

The Changing American Economy, 1815–1860

Directions: Review the significance of each of the following people, places, and topics in preparation for a document-based question on the Market Revolution.

1. The American System
 - Henry Clay
 - Second Bank of the United States
 - National currency
 - Protectionism
 - Tariff
 - Tariff of Abominations (1828)
2. The Transportation Revolution
 - Robert Fulton
 - National Road
 - Erie Canal
 - Main Line Canal
 - John Bull Locomotive
 - Baltimore and Ohio Railroad
3. Economic Change in the Northeast
 - Subsistence agriculture
 - Commercialization of agriculture
 - Samuel Slater
 - Factory towns: The Rhode Island system
 - Francis Cabot Lowell
 - Factory towns: The Waltham system
 - Elias Howe and Isaac Singer
 - Eli Whitney and interchangeable parts
4. Economic Change in the Midwest
 - Cyrus McCormick
 - John Deere
 - Commercialization of agriculture
 - Urbanization in the Midwest
 - Indian removal
 - Immigration
5. Economic Change in the South
 - Cotton gin
 - Cotton kingdom
 - Plantation system
 - Slave trade
 - Urban slavery in Upper South
 - John C. Calhoun

Document-Based Question: The Transportation Revolution, the Market Economy, and the Growth of Regionalism

Directions: Use the following documents and any additional knowledge that you have about the period from 1815 to 1860 to answer the following question in a well-organized essay. Be sure that you cite at least five of the documents provided.

How did changes in the American economic system lay the foundation for the increasing regional differences between the Northeast, the West, and the South?

Document 1

Harriet Robinson, “Early Factory Labor in New England” (1883)

In 1832, Lowell was little more than a factory village. Five “corporations” were started, and the cotton mills belonging to them were building. Help was in great demand and stories were told all over the country of the new factory place, and the high wages that were offered to all classes of workpeople; stories that reached the ears of mechanics’ and farmers’ sons and gave new life to lonely and dependent women in distant towns and farmhouses. . . . Troops of young girls came from different parts of New England, and from Canada, and men were employed to collect them at so much a head, and deliver them at the factories. . . .

At the time the Lowell cotton mills were started the caste of the factory girl was the lowest among the employments of women. In England and in France, particularly, great injustice had been done to her real character. She was represented as subjected to influences that must destroy her purity and self-respect. In the eyes of her overseer she was but a brute, a slave, to be beaten, pinched and pushed about. It was to overcome this prejudice that such high wages had been offered to women that they might be induced to become mill girls, in spite of the opprobrium that still clung to this degrading occupation. . . .

The early millgirls were of different ages. Some were not over ten years old; a few were in middle life, but the majority were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five. The very young girls were called “doffers.” They “doffed,” or took off, the full bobbins from the spinningframes, and replaced them with empty ones. These mites worked about fifteen minutes every hour and the rest of the time was their own. When the overseer was kind they were allowed to read, knit, or go outside the millyard to play. They were paid two dollars a week. The working hours of all the girls extended from five o’clock in the morning until seven in the evening, with one half hour each, for breakfast and dinner. Even the doffers were forced to be on duty nearly fourteen hours a day. This was the greatest hardship in the lives of these children. Several years later a ten-hour law was passed, but not until long after some of these little doffers were old enough to appear before the legislative committee on the subject, and plead, by their presence, for a reduction of the hours of labor.¹

¹Harriet Robinson, “Early Factory Labor in New England,” in Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *Fourteenth Annual Report* (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1883), 380–82, 387–88.

Document 2

James K. Polk, Inaugural Address (March 4, 1845)

The power “to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises” was an indispensable one to be conferred on the Federal Government, which without it would possess no means of providing for its own support. In executing this power by levying a tariff of duties for the support of Government, the raising of *revenue* should be the *object* and *protection* the *incident*. To reverse this principle and make *protection* the *object* and *revenue* the *incident* would be to inflict manifest injustice upon all other than the protected interests. In levying duties for revenue it is doubtless proper to make such discriminations within the *revenue principle* as will afford incidental protection to our home interests. Within the revenue limit there is a discretion to discriminate; beyond that limit the rightful exercise of the power is not conceded. The incidental protection afforded to our home interests by discriminations within the revenue range it is believed will be ample. In making discriminations all our home interests should as far as practicable be equally protected. The largest portion of our people are agriculturists. Others are employed in manufactures, commerce, navigation, and the mechanic arts. They are all engaged in their respective pursuits and their joint labors constitute the national or home industry. To tax one branch of this home industry for the benefit of another would be unjust. No one of these interests can rightfully claim an advantage over the others, or to be enriched by impoverishing the others.

