Chapter 8: Creating a Republican Culture, 1790-1820

- **The Capitalist Commonwealth**

  - To visitors, The United States had riches that were very apparent.
  
  - Beginning around 1800, the per capita income of Americans increased by more than 1 percent a year, more than 30 percent in a single generation.

- **Banks, Manufacturing and Markets**

  - America was a nation of merchants, in which citizens exploited opportunities to make spectacular profits from the wars triggered by the French Revolution.
  
  - Fur trader John Jacob Astor and merchant Robert Oliver became the nation’s first millionaires.

- **Banking and Credit**

  - To finance mercantile enterprises, Americans need a banking system.
  
  - Before the Revolution, farmers relied on government-sponsored land banks for loans, while merchants arranged partnerships or obtained credit from British suppliers.
  
  - In 1781, the Confederation Congress chartered the Bank of North America. Later that year, Federalists in Congress chartered the First Bank of the United States which issued notes and made commercial loans.
  
  - Jeffersonian Republicans opposed the Bank because they claimed it was unconstitutional and potentially oppressive.
  
  - In 1816, Congress chartered the Second Bank of the United States, there were 246 state-chartered banks with $68 million in banknotes in circulation.
  
  - State banking policies and those of the Second Bank were a factor in the Panic of 1819.

  - The Panic gave Americans their first taste of a business cycle, the periodic expansion and contraction of production and employment that are inherent to a market economy.

- **Rural Manufacturing**

  - The Panic of 1819 also revealed that artisans and yeomen as well as merchants now depended for their prosperity on the market economy.
  
  - Before 1800, most handcrafted goods were sold locally. By 1820, handcrafted goods’ markets expanded their reach and were selling their produce in regional and national markets.

  - The expansion of household production and the market economy reflected innovations in
the organization of production and in marketing rather than in technology.

- The penetration of the market economy into rural areas offered new opportunities to the farmers. Some of the more ambitious farmers switched from crops to raising livestock for slaughter, such as cattle. They also raised chickens and cows for both eggs and milk to sell.

- The Environmental Impact of Early Industry

- As the rural economy churned our more goods, it significantly altered the environment.

- Even as the income of many farmers rose, the quality of their natural environment deteriorated.

- While the new market economy was making families and communities more productive and prosperous, it was reducing their self-sufficiency.

- Transportation Bottlenecks and Government Initiatives

- America’s very size threatened to stifle its economic growth.

- Water transport was the quickest and cheapest way to get goods to market, but most new settlements were not near navigable streams.

- Between 1793 and 1812, the Massachusetts legislature granted charters to more than one hundred private turnpike companies. These charters gave the companies special legal status and often included monopoly rights to a transportation route.

- The increase in turnpike construction allowed dozens of inland market centers to gain connections to seaport cities.

- Meanwhile, state governments and private entrepreneurs were improving water transport by dredging rivers to make them navigable and by constructing canals to bypass waterfalls or rapids.

- Public Policy: The Commonwealth System

- Legislative support for road and canal companies was part of a broad system of state mercantilism known as the Commonwealth system.

- The American state legislatures passed measures they thought would be “of great public utility” and increase the “common wealth.”

- Critics condemned these grants of special rights to private enterprises as violations of republican principles. The award of “peculiar privilege” to corporations, they argued, not only violated the “equal rights” of all citizens but also restricted the sovereignty of the people.

- State mercantilism soon encompassed much more than transportation, and by 1820, innovative state governments had created a republican political economy: a Commonwealth system that funneled state aid to private businesses whose projects would improve the general welfare.
• **Toward a Democratic Republican Culture**

- After independence, many Americans in the northern states embraced a democratic republicanism that celebrated political equality and social mobility, at least for white males.

- These citizens primarily members of the emerging middle class; also redefined the nature of the family and of education by seeking more egalitarian marriages and more affectionate ways of rearing and educating their children.

• **Social and Political Equality for White Men**

- In J. Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), he wrote that European society was composed “of great lords who posses everything, and of a herd of people who have nothing”. But he also wrote that America was the opposite, in which there were “no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops.”

- As individuals used their “talents, integrity, and virtue” to amass wealth, their social standing rose, a phenomenon that astounded some Europeans. This was because in Europe, if a person did this it would be considered a disgrace, whilst it was considered the opposite in America. “To be the architect of your own fortune is honorable. IT is the highest recommendation,” remarked a Polish visitor.

