Chapter 9: An Empire for Liberty, 1790–1824

Chapter Review

I. AMERICAN COMMUNITIES Expansion Touches Mandan Villages on the Upper Missouri

The Mandans had lived along the Missouri River since the fourteenth century. The eighteenth century had been the golden age for these people, who numbered approximately 3,000 in 1804. Matrilineal clans were the main institution of their communities. On their journey to survey the west for President Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark spent the winter with the Mandans. Information provided by the Mandans and other Indian peoples in the west proved invaluable to the explorers. Lewis and Clark had been sent to survey the territory of the Louisiana Purchase as part of President Jefferson’s vision of an expanding agrarian nation, an “empire of liberty”—with no place for native peoples.

MHL video: Lewis and Clark: What Were They Trying to Accomplish? At www.myhistorylab.com

MHL document: Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis (1803) at www.myhistorylab.com

II. NORTH AMERICAN COMMUNITIES FROM COAST TO COAST

The United States entered the nineteenth century full of national pride. However, the United States’ place in the world, and the North American continent, was still uncertain.

a. The New Nation

Two thirds of Americans lived within 50 miles of the coast in small towns and on farms. The Atlantic seaports, which only contained three percent of the population, dominated the economy. Although the seaports were important, Americans looked westward towards open expanses and the opportunity for more land. From 1800 to 1850, Americans spread west all the way to the Pacific, contesting with Native Americans and European rivals.

b. To the North: British North America and Russian America

Britain kept a tight grip on British North America despite its loss of the American colonies in the Revolutionary War. British Canada dominated the continental fur trade and controlled several vital waterways including the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. Eventually British influence spread from Hudson’s Bay to Oregon. British control of this area was an impediment and frustration to westward moving Americans. Further north, Russia held the territory known as Alaska and the Bering Straight. Russians used Alaska for its fur resources, and harsh treatment of native peoples led to repeated revolts.
c. To the West and South: The Spanish Empire, Haiti, and the Caribbean

Spain, in possession of territories in both North and South American posed a potential threat to the United States. The Spanish sought to protect their territories, especially the silver rich territory of Mexico, from American encroachment. Spain also possessed the thriving shipping port of New Orleans, which was vital to American commercial interests and opened to trade by Pinckney’s Treaty. Further west, Spain controlled St. Louis and Santa Fé as well as expanding missions in California.

The Caribbean, a series of rich sugar islands held by various European powers including Spain, France, and Britain, posed a unique challenge to America as well. The islands provided up to 90 percent of Europe’s sugar and used slave labor to harvest the sugar cane. In 1791, Toussaint L’Ouverture led a slave revolt on the island of Saint-Domingue, France’s richest colony. A slave revolt so close to America filled many white southerners with fear.

d. Trans-Appalachia

The region of greatest growth within the United States was the territory west of the Appalachian Mountains. This was also the area most affected by fears of continued British influence on the region’s Indian peoples. Migration, which was usually a family affair, was increasingly becoming part of American life. As western populations grew and cities like Cincinnati flourished, river traffic grew as well. Control of New Orleans increasingly became an important issue to western farmers and merchants alike.

III. A NATIONAL ECONOMY

In 1800, the United States was predominantly a producer of raw materials. As a developing nation, the United States needed to be wary of economic domination by stronger, more established nations. This fear is illustrated by the concern over Spanish control of New Orleans.

a. Cotton and the Economy of the Young Republic

In 1800 the United States was a predominately rural and agricultural nation. In the north, crops were grown for subsistence and home consumption rather than for commercial sale. In the South, plantation agriculture and the use of slavery in the production of cotton for commercial sale dominated the economy. Technological advances like the cotton gin further ingrained cotton in the South’s economy. Economic expansion was limited by economic policies of the great powers.

b. Neutral Shipping in a World at War

Restrictions on American trade in the West Indies did not deter the development of a strong shipping industry centered in Atlantic ports. A series of wars between Britain
and France provided a substantial economic opportunity for American shipping. America’s neutral status enabled American ships to carry goods to both Britain and France while the conflict ensured that the two nations were not trading with one another. These European conflicts also enabled American shipping interests to seize lucrative opportunities in the China trade, including the Columbia River fur trade. American participation in shipping also fostered a strong shipbuilding industry within the United States and encouraged farmers to produce foodstuffs for growing cities.