Document 3

Thaddeus Joy, Speech at the Merchants Exchange, Buffalo, New York (1848)

You will now perceive, gentlemen, that I have brought my narration of the commerce of Buffalo up to the final opening of the Erie canal, from the Lakes to tide water. From that period, the commerce of the Lakes began to grow. And your city, then a small village of less than two thousand inhabitants, began to increase. Its growth, and the importance of its commerce from that period, is well known to most of you, and is more familiar to some of you, than to myself. — The change has been rapid and wonderful. The country bordering on Lake Michigan, which less than a quarter of a century ago, only produced bark canoes and Indian moccasins, is now sending forth a volume of the staff of life, in magnitude so enormous, as to astonish the whole world. And whoever looks over the statistical accounts of the commerce and shipping upon these inland seas, recently and so ably compiled by one of your old and intelligent citizens, James L. Barton, Esq., cannot but be astounded at its almost inconceivable magnitude and importance.

Having called up these reminiscences, gentlemen, I will only say a few words merely to express the pleasure I feel in meeting upon this ground so many enterprising, elastic men, and of beholding Buffalo a great City, of more than forty thousand inhabitants, flushed with a prospect of still further and increasing greatness. I see the rich products of the west wafted into your laps from the Lakes on the one side, and crowding the canal with its departure on the other. I see you going and coming with the speed afforded by the powerful steamboats on the one hand, and by flying locomotives on the other. And I behold you standing in yonder Telegraph office, holding converse with the wheat buyers of Chicago and Milwaukee at the west, and with the flour sellers of New York and Boston at the east. But this spectacle is so sublime, that I can scarcely believe what I see.²

²“Mr. Joy’s Address,” *Commercial Advertiser* (Buffalo, N.Y.), August 22, 1848.

Document 4

Slave Population in Selected States

State	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860
Alabama	N/A	N/A	N/A	47,449	117,549	253,532	342,844	435,080
Arkansas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,576	19,935	47,100	111,115
Delaware	8,887	6,153	4,177	4,509	3,292	2,605	2,290	1,798
Florida	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	25,717	39,310	61,745
Georgia	29,264	59,699	105,218	149,656	217,531	280,944	381,682	462,198
Kentucky	12,430	40,343	80,561	126,732	165,213	182,258	210,981	225,483
Louisiana	N/A	N/A	N/A	69,064	109,588	168,452	244,809	331,726
Maryland	103,036	105,635	111,502	107,398	102,994	89,737	90,368	87,189
Mississippi	N/A	N/A	N/A	32,814	65,659	195,211	309,878	436,631
Missouri	N/A	N/A	N/A	10,222	25,096	58,240	87,422	114,931
N. Carolina	100,783	133,296	168,824	205,017	245,601	245,817	288,548	331,059
S. Carolina	107,094	146,151	196,365	251,783	315,401	327,038	384,984	402,406
Tennessee	N/A	13,584	44,535	80,107	141,603	183,059	239,459	275,719
Texas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	58,161	182,566
Virginia	292,627	346,671	392,518	425,153	469,757	449,087	472,528	490,865

Fig. 6.1.

Document 5

Time Line: Inventions and Innovations of the Industrial Revolution

- 1775 James Watt invents first reliable steam engine.
- 1795 Eli Whitney's cotton gin makes separation of cotton seed from fiber fast and simple.
- 1798 Eli Whitney uses interchangeable parts to speed up production in musket manufacture.
- 1807 Robert Fulton's steamboat, the *Clermont*, navigates the Hudson River from New York to Albany.
- 1814 Francis Lowell brings British spinning and weaving processes together in Waltham Mills.
- 1831 Cyrus McCormick invents the reaper to speed up harvesting of grain.
- 1833 English-built John Bull steam locomotive and railroad cars begin service in New Jersey.
- 1837 John Deere invents first steel plow.
- 1844 Samuel F. B. Morse invents the telegraph.
- 1846 Elias Howe invents sewing machine; production of clothing becomes commercialized.
- 1851 Isaac Singer improves Howe's sewing machine, develops market for industrial use.

Fig. 6.1. Source: "Total Slaves," *Historical Census Browser*, 2004, <<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>> (31 August 2010).

