

# Chapter 15: The Ferment of Reform and Culture (1790—1860)

## Reviving Religion

### Recall

### Notes

- 3/4 of 23 million Americans in 1850 regularly attended church
- Thomas Paine wrote a book called ***The Age of Reason*** which declared all churches were "set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit"
  - many Founding Fathers including Jefferson and Franklin embraced **Deism** that Paine promoted
  - Deists relied on reason rather than religion and denied Christ's divinity
- **Unitarians** emerged in New England at the end of the 18th century and meant that God only existed in one person as opposed to the orthodox Trinity (God the Father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit)
  - stressed goodness of human nature rather than vileness
  - free will and salvation through being a good person
  - appealed to intellectuals whose rationalism and optimism conflicted with hellfire preachings of Calvinism
- a fresh wave of religion in 1800 set about the **Second Great Awakening**
  - left many converted souls and shattered a bunch of churches
  - revived boosted church attendance
- Peter Cartwright was really good at speaking and converting people
- Charles Grandison Finney was also a pretty good preacher
  - he was a lawyer and then became an evangelist after a deeply moving conversion as a young man
  - denounced both alcohol and slavery
- feminization in religion
  - women attended church enthusiastically
  - majority of new church members were women
    - many women wanted to turn their husbands back to God and then went on to turn society
  - made organizations and crusades to reforms

## Denominational Diversity

### Recall

### Notes

- New England Puritan district had so many preachers that it became known as the **Burned-Over District**
- Millerites, or Adventists, named after William Miller, said the Bible said Christ would return on October 22, 1844
  - gathered and waited for Jesus but he didn't show up
- Second Great Awakening also widened lines between classes

- wealthier and more conservative Eastern families didn't care
- communities from the West and South picked up ideas
- differing opinions on slaves split the religions more, then political parties

## A Desert Zion in Utah

### Recall

### Notes

- Joseph Smith claimed he received golden plates from an angel which turned into the Book of Mormon and then the **Mormons**
  - established a religious oligarchy but got hardcore opposed by non-Mormons
  - Joseph Smith was accused of having more than one wife
- Smith and his brothers murdered by a mob in 1844
  - Brigham Young took the torch and became head
    - gifted administrator, aggressive leader, eloquent preacher
- Mormons went to settle in Utah
- under Brigham Young, Mormon communities became prosperous frontier theocracy
  - men married as many as 27 wives with 56 children
  - thousands of immigrants from Europe joined, where Mormons had a missionary movement
- Washington government unable to control Mormons so an army was sent
- anti-polygamy laws passed which contradicted with Mormons marital customs

## Free Schools for a Free People

### Recall

### Notes

- tax-supported schools were rare because people thought they were only meant for the poor kids
  - advocates of "free" education met with opposition
- Americans eventually realized that if they didn't educate the kids, the kids would grow up and become dangerous and not know how to vote
  - taxation on wealthy paid for stability and democracy
- tax-supported education lacked miserably in the South but had increased influence everywhere else
  - free vote meant free education
  - there will never be a nation both ignorant and free
- school teachers ill-trained, ill-tempered, ill-paid
  - beat the kids more than they taught them
- Horace Mann, graduate of Brown University, decided to reform the education system
  - campaigned for better schoolhouses, longer terms, higher pay for teachers, expanded curriculum
  - education was still an expensive luxury
- about 1 million white adult illiterates in 1860, slaves still banned from reading and writing even if they were free

- Noah Webster made textbooks and improved education
  - standardized American language
- William H. McGuffey wrote some lessons on morality, patriotism, idealism and it was very important, sold 122 million copies

## Higher Goals for Higher Learning

### Recall

### Notes

- liberal arts colleges rose in South and West after Second Great Awakening
  - Latin, Greek, math, philosophy
- state-supported universities started in 1795 in North Carolina
  - land grants allowed higher learning
  - University of Virginia founded in 1819 mostly by Thomas Jefferson
- women were frowned upon at getting education
  - training at home was more important than schooling
  - too much learning injured the feminine brain, undermined health, made a lady unfit for marriage
- Emma Willard made a step towards schooling for women by opening Troy Female Seminary
  - Oberlin College opened its doors to women in 1837 also admitting black students
  - Mary Lyon established Mount Holyoke Seminary for women as well
- adults could go to libraries to learn, tax-supported libraries
- **lyceum** lectures provided opportunities for speakers
- magazines flourished for a short amount of time before dying out

## An Age of Reform

### Recall

### Notes

- most reformers were intelligent idealists touched by religion
  - inspired souls to fight against earthly evils
  - revived old Puritan idealistic society; free from cruelty, war, intoxicating drinks, discrimination, slavery
- women wanted to vote and start getting involved with public affairs
- people wanted to maintain traditional values in the new market society
  - ignored factory workers with naive single-mindedness
- poor classes still getting screwed over by debt
  - states gradually abolished debtors' prisons
- criminal codes were slowly being softened
  - whipping and branding were being eliminated as punishment
  - many crazed people were chain in jails or poor-houses with sane people
- Dorothea Dix had a lung trouble and she travelled 60,000 miles in 8 years to report on insanity and asylums from firsthand experience