IV. THE JEFFERSON PRESIDENCY

Jefferson’s inauguration as the third president of the United States was a momentous accomplishment. It marked the peaceful transition of power from the Federalists to the Republicans. Jefferson’s presidency would demonstrate that a strong party system could shape national policy without leading to a dictatorship or popular revolt.

MHL document: Margaret Bayard Smith, Reflections upon Meeting Jefferson (1809) at www.myhistorylab.com

a. Republican Agrarianism

Jefferson’s political philosophy focused on westward expansion. He believed that European governments had failed because they, unlike the United States, lacked room to grow. Jefferson’s vision of America was of a nation of small farmers, independent and self-sufficient. For this dream to be reality, westward expansion was necessary to prevent a Malthusian crisis. However, expansion was not all good. Westward expansion caused environmental damage, soil exhaustion, instability in communities, and fostered mistreatment and even abuse of Indian peoples who continued to be forced out of the way of white expansion.

b. Jefferson’s Government

Thomas Jefferson’s plan for the American government involved “simplicity and virtue.” He cut internal taxes, reduced the size of the army and the navy, and reduced the number of government employees. Jefferson was successful in these reductions in part because the national government had a much smaller role in American life than it does today—the Post Office was the only federal agency that touched most Americans. The small national government also helps to explain the rather unimpressive appearance of the nation’s capital at the time.

c. An Independent Judiciary

The switch from Federalist to Republican leadership raised questions about whether or not the judiciary should be independent of politics. Marbury v. Madison settled the issue. Chief Justice Marshall defended the independence of the judiciary and the principle of judicial review. Under Chief Justice Marshall’s leadership the Supreme Court would become a strong nationalizing force.
d. Opportunity: The Louisiana Purchase

In 1803, France and Britain were at war again. America, however, was protected by the Atlantic Ocean from the fighting. Napoleon considered North America a potential battleground for the European conflict and secretly reacquired the Louisiana Territory from Spain. Jefferson instructed Robert Livingston to negotiate to buy New Orleans from France for $2 million. In need of money to continue his military campaigns, Napoleon offered to sell the entire Louisiana Territory for $15 million. Although not authorized by the Constitution to agree to such a deal, Jefferson, arguing that expansion was necessary for liberty and the nation’s republican future, purchased the Louisiana Territory. Jefferson’s republican vision was undermined by the development of Louisiana, where natives were pushed aside and six new slaves states would join the Union by 1850.

MHL map: Louisiana Purchase at www.myhistorylab.com

e. Incorporating Louisiana

The immediate issue surrounding the Louisiana Purchase involved the Spanish and French residents of the territory. In order to accommodate the current residents while still incorporating the territory into America, Louisiana was allowed to adopt a legal code based on French civil law under which both free blacks and Indians had few rights. In 1812 with the required 60,000 free inhabitants, Louisiana was admitted to the union with a racially and ethnically diverse population of creoles, Americans, immigrants and free and enslaved blacks.

f. Texas and the Struggle for Mexican Independence

Spain objected to Napoleon’s sale of Louisiana to the United States. Now Spanish Mexico and the United States shared a common border. Conflict between Spain and France in Mexico resulted in the Spanish loss of Mexico. Two popular revolts against the French king Joseph Bonaparte led by Father Miguel Hidalgo and Father Jose Maria Morelos, were suppressed by royalists. But in 1812 a small force led by Mexican republicans, but composed mostly of Americans, invaded Texas, captured San Antonio, and declared Texas independent. A year later the Mexican republicans were defeated, but Americans such as Aaron Burr saw Texas as an opportunity for expansion.

V. RENEWED IMPERIAL RIVALRY IN NORTH AMERICA

Jefferson easily won reelection in 1804 after the Louisiana Purchase. After Burr killed Hamilton in a duel, the Federalists continued to dwindle to a small sectional group unable to attract voters outside of New England.

a. Problems with Neutral Rights
As the wars between Britain and France continued, American shipping continued to profit from neutrality. In 1805, the British targeted the American reexport trade by seizing American ships carrying French West Indian goods to Europe. Americans viewed these seizures as a violation of their neutral status. British sailors frequently deserted to American ships. As a result, the British began stopping American ships and forcibly impressing anyone they suspected to be a deserter. At least 6,000 innocent American citizens were forcibly impressed into the British navy from 1803 to 1812 as a result of this policy. Impressment turned violent with the 1807 *Chesapeake* incident.

