

The Market Revolution

Learning Target:

I can describe the economic changes that took place in the United States from 1790 to 1860, & I can analyze their effects on the nation.

Critical Vocabulary:

“Black Forties,” Political Machines, “Tammany Hall,” “Know-Nothing” Party, Samuel Slater, Eli Whitney, Charles Goodyear, Samuel Morse, Elias Howe, Lowell Mills, *Commonwealth v. Hunt*, Preemption Act of 1830, Homestead Act, John Deere, Cyrus McCormick, “National Road,” Robert Fulton, Governor DeWitt Clinton, Erie Canal, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, Clipper Ship, Pony Express

The Growth of America

Between 1790 and 1820, the population of the United States more than doubled to nearly 10 million people. Remarkably, this growth was almost entirely the result of reproduction, as the immigration rate during that period had slowed to a trickle. Fewer than 250,000 immigrants entered the United States due to doubts about the viability of the new republic and travel restrictions in Europe during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars.

Soon after Napoleon’s final defeat in 1815, immigration to the United States began to increase. Competing shippers who needed westbound payloads kept transatlantic fares low enough to make immigration affordable, and migrants were interested in the prospect of abundant land, high wages, and what they saw as endless economic opportunities. Many also migrated to America because Europe seemed to be running out of room, and numerous people were displaced from their homelands. For the next several decades, the number of immigrants continued to rise. In the 1820s, nearly 150,000 European immigrants arrived; in the 1830s, nearly 600,000; by the 1840s, nearly 1.7 million; and during the 1850s, the greatest influx of immigrants in American history—approximately 2.6 million—came to the United States.

During the 1800s, most European immigrants entered the United States through New York. Ships would discharge their passengers, and the immigrants would immediately have to fend for themselves in a foreign land. It did not take long for thieves and con-men to take advantage of the newcomers. Some of the immigrants brought infectious diseases with them to the States. In 1855, the New York legislature, hoping to curb some of these problems, turned the southern tip of Manhattan into an immigration receiving center. The immigration center recorded their names, nationalities, and destinations; gave them cursory physical examinations; and sometimes assisted them with finding jobs.

By 1860, the number of states had more than doubled to 33 from the original 13. Russia, France, and Austria were the only other countries in the western world that were more populous than the United States. Forty-three cities in the United States boasted populations of more than 20,000 people.

Most of the immigrants coming to the United States came from Ireland and Germany, but some also came from China, Britain, and the Scandinavian countries. In the 1840s, Ireland experienced a potato blight when a rot attacked the potato crop, and nearly two million people died of disease and hunger. Tens of thousands of Irish fled the country during the “**Black Forties**,” many of them coming to America. By the end of the century, more Irish lived in America than in Ireland, with nearly 2 million arriving between 1830 and 1860. As they arrived in the United States, they were too poor to move west and buy land, so they congregated in large cities along the eastern coast. By 1850, the Irish made up over half the populations of Boston and New York City.

The Irish accepted whatever wages employers offered them, working in steel mills, warehouses, and shipyards or with construction gangs building canals and railways. As they competed for jobs, they were often confronted with “No Irish Need Apply” signs. Race riots were common between the Irish and the free African Americans who competed for the same low-status jobs.

As a rule, Irish immigrants lived in crowded, dirty tenement buildings that were plagued by high crime rates, infectious disease, prostitution, and alcoholism. They were stereotyped as being ignorant, lazy, and dirty. They also faced severe anti-Catholic prejudices. Partially due to the hostility they faced, the Irish cultivated a strong cultural identity in America, developing neighborhood newspapers, strong Catholic churches, political groups, and societies.

Although most Irish had a rough start in America, many eventually improved their position by acquiring small amounts of property. The Irish eventually controlled the police department in New York City, driving around in police vans called “paddy wagons.”

In the 1820s and 1830s, state constitutions were revised to permit universal white-male suffrage, and as a group, the Irish found their way into American politics and were able to exert a remarkable political influence. They primarily followed the Democrats and Andrew Jackson, who was the son of an Irish colonist. Irish votes enabled Jackson to defeat John Quincy Adams in the election of 1828. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Irish had established **political machines** such as New York’s “**Tammany Hall**” and virtually ran the municipal government in and around New York.

During the eighteenth century, many Germans moved to America in response to William Penn's offer of free religious expression and cheap land in Pennsylvania. Consequently, when a new wave of Germans immigrated to America starting in the 1830s, there were already enclaves of Germans in the United States. Between 1830 and 1860, more than 1.5 million Germans migrated to American soil. Many of them were farmers, but many were also cultured, educated, professional people who were displaced by the failed democratic revolution in Germany in 1848.