- helped improve conditions for mentally ill and say they were not demented
- William Ladd led the American Peace Society in 1828 who didn't want war
  - was making a little bit of progress in advocating for peace before the Crimean War in Europe and Civil War in America

## Demon Rum - The "Old Deluder"

### Recall

### Notes

- excessive drinking among people everywhere
  - weddings and funerals became brawls
  - decreased efficiency of labor, increased rate of accidents near dangerous machines
- **American Temperance Society** formed in Boston in 1826 to make drinkers sign pledges and drink less
  - *"We've done with our days of carousing,  
Our nights, too, of frolicsome glee;  
For now with our sober minds choosing,  
We've pledged ourselves to never spree.*
- anti-alcohol further enhanced by a novel describing how a happy village was ruined by a tavern
- people wanted other people to resist drinking alcohol and stressed eventually stopping alcohol altogether
- less patient reformers wanted to ban alcohol
- **Maine Law of 1851** prohibited manufacture and sale of alcohol and other Northern states followed
  - repealed within a decade or declared unconstitutional
- not possible to legislate thirst
  - less drinking among women on the eve of the Civil War

## Women in Revolt

### Recall

### Notes

- women still didn't have a place in America or Europe
  - wife still followed their husbands and stayed at home
  - could not vote, could be legally beaten with reason, could not retain property because it was passed onto her husband
- rape was punished lightly in France while it was one of the few crimes worthy of death in America
- women started to want freedom as the 19th century passed
  - some women avoided marriage altogether
- gender differences were strong in 19th century America because market economy separated men and women into different jobs
  - women were physically and emotionally weak but were artistic and refined
    - special responsibility to teach youth how to be productive citizens

- men were strong but crude and had to be guided by their wives
- a woman's place was at home and a lot of them embraced that
  - some women saw the home narrative as a gilded cage
- white, well-to-do female reformers gathered halfway through the century
  - demanded rights for women, fought for the abolitionist movement
  - moved by evangelical spirit
- prominent characters of the women's rights movement include
  - Lucretia Mott, a Quaker with some of her friends
  - Elizabeth Cady Stanton, mother of seven who left "obey" out of her marriage ceremony and wanted women to vote
  - Susan B. Anthony, Quaker, fierce lecturer of women's rights around the country
  - Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, first female graduate of a medical college
  - Grimke sisters, Sarah and Angelina, championed antislavery
  - Lucy Stone, retained her maiden name after marriage
  - Amelia Bloomer, revolted against traditional fashion for women and donned short skirts and trousers
- feminists met in 1848 at **Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls**
  - declared all men and women equal, demanded ballot for women
  - launched modern women's rights movement

## Wilderness Utopias

### Recall

### Notes

- various other reformers set up weird towns
- Robert Owen founded **New Harmony**, Indiana, which attracted radicals, visionaries, theorists, scoundrels
  - colony collapsed in contradiction and confusion
- twenty individuals committed to transcendentalism formed **Brook Farm**, Massachusetts
  - lost a big building to fire shortly after it finished building
  - then the entire place collapsed
- **Oneida Community** in New York in 1848 practiced free love, birth control, and selective breeding of parents to form genetically superior children
  - survived for more than 30 years
- the **Shakers** were a small group of communistic people
  - their customs prohibited marriage and fucking so the town went extinct

## The Dawn of Scientific Achievement

### Recall

### Notes

- early Americans liked gadgets more than pure science
- some people made their own stuff

- Jefferson made a plow and he was gifted somewhat
- Nathaniel Bowditch lived to be 105 and wrote math stuff on how to navigate the oceans
- Matthew F. Maury graphed the ocean winds and currents
- Professor Benjamin Silliman was a pioneer chemist and geologist
- Louis Agassiz was a French Swiss immigrant who served at Harvard and broke biology
- Professor Asa Gray of Harvard published over 350 books
- John J. Audubon painted birds in their natural territory but he shot birds for sport when he was younger, what a hypocrite
- medicine was still pretty primitive
  - bloodletting was a common cure
  - smallpox plagues and yellow fever
- people got sick from not eating well, bad hygiene, teeth extracted by village blacksmith
- average life expectancy was 40 for a white person
- self prescribed patent medicines were common (one dose for people, two for horses) and fad diets or home remedies
- use of medicine by regular doctors was considered harmful
- surgeons tied people down and gave them whiskey before dismembering them and sometimes used laughing gas as anesthetics

