

# Chapter 8: Creating a Republican Culture, 1790-1820

## I. The Capitalist Commonwealth

### A. Banks, Manufacturing, and Markets

1. For merchants, farmers, and political leaders, republicanism meant **capitalism**. But to create a dynamic market economy, Americans needed a banking system.
2. In 1791, Congress chartered the First Bank of the United States; however, it did not survive. When the bank's twenty-year charter expired in 1811, President Madison did not seek its renewal.
3. Merchants, artisans, and farmers petitioned their state legislatures to charter new banks; by 1816, there were 246 state-chartered banks with \$68 million in bank-notes in circulation.
4. Many banks issued notes without adequate specie reserves and made ill-advised loans to insiders.
5. The Panic of 1819, sparked by a sharp drop in world agricultural prices, gave Americans their first taste of the **business cycle** – the periodic expansion and contraction of profits and employment.
6. The Panic of 1819 also revealed that artisans and yeomen as well as merchants now depended on regional or national markets, and merchant-entrepreneurs developed a rural-based manufacturing system similar to the European outwork, or putting-out, system.
7. The economic advances that the economy enjoyed during this time stemmed primarily from innovations in organization and marketing rather than in technology.
8. The penetration of the market economy into rural areas motivated farmers to produce more goods.
9. As the rural economy turned out more goods, it significantly altered the environment; by the mid-nineteenth century, most of the forests in southern New England and eastern New York were gone and mill dams altered the flow of New England's rivers.
10. The new market system decreased the self-sufficiency of families and communities even as it made them more productive and prosperous.

### B. Building a Transportation Infrastructure

1. Improved inland trade became a high priority for the new state governments, who endeavored to overcome geographic impediments to getting goods to market.
2. States chartered corporations to dredge rivers and build turnpikes and canals.
3. Pennsylvania issued fifty-five charters, including one to the Lancaster Turnpike Company, which built a 65-mile graded road connecting Lancaster and Philadelphia, boosting the regional economy.
4. Western settlers paid premium prices for land along navigable rivers, and farmers and merchants built barges to float goods to the port of New Orleans.

### C. Public Enterprise: The Commonwealth System

1. Throughout the nineteenth century, state governments had a much greater impact on the day-to-day lives of Americans than did the national government.
2. As early as the 1790s, state legislatures devised an American plan of mercantilism, known as the commonwealth system, as it aimed to increase the "common wealth" of citizens.
3. State legislatures granted hundreds of corporate charters to private businesses to build roads, bridges, and canals to connect inland market centers to seaport cities.
4. Incorporation often included a grant of limited liability, and transportation charters included the power of eminent domain.
5. By 1820, innovative state governments had embraced the new political economy of the commonwealth system, which used state incentives to encourage business and improve the general welfare.

## II. Toward a Democratic Republican Culture

### A. Opportunity and Equality – for White Men

1. After independence, many Americans in the northern states embraced a democratic republicanism that celebrated political equality and social mobility, at least for white males.
2. These citizens, primarily members of the **middle class**, also redefined the nature of the family and of education by seeking more egalitarian marriages and more affectionate ways of rearing and educating their children.
3. Some Americans from long-distinguished families questioned the morality of a social order based on mobility and financial success.
4. The expansion of **suffrage** changed the tone of politics; Americans increasingly rejected the deferential political

views of Federalists.

5. As legislators eliminated property qualifications for voting by white men, they erected barriers for women and black men; regardless of their wealth, custom and prejudice ruled out their participation in public affairs.

### B. Toward a Republican Marriage System

1. The controversy over women's political rights mirrored a debate over authority within the household. European and American husbands had long dominated their wives and controlled the family's property.
2. Women argued that their subordination was at odds with the republican belief in equal natural rights.
3. Economic and cultural changes eroded customary paternal authority, as parents could no longer use land as an incentive to control their children's lives and marriages.
4. Young men and women began to be influenced by the new cultural attitude of **sentimentalism**, which originated in Europe as part of the Romantic movement and celebrated the importance of "feeling."
5. As the passions of the heart overwhelmed the cool logic of the mind, a new marriage system appeared.
6. Rather than seeking to control them, fathers now sought to protect the best interests of their children in their marriages.
7. Theoretically, the republican ideal of **companionate marriage** gave wives equality with their husbands; in reality, husbands still controlled the property and governments accepted no obligation to prevent domestic abuse.
8. Though few sought divorces, before 1800 most petitioners for divorce charged their spouses with neglect, abandonment, or adultery; after 1800 emotional grounds dominated divorce petitions.