In contrast to the Irish, the Germans possessed modest amounts of material things and, as a result, were able to afford to settle in rural areas in the Midwest, such as Ohio and Wisconsin. They often migrated in families or groups, enabling them to sustain the German language and culture in their new environments. The German communities preserved traditions of abundant food, beer, and music consumption. Their culture contributed to the American way of life with such things as the Christmas tree and Kindergarten (children's garden), but their cultural differences often garnered suspicion from their "native" American neighbors.

America had always been a land of immigrants, but for many American "natives," the large influx of immigrants in the 1840s and 1850s posed a threat of unknown languages and customs. Some Americans feared that foreigners would outnumber them and eventually overrun the country. The natives saw the mass settlements of Irish and German Catholics as a threat to their hard-won religious and political liberties. This hostility rekindled the spirit of European religious wars, resulting in several armed clashes between Protestants and Catholics.

In 1849, nativists formed a group in New York called the "Order of the Star Spangled Banner," which developed into a political party called the "American Party." When asked about the organization, members refused to identify themselves saying, "I know nothing," which eventually led the group to be labeled the "**Know-Nothing**" Party. The anti-Catholic group won many elections up until the 1850s, when the anti-Catholic movement subsided and slavery became the focal issue of the time. Throughout this critical growth period in America, immigrants were helping to form the United States into one of the most ethnically and racially diverse societies in the history of the world.

The Growth of Industry

In the eighteenth century, British inventors perfected a series of machines for mass production of textiles, which initiated the European Industrial Revolution and gave Britain a head start in industrial production. For many years, the British carefully guarded their industrial secrets, forbidding the export of machines or even descriptions of them and restricting the departure of informed mechanics.

The British could not keep its secrets forever, and in 1789, **Samuel Slater** left Britain in disguise and arrived in America with the plans in his head for a

textile machine that would spin cotton. He contracted with a merchant-manufacturer in Rhode Island to build the machine, and in 1791, he created the first efficient American machinery for spinning cotton thread. By 1815, there were 130,000 cotton spindles turning in 213 factories. Slater is often called the "Father of the Factory System" in America.

Slater's cotton thread machine was a fabulous invention, but there was a shortage of cotton fiber to spin since it took an entire day for one slave to pick one pound of fiber and separate it from the seeds. In 1793, another mechanical entrepreneur, **Eli Whitney**, graduated from Yale and spent some time as a tutor on a cotton plantation in Georgia. While there, Whitney devised a mechanism for removing the seeds from the cotton fiber that was 50 times more effective than the handpicking process, thus inventing the cotton "gin" (short for "engine"). Whitney hoped to improve the life of slaves with his cotton gin by making the tedious process of removing seeds less burdensome and to perhaps even eliminate the need for slaves altogether.

The machine was fairly simple to create, and by the time Whitney secured a patent in 1794, a number of copies had already been created. Although he did not see much profit from the cotton gin, Whitney had unintentionally begun a revolution. Cotton production soared, the South became tied to King Cotton, and planters cleared more and more land for cotton growth. The North prospered from the fiber as it was shipped to the New England factories and processed in Slater's cotton thread machine. The Industrial Revolution had arrived in America.

Up to this point in American history, manufacturing occurred in the household or in small local shops. Growth of the textile production industry was slow until Jefferson's embargo in 1807 and import restrictions during the War of 1812—both actions stimulated domestic production. As the Industrial Revolution took hold in America, it created the factory system and transformed agricultural production, communication, and transportation across the United States.

New innovations advanced the Industrial Revolution. One of the most basic inventions of the time was adopted from Europe—the preservation of food by canning. By 1820, several major canneries were in full production in Boston and New York.

In 1798, Eli Whitney developed another innovation that spurred continued industrial growth in the north. Whitney won a government contract to manufacture muskets. He developed machine tools to make the parts of the musket so they were virtually identical, allowing them to be interchangeable. Based on Whitney's invention, factories for the mass production of firearms were built in the northern states. By the 1850s, Whitney's method for making muskets led to widespread adoption of the idea of interchangeable parts and eventually became the basis of modern assembly-line production methods.

It has been said that Eli Whitney both started and ended the Civil War. He started it by inventing the cotton gin, which made raising cotton more profitable and led to an increase in slavery. He ended it by developing a manufacturing process based on interchangeable parts that the North used in its factories, enabling the North to produce far more war goods than the South.