- Some Americans from long-distinguished families questioned the morality of a system of status based on financial success, however, for most white men; such a merit-based system meant the opportunity to better themselves.

- As the republican doctrine of equality gained acceptance, it raised the prospect of voting rights for all citizens. To limit those rights to white men, legislators explicitly wrote race or gender restrictions into the law.

- For example, in NJ, where initially the state constitution had granted suffrage to all property holders in 1776. The legislature sensed a “threat” to the male-centered political world, and in 1807, the NJ legislature limited voting rights to white men only.

• **Toward a Republican system of Marriage**

- John Adams lamented in 1776, that the republican doctrine of political equality had “spread where it was not intended,” encouraging some white women to speak out on public matters and to demand control of their finances.

- As land holdings shrunk in long-settled rural communities, many yeomen fathers could no longer leave substantial farms to their children and so could no longer select their spouses. Young men and women began to choose their own partners, influenced by a new cultural attitude, sentimentalism.

• **The Effects of Sentimentalism**
- Sentimentalism originated in Europe as part of the Romantic movement of the late 18th century, and came to America in the early 19th century.

- Around 1800, magazines began to encourage marriages “contracted from motives of affection, rather than of interest.”

- In theory, companionate marriages gave wives “true equality, both of rank and fortune” with their husbands.

- Moreover, the new love-based marriage system discouraged parents from protecting the interests of young wives, and governments refused to prevent domestic tyranny.

- Young adults who chose partners unwisely were severely disappointed when their spouses failed as providers or faithful companions.

- Divorces were very difficult to obtain before 1800, but afterwards, most divorce petitions cited emotional grounds. In response to changes in cultural values, several states expanded the legal grounds for divorce to include drunkenness and personal cruelty.

- Republican Motherhood

- By the 1790s, the birthrates in America were dropping dramatically, from an average of 8-9 children, to an average of 4-6 children.

- Women’s lives were also changing because of new currents in Christian social thought. Traditionally, women were blamed from being sexual temptresses or witches, but by 1800, Protestant ministers were blaming men for sexual and social misconduct and claiming that modesty and purity were inherent in women’s nature.

- Christian ministers embraced the idea of republican motherhood, in which the “real Rights of Women” were in teaching and caring for their children, a responsibility that gave them “an extensive power over the fortunes of man in every generation.”

- Raising and Educating Republican Children

- Under English common law, property owned by a father who died without a will passed to his eldest son, a practice known as primogeniture.

- However, after the Revolution, most state legislatures enacted statutes that required that such estates be divided equally among all the offspring.

- Encouraging Independence

- Many European visitors believed that republican parents gave their children too much freedom, because they thought American children had “Scant respect” for their parents.

- Permissive child rearing was not universal, however, and could be oft be seen by parents who followed the teachings rationalist religious writers influenced by John Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers. According to them, the parents’ role was to develop their child’s conscience and self discipline so that the child would be able to control his or her own
behavior and act responsibly.

- By contrast, many yeomen and tenant farmers, influenced by the Second Great Awakening, raised their children with authoritarian methods.

- Expanding Education

  - The values transmitted within families were crucial because most education still took place within the household.

  - In New England, locally funded public schools provided most boys and some girls with basic instruction in reading and writing.

  - To ordinary citizens, talk of secondary and college education smacked of elitism. Farmers, artisans, and laborers wanted elementary schools that would instruct their children in the “three R’s”: reading, ‘riting, ‘rithmetic,

  - In the 1820’s, state legislatures began to appoint statewide superintendents of schools, which set up school systems that taught self-discipline, and also American history.

- Promoting Cultural Independence

  - Writer Noah Webster believed education should develop the American intellect. Asserting “that America must be as independent in literature as she is in politics,” Webster wrote his Dissertation on the English Language in 1789

  - Ironically, the most famous and successful writer of this time, Washington Irving, was a federalist. He was, however, impatient with the slow pace of American literary development, so he lived for seventeen years in Europe, where he reveled in its aristocratic culture and intense intellectual life.

  - Not until the 1830s and 1840s, would American authors achieve a professional identity and, in the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and novelists of the American Renaissance, make a significant contribution to the great literature of Western society.

- American Republicanism and Slavery

  - Republicanism in the South differed significantly from that in the North.

  - Enslaved African constituted one-third of the South’s population and exposed an enormous contradiction in white Americans’ ideology of freedom and equality.

