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Forging the National Economy, 1790–1860

PART I: Reviewing the Chapter

A. Checklist of Learning Objectives

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to

1. describe the movement and growth of America's population in the early nineteenth century.
2. describe the effects of Irish and German immigration on American society.
3. explain why America was relatively slow to embrace the industrial revolution and the factory.
4. describe the early development of the factory system and Eli Whitney's system of interchangeable parts.
5. indicate the nature of early industrial labor and explain its effects on workers.
6. describe the impact of new technology and transportation systems on American business and agriculture, particularly in expanding the market economy and creating a sectional division of labor.
7. describe the sequence of major transportation systems that developed from 1790 to 1860 and indicate their economic consequences.
8. describe the effects of an increasingly specialized market economy on American society, including its impact on women and the family.

B. Glossary

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms.

1. **caste** An exclusive or rigid social distinction based on birth, wealth, occupation, and so forth. "There was freedom from aristocratic caste and state church. . . ."
2. **nativist** One who advocates favoring native-born citizens over aliens or immigrants. "The invasion of this so-called immigrant 'rabble' . . . inflamed the prejudices of American 'nativists.' "
3. **factory** An establishment for the manufacturing of goods, including buildings and substantial machinery. "The factory system gradually spread from England—'the world's workshop'—to other lands."
4. **trademark** A distinguishing symbol or word used by a manufacturer on its goods, usually registered by law to protect against imitators. ". . . unscrupulous Yankee manufacturers . . . learned to stamp their own products with faked English trademarks."
5. **distaff** The staff from which thread is drawn in spinning; hence, a symbol of spinning or, sometimes, of work usually done by women or considered appropriate for them. ". . . New England . . . exchanged the trident for the distaff."
6. **liability** Legal responsibility for loss or damage. "The principle of limited liability aided the concentration of capital. . . ."
7. **incorporation** The formation of individuals into a legally organized group. ". . . businessmen could create corporations. . . ."

8. **labor union** An organization of workers—usually wage-earning workers—to promote the interests and welfare of its members, often by collective bargaining with employers. “They were forbidden by law to form labor unions. . . .”
9. **strike** An organized work stoppage by employees in order to obtain better wages, working conditions, and so on. “Not surprisingly, only twenty-four recorded strikes occurred before 1835.”
10. **capitalist** An individual or group who uses private property to produce goods for profit in an open market. “It made ambitious capitalists out of humble plowmen. . . .”
11. **turnpike** A toll road. “The turnpikes beckoned to the canvas-covered Conestoga wagons. . . .”
12. **posterity** Later descendants or subsequent generations. “He installed a powerful steam engine in a vessel that posterity came to know as the *Clermont*. . . .”
13. **productivity** In economics, the relative capacity to produce goods and services, measured in terms of the number of workers and machines needed to create goods in a certain length of time. “The principle of division of labor . . . spelled productivity and profits. . . .”
14. **transient** Referring to a person without a fixed or long-term home or job; a migrant. “. . . they left little behind them but the homely fruits of their transient labor.”

PART II: Checking Your Progress

A. True-False

Where the statement is true, mark **T**. Where it is false, mark **F**, and correct it in the space immediately below.

- ___ 1. American frontier life was often plagued by poverty and illness.
- ___ 2. The influx of Irish immigrants contributed to America’s tolerance of ethnic and religious pluralism.
- ___ 3. Most early American manufacturing was concentrated in the South.
- ___ 4. The principle of “general incorporation” permitted individual businesspeople to apply for limited-liability corporate charters from the state legislatures.
- ___ 5. The early industrial revolution greatly benefited workers by opening up well-paying factory jobs.
- ___ 6. Early labor unions made very slow progress, partly because the strike weapon was illegal and ineffective.
- ___ 7. The steel plow and mechanical reaper helped turn American farmers from subsistence farming to commercial, market-oriented agriculture.
- ___ 8. By 1840, overland highways had proved a more effective form of transportation than canals.
- ___ 9. The Erie Canal’s great economic effect was to create strong east-west commercial and industrial links between the Northeast and the West (Midwest).
- ___ 10. The railroad gained immediate acceptance as a more efficient and flexible alternative to waterbound transportation.

- ___ 11. In the sectional division of labor that developed before the Civil War, the South generally provided raw materials to the Northeast in exchange for manufactured goods, transportation, and commercial services.
- ___ 12. The growth of a market economy providing more factory-made goods enabled middle-class women to achieve greater economic independence by working outside the home.
- ___ 13. The advances in manufacturing and transportation decreased the gap between rich and poor in America.
- ___ 14. American industrial cities were the sites of a slow but steady rise in wage rates for most workers.
- ___ 15. By the time of the Civil War, telegraph lines had been stretched across both the Atlantic Ocean and the North American continent.

B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and write the proper letter in the space provided.

