

Revivalism, Reform, and Artistic Renaissance

1820–1850



Revivalism and Reform
p. 284



Abolitionism and the
Proslavery Response
p. 290

“In the history of the world the doctrine of Reform had never such scope as at the present hour. ... We are to revise the whole of our social structure, the state, the school, religion, marriage, trade, science, and explore their foundations in our own nature.”

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, *Man the Reformer* (1841)

The expansion of democracy and the changes resulting from the market revolution left Americans concerned about their lives and the nation's future. Rising levels of inequality and a bitter debate over slavery further intensified anxieties. In this popular lithograph, *The Way of Good and Evil*, the artist portrays the social ills facing America, including alcoholism, prostitution, and crime. A tavern, brothel, and prison represent the path of destruction. Images of a different set of buildings—school house, home, and church—anchor the center. The path to salvation leads from these institutions through college and

eventually up into heaven. In the artist's view Americans face a clear choice: salvation or eternal damnation. Americans sought solutions for the nation's social problems and clamored for reforms. Many turned to mainstream religion for guidance. Religious reform movements focused on improving education and prisons or dealing with the danger posed by alcohol. Some religious movements viewed the market economy as the root of America's problems and advocated the abandonment of private property. Several secular utopian movements came to similar conclusions.

Still other reformers adopted a radically different critique of market society. The day's leading thinkers, including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, urged Americans to reject the values of the marketplace and turn to nature or to their individual consciences for inspiration. Other writers grappled with the changes in American society in their writing, exploring America's past and the market revolution and probing philosophical issues.

The rise of a more aggressive abolitionist movement and the development of an equally fervid defense of slavery intensified the public debate over slavery. Abolitionism helped radicalize many women and gave them the opportunity to develop effective organizing skills. Inspired by a more radical theory of equality and equipped with their new skills, women's rights advocates applied their critique of slavery to women's status under American law.

Reform efforts affected architecture as well. Many reformers advocated transforming the American landscape itself, including the built environment, as a means of promoting social reform and spiritual renewal.



The Cult of True Womanhood, Reform, and Women's Rights p. 295



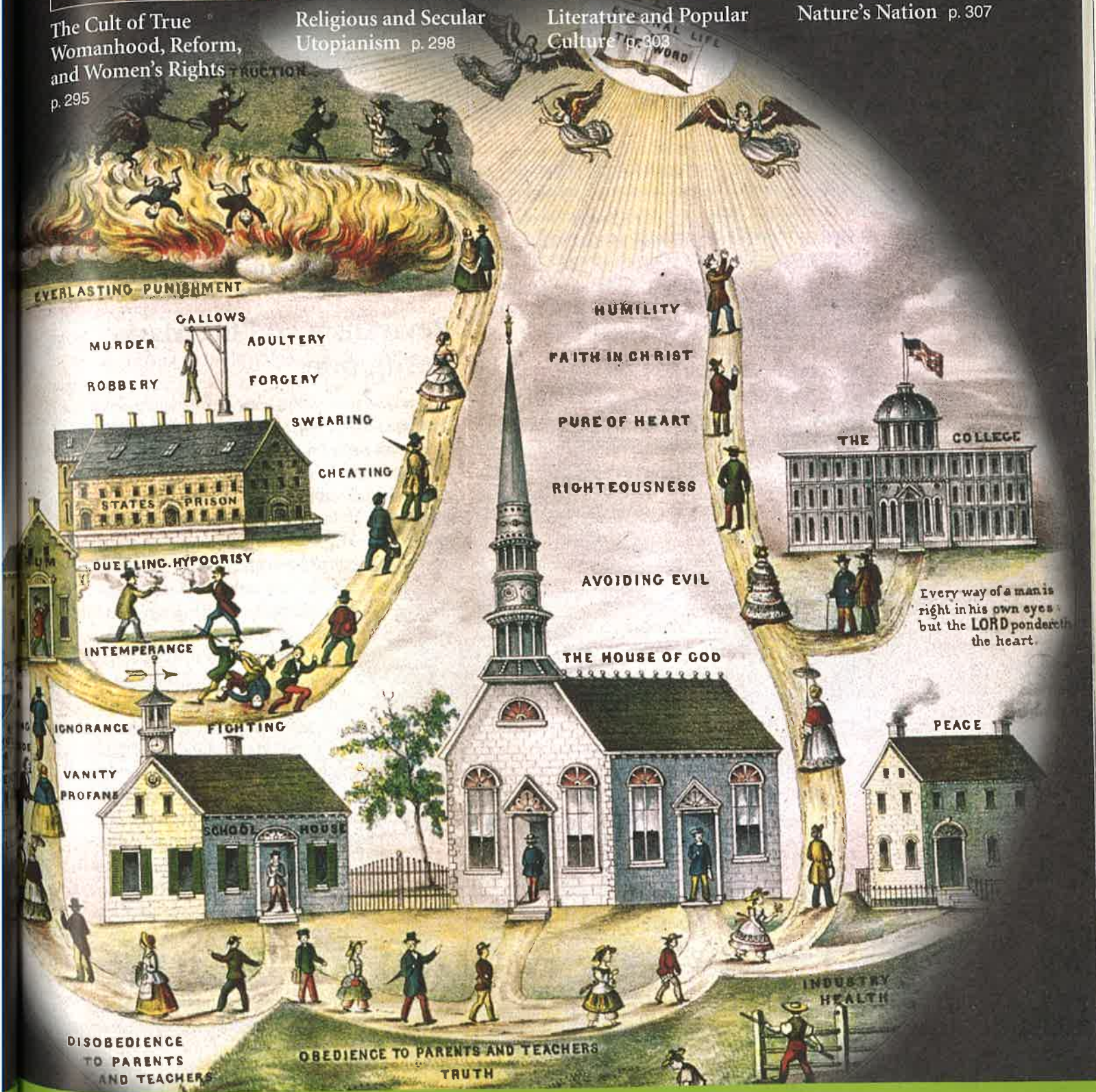
Religious and Secular Utopianism p. 298



Literature and Popular Culture p. 303



Nature's Nation p. 307



EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

MURDER
ROBBERY
GALLOWS
ADULTERY
FORGERY

STATES PRISON
SWEARING
CHEATING
DUELLING. HYPOCRISY

INTEMPERANCE
IGNORANCE
VANITY
PROFANE

SCHOOL HOUSE
FIGHTING

DISOBEDIENCE TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS

OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS
TRUTH

HUMILITY
FAITH IN CHRIST
PURE OF HEART
RIGHTEOUSNESS
AVOIDING EVIL

THE HOUSE OF GOD

THE COLLEGE

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes but the LORD pondereth the heart.

PEACE

INDUSTRY
HEALTH

Revivalism and Reform



The Cane Ridge revival in Kentucky (1801) was the first stirring of the larger revival movement that constituted America's Second Great Awakening. (For a discussion of the First Great Awakening, see Chapter 3). In the next four decades, this emotional style of evangelical Protestantism attracted large numbers of Americans. For those swept up in the revival, the forces of change transforming American society were seen as a threat to the church and the family. However the most far-sighted proponents of revival, such as Charles Grandison Finney, realized that the power of the market revolution might be turned to good ends and used to promote religion and reform.

By the 1830s Americans began to believe that the economic, political, and social changes sweeping over their society were undermining individual morality, the ability of communities to prosper, and the integrity of the family. This belief drove the push for moral reform. In many cases religious impulse inspired reformers. Finney preached that “true saints love reform” and argued that humankind could create a perfect society here on earth if all Americans made “the reformation of the whole world” their top priority. Not all reformers were religiously motivated, however. Some reform efforts promoted secular goals and drew on the Enlightenment's ideals of reason, science, and faith in humankind's ability to improve and reshape its surroundings (see Chapters 3 and 4). A variety of secular reform movements

emerged that led to improvements in schools, care for the mentally ill, and new methods of reforming criminals. Whether religious or secular, reform efforts targeted individual behavior such as drunkenness and prostitution.

Revivalism and the Market Revolution

One way of promoting revivalism was the camp meeting, an outdoor religious revival that lasted for several days. This painting of *Religious Camp Meeting* (10.1) by an English artist captures the emotional intensity of these events during which grown men and women swooned and collapsed in response to the fiery preaching of revival ministers.

The painting shows overwrought men and women, physically exhausted from the revival, splayed across the ground and on the benches in the foreground. One observer compared the audience's response to the fiery sermons of the camp meeting with the “swelling” of an ocean wave, an awesome spectacle of people “fainting, shouting, yelling, crying, sobbing and grieving.” The tents pictured in the background of the painting give only a small sense of the scope of these events. Camp meetings could last as long as a week and attract as many as three thousand individuals and one hundred different preachers.

10.1 Religious Camp Meeting

A contemporary artist captured the intense emotional experience of a revival meeting.



What was the Second Great Awakening?

Revivalists faulted many mainstream ministers for their overly intellectualized approach to preaching. The materialism associated with the market revolution was another cause ministers blamed for America's problems. One minister feared that the same forces that were "increasing the business and moneyed interests in the Nation" would "by spreading vice and irreligion prove its ruin. Those very things which all regard as improvements will be our destruction." For some proponents of revivalism, however, the new methods of communication and wealth generated by the market revolution were tools to press into the service of revivalism. No figure proved more adept at turning the tools of the market to religious purposes than Charles Grandison Finney, a lawyer turned preacher who became a leading spokesman for spreading the revivalist message of the Second Great Awakening to towns and cities. His influence was felt particularly strongly in those towns and cities most closely associated with the market revolution, such as the towns along the Erie Canal.

While walking to his law offices one day, Finney experienced a religious conversion. In a lawyerly manner he declared that from that day on he would be on a "retainer from the Lord Jesus Christ to plead his cause." Drawing on his experience as a courtroom lawyer, he fashioned a forceful and direct style of preaching that cajoled, harangued, and pleaded with his audience to embrace salvation. Finney's theology rejected many of the Calvinist assumptions of non-evangelical churches (see Chapter 3). Where Calvinists stressed predestination, the belief that God predetermined our individual destinies, including who will be saved and who will not, Finney instead stressed free will, the ability of individuals to seek out salvation through their own efforts. Linked to Finney's emphasis on free will was his ideal of perfectionism. By aiming for perfection, Finney preached, human beings could usher in the millennium. In contrast to the pessimistic message of Calvinism, which condemned most people to damnation, Finney emphasized sobriety and hard work along with his religious message. Finney's sermons appealed to the expanding middle class and the wealthy.

Finney found an especially eager audience in men and women in the cities and towns along the Erie Canal in upstate New York. A dramatic revival occurred in Rochester, New York, in 1830–1831. Finney adapted many of the new political techniques associated with Jacksonian democracy, techniques

"Capital is one of the means God uses to convert the world."

REVEREND DAVID MAGIE, Sermon, 1847

designed to get voters actively involved in politics, to his revivals. Politicians, Finney noted, "get up meetings; circulate handbills and pamphlets; blaze away in the newspapers." The goal of such actions was to stimulate "excitement and bring the people out."

Finney and other evangelicals took advantage of the opportunities provided by the market revolution, particularly the expansion of the publishing industry, to churn out tracts, Bibles, and other evangelical periodicals. Organizations such as the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society led the way in marketing evangelical religion books and pamphlets, making a concerted effort to use high-quality woodcut images in many of their publications.

Temperance

Temperance, the reform movement that developed in response to concern over the rising levels of alcohol consumption in America society, became an unusually effective reform effort. By 1830 consumption of spirits reached an all-time high in American history: almost 7 gallons per person of pure alcohol a year (more than twice the amount that the average American drinks today). Alcohol had always played an important part in many communities in America. Every class in American society imbibed alcohol, and hardly a community function took place without alcohol consumption. Workers on the job often drank alcohol during their midmorning break and with their mid-afternoon break. One social commentator noted that "a house could not be raised, a field of wheat cut down, nor could there be a log rolling, a husking, a quilting, a wedding, or funeral without the aid of alcohol."

Although Western religions had always frowned on drunkenness, Christians had never deemed the consumption of alcohol a sin. The Great Awakening changed this as spokesmen for the revival fastened on intemperance as an issue. At first proponents of temperance merely sought to promote moderation, but by the middle of the 1820s a more radical temperance movement had developed that sought complete abstinence from any consumption of

alcohol (see *Competing Visions: Temperance Reform and Its Critics*). The first national temperance organization was founded in 1826, and within three years the number of similar organizations had risen to 222. By the middle of the 1830s, temperance organizations numbered more than 1.5 million members, and more than 2 million Americans had taken the movement's pledge of abstinence. Evangelical religious leaders took the lead in these organizations, delivering sermons with titles like: "The Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils, and Remedy of Intemperance." Temperance reformers warned Americans that alcohol threatened their souls as well as their bodies. For congregational minister Lyman Beecher, temperance organizations were "a disciplined moral militia," an ironic metaphor given that the real militia had become another illustration of the problem of intemperance. Although militia musters, the practice sessions of the militia, had always been festive occasions that included drinking, by the middle of the nineteenth century they had

become drunken revels, as this depiction of a militia-day muster colorfully illustrates (10.2). The militiaman in the foreground is so inebriated he cannot stand, and the dancing figure of the African American suggests that the atmosphere is more carnival-like than military.

In addition to forming reform organizations, temperance

advocates campaigned for prohibition laws banning the sale of alcohol. The cause of temperance also attracted other reformers such as the young Whig politician Abraham Lincoln. The Whigs helped to secure new laws designed to promote sobriety. Maine adopted the most wide-sweeping law in 1851, prohibiting alcohol. By 1855 thirteen of the nation's thirty-one states had passed "Maine laws" prohibiting the sale of alcohol. The temperance movement did not manage to banish drinking from American life, but it did dramatically reduce alcohol consumption among Americans.