### C. Republican Motherhood

1. The main responsibilities of a married woman were running the household and raising the children.
2. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the United States experienced a sharp decline in the birthrate (causes included migration of men, which left women without mates for life, or delayed marriage, and thus childbirth) and an increase in the deliberate limitation on the size of families (birth control).
3. Fewer children meant fathers could provide more adequately for each, while mothers were no longer willing to spend all their active years bearing and rearing children.
4. Political leaders called on women to become "Republican mothers" who would correctly shape the characters of American men.
5. Christian ministers readily embraced the idea of **republican motherhood**, though most, but not all, urged their audiences to dismiss the idea of public roles for women, such as voting and office holding.

### D. Raising Republican Children

1. Unlike the English custom of primogeniture, most American states required that the estate of a man be divided among all his children if he died without a will.
2. Some felt that republicanism encouraged American parents to relax parental discipline and give their children greater freedom.
3. A rationalist mode of childrearing became the preference among families in the well-to-do and the rapidly expanding middle class, influenced by the Enlightenment belief that children were "rational creatures" who could be trained to act properly and responsibly.
4. By contrast, many poor families influenced by the Second Great Awakening had much stricter, authoritarian childrearing practices.
5. The values taught within families were crucial because most education took place within the home.
6. In the 1790s, Bostonian Caleb Bingham called for "an equal distribution of knowledge to make us emphatically a 'republic of letters,'" and Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Rush proposed ambitious schemes for a comprehensive system of primary and secondary schooling; ordinary citizens thought such educational proposals smacked of elitism.
7. Although the constitutions of many states encouraged the use of public resources to fund primary schools, there was not much progress until the 1820s.
8. To instill self-discipline and individual enterprise in students, reformers chose textbooks that praised honesty and hard work while condemning gambling, drinking, and laziness. American history was also required learning.
9. Noah Webster championed the goal of American intellectual greatness and his "blue-backed speller," first published in 1783, gave Americans of all backgrounds a common vocabulary and grammar.
10. Other than Washington Irving, no American author was well-known in Europe; not until the 1830s and

1840s would American-born authors, part of the American Renaissance, make a significant contribution to the great literature of the Western world.

### III. Aristocratic Republicanism and Slavery

#### A. The Revolution and Slavery, 1776–1800

1. The Patriots' struggle for independence from Britain raised the prospect of freedom for enslaved Africans; many slaves sought freedom by fleeing behind British lines.
2. Many slaves also fought for the Patriot cause in return for the promise of freedom.
3. In 1782, Virginia passed an act allowing **manumission**; within a decade, 10,000 slaves had been freed.
4. Quakers and Christian evangelical churches advocated emancipation, and Enlightenment philosophy also worked to undermine slavery and racism.
5. By 1804, every state north of Delaware had enacted laws to provide for the termination of slavery.
6. Emancipation came slowly because whites feared competition for jobs and housing and a melding of the races.
7. In the South, slaves represented a huge financial investment, and resistance against freedom for blacks was strong. Although Virginia allowed manumission in 1782, Thomas Jefferson and others sent petitions arguing that slavery was a "necessary evil" required to maintain white supremacy and the luxurious planter lifestyle.
8. The debate over emancipation among southern whites ended in 1800 when a group of slaves was hanged for planning an uprising.
9. Southern whites redefined republicanism so that it only applied to the "master race."

#### B. The North and South Grow Apart

1. Both in theory and in practice, republicanism in the South differed significantly from that in the North, and European visitors commonly noted the poverty and lack of strong work ethic there.
2. Some southerners admitted that slavery corrupted their society and contributed to the ignorance and poverty of the mass of the white population.
3. Slavery quickly found its way into national politics and remained a contested issue; when Congress ended American participation in the Atlantic slave trade in 1808, northerners called for the regulation of the interstate trade in slaves and the emancipation of illegally imported slaves while southerners mounted a defense of their labor system.
4. After 1800, political conflict over slavery increased as the North ended slavery, and the South expanded its slave-based agricultural economy into the lower Mississippi Valley as the tobacco economy declined and was replaced with the cotton boom.
5. In 1817, the founders of the American Colonization Society proposed to end slavery by encouraging southern planters to emancipate their slaves; the society would then arrange for their resettlement in Africa to prevent racial conflict. Most free blacks rejected the idea of colonization.
6. Lacking support from either blacks or whites, the American Colonization Society was a dismal failure, transporting only 6,000 African Americans to Liberia, a colony it established on the west coast of Africa.

