

# 4

## PART

**CHAPTER 9**  
**Transforming the**  
**Economy, 1800–1860**

**CHAPTER 10**  
**A Democratic**  
**Revolution, 1800–1844**

**CHAPTER 11**  
**Religion and Reform,**  
**1800–1860**

**CHAPTER 12**  
**The South Expands:**  
**Slavery and Society,**  
**1800–1860**

# Overlapping Revolutions

## 1800–1860

“The procession was nearly a mile long . . . [and] the democrats marched in good order to the glare of torches,” a French visitor remarked in amazement during the U.S. presidential election of 1832. “These scenes belong to history . . . the wondrous epic of the coming of democracy.” As Part 4 shows, Americans were making history in many ways between 1800 and 1860. Indeed, these decades constitute a distinct period precisely because the pace of historical change accelerated, especially between 1820 and 1860, as overlapping revolutions transformed American life. One revolution was political: the creation of a genuinely democratic polity. A second was economic: in 1800, the United States was predominantly an agricultural nation; by 1860, the northern states boasted one of the world’s foremost industrial economies. Third, these years witnessed far-reaching cultural changes. Beginning about 1800, the Second Great Awakening swept across the nation, sparking great movements of social reform and intellectual ferment that revolutionized the culture of the North and Midwest. Finally, sectionalism increased in intensity, as the South extended its slave-labor system and the North developed a free-labor society. The overall result by 1860 was striking and alarming: now more politically democratic, economically prosperous, and deeply religious, the United States stood divided into antagonistic sections. Here, in brief, are the key aspects of those transformations.



## Transforming the Economy, Society, and Culture

Impressive advances in industrial production, transportation, and commerce transformed the nation's economy. Factory owners used water- and steam-powered machines and a new system of labor discipline to boost the output of goods. Manufacturers produced 5 percent of the country's wealth in 1820 but nearly 25 percent by 1860. As enterprising merchants, entrepreneurs, and government officials developed a network of canals and markets, manufacturers sold these products throughout an expanding nation. The new economy created a class-based, urban society in the North and Midwest. A wealthy elite of merchants, manufacturers, bankers, and entrepreneurs rose to the top of the society. To preserve social stability, this elite embraced benevolent reform, preaching the gospel of temperance, Sunday observance, and universal elementary education. Simultaneously, an expanding urban middle class created a distinct material and religious culture and promoted its ideology of individual responsibility and social mobility. Some middle-class Americans advocated radical causes: joining utopian socialist communities and demanding equal rights for women and the immediate end of racial slavery. A mass of propertyless wage-earning workers, including poor immigrants from Germany and Ireland, devised a vibrant popular culture of their own. This complex story of economic change and social fragmentation is the focus of Chapter 9 and Chapter 11.



## Creating a Democratic Polity

Beginning in the 1810s, the rapid expansion of white male suffrage and political parties created a competitive and responsive democratic polity. Pressure came from ordinary citizens who organized political movements, such as the Anti-Masonic, Working Men's, and Liberty parties, to advance their interests and beliefs. Farmers, workers, and entrepreneurs persuaded state legislatures to improve transportation, shorten workdays, and award valuable charters to banks and business corporations. Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany entered the political arena to protect their cultural habits and religious institutions from restrictive legislation advocated by Protestant nativists and reformers. Then, during the 1830s, Andrew Jackson and the Democratic Party led a political and constitutional revolution that cut federal and state government aid to financiers, merchants, and corporations. To contend with the Democrats, the Whig Party devised a competing program that stressed state-sponsored economic development, moral reform, and individual social mobility. This party competition engaged the energies of the electorate, helped to unify a fragmented social order, and, during the 1830s and 1840s, lessened sectional tensions. Chapters 10 and 12 analyze this story of political change and party politics.



## Growing Sectional Divisions

However, the party system could not overcome the increasingly sharp sectional divisions. As the North developed into an urban industrial society based on free labor, the South increasingly defended white supremacy and slavery as a “positive good” and expanded its plantation-based agricultural society. Beginning in the 1820s, the two sections had differed over economic issues and Indian policy. Georgia and other southeastern states demanded and won—over the objections of northeastern reformers—the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which resettled native peoples west of the Mississippi River. Concurrently, between 1816 and 1832, northern manufacturers, workers, and farmers won high protective tariffs, which southern planters bitterly opposed. Eventually, party politicians negotiated a compromise, with the North accepting tariff reductions. The sections had clashed again over the expansion of slavery, into Missouri and the Louisiana Purchase in the 1820s and into Texas and the Southwest in the 1840s, and political leaders again devised compromises. However, by the 1850s, slavery—and the social system it symbolized—increasingly divided the nation. Moreover, because the democratic political revolution had engaged the passions of millions of ordinary Americans, the political system had become more volatile and resistant to compromise. Chapters 10 and 12 explain how national expansion led to increasing sectional struggle.