b. The Embargo Act

Jefferson insisted on America’s right, as a neutral nation, to ship goods to Europe. In 1806, Congress passed the Non-Importation Act to boycott British goods. The boycott was not successful. In 1807 Jefferson imposed the Embargo Act, which prohibited American ships from sailing to any foreign port. While the act was intended to force Britain and France to respect American neutrality, it instead brought commerce to a standstill and threw the nation into an economic depression and revitalized the Federalist in hard-hit New England.

c. Madison and the Failure of “Peaceable Coercion”

James Madison succeeded Jefferson to the American presidency. The Embargo Act had little effect on the European powers and thus was repealed by Congress. The struggle to remain neutral in disputes between powerful European nations continued with increasingly futile measures, the Non-Intercourse Act and Macon’s Bill Number 2.

d. A Contradictory Indian Policy

In the West, Indian nations were determined to resist the white settlers that pushed into their territories. North of the Ohio River lived the Northwest Confederation of the Shawnees, Delewares, Miamis, Potowatomis, and other small tribes. To the south lived the “Five Civilized Tribes”: the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and the Seminoles. In violation of the Indian Intercourse Act of 1790, which required treaties between the American government and Indian tribes, white settlers pushed ahead of treaty boundaries and further into Indian territory. Indians were trapped in an unending cycle of invasion, resistance, and defeat. After the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson ordered Indian groups to new lands west of the Mississippi River and away from the encroachment of white settlers. Because Jefferson’s Indian policy did nothing to halt westward expansion, Indian peoples had little hope but to relocate.

e. Indian Alternatives

The Shawnees of the Ohio Valley had resisted white settlement since the 1750s. Continuing pressure from settlers left the Shawnee divided. One group, led by Black Hoof, accepted acculturation. The rest of the tribe tried to maintain traditional cultural
ways. One group of Shawnees, led by Tecumseh, sought refuge from white settlement further west. There, Tecumseh molded his brother Tenskwatawa’s message into a powerful Indian resistance movement that had British support. William Henry Harrison’s “victory” over the Shawnee at Tippecanoe Creek only made matters worse, increasing violence and driving Tecumseh into alliance with the British.

**MHL profile:** *Tenskwatawa* at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)

**MHL map:** *Native American Removal* at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)

**VI. THE WAR OF 1812**

President Madison cited British support of western Indians and continued hostilities over neutral shipping rights when he asked Congress for a declaration of war against Britain. Congress granted the request and declared war on June 18, 1812.

a. The War Hawks

The War Hawks, a group of young political leaders elected to Congress in 1810, found all aspects of British interference intolerable. War Hawks such as Clay and Calhoun wanted to occupy Florida to block escape routes for runaway slaves and invade Canada in order to end the potential threat of Northwest Indians supported by the British. The declaration of war received no Federalist support, and in 1812, Madison won reelection with little support from New England and the middle states. Because of Jefferson’s cutbacks in government spending, both the army and navy were weak. In the summer of 1814, the British invaded and burned Washington D.C. in a humiliating defeat for the Americans. A few victories at sea failed to lift the British blockade.

**MHL document:** *A War Hawk Speaks about the British (1811)* at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)

b. The Campaigns Against the Northern and Southern Indians

In the Northwest, the British-Indian Alliance defeated American forces and ruined American ambitions of expansion. With active opposition from New Englanders, in July 1812 the American push into western Canada was repulsed increasing an anti-American sense of Canadian national identity. In another foray in 1813, Tecumseh was killed fighting on the British side, but neither British nor American territorial ambitions were advanced by the war. With aid of rival tribes, Jackson defeated a Red Stick Creek faction in 1814, and demanded large land concessions from the Creeks, the equivalent of one-half of their territory. Jackson’s improbably victory at New Orleans in January 1815 cemented his fame.

**MHL document:** *Indian Hostilities (1812)* at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)

c. Ending the War: The Hartford Convention and the Treaty of Ghent
Federalist opposition to the war culminated in the Hartford Convention of 1814. Federalist representatives from five New England states met to discuss specific grievances. The convention determined that a state had the right to protect its citizens from unconstitutional laws. This stance came to be known as the “nullification doctrine.”

The peace treaty that ended the War of 1812 was signed at Ghent, Belgium on Christmas Eve 1814. The treaty was inconclusive. With war over in Europe, the major issues that had sparked the war, impressments and neutral rights, were not mentioned in the treaty. The British did agree to vacate some western posts. The War of 1812 was one of America’s most divisive wars and a dangerous risk to the new republic. Although there were no clear winners, it was apparent that the losers were the Northwestern Indian nations and their southern allies. Abandonment of the Indians by the British in the Treaty of Ghent sealed their defeat.