The 1840s brought a host of inventions. In 1844, **Charles Goodyear** patented the process for vulcanizing rubber, making it stronger and more elastic. Also in 1844, **Samuel Morse** transmitted the first intercity telegraph message 40 miles from Baltimore to Washington. The message itself was borrowed from the Bible by the daughter of the Commissioner of Patents and said, "What hath God wrought?" It took a while for Morse's invention to catch on, but by 1861, the connections between cities spanned all the way to San Francisco, putting distant people in almost instant communication with one another.

In 1846, **Elias Howe** invented the sewing machine, which was then perfected by Isaac Singer. This invention gave another boost to northern industrialization, specifically the ready-made clothing industry. Machine-made clothes fit better and were less expensive than homespun clothes. The sewing machine also opened up a new line of employment for women, who began working in the clothing factories.

The many technical advances shaped all aspects of Americans' lives—social, cultural, political, and economic. Living conditions were improved with luxuries such as central heat, indoor plumbing, underground water lines, sewer systems, and improved lighting. Technological advances spurred laws of "free incorporation," allowing corporations to be created without applying for individual charters from the legislature. Various regions of the north began to specialize in specific industries based on their locations and the availability of natural resources. For example, New England became the center for textile mills, while Pennsylvania led in production of iron.

As these innovations and technical advances were taking place, the Boston Associates, a group of merchants headed by Francis Cabot Lowell, added a new dimension to factory production. Many of the early factories used Samuel Slater's cotton spinning machines and set up hand looms, but the weavers could not keep up with the machines. In 1813, in Waltham, Massachusetts, Lowell combined the spinning machines with power weaving machines at the Boston Manufacturing Company plant. Lowell focused on mechanization of the entire process for mass-producing standardized cloth. The cloth was plain and rather coarse, but durable and cheap.

The Boston Associates used the Boston Manufacturing Company as a model for new factories. In 1823, they harnessed the power of the Merrimack River at East Chelmsford, Massachusetts to develop

a new plant. The town was appropriately renamed Lowell and within three years had over 2,000 inhabitants. By 1850, factories based on the Waltham model produced one-fifth of the nation's total output of cotton cloth.

In the new **Lowell Mills**, the Boston Associates developed a labor system that employed young, unmarried women. By the 1820s, young women came to the factory towns from farms all over New England. The women lived in boardinghouses that were strictly supervised, and they earned between \$2.50 and \$3.25 per week, about half of which went for room and board. Often, the young women were not working to support themselves, but sending most of the money they made back home. Many worked simply for the excitement of meeting new people and to escape the confines of the farm for a few years before they married. A variety of educational and cultural opportunities offset, to some degree, unsafe and unhealthy conditions during the twelve-hour days and six-day workweeks.

As the Lowell factories experienced booming growth, the conditions for the workers changed. The cities in which the textile factories operated became dirty, bleak industrial cities. Wage cuts and deteriorating working conditions became the norm. As the demand for cheap labor grew, child workers also became vulnerable to exploitation in the factories. Over half of the nation's industrial workers in 1820 were children under the age of 10 who were both physically and mentally abused. Factory owners increasingly turned to Irish and German immigrants to operate their machines.

During the 1830s and 1840s, textile prices and mill wages dropped. Workers organized strikes where they "turned out" to protest 12-hour work days, wage cuts, and increasing costs for room and board. Although the protests were well attended, they did not force a reversal of management policy.

Skilled artisans and craftsmen could no longer compete with the low prices and high volume of factory goods, and many were forced to take factory jobs. The influx of these skilled workers into the workforce renewed the demand for better working conditions and a shorter workday. Prompted by the moniker, "Northern wage slave," many laborers undertook efforts to establish unions and create political organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of workers. In a landmark decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Court in the case of **Commonwealth v. Hunt** (1842), the court ruled that forming a trade union was not illegal. While on the surface this ruling looked to be significant for organized labor, it soon proved to be more of a symbolic gesture. Trade unions provided only marginal benefits for the workers of this time, and it would be nearly a century before they could meet management on even terms.

By 1850, Samuel Slater's factory system had been fine-tuned, and industry was booming in the east. The New England and the mid-Atlantic states had become the main centers of manufacturing and commerce. The primary products coming from the industrial centers in the north and mid-Atlantic at the time were textiles, lumber, clothing, machinery, and woolen goods.