#### C. The Missouri Crisis, 1819–1821

1. When Missouri applied for admission to the Union as a slave state in 1819, Congressman James Tallmadge of New York proposed a ban on the importation of slaves into Missouri and the gradual emancipation of its black inhabitants; when Missouri whites rejected Tallmadge's proposals, the northern majority in the House of Representatives blocked the territory's admission to the Union.
2. To underline their commitment to slavery, southerners used their power in the Senate (where they held half the seats) to withhold statehood from Maine, which was seeking to separate itself from Massachusetts.
3. Southerners advanced three constitutional arguments: they raised the principle of equal rights for the states; they argued that slavery was purely an internal state affair; and they maintained that Congress had no authority to infringe on the property rights of slaveholders.
4. Henry Clay finally put together a series of political arguments known collectively as the Missouri Compromise; the compromise set a precedent for admission of states to the Union in pairs – one free and one slave – and southern congressmen accepted legislation that prohibited slavery in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase north of latitude 36°30', the southern boundary of Missouri.
5. The task of reconciling regional differences had become difficult, and the specter of civil war lurked in the background.

### IV. Protestant Christianity as a Social Force

### A. A Republican Religious Order

1. In 1776, the Virginia constitutional convention issued a Declaration of Rights guaranteeing all Christians the "free exercise of religion."
2. After the Revolution, an **established church** and compulsory religious taxes were no longer the norm in America.
3. Thomas Jefferson's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom made all churches equal before the law but granted financial support to none.
4. The separation of church and state was not complete because most church property and ministers were exempt from taxation.
5. Many states enforced religious criteria for voting and holding office, although the practice was often condemned by Americans.

### B. The Second Great Awakening

1. Churches that prospered in the new nation were those that proclaimed doctrines of spiritual equality and governed themselves in a relatively democratic fashion.
2. Through revivals, Baptist and Methodist preachers reshaped the spiritual landscape of the South and the Old Southwest, and revivalists were particularly successful at attracting those who had never belonged to a church.
3. During the Second Great Awakening, the Congregationalist, Episcopalian, and Quaker churches grew slowly in membership, while the Methodist and Baptist churches grew spectacularly and became the nation's largest religious denominations.
4. Methodist "circuit riders" established new churches in remote areas by bringing families together for worship and then appointing lay elders to enforce moral discipline until the circuit rider's return.
5. Evangelical ministers adopted "practical preaching" methods, theatrical gestures, and a flamboyant style to attract converts.
6. Christian republicanism in the South added a sacred dimension to the ideology of aristocratic republicanism, while southern blacks adapted the teachings of the Protestant churches to their own needs.
7. Black Christianity developed as a complex mixture of stoical endurance and emotional fervor and encouraged slaves to affirm their spiritual equality with whites.

### C. Religion and Reform

1. Ministers began stressing human ability and individual free will, making American religious culture more compatible with republican doctrines of liberty and equality.
2. For some, individual salvation became linked with social reform through the concept of "religious benevolence."
3. Unlike the First Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening fostered cooperation between denominations.
4. Protestants across the nation saw themselves as part of a single religious movement that could change the course of history through politics.
5. Because the Second Awakening aroused such pious enthusiasm in many Americans, religion became a central force in political life; some urged the United States to become an evangelical Christian nation dedicated to religious conversion at home and abroad.

### D. Women's New Religious Roles

1. The upsurge in religious enthusiasm provided women with new opportunities to demonstrate their piety and even to found new sects – for example, those of Mother Ann Lee and Jemima Wilkinson.
2. Women in more mainstream churches (who formed the majority in many denominations) became active in religion and charitable work partly because they were excluded from other spheres of public life and partly because ministers relied increasingly on women to do the work of the church.
3. The new practice of having church services for males and females together was accompanied by greater moral self-discipline.
4. Women's religious activities and organizations were scrutinized and sometimes seen as subversive of the social order.
5. By the 1820s, mothers across the nation had founded local maternal associations to encourage Christian childrearing.
6. Religious activism advanced female education as churches established seminaries and academies where girls received intellectual training and moral instruction.
7. Women gradually displaced men as public school teachers because women had few other opportunities and

were willing to accept lower pay.

8. Along with republican and capitalist values, this Protestant religious impulse formed the core of an emerging national identity, even as the citizens of the North and the South defined republicanism and economic progress in distinctly different ways.