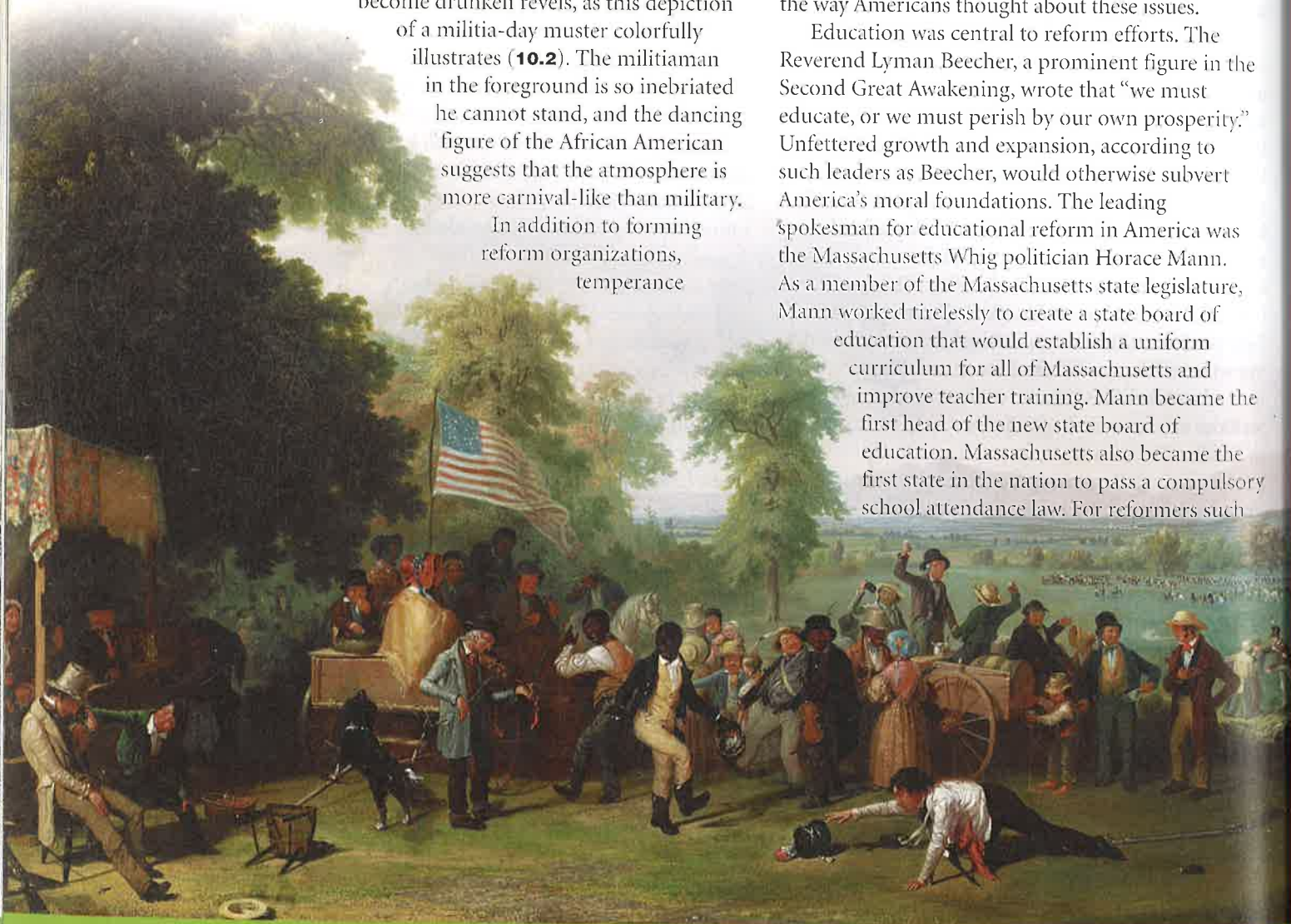
Schools, Prisons, and Asylums

Alcohol consumption was a major concern of many reformers, but hardly the only one. Reformers also turned their attention to education, the criminal justice system, and the treatment of the mentally ill. They founded a variety of new institutions to deal with these social problems and campaigned to change the way Americans thought about these issues.

Education was central to reform efforts. The Reverend Lyman Beecher, a prominent figure in the Second Great Awakening, wrote that "we must educate, or we must perish by our own prosperity." Unfettered growth and expansion, according to such leaders as Beecher, would otherwise subvert America's moral foundations. The leading spokesman for educational reform in America was the Massachusetts Whig politician Horace Mann. As a member of the Massachusetts state legislature, Mann worked tirelessly to create a state board of education that would establish a uniform curriculum for all of Massachusetts and improve teacher training. Mann became the first head of the new state board of education. Massachusetts also became the first state in the nation to pass a compulsory school attendance law. For reformers such

10.2 A Militia Muster

Although militia musters had always included some drinking, the scene depicted here shows a militia man too drunk to stand up. Martial virtue is nowhere to be seen.



What does this painting of a militia muster reveal about alcohol consumption in America?

Competing Visions

TEMPERANCE REFORM AND ITS CRITICS

The temperance movement brought an evangelical zeal to its antidrinking cause. The prominent minister Lyman Beecher, like many other leading spokespeople for temperance, took an active role in the Second Great Awakening. But other Americans viewed the zealotry of the reformers as a problem almost as bad as the sins they sought to expunge. The young lawyer Christopher Columbus Baldwin represented the more moderate view. In what way did Beecher's position as a minister inform his views of temperance? How did Baldwin's approach to the issue differ from Beecher's?

The minister Lyman Beecher cast the problem of intemperance in terms of a threat to the spiritual and political welfare of the nation. His religious idiom invoked the language of sin and compared drunkenness to biblical plagues, ranging from floods to fire.

Intemperance is the sin of our land, and, with our boundless prosperity, is coming upon us like a flood; and if anything shall defeat the hopes of the world, which hang upon our experiment of civil liberty, it is the river of fire, which is rolling through the land, destroying the vital air, and extending around us an atmosphere of death.

Lyman Beecher, *Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evils and Remedy of Intemperance* (Boston, 1828)

Christopher Columbus Baldwin, a resident of Worcester, Massachusetts, expressed some cynicism and skepticism about temperance advocates. In 1833 the state temperance movement held its annual convention in Worcester, and Baldwin was amused that at least some of the nearly 500 delegates in attendance did not take their vows of sobriety as seriously as their rhetoric suggested. Baldwin made these wry observations in his diary.

I am not a member of a temperance society, contenting myself with the practice of virtue without extra preaching it to others. It is one of the faults of the day to occupy so much of our time in recommending the practice of virtue that we have no time left us to perform it. So true it is that when mankind undertake a reformation they are always running into extremes.

The Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin, 1829–1835 (Worcester, 1901)



The MORNING DRAM.



The GROG SHOP.



The CONFIRMED DRUNKARD.



CONCLUDING SCENE.

The Drunkard's Progress

How did critics of temperance respond to this reform movement?

as Mann, the Common School—universal public education—would cure all of society’s ills. As Mann wrote, “let the Common School be expanded to its capabilities . . . and nine tenths of the crimes in the penal code would become obsolete; the long catalogue of human ills would be abridged.” While many types of reform were “curative or remedial,” schools, according to Mann, were “preventive.” Mann intended his reforms, like much mainstream educational reform of the day, to make good citizens and workers. This era saw the development of many features of modern schooling. The assignment of students to grades according to age and ability, the use of standardized procedures for promotion, and the notion of uniform textbooks for instruction all emerged out of the Massachusetts model that Mann helped pioneer.

An important new textbook, the popular McGuffey’s reader, appeared in 1836. This text went through multiple editions for the remainder of the nineteenth century. The McGuffey readers carried a clear political message well suited to a society in which wealth was become less equally distributed. The readers instructed children not to envy their social betters, but rather to remind them that “it is God who makes some poor, and others rich.” A rather different vision of education shaped the agenda of the Working Men’s party, which saw education as an invaluable tool in the ongoing political struggle between the people and the aristocratic few. Although they shared Mann’s Whig goal of universal education, they intended education to liberate workers, not make them docile workers. Thus a Philadelphia Working Men’s party committee declared that “despotism” thrived when the “multitude” is consigned to ignorance, and education and knowledge reserved for the “the rich and the rulers.”

Although educational reform attracted a wide range of supporters, including religious leaders, Whigs such as Mann, and the Working Men’s party, opposition to such reforms could be equally ardent. A variety of groups feared that government involvement in education would pose a danger to individual freedom. Democrats in Massachusetts, for example, viewed Mann’s program as a “system of centralization” that would put “power in a few hands” and would undermine the “spirit of our democratic institutions.” Farmers feared that plans for a longer school year would rob them of a valuable source of labor, and feared that increased taxes necessary to fund the new school system would fall heavily on agricultural interests. Finally Catholics feared that

the country’s Protestant majority deliberately designed the new system as a way of imposing its values on non-Protestants. In response to the rise of the Common School movement, Catholics began creating their own alternative system of parochial schools.

While Mann’s utopian vision of education as a cure for society’s ills was not realized, the Common School movement did achieve some notable successes. By the middle of the century, over half of the white children in America between the ages of five and

“I believe in the existence of a great, immortal, immutable principle of natural law . . . which proves the absolute right to an education of every human being that comes into the world.”

HORACE MANN, 1846

nineteen were enrolled in public schools, the highest percentage in the world at that time. Higher education also expanded dramatically. In 1815 there were 33 colleges in America; by 1835 the number had risen to 68 and reached 113 by 1848. The enthusiasm of the Great Awakening inspired much of this growth. Almost half these new colleges were affiliated with denominations that took a prominent role in the Awakening: Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists. Among the colleges and universities founded in this period were Amherst and Wesleyan in New England, Earlham in the Midwest, and Emory and Duke in the South. Although most such schools excluded women, whose educational opportunities lagged behind those for men, progress occurred in this area as well. In 1821 Emma Willard founded the Troy Female Seminary in Troy, New York, and in 1837 Mount Holyoke Female Seminary was established in Massachusetts. Oberlin College, founded in 1833 in Ohio, admitted women from its inception. A hotbed of abolitionist sentiment, Oberlin admitted its first African American students two years after opening its doors to white students in 1835. A number of state universities date from this period of educational reform as well, including

Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, and Wisconsin. Some of the nation's leading Catholic institutions also date from this period, including Fordham, Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Villanova, and Xavier.

Education was not the only area in which reformers worked to transform American society. The new religious emphasis on free will and commitment to moral reform had affected the treatment of criminals. In place of punishment a new reform-based model of incarceration emerged: the "penitentiary," a place where individuals were isolated from one another and given a chance to repent and reform. This method departed radically from earlier approaches to crime, which cast behavior in terms of sinfulness, innate depravity, and punishment.

Two different models for implementing this penitential ideal emerged in prisons. The New York State system employed the first at Ossining, a prison in the Hudson River Valley of New York. Prisoners sent "up the river" from New York City to "Sing Sing" were housed in individual cells at night but were organized in communal work details during the day. Inmates worked ten-hour days in local stone quarries; eventually the prisoners manufactured a variety of goods, including barrels, boots and shoes, hats, brushes, mattresses.

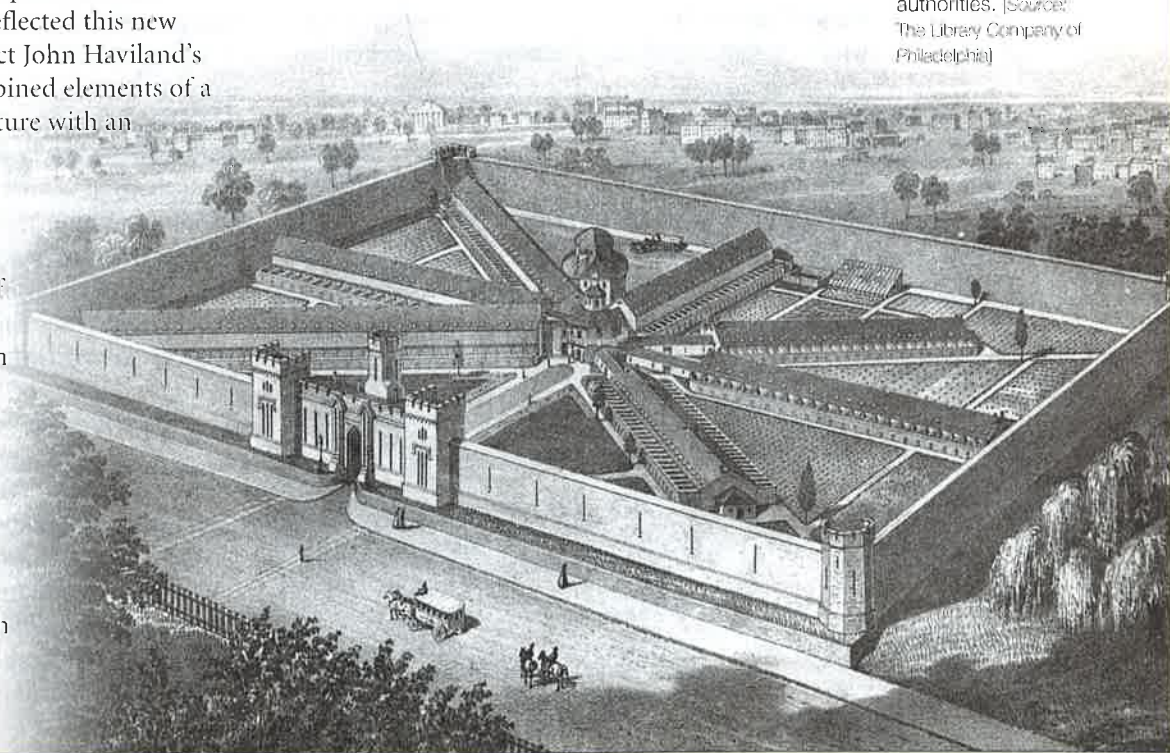
Pennsylvania pioneered a different model, which it implemented in Eastern State Penitentiary. Eastern State employed solitary confinement, a system that isolated prisoners from all contact with other prisoners as a means of forcing prisoners to reflect on their criminality and seek repentance. The architecture of Eastern State reflected this new approach to penology. Architect John Haviland's vision of the ideal prison combined elements of a new interest in gothic architecture with an Enlightenment emphasis on geometrical regularity (10.3). Thus while the outside of the prison looked like a medieval fortress, the inside consisted of a series of radiating spokes emending from a central watch tower. A guard in the central tower could see the prisoners, who themselves were unable to see the guard. Haviland described his radial design as facilitating "watching, convenience, economy and ventilation." This design, which

its inventor, British philosopher Jeremy Bentham, dubbed a panopticon, applied the Enlightenment's ideals of reason to prison reform. Under this system prisoners were potentially under surveillance at all times and could never be sure if the eyes of the state were on them. The goal was to impose discipline on prisoners and have them internalize this discipline as an ideal to be followed. This vision of penal reform fit with the Enlightenment's ideals of reason and control.