The Effects of Industry

Early American factories were usually owned by individuals, families, or partners. As mechanization became more widespread and the scale and complexity of businesses increased, a substantial capital investment was required to open a factory. Although it was a slow process, these factors led more and more firms to "incorporate" ownership.

Prior to the 1860s, most manufacturing was conducted by unincorporated companies. Organizing a corporation required a special act of a state legislature. Many people believed that only projects that were in the public interest, such as roads, railways, and canals, were entitled to the privilege of incorporation. Businessmen also often viewed corporations as monopolistic and corrupt and as a threat to the individual enterprise. It took years for corporations to be regarded as agencies of free enterprise.

Between the 1820s and the 1850s, the northeast became the premier region for industry. Along the Hudson and Delaware Rivers, the concentration of factories and mills rivaled that of the most industrialized areas of Britain. By 1860, American industry employed over one million workers in 140,000 companies, with an output amounting to \$1.9 billion.

Not only did the growth of industry encourage the formation of corporations, but it also shaped American society in a variety of other ways. It reduced the need for foreign products and moved the country closer and closer to self-sufficiency. During the War of 1812, Americans sunk a large amount of capital into manufacturing, and that trend continued after the war as profits and the prestige associated with the business increased.

The rapid growth of industry prompted a rapid growth of cities. Prior to 1840, commerce dominated the activities and location of major cities in America. The growth of industry required new concentrations of people at places convenient to waterpower or raw materials.

The four Atlantic seaports of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston were the largest American cities due to their strategic locations. By 1860, New York was the first American city to boast a population of more than one million. Urbanization was both a consequence of economic growth and a positive force in its promotion.

Westward Movement

By the mid-nineteenth century, the American economy that had been based on local commerce and small-scale farming was maturing into a dynamic, wide-reaching capitalist marketplace. As the industrial revolution in the northeast altered the economy and intensified the process of urbanization, an agricultural empire began to emerge in the west.

By 1860, more than one-half of the American population was located west of the Appalachian Mountains. Conditions along the entire Atlantic seaboard stimulated migration to the western regions. The soil in New England was incapable of producing agricultural crops beyond a subsistence level, resulting in a steady stream of men and women moving west to take advantage of the rich land in the interior of the continent. Many people in the Carolinas, Virginia, and the Deep South also moved westward because they had exhausted the soil. A lot of them moved near the Mississippi River because it provided a means for getting their products to coastal markets.

In the early nineteenth century, life was grim for the first pioneer families, who were poorly fed, ill-clad, and housed in hastily built dwellings. Many trudged on foot over hundreds of miles, dragging crude carts loaded with their scanty possessions. More fortunate pioneers traveled on horseback or in wagons—the best known was the canvas-topped Conestoga "covered wagons," pulled by horses or oxen. These wagons were waterproof, enabled pioneers to travel farther, and allowed families to travel together and bring more of their possessions.

As the nineteenth century wore on and more and more settlers moved west, conditions improved. Many became farmers as well as hunters, and flourishing settlements began to change the face of the west. Land speculators bought large tracts of the cheap land, sold their holdings for a profit, and moved still farther west, making way for new settlers. Artisans and merchants soon followed the farmers west. Rapid growth in the west was the norm. Chicago, Illinois in 1830 was simply a trading village with a fort, but long before some of its original settlers died, it had become one of the largest and richest cities in the nation.

Farmland in the west was easy to acquire. A new land law in 1820 reduced the minimum price of government land from \$1.64 to \$1.25 per acre and the minimum plot size from 160 to 80 acres. Westerners continued to push for greater relaxation of land laws, and under the **Preemption Act of 1830**, squatters were allowed to stake out claims ahead of the governmental land surveys and later get 160 acres at the minimum price of \$1.25 per acre. Then, after the 1862 **Homestead Act**, land could be claimed by merely occupying and improving it.

Pioneer families first had to clear the trees and grub out the stumps and underbrush, but then they could grow their own grain, vegetables, and fruit. They also ranged the woods for wild game, fished the nearby streams, and raised livestock. They usually planted their first crop in a natural glade, and then year by

year they pushed back the trees until the land was cleared. They discovered corn was very versatile—it could be fed to livestock or distilled into liquor—and it rapidly became the Western farmers' staple market item. Much of the Westerner's harvest was sent down the Ohio-Mississippi River system to the booming Cotton Kingdom in the south. The Mississippi River and its tributaries provided a natural highway for western commerce.