# Overlapping Revolutions 1800–1860

## Thematic Understanding

This timeline arranges some of the important events of this period into themes. Look at the entries under “American and National Identity”: what identities emerged in this period, and which issues shaped these developments? In the “Work, Exchange, and Technology” theme, how did industrial output and the transportation system change over time? >

	WORK, EXCHANGE, & TECHNOLOGY	MIGRATION & SETTLEMENT	POLITICS & POWER	CULTURE & SOCIETY	AMERICAN & NATIONAL IDENTITY
1810	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congress approves funds for a National Road (1806)</li> <li>• First American textile factory opens in Waltham, Massachusetts (1814)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congress outlaws Atlantic slave trade (1776–1809)</li> <li>• Andrew Jackson forces Creeks to relinquish millions of acres during War of 1812</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggle to expand the suffrage begins with Maryland reformers</li> <li>• Martin Van Buren creates first statewide political machine (1817–1821)</li> <li>• Missouri crisis (1819–1821) over slavery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In rural areas, people of different ranks share a common culture</li> <li>• Upper-class women sponsor charitable organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Colonization Society (1817)</li> <li>• Benjamin Franklin's <i>Autobiography</i> (1818) spreads notion of the self-made man</li> </ul>
1820	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New England shoe industry expands</li> <li>• Erie Canal completed (1825)</li> <li>• Henry Clay's "American System" of government-assisted development</li> <li>• Market economy expands nationwide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slave trade moves African Americans west</li> <li>• Rural women take factory work, alter gender roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rise of Andrew Jackson and Democratic Party</li> <li>• Anti-Masonic Party and Working Men's Party rise and decline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benevolent reform movements</li> <li>• Emerson champions transcendentalism</li> <li>• Charles Finney and others advance revivalist religion</li> <li>• Industrialism fragments society into more distinct classes and cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Walker's <i>Appeal . . . to the Colored Citizens</i> (1829) attacks slavery</li> <li>• Rise of southern sectionalism</li> </ul>
1830	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. textiles compete with British goods</li> <li>• Canal systems expand trade in eastern U.S.</li> <li>• Financial panic of 1837 begins six-year depression</li> <li>• Boom in cotton output</li> <li>• Increase in waged work sparks conflict between labor and capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indian Removal Act (1830) forces native peoples west</li> <li>• Cherokees' "Trail of Tears" (1838)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tariff battles (1828, 1832) and nullification</li> <li>• Whig Party forms (1834)</li> <li>• Jackson destroys Second Bank, expands executive power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temperance crusade expands</li> <li>• Joseph Smith and Mormonism</li> <li>• Middle-class culture spreads</li> <li>• Slavery defended as a "positive good"</li> <li>• Urban popular culture (sex trade and minstrelsy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• W. L. Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society (1833)</li> <li>• Female Moral Reform Society (1834) defines gender identity</li> <li>• Texas gains independence (1836)</li> </ul>
1840	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American machine tool industry expands</li> <li>• Walker Tariff moves U.S. toward "free trade" system and principles of "classical liberalism"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working-class districts emerge in cities</li> <li>• German and Irish immigrants spark nativist movement</li> <li>• Mormons resettle in Utah</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Log cabin campaign (1840)</li> <li>• Second Party System flourishes</li> <li>• Lawyers emerge as political leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fourierist and other communal settlements</li> <li>• Seneca Falls Convention (1848) calls for women's rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antislavery Liberty Party (1840)</li> <li>• New African American culture develops in Mississippi Valley</li> </ul>
1850	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe recession cuts industrial jobs (1858)</li> <li>• Railroads connect Midwest and eastern ports</li> <li>• Cotton production and prices rise, as does the cost of enslaved laborers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigrants replace native-born women in textile mills</li> <li>• White farm families settle trans-Mississippi west</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reform becomes political: states enact Maine-style temperance laws (1851 on)</li> <li>• "Mormon War" over polygamy (1858)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Renaissance: Melville, Whitman, and Hawthorne</li> <li>• Harriet Beecher Stowe's <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> (1852)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black and white preachers promote Christianity among slaves</li> <li>• Free blacks in North become politically active</li> </ul>