Life for the mentally ill was hardly better than that of prisoners. Indeed the two groups were often housed in the same facilities. In 1841 Dorothea Dix, a schoolteacher from Massachusetts, volunteered to provide religious instruction for women in the Massachusetts House of Correction. Shocked by the treatment of the inmates, particularly the mentally ill, who were dressed in rags, confined to one room, and often beaten, Dix embarked on a campaign to change the way mental illness was treated. After visiting a variety of jails and poorhouses where the mentally ill were housed, she compiled a report to the Massachusetts legislature detailing the wretched conditions she discovered in places such as the House of Correction. Dix recommended that criminals be separated from the mentally ill and argued that the latter would benefit from more humane treatment. Other reformers followed Dix's lead, and by 1860, twenty-eight of thirty-three states had public asylums for the mentally ill.

10.3 Philadelphia Penitentiary

Architects designed prisons to accommodate the penitential model. Prisoners could be isolated for reflection while still being monitored by prison authorities. [Source: The Library Company of Philadelphia]



What was a panopticon?

Abolitionism and the Proslavery Response



The simmering debate over slavery heated up as abolitionists' demands for an immediate end to slavery. Like revivalists abolitionists also took advantage of the new tools provided by the market revolution, particularly communications technologies such as improvements in printing, to bombard Southerners with their message. The rise of a more aggressive style of abolitionism produced a fierce reaction from Southerners, who became increasingly militant in their defense of slavery. Rather than concede that slavery was a necessary evil, as Jefferson and others of the Founding generation had, Southerners developed a new proslavery ideology. They now touted slavery as a positive good that served to reform and uplift slaves. The real evils in American society, they argued, were abolitionism and the factory system. By the middle of the century, the slavery debate created huge divisions within American politics and society.

The Rise of Immediatism

Much of the early opposition to slavery was led by the Quakers. The ideals of the American Revolution also contributed to the rise of abolitionist sentiment, which attracted a number of leading politicians, including prominent Federalists, such as Alexander Hamilton and John Jay. For these abolitionists slavery posed a threat to the republican values of liberty and virtue. Racial equality or justice was not a major concern, and they turned to colonization as a solution to the problem of slavery. James Madison, Henry Clay, and John Marshall championed a plan which included gradually liberating the slaves and returning them to Africa. The American Colonization Society, the organization devoted to

implementing this idea, was founded in 1817. The society helped to found the West African colony of Liberia and began transporting free blacks there from the United States. Yet by 1830 only 1,400 blacks had been repatriated to Liberia. Although gradualism and colonization had appealed to many white opponents of slavery, it never attracted much interest among African Americans, who supported a more immediate end to slavery and were committed to remaining in the United States. A convention of free blacks, speaking of the United States, proclaimed these views in forceful terms in 1831, declaring that “this is our home, and this is our country.”

In 1829 David Walker, a free black who had grown up in North Carolina and moved to Boston, published an *Appeal*, which he addressed to the “Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America.” Walker rejected the ideas of colonization and declared that “America is more our country than it is the whites—we have enriched it with our *blood and tears*.” Walker urged slaves to defend themselves, by force if necessary, against their masters. Walker’s call for slave insurrection led Southern states to enact legislation that made it illegal to teach slaves to read. It also marked the end of support among many Southern intellectuals for the ideal of colonization. Walker’s death in 1830 cut short his career as an abolitionist.

Although Walker’s radical, insurrectionary appeal had little impact on mainstream abolitionists, his call for immediate abolition resonated with opponents of slavery. Since the Revolution mainstream abolitionist thought had adopted a gradualist approach,

“I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. ... I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. ... I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—**AND I WILL BE HEARD.**”

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON, *The Liberator*, 1831

preferring to end slavery in a piecemeal fashion. In place of gradual schemes of emancipation, a new doctrine of abolitionism now emerged. Abolitionists rejected gradualism in favor of **immediatism**, a doctrine that advocated an immediate end to slavery. The most forceful spokesman for immediatism was William Lloyd Garrison, who founded the newspaper *The Liberator* in 1831. In the very first issue, Garrison announced that he had recanted the “popular but pernicious doctrine of gradual abolition.”

With the help of other abolitionists, Garrison organized the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1832. A year later Garrison joined with sixty other delegates, including men, women, whites, and free blacks, to create the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS). By the end of the decade, more than 1,350 antislavery societies had sprung up in the North with combined memberships of 250,000. The success of British abolitionists, who in 1833 had persuaded Parliament to emancipate West Indian slaves, inspired American abolitionists.

In 1835 American abolitionists, taking advantage of the new opportunities provided by the market revolution to get their antislavery message across, began a vigorous campaign to inundate Southerners with antislavery literature. Abolitionists also worked diligently in the North to raise awareness of the evils of slavery. In addition to using traditional print forms such as newspapers and pamphlets, they developed almanacs, songbooks, children’s books, and jigsaw puzzles. This children’s puzzle (10.4) includes several scenes typical of abolitionist literature, including images of slaves being whipped and brutalized.

Adept at publicizing their cause, abolitionists seized opportunities provided by dramatic events, such as the escape from bondage of Henry “Box” Brown, who had mailed himself from Richmond, Virginia, to Philadelphia in a wooden box. The trip took twenty-six hours, and Brown arrived in his box in Philadelphia a little shaken but unscathed. Abolitionists distributed images of Brown’s escape, and he became a prominent spokesman touring the



North with a panorama, “The Mirror of Slavery” (10.5). Panoramas were large pictures mounted on rollers that, when unfurled slowly, gave the viewer the feeling that the picture before them was moving. Often a narrator accompanied a panorama on tour. Brown’s narration complemented the panorama’s depiction of the history of slavery in America.

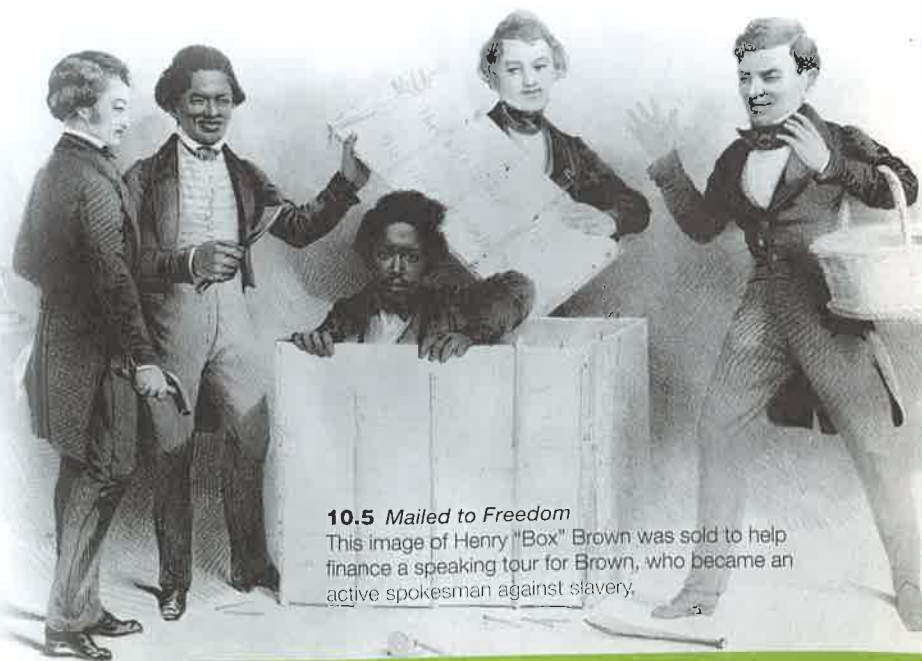
Another event that triggered public interest in slavery was the unveiling of American artist Hiram Powers’s sculpture, *The Greek Slave*. Powers’s popular work depicted a beautiful Greek woman enslaved by the Ottoman Turks, who were

Muslims. The image of a Christian woman degraded and held captive by Muslims captivated American audiences. Displayed in the nude the sculpture also caused something of a sensation in the press. Abolitionists used the attention focused on this sculpture as a means of reminding Americans of the evils of slavery. How they accomplished this—and the opposing views of Southerners—is the subject of *Images as History: The Greek Slave*, page 292.

The antislavery movement attracted a strong following in New England and also drew support among transplanted New Englanders in the

10.4 Abolitionist Puzzle

Abolitionists developed a variety of ways to educate Northern children about the evils of slavery, including jigsaw puzzles. [Source: Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library]



10.5 Mailed to Freedom

This image of Henry “Box” Brown was sold to help finance a speaking tour for Brown, who became an active spokesman against slavery.

Images as History

THE GREEK SLAVE

The Vermont sculptor Hiram Powers's statue, *The Greek Slave* (1844), became one of the most popular sculptures in nineteenth-century America. Powers portrayed the slave stripped naked by her Turkish captors, chained, and placed on the auction block. Religious leaders and even some reviewers had denounced earlier artists who, following European conventions, had portrayed women in the nude, but Powers avoided moral censure by explaining to his audience that by depicting the dignity of the slave in the face of such cruel treatment, he had clothed her in an invisible robe of virtue. How would viewers in different parts of the nation have responded to this work of art? How would abolitionists have interpreted its message? How would defenders of slavery?

Cities across America and small towns in New England and Ohio exhibited *The Greek Slave*. The image here shows a crowded gallery of men, women,

and children viewing the work in New York. Besides prompting widespread commentary in the press, Powers's work inspired several poems. A poet in the *Knickerbocker Magazine* described *The Greek Slave* as "Naked yet clothed with chastity." Public reaction to the sculpture became entwined in the larger debate over slavery. While Southerners praised the work, focusing on the theme of Christian virtue, some Northerners compared the slave's suffering to the plight of America's slaves. One New York correspondent wondered how an audience might be driven to tears at the sight of an "insensate piece of marble" and "yet listens unmoved to the awful story of the American slave!" Apologists for slavery mocked such appeals. Noting that many abolitionists had waxed poetic about *The Greek Slave*, one writer wondered why "we have not heard" of a single effort to free her from her chains.

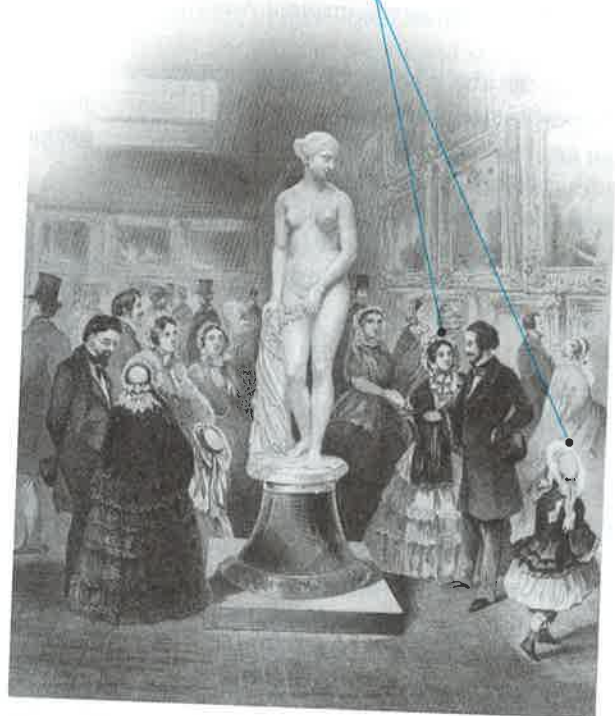
The *Greek Slave* turns away from viewers, a sign of her modesty.

The chains around her wrists signify her status as a slave.

The Greek Slave (Source: Hiram Powers (1805–1873), *The Greek Slave*, 1851, after an original of 1844. Marble, 65 1/4 × 21 × 18 1/4 in. (165.7 × 53.3 × 46.4 cm). Olive Louise Dann Fund. 1962.43. Location: Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A. Photo Credit: Yale University Art Gallery / Art Resource, NY)



Although a nude figure would have normally been shocking, *The Greek Slave* attracted huge crowds, including women and children. Exhibition guides reminded viewers that the slave was clothed in Christian virtue.



Viewing *The Greek Slave*

Why was *The Greek Slave*'s nudity accepted by the public?

Midwest, particularly those with strong evangelical religious beliefs. Quakers in Pennsylvania and other parts of the country were active members of the abolitionist movement, too. A few prominent Southerners also joined the movement, including Angelina and Sarah Grimké, daughters of a wealthy South Carolina planter, whose conversion to Quakerism facilitated their involvement in abolitionism. The two women eventually left the South to pursue the cause of abolitionism. The antislavery movement galvanized large numbers of women, who became the grassroots activists on behalf of abolitionism. By the end of the 1830s, more than two-thirds of the signers of antislavery petitions submitted to Congress were women.