Document 6

Robert Fulton's Steamboat

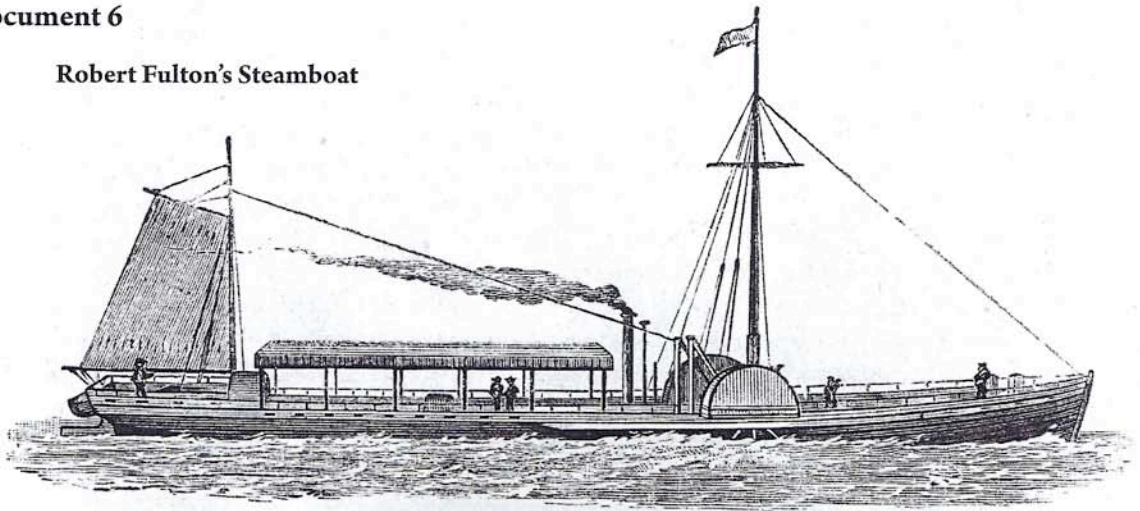


Fig. 6.2.

Document 7

Second Bank of the United States

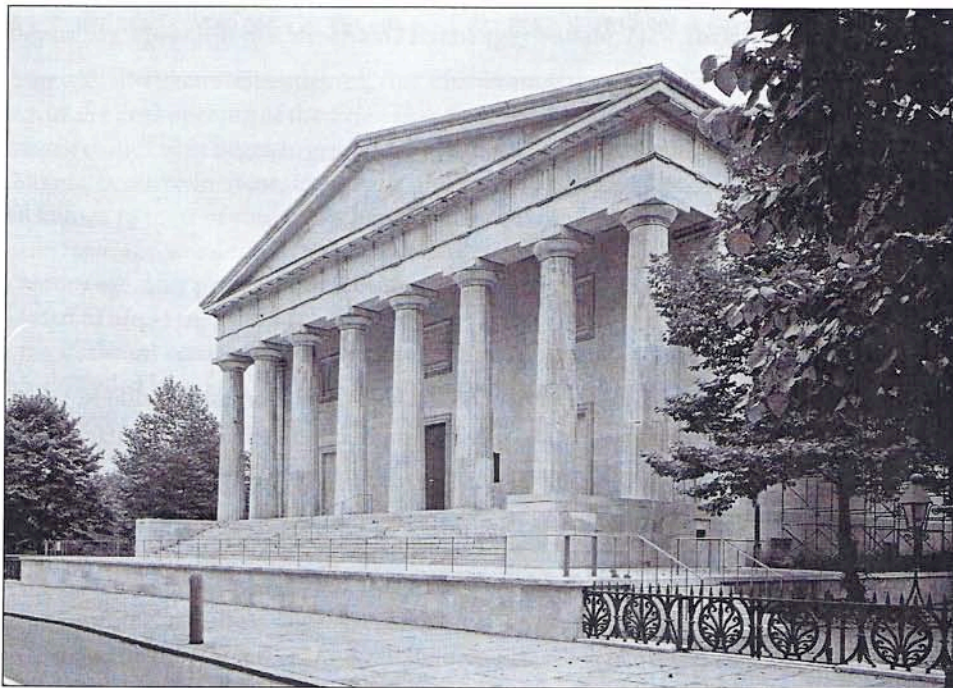


Fig. 6.3.

Fig. 6.2. Broadside view of Robert Fulton's steamboat *Clermont* in 1807, from *The Steam Engine and Its Inventors: A Historical Sketch* by Robert L. Galloway (London: MacMillan and Co., 1881), 237, fig. 49. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-110382.

Fig. 6.3. Second Bank of the United States, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Historic American Buildings Survey, HABSPA, 51-PHILA, 223-26.

Document 8

Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It* (1860)

It is a fact well known to every intelligent Southerner that we are compelled to go to the North for almost every article of utility and adornment, from matches, shoepegs and paintings up to cotton-mills, steamships and statuary; that we have no foreign trade, no princely merchants, nor respectable artists; that, in comparison with the free states, we contribute nothing to the literature, polite arts and inventions of the age; that, for want of profitable employment at home, large numbers of our native population find themselves necessitated to emigrate to the West, whilst the free states retain not only the larger proportion of those born within their own limits, but induce, annually, hundreds of thousands of foreigners to settle and remain amongst them; that almost everything produced at the North meets with ready sale, while, at the same time, there is no demand, even among our own citizens, for the productions of Southern industry; that, owing to the absence of a proper system of business amongst us, the North becomes, in one way or another, the proprietor and dispenser of all our floating wealth, and that we are dependent on Northern capitalists for the means necessary to build our railroads, canals and other public improvements. . . .³

³Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It* (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1860), 21.