- ___ 1. The experience of frontier life was especially difficult for
 - a. women.
 - b. young people.
 - c. foreign immigrants.
 - d. Roman Catholics.
- ___ 2. As late as 1850, over one-half of the American population was
 - a. foreign-born.
 - b. living west of the Mississippi River.
 - c. under the age of thirty.
 - d. living in cities of over 100,000 people.
- ___ 3. The primary economic activity in the Rocky Mountain West before the Civil War was
 - a. agriculture.
 - b. fur-trapping.
 - c. mining.
 - d. small business trading.
- ___ 4. Americans came to look on their spectacular western wilderness areas especially as
 - a. one of their distinctive, defining attributes as a new nation.
 - b. primarily a source of economic exploitation.
 - c. a potential attraction for tourists from abroad.
 - d. the sacred home of Native American peoples.
- ___ 5. The American painter who developed the idea for a national park system was
 - a. Samuel F. B. Morse.
 - b. Caleb Bingham.
 - c. John James Audubon.
 - d. George Catlin.

- ___ 6. Two major sources of European immigration to America in the 1840s and 1850s were
 - a. France and Italy.
 - b. Germany and France.
 - c. Germany and Ireland.
 - d. Ireland and Norway.

- ___ 7. One consequence of the influx of new immigrants was
 - a. a decline in the birthrate of native-born Americans.
 - b. an upsurge of anti-Catholicism.
 - c. a virtual end to westward migration.
 - d. a national decline in wage rates.

- ___ 8. Industrialization was at first slow to arrive in America because
 - a. there was a shortage of labor, capital, and consumers.
 - b. low tariff rates invited foreign imports.
 - c. the country lacked the educational system necessary to develop technology.
 - d. the country lacked a patent system to guarantee investors the profits from new machines.

- ___ 9. The first industry to be shaped by the new factory system of manufacturing was
 - a. textiles.
 - b. the telegraph.
 - c. agriculture.
 - d. iron-making.

- ___ 10. Wages for most American workers rose in the early nineteenth century, except for the most exploited workers like
 - a. immigrants and westerners.
 - b. textile and transportation workers.
 - c. single men and women.
 - d. women and children.

- ___ 11. A major change affecting the American family in the early nineteenth century was
 - a. the rise of an organized feminist movement.
 - b. the movement of most women into the work force.
 - c. increased conflict between parents and children over moral questions.
 - d. a decline in the average number of children per household.

- ___ 12. The first major improvements in the American transportation system were
 - a. canals and railroads.
 - b. railroads and clipper ships.
 - c. steamboats and highways.
 - d. keelboats and Conestoga wagons.

- ___ 13. The new regional "division of labor" created by improved transportation meant that
 - a. the South specialized in cotton, the West in grain and livestock, and the East in manufacturing.
 - b. the South specialized in manufacturing, the West in transportation, and the East in grain and livestock.
 - c. the South specialized in cotton, the West in manufacturing, and the East in finance.
 - d. the South specialized in grain and livestock, the West in cotton, and the East in transportation.

- ___ 14. One effect of industrialization was
 - a. an increasing economic equality among all citizens.
 - b. a strengthening of the family as an economic unit.
 - c. an increasingly stable labor force
 - d. a rise in the gap between rich and poor.

- ___ 15. A major new technological development that linked America more closely to Europe was
 - a. the McCormick reaper.
 - b. the transatlantic cable.
 - c. the telephone.
 - d. the steamboat.

C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

- _____ 1. Nation where a potato famine in the 1840s led to a great migration of its people to America
- _____ 2. Semisecret Irish organization that became a benevolent society aiding Irish immigrants in America
- _____ 3. Liberal German refugees who fled failed democratic revolutions and came to America
- _____ 4. Americans who protested and sometimes rioted against Roman Catholic immigrants
- _____ 5. The transformation of manufacturing that began in Britain about 1750
- _____ 6. Whitney's invention that enhanced cotton production and gave new life to black slavery
- _____ 7. Principle that permitted individual investors to risk no more capital in a business venture than their own share of a corporation's stock
- _____ 8. Morse's invention that provided instant communication across distance
- _____ 9. Common source of early factory labor, often underpaid, whipped, and brutally beaten
- _____ 10. Working people's organizations, often considered illegal under early American law
- _____ 11. McCormick's invention that vastly increased the productivity of the American grain farmer
- _____ 12. The only major highway constructed by the federal government before the Civil War
- _____ 13. Fulton's invention that made river transportation a two-way affair

- _____ 14. "Clinton's Big Ditch" that transformed transportation and economic life from New York City across the Great Lakes to Chicago
- _____ 15. Beautiful but short-lived American ships, replaced by British "tramp steamers"