Anti-Abolitionism and the Abolitionist Response

The rhetoric of proslavery thought intensified as Northern opponents of slavery employed increasingly assertive tactics. Southerners held mass rallies to denounce Northern abolitionists. Garrison's *The Liberator* proved to be especially galling. Within a year of its first issue, the Georgia legislature proposed a \$5,000 reward for anyone who would kidnap Garrison and bring him to Georgia for trial. Rewards were posted for bounty hunters to kidnap other prominent abolitionists and bring them to the South for trial. The wealthy New York abolitionist Arthur Tappan had a price of \$50,000 on his head at one point. In July of 1835 a steamship arrived in Charleston harbor carrying thousands of anti-slavery tracts and newspapers addressed to Southerners. A crowd of angry residents grabbed the mailbags containing the Northern abolitionist literature; the next night a crowd of three thousand Charlestonians burned the abolitionist literature in a bonfire. This Northern contemporary political cartoon, which captured the antiabolitionist event, ridiculed Southerners' efforts to prevent the distribution of abolitionist materials (10.6).

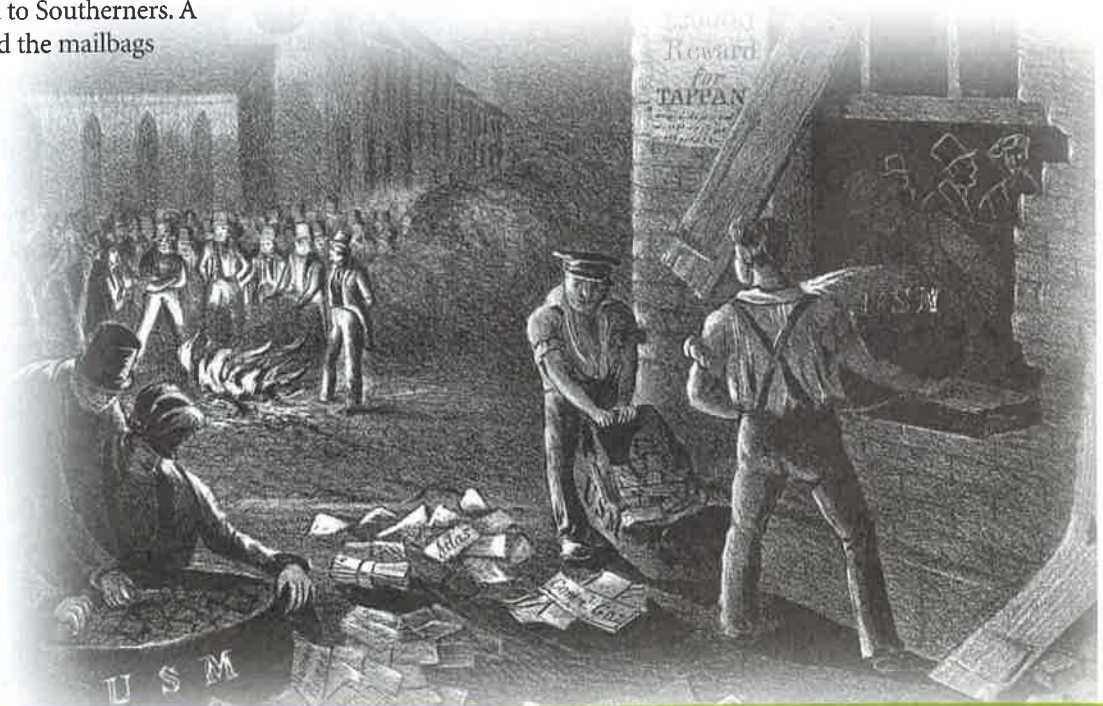
Southern hostility to antislavery publications did not deter abolitionists. They began inundating Congress with petitions calling for an immediate end to slavery.

Southerners reacted by passing the "gag rule," a procedural motion that required that the House of Representatives automatically table antislavery petitions and not consider them. The gag rule passed with the support of Northern and Southern Democrats. The Senate was unable to pass its own gag rule, but it adopted a practice that produced virtually the same effect. Once the Senate had received slavery petitions, a proslavery senator would simply make a motion to table them. Despite the gag rule abolitionist petitions continued to pour into Congress, especially from women's groups. In 1836–1837 an all-female petition from Massachusetts gathered 21,000 signatures, a record number. Southern efforts to stymie free speech and the right to petition Congress only underscored abolitionists' belief that slavery was incompatible with liberty. To leading abolitionists interference with the U.S. mail and congressional refusal to deal with petitions made slavery a national, as opposed to a local, issue.

The Proslavery Argument

Leading Southerners of the revolutionary era had attacked the institution of slavery even as they continued to profit from it. No member of the Founding generation was more conflicted over the issue of slavery than Thomas Jefferson, who wrote to a friend in 1820 declaring that "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." Jefferson hoped that a new generation

10.6 New Method of Sorting the Mail
The abolitionist mail campaign prompted violent protest in the South. In this drawing Southerners assault the Charleston post office and burn abolitionist mail.



What was the "gag rule"?

“The peculiar institution of the South—that, on the maintenance of which the very existence of the slaveholding States depends, is pronounced to be sinful and odious, in the sight of God and man; and this with a systematic design of rendering us hateful in the eyes of the world—with a view to a general crusade against us and our institutions.”

JOHN C. CALHOUN, speech on abolitionist petitions, 1837



10.7 Slavery As It Is
This proslavery cartoon portrays slaves as happy and well cared for by masters who are cast as benign patriarchs.

of statesmen would find a way to eliminate slavery. Such hopes diminished, however, as “Alabama fever” swept across much of the South and cotton agriculture transformed the American economy. Complicate matters further the Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner’s insurrection (see Chapter 9) frightened many Southerners, who became convinced that Northern abolitionists were stirring slave insurrections in the South.

In 1832 Thomas R. Dew, a young professor at the College of William and Mary, published his *Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832*. Sitting in the aftermath of Nat Turner’s Rebellion, the legislature had seriously debated ending slavery, but a narrow majority rejected the idea. Dew repudiated the ideas of Jefferson and others who, agonizing over slavery, considered it unjust and recommended its elimination. Dew defended the property rights of slaveholders and dismissed the impracticality of relocating emancipated slaves outside of Virginia. Dew even went so far as to claim that slavery was a positive good, sanctioned by ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and justified by the text of the Bible.

Proslavery spokesmen championed the religious, philosophical, and economic benefits of slavery in Southern colleges and wrote in the South’s leading magazines defending their new proslavery ideology. Southerners took the defense of slavery to new extremes when they argued that slavery was not only good for masters, but also good for slaves. Rather than exploiters of slaves, Southern defenders of slavery cast themselves as benevolent patriarchs; slaves, these defenders argued, were the lucky beneficiaries of this system. This self-serving vision of slavery is reflected in this political cartoon appropriately entitled *Slavery As It Is* (10.7). In the cartoon two shocked Northerners express their astonishment that slaves were so well treated and happy. In this particular image the artist singles out the evils of British factory life for condemnation. Southerners often made similar points about Northern industry, which they argued treated its workers more brutally than Southern plantation owners treated slaves.

One of the most influential apologists for Southern slavery was John C. Calhoun, an eminent South Carolina politician. Calhoun argued exuberantly that the South’s “peculiar institution,” which was the term he coined to describe Southern slavery, was not “an evil,” a cause of shame, but rather “a good—a positive good,” to be championed.

What was the proslavery argument?

The Cult of True Womanhood, Reform, and Women's Rights



Women took a leading role in reform movements. The most active reformers were members of a growing middle class. Female reformers targeted activities that threatened the family and that demeaned women's role in the family. Prostitution was one prominent target of reformers, but hardly the only social problem that attracted notice from female reformers. A variety of other concerns drew their notice: alcoholism, crime, illiteracy, and even slavery. The social changes brought about by the market revolution, including the rise of the factory system (see Chapter 9), contributed to new ideas about the family and gender roles. The development of a new concept of domesticity and the related notion that men's and women's proper roles lay in separate spheres of activity became the cornerstone of a new middle-class ideal. Society defined the public world of work and politics as male, while the private world of home and family became women's domain. Female reformers defended the new ideal and attacked the social evils that threatened it.

The New Domestic Ideal

Horace Bushnell, an influential New England minister, captured the profound change that transformed American economic and social life when he remarked that the "transition from mother-and-daughter power, to water and steam power, is a great one" and had produced a "complete revolution in domestic life." One consequence of the rise of industry was a growing separation between home and workplace. This change facilitated the rise of a new middle-class ideology that defined women's role as a separate sphere of domesticity. A "cult of true womanhood" emerged in which female values were defined in opposition to the aggressive and competitive values of the marketplace. Women were identified with piety, motherhood, and sexual passivity. Although this ideal was largely unattainable for many rural farm women, urban working-class women, and free black women—all of whom had to work to maintain even the most minimal economic subsistence—the rise of this middle-class ideal suffused American culture.

Magazines such as *Godey's Ladies Book*, the growing body of middle-class

advice literature such as Catherine Beecher's *Treatise on Domestic Economy*, and the ubiquitous prints produced by Currier and Ives all celebrated the new domestic ideal. Lilly Spenser Martin, the most renowned female artist of her day, made the new domestic ideal a central theme in her paintings. Rather than depict her subjects in the formal settings, garbed in rich velvet clothing and seated in poses borrowed from paintings of royalty and aristocracy, characteristic of the traditional family portraits favored by an earlier generation of artists,

Martin often chose intimate scenes of domestic life as her settings. In *Domestic Happiness* she depicts a husband and wife standing before their two sleeping children. The mother's hand gently touches her husband, a gesture symbolizing the new domestic ideal's emphasis on emotional intimacy between husband and wife (10.8). At the same time the mother's hand gesture conveys another message. The mother appears to be gently restraining her husband from waking the slumbering children, a subtle reminder that in the domestic sphere, women, not men, were in charge.

10.8 Domestic Happiness

Lilly Spenser Martin's painting captures the new ideal of domesticity in which women were assigned the role of instilling the values of piety, family, and sexual passivity. [Source: Lilly Martin Spencer, "Domestic Happiness". 1849. Oil on canvas, Spencer, Lilly Martin (1827–1902) / The Detroit Institute of Arts, USA / Gift of Dr and Mrs James Cleland Jr. / The Bridgeman Art Library]



How does *Domestic Happiness* represent the ideal of the family?



LECTURES TO LADIES
OR
ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY;

BY
MRS. MARY S. GOVE.

“God is paid when man resists;
“T’ enjoy is to obey.”

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY SAXTON & FERRE,
No. 129, Washington Street,
1842.

10.9 Lectures to Ladies on Anatomy and Physiology

The image preceding the text of Gove Nichols’s book sought to make the idea of a book on female anatomy more acceptable by presenting a skeleton kneeling in prayer. The religious pose and the absence of flesh were calculated to make the book more acceptable to nineteenth-century notions of propriety.

Controlling Sexuality

A key aspect of the new ideal of domesticity was its emphasis on emotional control, including control of sexuality. In 1834 Lydia Finney, the wife of Charles Finney, established the New York Female Moral Reform Society, which sought to champion moral purity. By 1837 the Female Moral Reform Society had fifteen thousand members and branches across New England and New York state. The society focused on the problem of urban prostitution. Estimates vary but in some urban areas such as New York somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of the female population may have been involved in prostitution. The members of the society even visited brothels to try to convert the “fallen women” and urge them to abandon their involvement in commercial sex. Sometimes the reformer tried to shame the male clients of the prostitutes by publishing their names in the press. The society also worked to change laws, lobbying for the criminalization of prostitution.

The reformer Sylvester Graham formulated a far-reaching critique of sexuality. In his widely reprinted lectures on *Chastity* (1834) Graham advised his readers to avoid the dangers of sexual overstimulation, recommending instead that they “Take more exercise in the open air, and use the cold bath under proper circumstances.” Graham also believed that diet contributed to overstimulation, producing a variety of physical and psychological ailments. Graham’s followers abandoned stimulants such as tea, coffee, and alcohol, replacing them with a bland

diet built around whole grain breads and crackers made from whole grains (the forerunner of Graham crackers). Followers of Graham could obtain information about bland diets from the *Graham Journal of Health and Longevity*, or they could attend Graham clubs at college or choose to live in boarding houses committed to Graham’s rules.

A follower of Graham’s who set off on a different path, Mary Gove Nichols, became interested in the issue of women’s reproductive rights and health. She traveled across America lecturing to women about their bodies. Her influential work *Lectures to Ladies on Anatomy and Physiology* (1842) included an image of a female skeleton, kneeling in prayer, on its frontispiece (10.9). Nichols argued that the idea of women as passionless was a direct result of her “enslaved and unhealthy conditions.” Paulina Wright, another lecturer on women’s health issues, actually carried around an anatomically correct female mannequin to help demonstrate issues relevant to sexual and reproductive health. Wright’s lectures sometimes proved shocking, causing some in attendance to faint or even “run from the room.” The various strains of antebellum reform had forced women to examine the values, institutions, and political forces that justified the oppression and exploitation of women.

The Path toward Seneca Falls

Women had taken an active role in a variety of political and moral reform movements, including opposition to President Jackson’s policy of Indian removal (see Chapter 8), temperance, and the crusade against prostitution. Participation in these various reform movements had led women to organize themselves, speak out in public, and begin to question the underlying political, legal, and social values that contributed to the oppression of women. Having taken these steps toward raising their political consciousness, women next turned their attention to the most brutal type of oppression in America—slavery.

Women were drawn to the antislavery movement in large numbers. Of the almost seventy thousand signatures on antislavery petitions submitted to Congress in 1837–1838 more than two-thirds were women’s. Organizations such as the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society (1833) provided women with unprecedented opportunities to become political actors in one of the most important political dramas of the day. Involvement in the antislavery cause could be a harrowing experience. The virulent hatred abolitionists faced, even in the North, did not

What were Sylvester Graham’s main beliefs?

make any exemption for gender. In 1838 the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women refused to comply with a demand that black women be excluded from its meetings. An angry antiabolitionist crowd then stormed the building and later torched it.

