamble that confirmed his guess. The westward population movement dramatically changed the political landscape and Americans’ view of themselves.

Expansion would not create the settled communities of yeoman farmers Jefferson had hoped for. Rather, it would breed a nation of restless and acquisitive people and, in the South, as we shall see in the next chapter, a greatly expanded community tied to cotton and to the slave labor that produced it.

**AP* DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION**

Directions: This exercise requires you to construct a valid essay that directly addresses the central issues of the following question. You will have to use facts from the documents provided and from the chapter to prove the position you take in your thesis statement.

When Thomas Jefferson entered the White House in 1800, he had a clearly defined idea of what form the American nation should take. This concept was called agrarian republicanism. By the time Jefferson died in 1826, he was filled with fears for the survival of his country. Define agrarian republicanism and identify the issues and forces that threatened its survival by 1826.

**Suggested Answer:**

Successful essays should note:
- The definition of agrarian republicanism and Jefferson’s belief about necessary foundations for a republican form of government (p. 279–280)
- Comparisons and differences between frontier settlements in the Old Northwest and the Old Southwest to the established farming communities in the East (Images p. 294, 330, and 384 and Document A)
CHAPTER 9
AN AGRARIAN REPUBLIC, 1790–1824

• The ideals and characteristics that Jefferson expected of society, people, and government in an agrarian republic (p. 279–281 and Document A)
• The driving forces behind the Tallmadge amendment and Missouri’s petition for statehood (p. 301 and Document B)
• The threat that the Tallmadge amendment would have upon Jefferson’s agrarian republic (Document B)
• The Missouri Compromise and the implications that a now divided nation, one slave and one free, foretold for the future of the agrarian republic that Jefferson helped establish (Map 9-7 and Document C)
• The forces within the issues of the Missouri Compromise threatening Jefferson’s agrarian republic (p. 300–301 and Document D)

Document A
Examine the painting below of the Salem, North Carolina, farm in 1787 that belonged to an independent farmer, as well as the discussion of Jefferson’s beliefs about necessary foundations for a republican form of government (on pages 279–280). Contrast this to the image of frontier settlers in the Old Northwest and the Old Southwest shown on page 294. Now turn to von Iwonski’s idyllic painting of a yeoman farm in Texas (page 330) and then Hicks’ painting of his childhood farm on page 384. These are the images of the kinds of self-sufficient, independent farmers that Jefferson had in mind.

• What were the characteristics of the people that Jefferson felt would inhabit an agrarian republic?
• What were the characteristics he expected of such a nation’s government and society?


Document B
And provided, That the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude be prohibited, except for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been fully [duly] convicted; and that all children born within the said State, after the admission thereof into the Union, shall be free at the age of twenty-five years.

—John Tallmadge, February 13, 1820

• What forces or motivations were behind John Tallmadge’s amendment to the Missouri petition for statehood?
• Why would the Tallmadge amendment threaten the survival of that agrarian republic Jefferson had fought to establish?

Document C
Examine the map of the Missouri Compromise shown on page 300. The Tallmadge amendment given in Document B was introduced by a New York congressman who was opposed to slavery. It set off the political debate that ended in the Missouri Compromise. The Tallmadge amendment failed, but notice how the Missouri Compromise line has now divided the nation into two sections, one free and one slave.

• What does this portend for the future of the agrarian republic that Jefferson helped establish?
Document D

I thank you, dear sir, for the copy you have been so kind as to send me of the letter to your constituents on the Missouri question. . . . [T]his momentous question (slavery), like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union. It is hushed, indeed, for the moment. But this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence. . . .

The cession of that kind of property. . . would not cost me a second thought. . . But as it is, we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other. . . .

I regret that I am now to die in the belief that the useless sacrifice of themselves by the generation of 1776, to acquire self-government and happiness to their country is to be thrown away by the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons, and that my only consolation is to be that I live not to weep over it. . . . To yourself, as the faithful advocate of the Union, I tender the offering of my high esteem and respect.

—Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820

John Holmes had sent Jefferson a copy of his letter to his Massachusetts constituents explaining his support of the Missouri Compromise. Jefferson had witnessed the debate from his retirement in Virginia. Jefferson’s comment about the “wolf by the ears” is the lament of a slave owner who believed that slavery was immoral, but who realized the abolition of slavery would destroy the South, as he knew it.

• What were the forces within the issues of the Missouri Compromise that were threatening Jefferson’s agrarian republic?

AP* PREP TEST

Select the response that best answers each question or best completes each sentence.

1. The expansion of the United States across the North American continent:
   a. had little influence on the nation’s history prior to the Civil War.
   b. profoundly shaped the nation’s history between 1800 and 1850.
   c. was most significant during the Washington and Adams administrations.
   d. created an empire for liberty that benefited everybody in the United States.
   e. began with Jefferson’s presidency and ended under Jackson’s administration.

