

# The American Pageant

## 15<sup>th</sup> Edition

### Chapter 15 notes

#### The Ferment of Reform and Culture

## **I. Reviving Religion**

1. Church attendance was still regular but deism was being promoted widely.
  - It relied on science more than the bible and denied the divinity of Christ.
  - Deism helped spin off the Unitarian faith- believed that God existed only in one person and he was a loving father figure not a stern creator. This appealed mostly to the intellectuals.
2. Second Great Awakening started in the 1800s.
  - It converted people, shattered/ reorganized churches, and encouraged evangelicalism, prison reform, women's movements and a crusade to abolish slavery.
  - Peter Cartwright was a well known traveling frontier preacher and converted thousands to Christianity.
  - Charles Grandison Finney was the greatest revival preacher.
3. Women played a bigger role in religion this time around.

## **II. Denominational Diversity**

1. Preachers went to Western New York where the puritans had settled; it was called the burnt over district.
  - The second great awakening widened lines between classes and religion, issues about slavery split churches apart.

## **III. A Desert Zion in Utah**

1. Joseph Smith reported having received golden plates from an angel and when deciphered they constituted the book of Mormon and this launched the Church of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).
  - Hostility arose towards them; Smith and his brother were murdered. Brigham Young took over and led the Mormons to Utah.
  - They had problems with the US and becoming a state because of their polygamy practices.

## **IV. Free Schools for a Free People**

1. Tax supported schools came along in 1825-1850, the rich realized that the children (even the poor ones) were the future of America and didn't want the majority voters to be ignorant.
2. Schools housed 8 grades in one room and the male teachers were ill-trained, ill-tempered and underpaid.
3. Horace Mann campaigned for reform- better school houses, longer school years, more curriculum and higher teacher pay.
  - o Blacks were still excluded from education opportunities.
  - o Noah Webster made a dictionary to standardize the language.
- V. Higher Goals for Higher Learning
4. There weren't many good colleges that offered a wide-curriculum.
5. The first state supported universities came in 1795. The University of Virginia was founded by Thomas Jefferson.
6. Women's higher education was frowned upon- too much learning was thought to injure the feminine brain, undermine health and made women unfit for marriage.
  - o Oberlin College in Ohio was the 1st coeducational university and it also opened its doors to blacks.

## **VI. An Age of Reform**

1. People now had a desire to change for a perfected society.
  - o Debtor's prisons were abolished and criminal codes were being softened. Brutal punishments were being slowly eliminated
2. New ideas were taking place- i.e. Prisons should help reform people as well as punish them
  - o People who were insane were treated terribly because of the old beliefs that they were possessed by demons.
  - o Dorothea Dix helped people understand that the people were mentally ill and not doing it on purpose.
  - o In 1826 the American Peace Society was formed by William Ladd.

## **VII. Demon Rum- the "Old Deluder"**

1. There was a problem with excessive drinking among not only men, but also women, clergymen and congress members.  
It decreased efficiency of labor and increased accidents at work. Excessive drinking also threatened the sanctity of family.
2. The American Temperance society was formed in 1826 to reform drunkards.
  - o Some people just wanted to have people cut back on drinking but some like Neal Dow "The father of prohibition" wanted it gone completely.

## **VIII. Women In Revolt**

1. In the 19th century women roles were the ones of the weak bodied and weak minded but artistically refined homemakers.
  - o American women were a little better off than their European counterparts.
  - o Gender Differences were strongly emphasized by the distinct economic roles the market economy brought.

2. Women started a reform movement in the mid 19th century.
  - Feminists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Blackwell- the first female medical graduate- challenged the men's world.
  - Women also campaigned against the evils of slavery.
  - Feminists met in 1848 for the women's rights convention at Seneca Falls in New York, they rewrote the Constitution to include women they managed to launch the woman's rights movement.

## **IX. Wilderness Utopia**

1. Robert Owen, seeking human betterment founded a community.
  - All of the Utopias: New Harmony, Brook Farm, Oneida Community and the shakers all failed because of competition with the democratic free enterprise and free lands

## **X. The Dawn of The Scientific Achievement**

1. Americans were more interested in practical gadgets than in pure science. They borrowed and adapted Europeans findings.
2. Medicine in America was still primitive my modern standards.
  - Illness often resulted from improper diet, hurried eating, perspiring and cooling off too rapidly and ignoring germs/ sanitation.
  - In the 1840's doctors and dentists started to use laughing gas and ether as anesthetics.

## **XI. Artistic Achievements**

1. Architecturally Americans chose to imitate old world values borrowing from classical Greek and Roman examples.
2. Painting and theater suffered because there was not enough wealthy to sit and pay for art and entertainment in their leisure time.
  - Artists were exported to learn in Europe and art was imported.
  - Charles Willson Peale painted some 60 portraits for President George Washington; one of them is on our dollar bill.
  - After 1812 painters changed their subjects from portraits to landscapes.
  - Romantic Art spawned in this era (1820's).
  - Painters had some competition when crude photography showed up.
3. Music was changing- turning away from puritan disapproval.
  - American folk music had slave spirit influences.

## **XII. The Blossoming of National Literature**

1. Before 1820 there wasn't any good American literature. Americans were too busy conquering a continent.
  - After the arrival of romanticism in 1820 the wave of nationalism inspired many authors – they now emphasized imagination over reason, nature over

civilization, intuition over calculation and self over society. American literature flowed like never before.

- Washington Irving was the 1st American to win international recognition as a literary figure. Also important and widely recognized were writer James Fenimore Cooper and poet William Cullen Bryant.

### **XIII. Trumpeters of Transcendentalism**

1. The next literary movement was the transcendentalism which rejected that all knowledge comes to the mind through the senses they thought the truth rather “transcends” the senses.
  - Commitment to self-reliance, self-culture, and self-discipline were parts of the beliefs that bred hostility to authority.
  - Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were well known for being nonconformist poets and essayists. Margaret Fuller and Walt Whitman were important transcendentalists too.

### **XIV. Glowing Literary Lights**

1. Not all poets of the time were influenced by transcendentalism. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote for the refined class and it was adopted by the less cultured classes. His writing was also liked in Europe.
  - John Greenleaf Whittier wrote abolitionist poems
  - Professor James Russell Lowell was a distinguished essayist and poet opposing the Mexican war.
  - Louisa May Alcott wrote “Little Women” to support her family.
  - Emily Dickinson lived reclusively; she explored universal themes of love, nature, death and immortality in her writing.
  - Novelist William Gilmore Simms dealt with books about the southern frontier in colonial days and he believed in slavery.

### **XV. Literary Individualists and Dissenters**

1. Not all writers were interested in human goodness. Contrary minded authors played with the darker realms of human experience- Pain, fear, death, grief, supernatural and the unconscious.
  - Edgar Allan Poe had a miserable life but was a gifted lyric poet and excelled in the short story. He showed a lot of gothic morbidity in his writings.
2. Nathaniel Hawthorne was influenced with Calvinist obsession with original sin and struggle between good and evil as seen in the “Scarlet Letter”
3. Herman Melville wrote Moby Dick the story of struggle between a whale with an allegory between good and evil.

### **XVI. Portrayers of the Past**

1. A distinguished group of American historians was emerging at the same time. George Bancroft – “father of American history” published volumes about American history.
2. William H. Prescott and Francis Parkman had terrible vision but published accounts of American history.
3. Most of the early historians came from the New England Area because there were better stocked libraries.

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