Support for abolitionism not only provided many women with practical experience in politics but also led many to question their legal status as women. A major turning point in the relationship between antislavery and women's rights occurred in 1840 when American reformers Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott attended an international antislavery conference in London. The female delegates were not allowed to speak at the event and were forced to sit behind an opaque screen out of view of the other delegates. Incensed by their treatment in London, Stanton and Mott saw the oppression of women as an evil requiring the same sort of attention as the oppression of slavery.

Stanton was born into a prosperous family, and her father was a prominent lawyer who became a state Supreme Court judge. She spent many hours reading law books in her father's office. The issue that most galled Stanton was the English common law doctrine of coverture, which treated a woman as legally dead once she married. American law had inherited this concept, which meant that a husband would control any property a woman might have owned before her marriage.

In 1837 Thomas Herttell introduced a bill into the New York legislature to give married women more control over their property. Eleven years later the New York legislature passed a landmark married women's property act, which allowed women to retain control of their inherited property. Stanton was among those who helped win approval for this law. The law stopped short of giving married women full control of any wealth or property they gathered during marriage, but it was an important step forward.

The year 1848 proved to be a momentous one in the history of women's rights. In the same year that New York adopted the married women's property act, supporters of women's rights gathered in Seneca Falls, a manufacturing town in New York not far from Rochester, for a historic meeting. The organizers of the convention were Stanton and Mott, two veterans of moral reform and abolitionism. About three hundred men and women, including noted African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass, assembled in a church for the Seneca Falls Convention, during which a women's rights manifesto closely modeled on the Declaration of Independence was drafted.

The Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions emphatically declared that "all men and women are created equal." The Declaration of Sentiments noted that women were denied economic opportunities, legal rights, and access to education. The document also asserted that "it is the duty of women of this country to secure themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise." The example of Seneca Falls prompted more than two dozen other such meetings in the next twelve years.

The ardent abolitionist newspaper founded by Frederick Douglass not only applauded the actions of the convention but also exhorted abolitionists to em-

"The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman. ..."

"Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" of the Seneca Falls, New York, Women's Rights Convention (1848)

brace the cause of women's rights alongside their opposition to slavery. The mainstream press, however, was less sympathetic to the cause of women's rights. One newspaper mistakenly concluded that the Declaration of Sentiments was a parody of the Declaration of Independence, not an attempt to appropriate its language on behalf of women. Although 40 percent of American newspapers printed negative accounts of Seneca Falls, 29 percent of American newspapers were favorable. Although still supported by a minority of Americans, the cause of women's rights had become a topic of national conversation for the first time. The Declaration of Sentiments would become a foundational text for all subsequent efforts to promote the cause of equal rights for American women. In Stanton's view the women who gathered in upstate New York in a modest church had instigated "a rebellion such as the world had never seen before."

The women's rights question caused a major schism in the abolitionist movement. In 1840 delegates to the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) debated the issue of women holding office in the organization. William Lloyd Garrison, a supporter of women's rights, outmaneuvered his opponents and emerged victorious on this question. However a number of abolitionists opposed to linking the cause with the women's rights question responded by resigning from the AASS.

Religious and Secular Utopianism



As many mainstream religious groups preached the necessity of reform and worked hard to change American society, certain sectarian groups sought a radical transformation of American society. In some cases these groups were attempting to create a heaven on earth, literally preparing the way for Christ's return. A variety of different secular utopian movements also flourished in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Many groups abolished private property entirely and embraced some form of socialist or communist ideal, in which all goods were collectively owned.

10.10 Millerite
William Miller's prediction that the millennium would arrive in March of 1843 prompted this satirical image of one of his followers preparing for apocalypse by stocking up on cheese and crackers.

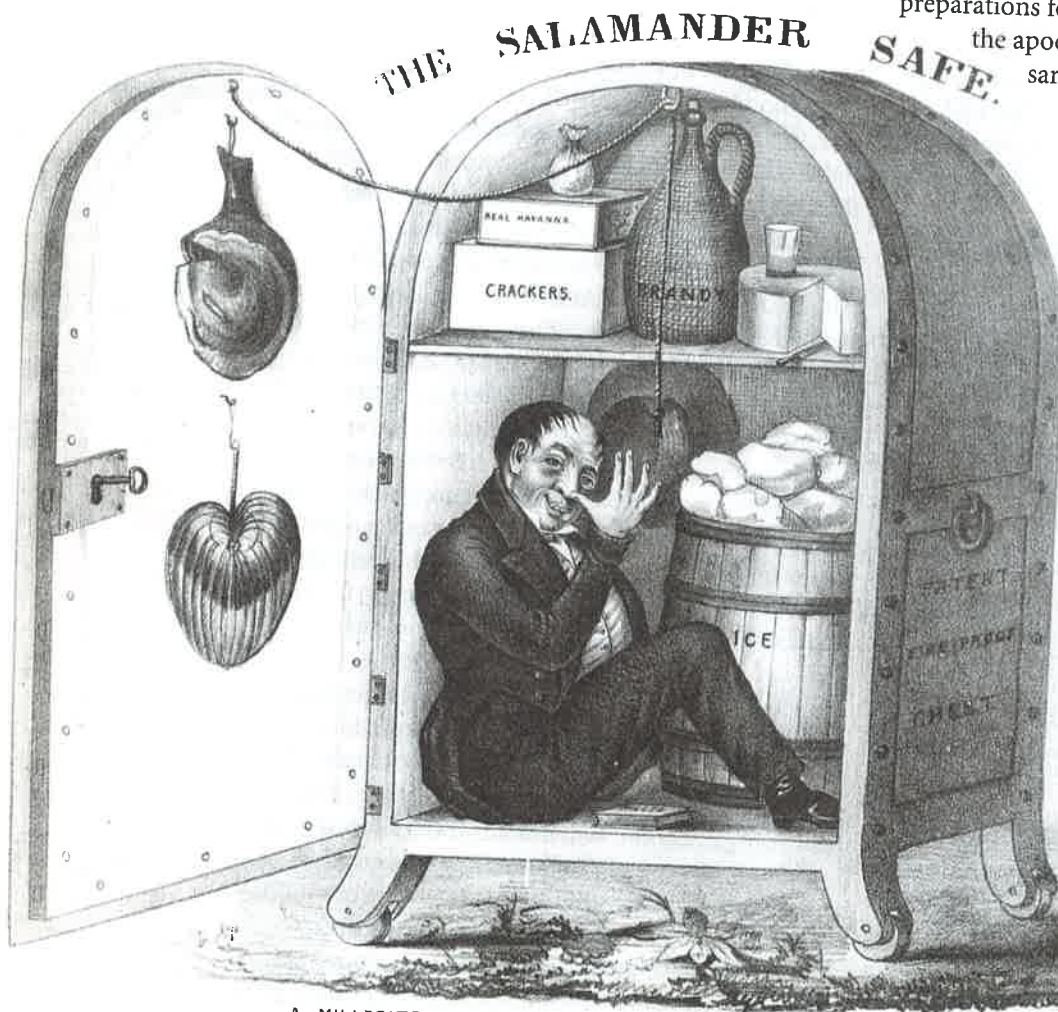
Millennialism, Perfectionism, and Religious Utopianism

Millennialism, the belief that the millennium was imminent and that judgment day would soon follow, attracted many followers in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Some believers went so far as to name the date of Christ's return to establish the millennium. The followers of William Miller, called

Millerites, predicted that Christ would return in March of 1843. When that prediction failed to come true, Miller prophesied a new date, October 22, 1844. The movement collapsed soon after the revised prediction also proved false. Indeed the failure of the Millerites to successfully predict the true date for the millennium inspired a fair amount of humor. This satirical picture of a Millerite depicts a man prepared to lock himself in a trunk together with crackers, cheese, and plenty to drink, which were necessary preparations for the chaos that would precede the apocalypse before Judgment Day. The

sardonic image captures some sense of the popular reaction to Miller's failed predictions (10.10). Aspects of Miller's teachings survived and were later incorporated into the teachings of the Seventh Day Adventists, another nineteenth-century religious sect, one that celebrated Saturday, not Sunday, as their day of worship.

The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, or Shakers, created a successful religious utopia, establishing settlements across the nation and attracting thousands of followers. Shaker communities practiced a form of Christian communism. The Shaker faith was shaped by the teachings of Mother Ann Lee, an eighteenth-century religious figure who drew on Quaker teachings and adapted them in light of her personal experience and own revelations. The wife of an abusive husband whose four children died



A MILLERITE PREPARING FOR THE 23RD OF APRIL.

How did the Shakers recast the idea of the family?

during infancy, she experienced a revelation that sex itself was the root of human evil. Her followers became known as Shaking Quakers or Shakers because their religious worship involved an ecstatic form of dance that one contemporary described as involving “extravagant postures” and “fantastic contortions.” The sect also adopted a strict rule of celibacy. Mother Ann’s vision of Christianity not only transformed ideas about sexuality but also radically recast gender roles. She preached that God was a combination of the masculine and feminine, a radical teaching given the strongly patriarchal character of most Protestant theology in the nineteenth century. Judged by the standards of the day, the Shakers came closer to the idea of equality of the sexes than almost any other group in America. Within the confines of the Shaker community there were only brothers and sisters—neither husbands and wives nor mothers and fathers. Abandoning the idea of procreation, the Shakers grew in numbers by taking in orphans and converting new members. The Shakers radically reconfigured the meaning of the family unit, rejecting the ideal of domesticity and marriage itself.

Shakers not only rejected the values of the domesticity and mainstream attitudes toward family life but they also developed a complex relationship with the growing market economy around them. Thus while Shakers participated in the expanding market economy, they did not internalize its competitive values. Within the confines of the Shaker community, there was no private property. The Shaker collective, however, did not cut itself off from the wider world of the market. Shaker craftsmen developed a reputation for being skilled furniture makers, and Shakers sold a variety of agricultural products to their surrounding communities to help pay the expenses of the community.

The Shakers were hardly the only radical religious experiment that rejected the values of the marketplace and the traditional ideal of the family. One of the most radical utopian leaders was John Humphrey Noyes. A Yale-educated Congregationalist minister, Noyes took the idea of perfectionism, a doctrine that had evolved from Methodism, in a novel direction. Earlier perfectionists had argued that it was possible to attain a perfect state of holiness in one’s life. Such a state did not mean that a person was completely free from sin, but rather that one had attained the highest level of spiritual perfection consistent with human nature. In 1840 Noyes created the Putney Association and by 1844 the small group was practicing a form of Christian

communism in which all property was commonly owned. The association included thirty-seven who worshiped together in a small chapel, lived in three houses, farmed, and maintained a store. In 1846 Noyes took his theory of perfectionism in a new direction. If one attained a state of religious perfection and could not sin, then he argued one could be free of many government laws enacted to deal with humans’ fallen, sinful state. Marriage and monogamy were two such ideals.

Noyes’s restructuring of the family and new ideas about sexuality ran afoul of the dominant views of marriage; he was indicted for adultery in Vermont, but fled to upstate New York, to Oneida. At Oneida Noyes instituted the practice of “**complex marriage**,” a system where any man or women who had experienced saving grace was free to engage in sexual relations with any other person. Like the Shakers members of the Oneida community also owned all material property in common. Given their commitment to free love, birth control became an important concern of the community. Noyes began to preach the necessity of something he called male continence, a primitive form of natural birth control that required that men engage in sex acts without consummating them. Noyes’s views mirrored the views of other nineteenth-century medical reformers such as Sylvester Graham, who believed that it was important for men to conserve their bodily fluids. Eventually the Oneida community embraced a form of eugenics, ways of improving humanity by genetic means in which only the most spiritually perfect were allowed to consummate their sexual unions and produce children. The interior of the Oneida mansion house was organized to facilitate the idea of complex marriage by weakening notions of privacy. The “tent room” on the third floor of the Oneida mansion dispensed with private rooms entirely, replacing them with a series of semiprivate enclosures blocked off by cotton cloth. The “tent room” increased the “sociality” of members and reduced the “cold isolation” of traditional apartments.

Although the practice of complex marriage was radically different from the celibacy practiced by the Shakers, both groups sought to reconfigure the family, sexuality, and their relationship to the market economy. Although each group approached the family and sex from radically different perspectives, the groups shared with one another the practice of communal ownership of property and, although differing in means, they both also attempted to free women from traditional gender

Choices and Consequences

MARY CRAGIN'S EXPERIMENT IN FREE LOVE AT ONEIDA

Mary Cragin and her husband George were among the many Americans deeply influenced by Charles Grandison Finney's religious leadership in the Second Great Awakening. George found a job in New York working for a reform paper, the *Advocate of Moral Reform*, as an office manager and accountant. George showed his wife a copy of a letter written by Noyes, which introduced Mary to Noyes's ideas of perfectionism. Mary and her husband were both taken with this doctrine and moved to Vermont. Noyes began his experiment in "communism in love" at Putney. As a member of his first perfectionist community at the Putney Vermont community, Mary Cragin faced a choice: either leave the community or participate in its bold new experiment in free love.

Choices

1 Persuade her husband to leave the community with her.

2 Leave regardless of her husband's decision.

3 Stay with her husband and participate in Noyes's system of complex marriage.

Decision

Mary chose option number 3, to stay at Putney with her husband and participate in a complex marriage with Noyes and others.

Consequences

Mary eagerly embraced Noyes's theory and eventually traveled with her husband and others to Oneida, becoming founding members of that community. In the published comments in the "First Annual Report of Oneida Community Association" (1849), she declared that her life at Oneida brought her closer to God than anything else she had ever done. She died a year later when the boat she was traveling on capsized.

Continuing Controversies

Why would a nineteenth-century woman be attracted to utopian movements that rejected mainstream views of the family and marriage?

Modern scholars are divided over the impact of "Bible Communism" and "complex marriage" on women's lives. Some scholars argue that compared to the restrictive and oppressive environment most women faced in American society, Oneida provided women with more power, greater control over their sexual lives, and more equality. Although not a feminist utopia, Oneida's system of complex marriage was liberating in many ways for women.