D. Matching People, Places, and Events

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| ___ 1. Samuel Slater | A. Inventor of the mechanical reaper that transformed grain growing into a business |
| ___ 2. Eli Whitney | B. New York governor who built the Erie Canal |
| ___ 3. Elias Howe | C. Inventor of a machine that revolutionized the ready-made clothing industry |
| ___ 4. Samuel F.B. Morse | D. Agitator against immigrants and Roman Catholics |
| ___ 5. Know-Nothings | E. Wealthy New York manufacturer who laid the first transatlantic cable in 1858 |
| ___ 6. <i>Commonwealth v. Hunt</i> | F. Immigrant mechanic who started American industrialization by setting up his cotton-spinning factory in 1791 |
| ___ 7. Cyrus McCormick | G. Painter turned inventor who developed the first reliable system for instant communication across distance |
| ___ 8. Robert Fulton | H. Developer of a "folly" that made rivers two-way streams of transportation |
| ___ 9. Cyrus Field | I. Radical, secret Irish labor union of the 1860s and 1870s |
| ___ 10. Molly Maguires | J. Yankee mechanical genius who revolutionized cotton production and created the system of interchangeable parts |
| ___ 11. DeWitt Clinton | K. Pioneering Massachusetts Supreme Court decision that declared labor unions legal |

E. Putting Things in Order

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them from 1 to 5.

- ___ First telegraph message—"What hath God wrought?"—is sent from Baltimore to Washington.
- ___ Industrial revolution begins in Britain.
- ___ Telegraph lines are stretched across Atlantic Ocean and North American continent.
- ___ Major water transportation route connects New York City to Lake Erie and points west.
- ___ Invention of cotton gin and system of interchangeable parts revolutionized southern agriculture and northern industry.

F. Matching Cause and Effect

Match the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line.

Cause	Effect
___ 1. The open, rough-and-tumble society of the American West	A. Made the fast-growing United States the fourth most populous nation in the Western world
___ 2. Natural population growth and increasing immigration from Ireland and Germany	B. Opened the Great Lakes states to rapid economic growth and spurred the development of major cities
___ 3. The poverty and Roman Catholic faith of most Irish immigrants	C. Encouraged most western farmers to specialize in cash-crop agricultural production for eastern and European markets
___ 4. Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin	D. Made Americans strongly individualistic and self-reliant
___ 5. The passage of general incorporation and limited-liability laws	E. Aroused nativist hostility and occasional riots
___ 6. The early efforts of labor unions to organize and strike	F. Bound the two northern sections together across the mountains and tended to isolate the South
___ 7. Improved western transportation and the new McCormick reaper	G. Aroused fierce opposition from businesspeople and were often declared illegal
___ 8. The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825	H. Enabled businesspeople to create more powerful and effective joint-stock capital ventures
___ 9. The development of a strong east-west rail network	I. Transformed southern agriculture and gave new life to slavery
___ 10. The replacement of household production by factory-made, store-bought goods	J. Weakened women's economic status and tended to push them into a separate "sphere" of home and family

G. Developing Historical Skills**Reading a Chart and Bar Graph**

Examine the bar graph on p. 300 to learn more about the character of the American population from 1790 to 1860.

Answer the following questions.

- Which decade showed the largest absolute increase in total population?
- During which decade did the nonwhite population begin to *decrease* as a percentage of the total population?

3. In which census year did the nonwhite population surpass the white population of 1790?
4. Using the bar graph, indicate about how many times larger the total population was in 1860 than it had been in 1820.

H. Map Mastery

Map Discrimination

Using the maps and charts in Chapter 15, answer the following questions.

1. How many states did the Cumberland Road pass through? (Do not count Missouri.)
2. Which industry developed near Philadelphia?
3. If you were a tobacco farmer, in which state would you most likely live?
4. If you had traveled from Albany, New York, to Evansville, Indiana, which *two* canals and *one* lake would you have traversed?
5. If you had traveled from Columbia, Pennsylvania, to Cleveland, Ohio, which *two* canals and *one* river would you have traversed?
6. In 1860, how many direct rail lines linked the North and the South west of the Appalachians?
7. Which three midwestern states had the greatest number of rail lines in 1860?
8. If you had traveled from Independence, Missouri, to Los Angeles, California, before the Civil War, which major trails would you have traversed?

Map Challenge

Using the maps on pp. 319, 320, 321, and 324, write a brief essay explaining the *economic* importance of the Erie Canal and other canals and railroads for trade between the Northeast and the Northwest.

PART III: Applying What You Have Learned

1. How did changes in the size and character of the population affect American social and economic life from 1790 to 1860?
2. How did the existence of a vast western frontier shape Americans' values and society in the period 1790–1860?
3. What were the effects of the new factory and corporate systems of production on early industrial workers, and how did they respond to these conditions?
4. How did the new transportation systems create a commercially linked national economy and a specialized sectional division of labor?
5. What was the impact of the new economic developments on the distribution of wealth and the role of women in society?
6. In America, early industrialization, westward expansion, and growing sectional tension all occurred at the same time. How was the development of the economy before the Civil War related to both the westward movement and increasing sectional conflict?