- The Revolution and Slavery, 1776-1800

  - In 1782, the Virginia assembly passed a manumission act, which allowed individual owners to free their slaves, and within a decade, planters had released ten thousand slaves.
- Religious institutions also condemned slavery, the Quakers doing so first in the 1750s. The rapidly growing evangelical Christian Churches, notably the Methodists and the Baptists, also advocated emancipation and admitted both enslaved and free blacks into their congregations.

- Anthony Benezet, a Quaker philanthropist, defied popular opinion when he declared that African Americans were “As capable of improvement as White People,” when he founded an all black school in Philadelphia.

- In 1784, judicial rulings abolished the slavery in MA; and over the next two decades, every state north of Delaware enacted legislation to end slavery.

- The tension in American republican ideology between respect for liberty and respect for property rights was greatest in the South, where slaves represented a huge financial investment.

- To preserve, their privileged social position, southern whites redefined republicanism, so that its principles of individual liberty and legal equality applied only to members of the “master race” – creating what historians call a herrenvolk (master people) republic.

• The North and South Grow Apart

- European visitors to the US agreed that the South formed a distinct society, and many cast doubts on its character.

- Some southerners admitted that human bondage corrupted their society and induced ignorance and poverty among whites as well as blacks.

- For their part, wealthy planters wanted a compliant labor force that was content with the drudgery of agricultural work. Consequently, they trained the majority of their slaves as field hands, and did little to provide ordinary whites with elementary instruction in reading or arithmetic.

• Slavery and National Politics

- As the northern states ended human bondage, the South’s continuing commitment to slavery became a political issue.

- The successful slave revolt in Haiti in the 1790s brought a flood of white refugees to the US and prompted congressional debates about diplomatic relations with the islands new black government.

- The South’s political clout – especially its domination of the presidency and in Senate – ensured that the national government would continue to protect slavery.

- Antislavery advocates had hoped that African bondage would “die a natural death” following the end of the Atlantic slave trade and with the decline of tobacco economy. However, they hopes quickly faded as the cotton boom increased the demand for slaves, and when LA (1812), MI (1817), AL (1819) joined the Union as slave permitting states.

• Richard Allen Responds to Colonization Proposals

- In 1817, influential Americans who were worried about the impact of slavery and race
on society founded the American Colonization Society, which sought to free slaves and colonize them in Africa.

- Emancipation without removal, Henry Clay predicted, “would be followed by instantaneous collisions between the two races, which would break out into a civil war that would end in the extermination or subjugation of the one race or the other.”

- Lacking significant support from white slave owners and from free blacks like Richard Allen, the American Colonization society transported only 6,000 African Americans to Liberia, a colony it establish on the west coast of Africa.

• The Missouri Crisis, 1819-1821

- The failure of colonization set the stage for a new political conflict over slavery.

- When Missouri applied for admission to the Union in 1819 with a constitution that allowed slavery but was rejected, southerners went into an uproar.

- In the ensuing debate over slavery, southerners advanced three constitutional arguments.

  1. They raised the principle of “equal rights”, in that they argued that Congress could not impose conditions on Missouri that it had not imposed on other territories seeking statehood.

  2. They maintained that slavery fell under the sovereignty of the state governments: Under the Constitution, states exercised control over their internal affairs and domestic institutions, including slavery and marriage.

  3. They insisted that Congress had no authority to infringe on the property rights of individual slaveholders.

- Controversy raged in Congress and newspapers for two years before Henry Clay put together a series of political agreements known collectively as the Missouri Compromise, which was composed of the following components…

  - This deal allowed Maine to enter the Union as a free state in 1820 and Missouri to follow as a slave state in 1821.

  - By admitting both states, the agreement preserved a balance in the Senate between North and South and set a precedent for future additions to the Union.

  - For their part, southern senators accepted the prohibition of slavery in the vast northern section of the Louisiana Purchase, the lands north of latitude 36º30’ (which was the southern border of Missouri).

• Protestant Christianity as a Social Force
Throughout the colonial era, religion played a significant role in American life. Beginning in 1790, a series of religious revivals planted the values of Protestant Christianity deep in the national character, giving a spiritual definition to American republicanism. These revivals especially changed the lives of blacks and of women.