Westerners were continually finding ways to bring more land into cultivation. Unfortunately, when they reached the sticky black soil of the treeless prairies, their wooden plows would break, making it nearly impossible to plant. The innovators of the time helped the farmers overcome the challenges they faced. In 1837, **John Deere** invented a steel plow that could break the soil and was light enough to be pulled by horses.

In 1834, **Cyrus McCormick** invented a mechanical mower-reaper that transformed the scale of American agriculture. Farmers using hand-operated sickles and scythes could only harvest half an acre of wheat a day, while McCormick's reaper and two men could work twelve acres a day. McCormick's success attracted other inventors, and soon there were mechanical seeders that replaced the need to sow seed by hand and mechanical threshers to separate the grains of wheat from straw.

With all of the technological advances and continual movement to the west, farming had become a major commercial activity by the 1850s. Large-scale, specialized, cash-crop agriculture dominated the trans-Allegheny west. Soon, the volume of agricultural products became more than the South could consume. However, before the farming community could do more than ship their produce downriver, a transportation revolution would have to occur that would enable them to send foodstuffs east and west.

Innovative Transportation

In the late eighteenth century, primitive methods of travel were still in use in America. Waterborne travel was uncertain and often dangerous, covered-wagon and stagecoach travel over rutted trails was uncomfortable, and all types of travel were very slow. Americans were aware that a transportation network would increase land values, stimulate domestic and foreign trade, and strengthen the American economy.

In 1794, a private company completed the Philadelphia-Lancaster Turnpike, a broad, paved highway that was similar to the good European highways at that time. It was called a "turnpike" because as drivers approached the tollgate they were confronted with a barrier of sharp spikes that was turned aside when they paid their toll. The completion of the Lancaster Turnpike resulted in a turnpike-building boom that lasted nearly 20 years. By 1821, nearly 4,000 miles of turnpikes had been completed, mostly connecting eastern cities. Money needed to build the new turnpikes was coming primarily from state governments and in some cases from individuals.

Constructing decent roads over the Appalachians and in the west was a more difficult task than building those in the east. Although states' rights proponents regularly blocked spending federal funds for internal improvements, one notable exception was the Cumberland Road. In 1811, the federal government began to construct a turnpike—Cumberland Road, also called the "**National Road**"—which stretched 591 miles from Cumberland, in western Maryland, to Vandalia, in Illinois. The project was completed in 1852 with a combination of federal and state aid, with different states receiving ownership of segments of the highway.

Americans benefited from the new turnpikes; however, it was not yet economical to ship bulky goods by land across the great distances in America. Businessmen and inventors began concentrating on improving water transportation. In 1807, **Robert Fulton** sent the first commercially successful steamboat, the Clermont, from New York City up the Hudson River to Albany. Skeptics initially thought the project would never work and nicknamed the boat "Fulton's Folly." The Clermont made the run of 150 miles at about five miles an hour, proving that it was an efficient vessel. Thereafter, use of the steamboat spread rapidly, with steamers making the run from New Orleans as far north as Ohio. By 1830, there were more than 200 steamers on the Mississippi.

As early as the 1820s, the successes of the steamboat were clear. Steamboats played a vital role in opening the west and south to further settlement. They stimulated the agricultural economy of the west by providing better access to markets at a lower cost. Farmers quickly bought land near navigable rivers, because they could now easily ship their produce out. Villages at strategic points along the waterways evolved into centers of commerce and urban life. In the 1830s and 1840s, the port of New Orleans grew to lead all others in exports.

Steamboats were also much more comfortable than other forms of land transportation at the time. The General Pike, launched in 1819, set the standard for luxurious steamers with marble columns, thick carpets, ornate mirrors, and plush curtains. Luxury steamers evolved into floating palaces where passengers could dine, drink, dance, and gamble as they traveled to their destinations.

While steamboats were conquering western rivers, canals were under construction in the northeast to further improve the transportation network. In 1817, the New York legislature endorsed **Governor DeWitt Clinton**'s plan for connecting the Hudson River with Lake Erie—the **Erie Canal**. Completed in 1825, the canal ran 363 miles from Albany to Buffalo. The completion of the canal reduced travel time from New York City to Buffalo from 20 days to six, reduced the cost of moving a ton of freight from \$100 to \$5, and moved the country a step closer to linking the Mississippi Valley and the Atlantic Ocean. The canal also provided a water route from New York to Chicago, via the Great Lakes, and marked the beginning of Chicago's rapid growth.