2. As Americans entered the 1800s, they:
   a. were discouraged by the political conflicts that characterized the 1790s.
   b. were proud of the international prestige the new republic had gained.
   c. began an era of colonization in Florida and the Caribbean.
   d. began an era of unprecedented peaceful relations with foreign powers.
   e. found that the nation’s role in international affairs still remained uncertain.

3. The American economy in the early nineteenth century:
   a. was completely dominated by subsistence agriculture.
   b. depended entirely on large-scale commercial agriculture.
   c. rested for the most part on manufacturing and commerce.
   d. was predominately rural and agricultural throughout the nation.
   e. ended its dependency on foreign manufactured commodities.

Answer Key

1-B  4-B  7-D  10-E  13-A
2-E  5-E  8-B  11-C  14-C
3-D  6-A  9-D  12-B
4. The inauguration of President Thomas Jefferson was a significant occasion because:
   a. he was the first president to be elected by popular vote of the American people.
   b. it marked the peaceful transition of power from one political party to another.
   c. it was such a complete and radical break with the previous administrations.
   d. he initiated the era in American history known as Radical Republicanism.
   e. it marked the first slave owner and southern president into the presidency.

5. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who established the independence of the federal judiciary was:
   a. Samuel Chase.
   b. John Jay.
   c. James Madison.
   d. Earl Warren.

6. Thomas Jefferson believed:
   a. that the expansion of the nation was essential to liberty.
   b. all people should be free and equal in the United States.
   c. that Indians were not welcome in any part of the nation.
   d. slavery should not be allowed to expand into Louisiana.
   e. the Constitution authorized the president to purchase territory.

7. As the United States expanded to the West:
   a. most Americans strongly supported a powerful and viable Mexico as a neighboring nation.
   b. Americans moved into parts of Mexico, and the United States purchased the area in 1803.
   c. most people believed the United States no longer needed to acquire new territories.
   d. some Americans felt that Mexico provided an ideal opportunity for further territorial acquisition.
   e. most Americans feared Mexico as a neighbor, fearing the spread of Catholicism to the United States.

8. Government policies regarding Indians:
   a. ensured that Native Americans assimilated easily into American culture and society.
   b. often led to a cycle of white encroachment, Indian resistance, and ultimately tribal defeat.
   c. guaranteed the survival of native societies by guaranteeing Indians western reservations.
   d. tried to protect native societies by prohibiting national expansion beyond the Arkansas River.
   e. remained loyal to the Indian Intercourse Act of 1790, despite strong political opposition.

9. The new generation of politicians who openly resisted British influence in North America were called:
   a. America Firsters.
   b. Isolationists.
   c. Patriots.
   d. War Hawks.
   e. Jacksonians.

10. The Hartford Convention:
    a. was the first talk of southern secession from the Union based on citizens protest.
    b. concluded the peace treaty that ended the war with England late in 1814.
    c. was the first national meeting to nominate a presidential candidate.
    d. called upon all Americans to fight against the English in 1812.
    e. strongly expressed New England Federalists’ opposition to the War of 1812.

11. In 1816, the United States entered a period known as the Era of Good Feelings that:
    a. experienced no real deep political divisions until the emergence of sectional differences in the 1850s.
    b. led to a period of twenty years in which there were no contested elections for the office of president.
    c. seemed to indicate the success of Jeffersonian Republicanism and the end of the Federalists.
    d. was based on all the former Federalists joining the Republicans and ending political partisanship.
    e. indicated an end to a sectionalism split in the United States for the next seventy years.

12. John Quincy Adams’s most successful effort as secretary of state:
    a. was to bring about a successful end to the War of 1812 against England.
    b. dealt with Spain over Florida and the American border with Spanish territory.
    c. was using the Monroe Doctrine to force European powers to give up their colonies.
    d. guaranteed Americans the right to use the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans.
    e. was the fixed border with France at the 49th parallel that resolved U.S. claims to Oregon.
13. The Missouri Compromise:
   a. revealed deep sectional differences in the United States, especially over issues dealing with slavery.
   b. established a plan that would gradually emancipate all the slaves over a period of three generations.
   c. provided a realistic resolution to sectional differences and helped usher in the Era of Good Feelings.
   d. allowed slavery in Missouri but prohibited any states admitted after 1820 from becoming slave states.
   e. Permitted slavery in Missouri and all new states that were admitted into the Union from 1820 onward.

14. The western expansion that occurred in the early nineteenth century:
   a. led to the empire of contented yeomen farmers that President Jefferson had envisioned.
   b. meant that by 1836 the United States had stretched from sea to shining sea.
   c. fueled a desire among Americans for even more growth and territorial acquisitions.
   d. marked an end of territorial growth until the issues associated with the Civil War were resolved.
   e. indicated the growth of the Federalist Party, which fueled an active participation in government.

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