



# U. S. History: From the Colonial Period to 1877

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## 13.1 THE INDUSTRIAL NORTH

<p><b>ECONOMIC &amp; INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION</b> <b>Economic Growth</b></p>	<p>Americans in the 1840s and 1850s witnessed UNPRECEDENTED ECONOMIC GROWTH because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More people were migrating to the CITIES and working in FACTORIES</li> <li>■ There were new sources of energy (STEAM AND COAL) to fuel those factories</li> <li>■ There was a major increase in AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agriculture and Land Policy</b></p>	<p>Settlement in the MIDWEST increased agricultural productivity because the LACK OF TREES meant that land demanded less energy to clear and the RICH SOIL gave higher crop yields. Farmers increased their production by adopting new agricultural techniques that greatly reduced the labor necessary for producing a crop. Most important were IMPROVED TOOLS and FARM MACHINES, such as the JOHN DEERE STEEL PLOW, introduced in 1837 and continually improved thereafter, and the MCCORMICK REAPER. The federal government made land available to settlers at the relatively low cost of \$1.25 PER ACRE, a policy that underlay the agricultural expansion of the nineteenth century.</p>
<p><b>Manufacturing &amp; Mechanization</b></p>	<p>Because the United States was LAND RICH AND LABOR POOR, manufacturers constantly had to find ways to save labor. MECHANIZATION offered the best prospects. The essential features of this mode of production became the use of INTERCHANGEABLE PARTS. Within a factory setting, standardized parts could be efficiently and rapidly assembled into a final product. This practice, known as the "American system," spread from industry to industry. MANUFACTURING AND AGRICULTURE meshed into a DYNAMIC NATIONAL ECONOMY, as New England (which led the nation in manufacture) shipped products like clocks, axes, and guns west and south in exchange for southern and western goods like wheat, pork, whiskey, tobacco, and cotton.</p>
<p><b>Railroads</b></p>	<p>The RISE OF RAILROADS during the 1840s and 1850s had an enormous effect on the economy as a whole. Railroads not only offered a MODE OF TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL faster than any other, but they provided the means for cities and communities not linked by rivers or canals to participate in trade. Railroads stimulated the growth of the IRON AND COAL INDUSTRIES and fostered the growth of THE TELEGRAPH INDUSTRY, which was used to improve communication between railroad lines and to avoid collisions. Almost all the railroads were built and owned by PRIVATE CORPORATIONS, but government aid did come in the form of massive LAND GRANTS TO RAILROAD ENTREPRENEURS. An 1850 law provided a grant of six square miles of federal land to companies for each mile of track they built.</p>
<p><b>FREE LABOR: IDEAL V. REALITY</b></p>	<p>Prosperity and advancement during the antebellum period were not accessible to all Americans. Antebellum America was A WHITE MAN'S WORLD, with women and free blacks overwhelmingly excluded from most opportunities. Discrimination against these two groups did not bother most white males, who took it for granted as the accepted order of things. There was concern, however, about the varying nature of white men's experiences. POVERTY existed IN THE MIDST OF PROSPERITY and SOME FAILED while OTHERS SUCCEEDED.</p>
<p><b>Ideal: Self-Reliance + Discipline + Hard Work = Success</b></p>	<p>As northern society became more industrialized, leaders felt compelled to explain why the changes in the region's economy benefited some more than others. They developed the CONCEPT OF "FREE LABOR," which meant that northern society was open to all individuals (i.e., all white males) who were HARD-WORKING, SELF-RELIANT, AND INDEPENDENT. If one maintained these qualities throughout life, they argued, MATERIAL SUCCESS WOULD RESULT. The free-labor system applied not only to landowners but also to wage laborers, with the reasoning that if they worked hard they could rise to the class of independent property owners. In northern public schools, textbooks and teachers attempted to</p>

<p><b><u>Reality:</u> Economic Inequality</b></p>	<p>instill students with FREE-LABOR VALUES: SELF-RELIANCE, DISCIPLINE, and above all, HARD WORK.</p> <p>Free-labor apologists considered the gaps between rich and poor to be inevitable because some individuals simply were harder workers, more talented, and luckier than others. Though many men obtained the free-labor ideal, more Americans did not (i.e., they remained LANDLESS AND WORKED FOR WAGES). As with any such ideal, those who believed in it and did not succeed suffered great anxiety. The free-labor ideal led countless Americans, both rural and urban, to move every few years, searching for an opportunity that might never present itself. Thus, reality for many Americans, no matter how hard they worked, was not material success and security BUT A LIFE OF PERPETUAL SELF-DOUBT AND PERSONAL DISSATISFACTION.</p>
<p><b>Immigrants and the Free-Labor Ladder</b></p>	<p>The risks and vagaries of free labor did not prevent millions of immigrants, mainly from Germany and Ireland, from coming to the United States during the 1840s and 1850s. The majority of GERMAN IMMIGRANTS were ARTISANS or TRADESMEN who settled in urban areas, especially in midwestern cities. On the whole, German Americans attained the free-labor ideal, becoming middle-class, independent producers. IRISH IMMIGRANTS were driven to the United States by destitution caused by famine. They entered at THE BOTTOM RUNG of the free-labor ladder and HAD DIFFICULTY CLIMBING UP. Approximately three out of four Irish immigrants worked as laborers or domestic servants. Most settled in northeastern cities, surviving on whatever low-paid menial labor they could find. The Irish were looked down on and DISCRIMINATED AGAINST by most native-born Americans, and their Catholicism aroused Protestant resentment. Still, in America they found abundant (if low-paying) work and could earn in one day wages that would require several weeks of work in Ireland.</p>
<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p>	<p><b>Explain the role of each of the following in the economic growth of the 1840s and 1850s: industry, agriculture, and the railroads.</b></p> <p><b>Explain why the free-labor values of self-reliance, hard work, and discipline did not result in success for everyone. Why did some laborers remain landless and dependent upon wages while others succeeded?</b></p>