The Erie Canal was immediately a financial success, paying for itself within seven years. The success of the “Big Ditch” sparked a canal-building mania that lasted for more than a decade and resulted in around 3,000 miles of waterways by 1840. Ohio built the Ohio and Erie Canal, running from the Ohio River to Cleveland, and Indiana built the Wabash and Erie Canal. Both were feeders that supplied farmers west of the Appalachians with water connections to the east.

The Erie Canal had broad economic implications. The value of land along the route increased, new cities in New York such as Rochester and Syracuse sprang up, industry in New York boomed, and farming in the Old Northwest attracted thousands of newcomers who could now easily ship their goods to market on the east coast.

Both the turnpike and the canal contributed to the emerging national economy, but the most significant development was the railroad. Railroads were faster and cheaper than canals to construct, and they did not freeze over in the winter. Since many states had overextended by borrowing heavily to finance their canals, much of the early railroad growth was developed by private investors.

In 1828, development of the first railroad began in Baltimore, and four years later the **Baltimore and Ohio Railroad** reached 73 miles. By 1833, the Charleston and Hamburg Railroad extended 136 miles west of Charleston. The Panic of 1837 slowed railroad construction, but by 1840 the United States had over 3,000 miles of tracks, nearly double the mileage in all of Europe. And by 1860, the U.S. saw development of over 30,000 miles of railroad tracks, three-fourths of which were in the industrializing north. There were several southern railway lines, but no one single southern railway system.

Early railroad pioneers faced several challenges: Tracks with steep grades and sharp curves required more powerful locomotives, sparks from wood-burning engines caused fires, brakes were ineffective, and wooden rails topped with iron straps wore out quickly and broke loose, causing dangerous crashes. The intent of most early railroad builders had been to monopolize the trade of certain districts, not to establish connections with competing centers, so few of the tracks were coordinated into railroad systems. Frequently, railroads went so far as to use tracks of different widths to prevent other lines from using their tracks.

Eventually, all of these railway obstacles were overcome. Modifications in locomotive design enabled trains to negotiate sharp curves, engines that could burn hard coal appeared, better brakes were developed, and the iron T-rail combined with crossties increased durability of the tracks. Rail gauges also gradually became standardized, linking the various rail lines together.

The development of so many railroads changed American society. The railroad provided indirect benefits by encouraging settlement and expansion of farming, thus transforming agriculture. Much more of the fertile prairie could be developed because the farmers now had access to national markets via the train. American cities were also influenced by railway development. Eastern seaports, along with other intermediate centers like Cincinnati, benefited from an increase in exportable goods.

Other forms of transportation were also working to bind the United States together and to the rest of the world. In 1845, the first **clipper ship**, the Rainbow, was launched. Clipper ships were long, narrow, and built for speed. With their taller masts and numerous sails, they could outrun a steamer if there was a good breeze. While in operation, clippers carried highly demanded tea from China to America and transported goods to the prospectors in California. Clippers lasted less than two decades because, although they were fast, they did not have much cargo space.

In 1860 in the far west, the **Pony Express** was established as a form of transportation for carrying mail. Daring pony riders carried mail from Missouri to California in ten days—an amazing feat for the times. The riders changed horses at stations every 10 miles, and rode summer or winter, day or night, good weather and bad. The Pony Express only lasted 18 months, succumbing to Samuel Morse’s telegraph machine.

The transportation revolution in the United States had been spurred by the desire of the Easterners to tap into all that the west had to offer. Turnpike, canals, steamboats, and railways forged a truly continental economy. Transportation innovations cut the cost and increased the speed of moving goods, helping to create a national market and provide a stimulus for regional specialization. Westerners, with their boundless prairies and swiftly growing population, became important producers of commercial agriculture, supplying both the North and the South with food. Northerners supplied the West and the South with textiles and other manufactured goods. Southerners supplied the North with cotton, the raw material they needed to produce their textiles.

The movement of goods over long distances to the various regions required a supporting infrastructure, which stimulated the growth of market towns where merchants, bankers, warehousemen, retailers, and other middlemen provided the services needed to move the goods from producers to consumers. More extensive markets increased competition, pushing manufacturers to produce better and cheaper products in order to capture a larger share of the market.

Transportation innovations encouraged a new sense of connectedness among Americans, encouraging a deeper sense of nationalism. The transportation revolution pushed nineteenth-century America through the process of integrating an entire continent into a single cultural and economic entity.