Other scholars view Oneida as just another form of female oppression. According to this view the limited choices granted to women did not end male power and authority. At Oneida men continued to dominate women's lives, controlling their sexual and reproductive choices.



Why might a woman like Mary Cragin have been drawn to the Oneida Community?

roles. See *Choices and Consequences: Mary Cragin's Experiment in Free Love at Oneida* for further discussion of a bold new experiment in women's roles.

Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, or Mormonism, created another model of a religious utopia. Joseph Smith grew up in western New York, an area in which the fires of the Great Awakening burned hot. In this evangelical milieu Smith had a revelation on which Mormonism was based. According to the Book of Mormon, Smith had a revelation in 1823 prompted by an angel who steered Smith to a set of golden tablets written in an ancient language. With divine help Smith deciphered the tablets, which told of the travails of a lost tribe of Israelites who had settled in America and whom Mormons identified as Native Americans. The book of Mormon was published in Palmyra, New York, in 1830, and this town became the site of one of the earliest Mormon communities. The belief that the Indians were actually descendants of a lost tribe of Hebrews was not a view uniquely held by the Mormons, but this theory attracted considerable attention from a number of prominent religious authors of the time. Smith's treasure hunting was also not that unusual, spurred on by popular stories about buried treasures gathered by ancient Indian civilizations.

An important idea influencing Smith was the widespread belief that the millennium was at hand, bringing with it an end to debt and the return of Christ and a new era of peace, happiness, and prosperity. The revelations detailed by Smith struck a resonant chord with small farmers, tradesmen, and mechanics whose experience with the expanding market economy had been largely negative. Smith's new revelation attracted several thousand followers. Mormons eventually set up their own community in Kirtland, Ohio, and eventually a larger community at Nauvoo, in Illinois. The Mormons did not go as far as the Shakers or Oneidians in embracing communism, but they had a strong communal economic ethic. Smith's 1831 law of consecration urged Mormon's to deed their land to the church, which would distribute it among the faithful, with any surplus being retained by the church.

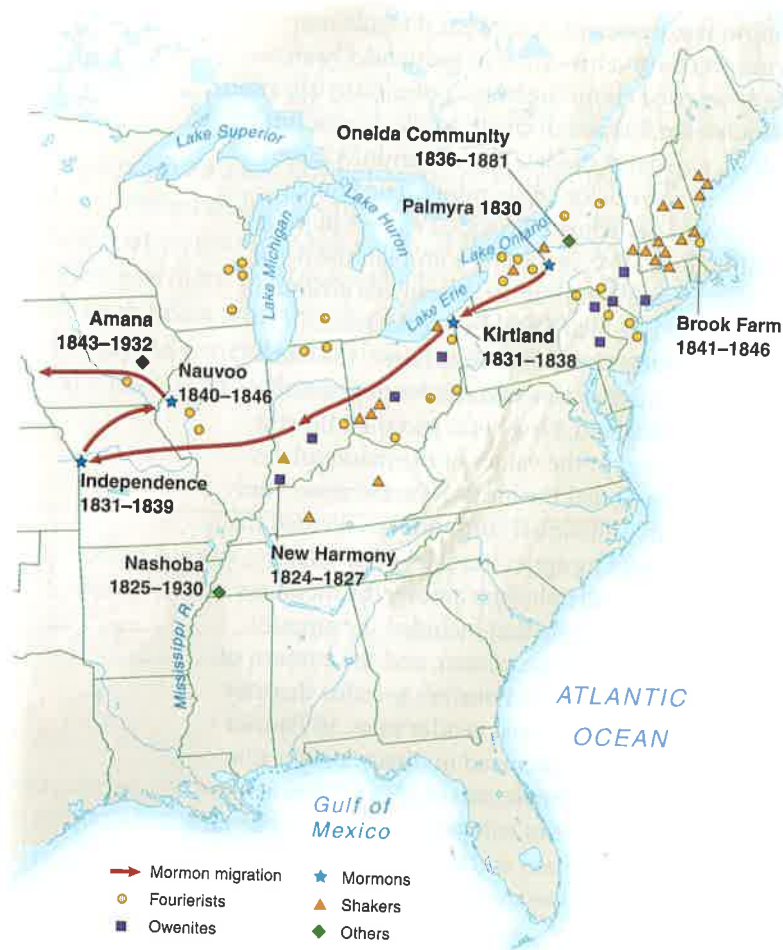
Secular Utopias

In addition to religious utopian experiments such as the various Shaker communities, Oneida, and the Mormons, a number of socialist utopian communities appeared. Robert Owen's New Harmony,

a utopian community in Indiana, was one such ambitious experiment. A successful textile mill owner who began his career in Scotland, Owen was deeply worried about the impact of industrialization on society and hoped to create an ideal community built on a socialist model. The community lasted only three years before disbanding. The French theorist Charles Fourier provided a more popular socialist alternative, including a utopian theory of phalanxes, ideal communities organized around socialist ideals, which gained a considerable following in the 1840s. Indeed between 1841 and 1846, twenty-five of these phalanxes popped up across New England, New York, and the Midwest. Rather than accept the values of the marketplace, Fourier championed the ideas of "association" and "cooperation." Individual communities divided the profits produced by agricultural labor or goods manufactured at the phalanx among the members according to a formula that included the amount invested, the skills of the person, and the amount of his or her physical labor. Fourier's socialist theories also questioned traditional gender roles. In Fourier's view social progress occurred in direct "proportion to the advance of women toward liberty." Women in Fourierist communities enjoyed equal pay and equal opportunities with men and benefited from an egalitarian attitude toward sex that was unusual for its time.

“Under our system of isolated and separate households, with separate interests and separate pursuits, instead of association and combination among families, there is the most deplorable waste, which is one of the primary sources of the general poverty that exists; and discord, antagonism, selfishness, and an anti-social spirit are engendered.”

ALBERT BRISBANE (American Fourierist),
Concise Exposition of the Doctrine of Association, 1843



10.11 Locations of Utopian Communities

The heaviest concentration of these religious and social experiments was in New England, western New York, and the Midwest.

As the map (10.11) shows, utopian experiments, both secular and religious, were scattered across the United States. A host of other smaller utopian experiments were attempted during this period as well. At Brook Farm, a community in Massachusetts near Boston, manual labor was supplemented by activities designed to encourage “intellectual improvement” and “social intercourse, calculated to refine and expand” the mind and soul. When novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne visited Brook Farm, he used his brief residence in the community as the basis for his novel *The Blithedale Romance*. Bronson Alcott’s utopian community Fruitlands shared several characteristics with Brook Farm, particularly the emphasis on balancing manual and intellectual labor and its views of communal ownership. In contrast to Brook Farm, dietary restrictions were an

“Although the desire of acquiring the good things of this world is the prevailing passion of the American people ... here and there in the midst of American society ... sects arise which endeavor to strike out extraordinary paths to eternal happiness.”

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE
Democracy in America, (1835)

important part of this utopia. The members of the community were not only vegetarian but also ate only “aspiring” vegetables—those that grew upward (or reaching up for the supreme truths). Potatoes, beets, and carrots, which grew downward, were forbidden.

A few utopian communities tried to tackle the problem of race in American life. Francis Wright, a Scottish abolitionist, founded Nashoba, an interracial cooperative near Memphis, Tennessee, to demonstrate the potential for blacks and whites to live together as equals. At Nashoba slaves were to be given a formal education and allowed to earn enough to purchase their freedom. However Wright’s more radical ideas included the abolition of the nuclear family, religion, and private property. The community lasted only four years before disbanding.

What patterns are evident from this map of utopian communities?

Literature and Popular Culture



The danger posed by the “tyranny of the majority,” a subject explored in some detail by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, attracted the attention of intellectuals and writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, a Harvard-trained minister who rejected orthodox religion in favor of philosophical exploration. Emerson’s essays, beginning with his manifesto, “The American Scholar,” enjoined Americans to wake from their slumbers, reject the latest fashions of the marketplace and instead discover the deeper philosophical truths to be found in nature and self-reflection. Within two decades of Emerson’s address, Nathaniel Hawthorne published the *Scarlet Letter* (1850); Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (1851); Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854); and Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1855). The vigorous intellectual and poetic activity of these writers and thinkers constituted a veritable American Renaissance. Some of the best-known works of these literary giants explored the problems of American society in a fictional setting.

While a few literary figures crafted rich and sophisticated works of fiction and poetry, a host of now forgotten writers marketed their books to the growing mass audience of readers. Many popular works depicted lurid tales of city life, including murder and prostitution. The marketplace also adapted to the intellectual ferment of the era by creating new institutions devoted to presenting lectures by leading intellectuals, including Emerson, to the people. In addition to hearing literary figures such as Emerson, one might also learn about the latest intellectual fads, including phrenology, a pseudo-science that focused on the shape of an individual’s skull as a means of discerning his or her character and intellect.

Literature and Social Criticism

Emerson’s “American Scholar” address marked the beginning of one of the greatest periods of American literary achievement. Emerson became the leading exponent of the philosophy of Transcendentalism, a loose set of philosophical and literary ideas that looked to nature for inspiration and philosophical insights. The other leading literary figure associated with this movement was Henry David Thoreau. In his masterpiece *Walden* Thoreau framed his critique of the impact of the market on American society. Ostensibly a tale of Thoreau’s effort to get back to nature, *Walden* asserted that “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” Thoreau further declared, “The greater part of what my neighbors call good I believe in my soul to be bad.” Only by rejecting the numbing conformity of American society, the tyranny of the majority, and the worldly values of the marketplace could Americans rekindle the divine spark in each person.

Other American literary figures turned a critical eye to American history and society, focusing on different aspects of the age. Nathaniel Hawthorne parodied the excesses of utopian movements in *The*

Blithedale Romance. In his 1843 tale “The Celestial Railroad,” he took aim at the connections between revivalism and the market revolution. In this tale, an updating of the Christian tale of the religious pilgrim’s search for salvation, Hawthorne provided his spiritual seeker with a comfortable seat on a railroad coach. Rather than patiently wait until arriving at the heavenly city, the final stop of the train, most of the travelers in the story prefer to exit at “Vanity Fair,” a glittering city that was “an epitome of whatever is brilliant, gay, and fascinating.” Although they failed to achieve salvation, the residents of Vanity Fair were well supplied with clergy, churches, and lecturers on the latest topics of discussion, and the stores were stocked with the most fashionable goods.

Novelist Herman Melville’s epic novel *Moby Dick* told the story of Captain Ahab’s pursuit of the great white whale. A rich and complex novel, Ahab’s quest provided another metaphor for the search for meaning, spiritual fulfillment, and truth by those working within an economic system that increasingly treated people as commodities. As was true for Hawthorne, Melville’s writing grappled with the alienation of Americans resulting from the economic changes wrought by the market revolution. One

group Melville discussed was the new expanding middle class of clerks for whom “Ocean reveries” provided an escape from their dreary lives. Melville wrote of these cogs in the great machine of industry, “tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks.” In many ways Melville’s own experiences at sea not only provided him with details for his tale of the “Great White Whale” but also allowed him to escape the very fate of those clerks trapped at their desks that he chronicled in much of his writing. Indeed one of Melville’s most famous literary creations was lowly and alienated clerk “Bartleby the Scrivener,” a man drained of all creativity and energy who symbolized the way in which commerce could turn individuals into utterly passive victims of larger social and economic forces. The clerk Bartleby responds to every request from his employer with the same bored refrain, “I would prefer not to.”

10.12 The Mansion of Happiness

This popular board game embodied many of the ideals of domestic fiction and prints. Like the current game “Life,” the game follows the players’ journey along a path between piety and sin.

Domestic Fiction, Board Games, and Crime Stories

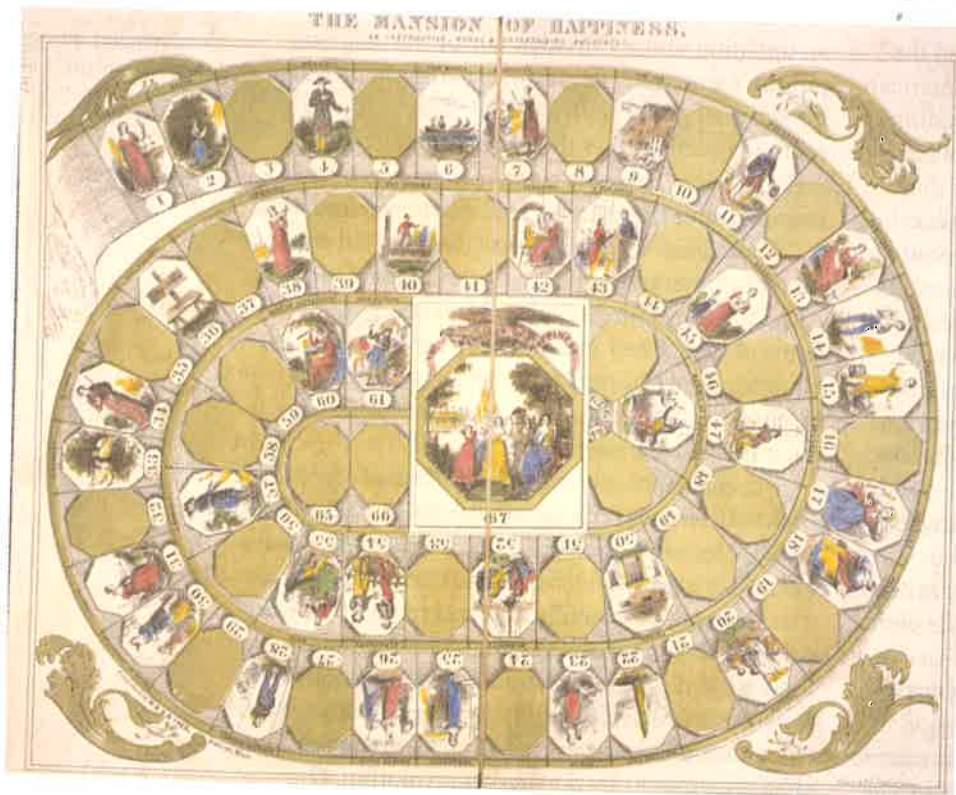
Many popular writers of Hawthorne and Melville’s day were women, a fact that prompted Hawthorne to lash out angrily at the “damned mob of scribbling women” whose books often sold in the hundreds of thousands. Indeed women had written the top-five bestsellers by the middle of the century. Women

avored “sentimental writing” and “domestic fiction,” which were immensely popular in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Susana Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850) sold more than forty thousand copies in its first year and was reprinted sixty-seven times. This tale of an orphaned but resourceful child who must find her way in the wider world recast the traditional tale of the Christian pilgrim on the road to salvation in terms of the ideals of middle-class domesticity. By discovering her inner strength, the heroine is able to demonstrate her talents and virtues. After proving her determination and character, she finds a virtuous man whom she weds, thus fulfilling the ideal of domesticity. This general plotline carries through most of the works of sentimental writing and domestic fiction of the time.