- **A Republican Religious Order**
  - The demand for greater liberty unleashed by the republican revolution of 1776 forced American lawmakers to devise new relationships between church and state.
    - Formerly only Quaker- and Baptist-controlled governments of Pennsylvania and Rhode Island had repudiated the idea of an established church.
    - Following independence, an established church and compulsory religious taxes were no longer the norm in the United States.
    - Freedom of conscience proved equally difficult to achieve. In Virginia, Jefferson’s Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom prohibited religious requirements for holding public office, but other states discriminated against those who dissented from the doctrines of Protestant Christianity.

- **The Second Great Awakening**
  - Overshadowing the state-church debate was a decades-long series of religious revivals, known as the Second Great Awakening, that made the US a Christian society.
  - The churches that prospered the most from this movement were the Evangelical Methodist and Baptist.
    - The Baptists boasted a republican church organization with self-governing congregations.
    - And both the Baptists and Methodists developed an egalitarian religious culture marked by communal singing and emotional services.

- **The Revivalist Impulse**
  - This movement began in the 1790s and was much broader than the First Great Awakening (1740s).
  - However, the Second Great Awakenings had similar “revivals” as to those of the First, and through these revivals, Baptist and Methodist preachers reshaped the spiritual landscape of the South and the Old Southwest.
    - They offered powerful and emotional messages and the promise of religious fellowship; revivalists attracted both unchurched individuals and pious families searching for social ties to their new frontier communities.
  - The Second Great Awakening changed the denominational makeup of American
- The Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Quakers grew slowly from natural increase of their members.

- On the other hand, the Methodist and Baptist churches exploded in spectacular fashion by winning converts and they soon were the two largest denominations in the US.

- The preachers, in order to attract converts, spoke from memory in plain language but with theatrical gestures and flamboyance.

- “Preach without papers” and emphasize piety rather than theology, advised one minister, “seem earnest & serious; & you will be listened to with Patience, & Wonder.”

- **Black Protestantism**

- In the South, evangelical religion was initially a disruptive force because it spoke of spiritual equality and criticized slavery.

- Husbands and planters grew angry when their wives became more assertive and when blacks were welcomed into their congregations.

- In response to this, and in an attempt to retain white men in their churches, Methodist and Baptist preachers gradually adapted their religious message to justify the authority of yeomen patriarchs and slave-owning planters.

- Black preachers adapted the teachings of the white Protestant churches to their own needs.

- Black Christians generally ignored the doctrines of original sin and Calvinist predestination as well as biblical passages that encouraged unthinking obedience to authority.

- **New Religious Thought and Institutions**

- Influenced by republican ideology, whites also rejected the Calvinist preoccupation with human depravity and weakness, embracing instead Christian doctrines that focus on human ability and free will.

- Unitarians were educated and affluent Congregationalists who placed increasing emphasis on the power of human reason, and they worshipped an indivisible and “united” god.

- They disregarded the concept of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- By the 1820s, Protestant Christians were well positioned to undertake the task of working for the welfare of human race.

- Unlike the First Great Awakening, the Second brought cooperation among denominations, instead of splitting them into warring factions.
**Women’s New Religious Roles**

- The upsurge in religious enthusiasm allowed women to demonstrate their piety and even to found new sects.

- The Shakers was an example sect; it had started in Britain, was brought across to America, and was led by women.

**Increasing Public Activities**

- The female-led religious experiments were less significant than the activities of thousands of women in mainstream churches.

- Women took charge of religious and charitable enterprises both because they were excluded from other public roles and because ministers relied increasingly on them to do the work of the church.

- Believing in female virtue, many young women and the men who courted them now postponed sexual intercourse until after marriage – previously a rare form of self-restraint.

- As women claimed new spiritual authority, men tried to curb their power by limiting their power to vote in churches, etc.

- By the 1820s, *Mother’s Magazine* and other newsletters, widely read in hundreds of small towns and villages, were giving women a sense of shared purpose and identity.

**Women’s Education**

- Religious activism advanced female education.

- Churches established scores of seminaries and academies where girls from the middling classes received sound intellectual and moral instruction.

- Beginning in the 1820s, women educated in these seminaries and academies displaced men as public-school teachers.

- This occurred because educated women had few other opportunities for paid employment and thus accepted lower pay than men would (around $12 to $14 a month with room and board – less than a farm laborer).

- Just as the ideology of democratic republicanism had expanded voting rights and the political influence of ordinary men in the North, so the values of Christian republicanism had bolstered the public authority of middling women.

- This new female identity would be tested in the decades to come, when fundamental economic changes and the growing sectional conflict over slavery would divide the nation along economic and sectional lines.