## Artistic Achievements

### Recall

### Notes

- some people predicted that a cultural flourishing would follow the political awakening and they were wrong
  - Americans struggled to form a unique American culture
- Americans chose to imitate Old World architecture rather than build their own stuff
  - **Federal Style** architecture borrowed from classic Greeks and Romans with symmetry and balance
    - columns, domes, pediments
  - a **Greek Revival** came between 1820 and 1850 and houses popped up over America with Gothic style architecture
    - arches, sloped roofs, stained-glass windows
- Thomas Jefferson was also an architect and he was inspired by 16th century Andrea Palladio's style
- early American paintings did not have a unique style
  - early portrait painters went to England where they could have education and actual customers
- theatre was a sinful waste of time, so was art in general
- competent painters still emerged
  - Gilbert Stuart competed against the best artists in Britain and then painted George Washington somewhat picturesque

- Charles Willson Peale painted 60 portraits of Washington who only sat still for about 14 of them
- John Trumbull recreated war scenes on canvas
- after War of 1812, focus of paintings shifted to natural landscape
  - **Hudson River school** housed this type of art
  - Thomas Cole and Asher Durand celebrated nature and showed the threat of human expansion to pristine environments
  - Albert Bierstadt dramatically rendered natural landscapes
- portrait painters encountered competition from crude photography called daguerrotype
- music was slowly gaining steam by shaking off religious roots
  - **minstrel shows** featured blackface, which were uniquely American in all the wrong ways
  - "Dixie" adopted by Confederates as their battle hymn
  - Stephen C. Foster wrote three songs sang in California gold-rushers
    - he got less popular and drank to death
    - songwriters didn't earn money because copyright wasn't for them



## The Blossoming of a National Literature

### Recall

### Notes

- American literature fell short
  - despite having a population that was actually literate, America plagiarized much of its work from Britain
  - political issues got the most focus which is where all the literacy went
- **romanticism** emerged after War of 1812, emphasizing imagination over reason, nature over civilization, intuition over calculation, self over society
  - primal nature
- Washington Irving first American recognized internationally for literacy
  - used American themes and Gothic stories
- James Fenimore Cooper did some stuff and made New World themes acceptable
  - read a book to his wife and went, 'hey, I can write better than that'
  - wrote a bunch of novels of American exploration of Republican government
- William Cullen Bryant wrote "Thanatopsis" when he was just 16 years old
  - poems
  - Bryant edited *New York Evening Post* and set standards for journalism that was dignified and liberal

## Trumpeters of Transcendentalism

## Recall

## Notes

- second quarter of the 19th century had **transcendentalism**
  - liberalizing straightjacket Puritan theology
  - everyone can talk to God
  - religious and social individualism
    - self-reliance, self-culture, self-discipline
- Ralph Waldo Emerson was a lyceum lecturer and wrote an address called **The American Scholar**
  - intellectual declaration of independence telling American writers to stop copying Europeans and explore their own themes
  - poet and philosopher but only mediocre at both
    - still wrote essays which thousands of people
    - stressed self-improvement, self-confidence, optimism, freedom
- Henry David Thoreau, poet, mystic, nonconformist, and transcendentalist
  - didn't support slavery and wrote a book on simply existing in a hut near Walden Pond
- Margaret Fuller edited *The Dial*, promoting transcendentalism
  - launched paid seminars encouraging elite women to have conversations
  - criticized gender roles and was a feminist
- Walt Whitman wrote poems with emotion and didn't follow poetry rules
  - "All the Past we leave behind;  
*We debouch upon a newer, mightier world, varied world;  
Fresh and strong the world we seize—world of labor and the march—  
Pioneers! O Pioneers!*"

## Glowing Literacy Rights

## Recall

## Notes

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow taught modern languages and was also a poet
  - wide knowledge of European culture let him use themes
  - first American to be enshrined in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey
- Greenleaf Whittier was poet of antislavery crusade
  - abolitionist poems called out inhumanity, injustice, intolerance
- James Russell Lowell was essayist, literary critic, diplomat, editor
  - poet in political satire opposing the Mexican War
- Louisa May Alcott wrote *Little Women* and supported her family
- Emily Dickinson wrote poems about social remove with simple rhymes and spare language
  - published like a dozen poems during her life but over 2000 more upon death
- William Gilmore Simms, novelist, wrote 82 books about southern frontier and other southern literature



## Literary Individualists and Dissenters

### Recall

### Notes

- Edgar Allen Poe was a literary genius specialized in Gothic horror and lyric poet
  - suffered in his life so his works reflected that
  - set high standards for detective stories
  - morbid writing
- Nathaniel Hawthorne was a Calvinist and he wrote *The Scarlet Letter*
  - psychological horror
- Herman Melville wrote *Moby Dick*
  - people didn't like it cause they wanted straightforward books

## Portrayers of the Past

### Recall

### Notes

- George Bancroft wrote superpatriotic history of the United States
- William H. Prescott published classic accounts of the conquest of Mexico and Peru
- Francis Parkman wrote about war between France and Britain for North America
- a lot of New Englanders had big libraries and writers
  - allowed for "New England" interpretation of history