Domestic fiction mirrored the same cultural values that led to the creation of the first popular board game in American history, “The Mansion of Happiness.” Ann Abbott, the daughter of a Massachusetts minister, invented the game in 1843. Players in this game traveled along a spiral board that led to the “mansion of happiness” at the center. If they landed on such desirable spaces as “temperance,” “piety,” and “chastity,” they could move forward. Landing on a space such as “idleness” would result in a penalty that sent the player backward. Rather than use dice, which were asso-

ciated with the evil of gambling, players used a numbered top to determine how many spaces to move on a turn (10.12.) The game shared the ideals of popular prints such as *The Way of Good and Evil*, which also imagined life as a journey along a path between piety and sin (see page 283).

While domestic fiction and games such as “The Mansion of Happiness” popularized the domestic values esteemed by reformers, there was also a market for stories about the very evils these works advised Americans to avoid lest they wind up in prison or the asylum. The new penny press included a host of papers such as the *National Police Gazette* and the *New York Sun*, whose pages were filled with tales of crime and moral depravity. Literature embraced the sordid as much as the sacred, and an especially popular genre was crime fiction. George Lippard’s *The Quaker City, Or, The Monks of Monk*



What ideas about the family and religion are reflected in “The Mansion of Happiness”?

Hall: A Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery and Crime (1845) spun a lurid tale that explored the evils of urban life. In contrast to Susana Warner, Lippard imbued his tale of seduction, murder, and intrigue with a subtle class-conscious critique of the debauched elites who gathered in a dilapidated old mansion, Monk's Hall, filled with secret passages and murder victims. The one writer who managed to transform such gothic tales of crime and horror into high art was Edgar Allan Poe. In stories such as the "Tell Tale Heart" and the "Black Cat," Poe explored the psychological dimensions of crime. His taut, gripping stories were models of literary craftsmanship. Poe brought the techniques of high literature to bear on topics that were usually the province of popular writers.

Slaves Tell Their Story: Slavery in American Literature

At the same time that the writers of the American Renaissance were formulating their critique of American society, a variety of other voices were also entering the expanding literary marketplace. Accounts published by runaway slaves provided a graphic description of the brutality of slavery.

The most famous and influential slave autobiography was Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* published in 1845. The work was a publishing success: More than thirty thousand copies sold within a decade of its initial publication. Douglass awakened Americans to the injustice of slavery by exposing "the cruelties of it as I had myself felt them." The accuracy of his account was a key element of the book's appeal, but critics questioned his work's authenticity. Douglass thus went to great lengths to prove that his book was not an abolitionist hoax. Indeed Douglass worried that his eloquence might itself be used as proof that the book could not have been written by a former slave. To establish his credibility Douglass included a daguerreotype image of himself (a forerunner of modern photography), a copy of his signature (a sign of his literacy), and two testimonials swearing that the narrative was indeed authentic.

Douglass was not the only escaped slave to publish an account of his travails. In 1847 *The*

Narrative of William Brown was published and became a bestseller. Douglass and Brown also published fictional accounts of slavery. Brown's novel *Clotel* explored the life of a slave woman, a mulatto daughter of President Thomas Jefferson (for the rumors about Jefferson's slave mistress Sally Hemings, see Chapter 7). The character Clotel ultimately chooses suicide over slavery and leaps off a bridge into the Potomac, a dramatic ending depicted in this woodcut from the book (10.13). About a decade after the appearance of *Clotel*, Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* was published under the pen name Linda Brent. Jacobs had escaped to freedom in 1842, but it took almost another two decades for her to improve her



writing to the point where she was able to publish an account of her ordeal under slavery. She described her purpose in writing in forceful terms: "I have not written my experiences in order to attract attention to myself, on the contrary, it would have been more pleasant to me to have been silent about my own history." Jacobs went on to declare her intention to "Add my testimony to that of abler pens to convince the people of the free states what slavery really is." Jacob's account of her life, particularly the firsthand accounts of the sexual predations of white Southerners on black women, exposed the plight of female slaves in a way that accounts by Douglass and Brown could never have done.

10.13 *Clotel*
This image from the novel *Clotel* captures the moment in the novel when the heroine throws herself off a bridge rather than suffer enslavement.

Lyceums and Lectures

Josiah Holbrook, a teacher and lecturer, began the Lyceum movement in 1826. Named after the place in ancient Greece where the philosopher Aristotle lectured to his pupils, the Lyceum movement provided a forum for public lectures and debates on a variety of intellectual issues. By 1834 more than three thousand Lyceums appeared in towns and cities across America. As methods of transportation improved with the rise of the railroad, the Lyceum movement created a national market for speakers on a variety of topics of general interest.

An especially popular lecture topic was phrenology, a pseudo-scientific belief that focused on the relationship between the structure of the human head and character and personality. In addition to listening to lectures on the subject, Americans could pay to have their heads analyzed by phrenologists at salons in major cities and towns. By the 1850s the *American Phrenological Journal* had a circulation of more than fifty thousand. Phrenology became an American obsession in the middle of the nineteenth century. Phrenological heads made of plaster or ceramic became common-place decorations in many American homes, prompting the *Boston Christian Examiner* in 1834 to complain that "heads of chalk, inscribed with mystic numbers, disfigured every mantelpiece." Few of these were as striking as this impressive folk sculpture of a young



10.14 Phrenological Head

This colorful folk sculpture of a young girl's head included hand-painted zones that phrenologists believed controlled human emotion and behavior. [Source: Asa Ames (1824-1851), "Phrenological Head", Evans, New York, c. 1850, paint on wood, American Folk Art Museum]

girl's head with the various different zones of the cranium colored according to phrenological theory (10.14). Phrenology also attracted the notice of many leading public figures such as Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story, the moral reformer Horace Mann, and the artist Hiram Powers, whose sculpture *The Great Slave* was the most popular sculpture displayed before the Civil War.

Phrenology affected the lives of many Americans. *Godey's Ladies Book* even advised women to use hats and other head coverings to highlight or accentuate certain aspects of their phrenological character. Phrenology appealed to Americans at a time when the nation was experiencing rapid change. In particular phrenology spoke to the fears of urban Americans who increasingly lived and worked in an environment where they dealt with a world filled with strangers. The new market economy opened up countless opportunities for swindlers and rogues of various kinds, prompting a new term, "confidence man," someone who exploited the trust of a stranger to fleece him of his property or money. Although one might dress the part of a member of the respectable middle class, appearances were often deceiving, and the rise of the "confidence man" was symbolic of the danger posed by the anonymous world of the market. Phrenology promised to allow one to see beyond appearances into the true character of an individual and thus see past the masks and disguises of "confidence men."

Why was phrenology so popular during this period of American history?

Nature's Nation



In honor of the opening of the Erie Canal, a young American artist named Thomas Cole staged an exhibition of landscape paintings that became an immediate sensation. Organizers of the show declared that the artist's work "had equaled those works which have been the boast of Europe." Cole's work would "adorn our houses with the American prospects and American skies."

While writers such as Emerson and Thoreau extolled nature in prose, painters such as Cole captured its majesty in color on canvas.

The new appreciation for nature influenced the design of urban parks and cemeteries. Reform also prompted Americans to embrace a variety of different architectural styles that would help further the transformation of society. Cemetery designers turned to ancient Egypt for inspiration. The concern for architectural reform even influenced phrenologists, who championed the octagon as the perfect housing form.

Landscape Painting

An exhibition of the work of painter Thomas Cole that was staged at the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 featured landscape paintings that symbolized a new distinctly American style of art. Americans eager to defend American culture against its European critics took up Cole's cause. An art critic noted that Cole's work proved that American art need not embrace the artificial beauty depicted in so much European art. "Nature needs no fictitious charms," and "the eye requires no borrowed assistance from the memory."

In 1835 Cole articulated his view of nature in his "Essay on American Scenery." He wrote that "the most distinctive, and perhaps most impressive, characteristic of American scenery is its wilderness." Cole realized his vision of nature beautifully in his painting *Kaaterskill Falls* (1826) (10.15), depicting a dramatic natural setting in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. The scene Cole presents is one of primordial beauty: A dramatic rock outcropping, a tree twisted and broken by nature's forces, and of course the rushing waterfall all reinforce the power and majesty of nature. The only human presence is a lone Indian communing with nature depicted in the center of canvas. Yet even this figure's physical presence is itself dwarfed by the monumental natural landscape, which towers above him.

10.15 *Kaaterskill Falls*

One of Thomas Cole's dramatic landscapes, this painting of a waterfall in New York's Catskill Mountains captures the majesty of nature that Cole so esteemed.



What does Cole's painting reveal about American views of nature?

Parks and Cemeteries

When Cole and other landscape painters were celebrating nature, America was undergoing one of its first great waves of urbanization. As agriculture became more efficient, large numbers of Americans from the countryside streamed into the nation's growing cities. While many urban homes boasted a Currier and Ives print of an idyllic rural setting, a more concrete effort was made to bring nature itself to the city. The creation of urban parks as retreats from the hustle and bustle of city life and a radically new approach to designing cemeteries were two highly visible results of the desire to preserve nature in the midst of rapid urbanization.

New York's Central Park (geographically at the center of Manhattan Island, but originally situated at the edge of the city) was the most ambitious and visible effort to bring the country to the city. Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in 1857 and officially opened two years later, Central Park sought to bring a varied country landscape, including meadows, rolling hills, lakes, and woodlands, to urban dwellers. To preserve the calming views, the designers sunk roadways beneath the line of sight of most strollers (10.16). For many upper-class and middle-class Protestant reformers, Central Park was intended to have a civilizing influence on the city's working-

class and immigrant inhabitants. These reformers believed that strolls through the different country settings would exert a spiritually uplifting effect on those whose daily lives were degraded by industrial life and whose private lives were confined to the squalid conditions of areas such as Five Points. Championed by New York's elite and designed with middle-class values in mind, the land for much of the park was acquired by displacing Irish immigrants and destroying one of the city's most long-established African American communities.

Mount Auburn Cemetery, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston, reflected the new view of cemeteries. The opening of Mount Auburn in 1831 attracted a crowd of two thousand people who were treated to orations by leading ministers and Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story. In contrast to the graveyards or burial grounds of earlier days, designers made the new cemeteries associated with the rural cemetery movement, such as Mount Auburn, places of repose for the living as much as for the dead. As this painting (10.17) of a couple strolling through the beautifully landscaped terrain of Mount Auburn suggests, the "repose and sacred loveliness of natural beauty" made the cemetery a destination for nearby city dwellers who wished to experience the ennobling effects of nature. It soon became a major tourist attraction, with as

10.16 Central Park

To maintain its country-like setting, the roads running through Central Park were sunk below the line of sight.



What was the rural cemetery movement?



10.17 Mount Auburn

The "rural cemetery movement" aimed to bring the country to the city and honor the dead by creating places of repose and reflection.

[Source: Thomas Chambers, "Mount Auburn Cemetery". Mid-19th C. Oil on Canvas, 14" X 18 1/8". Image © 2010 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Gift of Edger William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch]

many as thirty thousand visitors per year traveling to Boston to see Mount Auburn. Its success led to the creation of other cemeteries designed to provide urban dwellers with places of reflection and repose.

The "rural cemetery movement" inspired an important architectural change. Architects looking for inspiration for representing death found it in ancient Egypt's concern for death; Egypt's ancient pyramids and other monumental structures and its funeral practices were extremely elaborate. The image of Mount Auburn shown here (10.18) features one of the most common architectural elements borrowed from ancient Egypt, the obelisk. Mount Auburn and other cemeteries also included Egyptian revival entrances that borrowed architectural elements from ancient Egyptian temples, including the giant pylons that framed ancient temples. The Egyptian revival also inspired architects working on a variety of other public buildings, mostly those with a grim purpose, such as Philadelphia's debtor's prison and New Jersey's state prison.

Revival and Reform in American Architecture

Egypt was not the only ancient culture that American architects and designers turned to in the 1830s for inspiration. Andrew Jackson's rise to power in 1828 had reflected and facilitated a broad democratization of society (see Chapter 8). The democratization of American life coincided with Greece's war for independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1821. The Greek independence movement seemed analogous to America's own struggle against Britain. Not surprisingly American culture

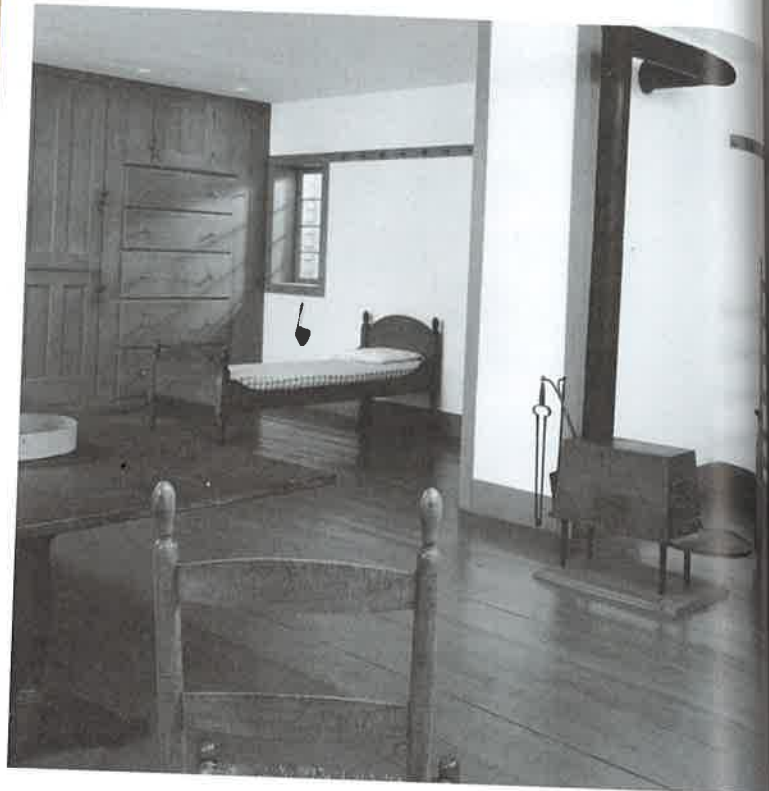
"Nothing has more to do with the morals, the civilization, and refinement of a nation, than its prevailing architecture."

OLIVER P. SMITH, *The Domestic Architect* (1854)



10.18 and 10.19 Greek Revival Parlor and Shaker Sitting Room

The thick carpets and elaborate decoration and furniture in this Greek Revival parlor contrast sharply with the bare ascetic furnishings of this Shaker sitting room. Shaker furniture were designed to be functional, not fancy. [Source: (10.18) Courtesy, Winterthur Museum]; (10.19) The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Inc.]



developed a fascination with Greece, the birthplace of democracy. As a result Greek Revival was a popular style of architecture, interior design, and dress during the 1820s and 1830s. As one contemporary writer noted, Americans had “a perfect mania for the Grecian orders” that pervaded American society and required that “every building from the shop of the tradesmen, to the church and the capitol, must be Grecian.” Simple farmhouses were adorned with classical columns and crowned by pediments, giving their doorways the appearance of mini-Greek temples.

The rage for all things Greek not only affected architecture but also shaped the way Americans designed and decorated their homes. Furniture in this period was fashioned to resemble ancient Greek styles, often including decorative motifs drawn from Greece, such as urns and classical pillars. The obsession with ancient Greece literally transformed the map of the United States. Across America cities and towns sprung up with Greek names; western New York alone, along and near the Erie Canal, saw the appearance of cities such as Troy, Ithaca, Utica, and Syracuse. Harriet Martineau, an English traveler who

published several accounts of experiences in America, feared that America’s youth would grow up thinking that “Utica, Carthage, Athens, Palmyra, and Troy” were simply names of towns in western New York rather than the great cities of antiquity and the cradles of Western civilization. Ohio and Georgia each had its Athens.

While many Americans embraced Greek Revival, many utopian sects rejected mainstream architectural designs and furnishings that accompanied them. No group was more self-conscious about the connection between architecture, furnishings, and reform than the Shakers. The interiors of Shaker buildings were sparsely furnished, and the design of Shaker furniture embodied their ideal of simplicity. The Millennial Law (1823) of the Shakers, a set of rules that governed Shaker communities, actually proscribed the styles of furniture, including permissible colors, and expressly forbade designs that were “merely for fancy.” The Shakers’s rejection of the values of the marketplace is evident if one contrasts the furnishing and design of a typical Shaker sitting room and a Greek Revival parlor in a prosperous home (10.18

What does Shaker furniture reveal about Shaker values?

and **10.19**). Greek Revival architecture and furniture included ornamental designs such as classical columns and urns. The plush cushioned furniture and intricately carved furniture of the Greek Revival room contrast noticeably with the spare ascetic style of the Shaker room. Shaker furniture was devoid of any ornamentation and highly functional, embodying the ideal of simplicity itself.

The power of architecture to transform and uplift individuals inspired several reformers to propose using architecture to mold American character and thereby reform American society. Two of the most influential architectural reformers were Andrew Jackson Downing and Alexander Jackson Davis, who in the 1840s and 1850s helped popularize the Gothic Revival, a style of architecture that looked to medieval Europe for inspiration. Downing authored two popular works on architecture in the early 1840s that went through twenty editions in the three decades following their publication. Downing believed that a properly designed home should serve as a spiritual sanctuary from the commercial world of the market. Downing's Gothic Revival homes, which incorporated medieval architectural elements, such as pointed arches, were meant to be uplifting to those who dwelled in them and inspire those who

gazed upon them by literally guiding an onlooker's gaze toward heaven. The Gothic Revival also drew on renewed interest in nature that had inspired painters such as Thomas Cole and the designers of Mount Auburn Cemetery. Rather than embrace the orderly quality of Greek classicism, enthusiasts for Gothic Revival championed a more organic style that shunned regularity in favor of variegated style that closely mimicked the irregularities of nature.

At one level the Gothic Revival was part of the larger reaction against the excesses of Jacksonian Democracy. Leading champions of this style, such as Downing and Davis, also rejected the democratic values of the Greek Revival, believing that architecture should underscore social class position, not seek to erase it. Davis believed that housing ought to announce one's class status, and he envisioned villas for the upper classes, cottages for the middle class, and farmhouses for the working classes. Davis helped plan the nation's first suburbs, including Llewellyn Park in Orange, New Jersey. Lyndhurst in Tarrytown, New York, was an extraordinarily opulent Gothic Revival villa. Compared to the symmetry of Greek Revival buildings, the irregular roofline and different shaped windows of Lyndhurst evoked the unpredictability of nature (**10.20**).

10.20 Lyndhurst

The Gothic Revival mansion, Lyndhurst, embraced elements of medieval architecture. Gothic Revival architecture's soaring arches focused the viewers' attention on heaven above. The angular lines were intended to mirror and evoke the awesome power of nature.



How did religious ideals and views of nature inform Gothic Revival architecture?



10.21 Octagon House

Phrenologist Orson S. Fowler believed that a balcony on a house corresponded to the upper portion of the skull and would encourage higher mental functions.

The popular phrenologist Orson S. Fowler championed octagon-shaped houses as a cure for America's social ills (10.21). Building on his phrenological theories, Fowler attacked box-like homes and argued that by more closely approximating a circle, the octagon encouraged harmony. Although the vast majority of these houses were built in the Northeast, octagon houses dotted the American landscape from Watertown, Wisconsin, in the Midwest to Natchez, Mississippi, in the South. Unlike some reformers who feared progress and

believed that the expansion of the market threatened American values, Fowler believed that the march of civilization was inevitable. Americans needed to accept acquisitiveness as crucial to the marketplace, while tempering it with insights gained from new areas of knowledge, such as phrenology. The octagon house, Fowler believed, would serve both goals admirably well. The octagon fad eventually dissipated when phrenology's pseudo-scientific doctrines were themselves discredited.

Conclusion

The force of the market revolution and the democratization of American society transformed American society in the middle

decades of the nineteenth century. The rapid pace of social, cultural, and political change left many Americans struggling to deal with

Why did phrenologists favor the octagon as an architectural style?

these developments. The fires of the Second Great Awakening drew many Americans back to religion. Leading revivalists also enjoined Americans to take part in moral reform efforts, such as temperance. The most successful revivalist, Charles Grandison Finney, made use of the tools provided by the market revolution to spread the message of the Second Great Awakening more effectively.

For many Americans the home and family provided a refuge from the aggressive world of the marketplace. A new ideal of domesticity and a cult of true womanhood emerged that defined women's roles and attributes in opposition to the male-oriented values of the marketplace. One of the issues that prompted the greatest concern was sexuality, specifically controlling dangerous sexual impulses and promoting the idea of self-control and middle-class respectability.

In response to the rapid pace of change a host of different religious and secular utopian movements emerged. Older religious groups such as the Shakers attracted new followers, and new groups such as the Mormons attracted a wide following. Virtually all the utopian groups experimented with some type of communal ownership of property, and many also experimented with new models of the family and sexuality. The Shakers did away with the family unit and sex and reconstituted themselves as a brotherhood and sisterhood. The Oneida perfectionists, by contrast, practiced a form of free love and complex marriage in which men and women could each be married to multiple partners.

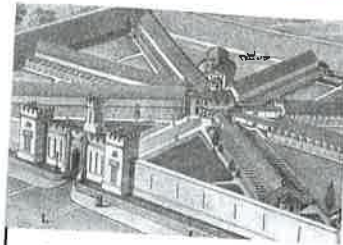
The middle decades of the nineteenth century saw unparalleled artistic achievement in American art and literature. Novelists such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville published important works in American literature, some of which explored the impact of the market on society. At the same time other

popular writers were exploiting the tales of crime and violence reported in the penny press.

Writers such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson explored the mystical truths of nature in their prose. While Thoreau was something of a recluse, Emerson by contrast became one of the leading lecturers in the nation, taking advantage of the Lyceum movement and new developments in transportation to reach a wider audience. A variety of other ideas were marketed through Lyceums and lectures, including phrenology. Painters such as Thomas Cole praised the value of nature and captured its wild beauty on canvas, while others tried to reconcile the growth of civilization and the shrinking wilderness in their art. Reform also influenced American architecture, leading to new designs for prisons, parks, cemeteries, and homes.

The expansion of print material associated with the market revolution facilitated reform efforts. No group made more effective use of this change than abolitionists. The expansion of the literary marketplace also helped former slaves, including Frederick Douglass, find an audience for his firsthand account of the evils of slavery. The effectiveness of the abolitionists' campaign produced a backlash, helping to crystallize a more militant defense of the institution of slavery.

To escape the degradation of the new market society and preserve the traditional agrarian ideal, some Americans found the simplest solution in moving west. This solution, however, created a new set of problems as Americans encountered resistance from Indians and the region's Hispanic population. Westward expansion also fueled the controversy over slavery. Would the new Western lands join the Union as free states or as slave states? The issue of slavery would come to dominate politics in the era of western expansion.



1826

American Society for the Promotion of Temperance founded

Reformers concerned about the dangers of alcohol organize a national movement to promote sobriety

1829

Eastern State Penitentiary opened

Pennsylvania's new penitentiary becomes a model of the new approach to crime suggested by moral reformers

1830

Charles Grandison Finney leads Rochester Revival

The Second Great Awakening targets the towns along the Erie Canal, including the fast-growing town of Rochester

CHAPTER REVIEW

Review Questions

1. How did the Great Awakening minister Charles Grandison Finney use the tools of the market revolution and the new style of Jacksonian politics to spread his religious message?
2. What was the difference between traditional prisons and the new penitentiary favored by reformers? How did prison reformers make use of architecture to implement their new penitential ideal?
3. What was the cult of true womanhood? How did this ideal fit into the new notion of domesticity?
4. What role did the family play in the utopian worlds created by the Shakers, Oneidians, and Mormons? How could the reform efforts of these movements be seen as a response to the social and economic conditions of the era?
5. How did Thoreau's *Walden* embody transcendentalist ideas?
6. Why did phrenology appeal to Americans living during the changes wrought by the market revolution?
7. What was the rural cemetery movement? How did places such as Mount Auburn Cemetery fit within the larger movement of reform?
8. What was the Lyceum movement, and how did it both reflect the values of the market revolution and provide a forum for criticism of American society, including the market?
9. How did architecture reflect the ideals of social reformers in the middle decades of the nineteenth century?



1831

Mount Auburn Cemetery opens near Boston

An expression of the rural cemetery movement's focus on nature, Mount Auburn becomes a major tourist attraction and model for other urban cemeteries



1839–1843

Joseph Smith leads the Mormons to Illinois and founds the Mormon city of Nauvoo

Mormons establish a utopian settlement

Millerite William Miller predicts the end of the world

The Millerites are dispirited and the movement collapses. Elements of their belief are picked up by the Seventh Day Adventists



1845–1847

Publication of Frederick Douglass's autobiography and William Brown's novel *Clotel*

Douglass's popular narrative of his life as a slave and William Brown's novel expose the evils of slavery



1848

Seneca Falls Convention

Women's rights advocates gather to demand legal equality for women

Oneida Community established in New York

Founding of one of the most radical utopian experiments

Key Terms

temperance A reform movement that developed in response to concern over the rising levels of alcohol consumption in America society. 285

penitentiary A new reform-based model of incarceration that isolated individuals from one another and gave them a chance to repent and reform. This method was a radical departure from earlier approaches to crime, which cast behavior in terms of sinfulness, innate depravity, and punishment. 289

immediatism Abolitionist doctrine that rejected gradualism and advocated an immediate end to slavery. 291

gag rule A procedural motion that required that the House of Representatives automatically table antislavery petitions and not consider them. 294

“peculiar institution” A term that John C. Calhoun coined to describe Southern slavery. In Calhoun's view slavery was not “an evil” or a cause of shame but rather “a good—a positive good” to be championed. 294

“cult of true womanhood” A set of beliefs in which women's values were defined in opposition to the aggressive and competitive values of the marketplace. 295

Seneca Falls Convention A convention of women's rights supporters, held in Seneca Falls, New York, whose resolves emphatically declared that “all men and women are created equal.” 297

complex marriage A system developed by John Humphrey Noyes's followers at Oneida, where any man or women who had experienced saving grace was free to engage in sexual relations with any other person. 299

Transcendentalism A loose set of philosophical and literary ideas focused on the spiritual power of the individual. Transcendentalists looked to nature for inspiration and philosophical insights. 303