VII. DEFINING THE BOUNDARIES

The “Era of Good Feelings” which followed the War of 1812 signaled a period in American political history where politicians largely agreed on the national agenda. A series of diplomatic achievements by John Quincy Adams gave the nation a more sharply defined definition.

a. Another Westward Surge

The end of the War of 1812 was followed by a western surge to the Mississippi River that populated the Old Northwest (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin) and the Old Southwest (western Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana). Both push and pull factors accounted for the large westward migration. Overpopulated land in the east helped push farmers off the land while open western territories pulled them west in search of land. The affordable price of western land was perhaps the most important pull factor. In the Land Act of 1820, Congress set the price of land at $1.25 per acre with a minimum purchase of 80 acres. Geography also facilitated lateral westward movement. This enabled the already entrenched regional cultures to expand westward with settlers and prevented the West from forming a third, unified political region. While free labor was carried into the Northwest by Yankees, the Southwest followed the plantation model, with involuntary Africans immigrants making up half the migrants.


b. The Election of 1816 and the Era of Good Feelings

In 1816, James Monroe was elected president over the last Federalist presidential candidate. In 1820 Monroe ran unopposed and was re-elected. This signaled the triumph of Jeffersonian Republicans over the Federalists. Yet Monroe reached out to the North, earning his presidency the title “Era of Good Feelings” from a Federalist journalist.
Monroe sought a government of national unity and chose members of his cabinet to reflect interests of both Northerners and Southerners. Monroe supported Clay’s “American System,” a program of national economic development. The plan called for Republicans to break with Jefferson and support Federalist proposed measures like the national bank, a tariff on imported goods, and a national system of roads and canals. In 1816, Congress chartered the Second Bank of the United States for 20 years. The Tariff of 1816 was the first substantial protective tariff in American history. Internal improvements, the third piece of the American System, proved to be more controversial, but led to local projects such as the Erie Canal being built without federal money.

c  The Diplomacy of John Quincy Adams

John Quincy Adams, Monroe’s Secretary of State, facilitated many important treaties that helped further define the United States and promoted nationalism. Anglo-American agreements in 1817–18 fixed the border between Canada and the United States at the 49th parallel and established joint occupation of Oregon territory. The Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819 provided for the Spanish cession of Florida to the United States and required that the Spanish drop all claims to the Louisiana and Oregon territories. Finally, Adams drafted the Monroe Doctrine that called for an end to colonization in the Western Hemisphere by European powers and established the intervention of European nations into Western Hemisphere nations as a direct threat to the United States.

MHL document:  *The President Addresses the Union (1823)* at www.myhistorylab.com

e. The Panic of 1819

When the European wars ended, European economic activities rebounded and the years of prosperity enjoyed by America’s shipping industry came to an end. Inexpensive European goods flooded the market and the western land boom turned into a speculative frenzy. The result was what is known as the Panic of 1819, sparked in part by aggressive action by the Second Bank, fueling resentments later exploited by Jackson. Tariff policy also provoked Southern protests in 1824. The United States was clearly becoming a nation dominated by commerce in which economic issues would highlight sectional and political conflicts.

f. The Missouri Compromise

America’s westward expansion raised issues about the institution of slavery. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 banned slavery in trans-Appalachia but made no mention of it elsewhere. The northern states, all of which had abolished slavery by 1819, favored a policy of containment for the institution of slavery. Southerners, concerned with sectional balance and the continuation of slavery, favored the system’s expansion into the western territories. Missouri’s application to join the Union as a slave state in 1819 raised passions in the North and South alike until the admission of Maine as a free state “balanced” Missouri and a line was drawn at Missouri’s southern boundary defining the
extension of slavery westward. The solution was only temporary and, in response, the South became more united in defense of slavery.

VIII. CONCLUSION

American expansion dramatically changed the economic and political landscape, but the spread of slavery and the destruction of Indian communities undermined Jefferson’s empire of liberty.

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to answer the following questions after studying Chapter 9:

1. Where did the new nation find economic opportunities in the world market?
2. How did President Jefferson calm the political hostilities of the 1790s?
3. What values were embodied in republican agrarianism?
4. What unresolved issues between the United States and Britain led to the War of 1812?
5. What were the causes of Indian resistance and how did the War of 1812 resolve them?
6. How did the Missouri Compromise reveal the dangers of expansion?

Discussion Suggestions and Possible Answers

1. What economic and political problems did the United States face as a new nation and how successful were the efforts to solve these problems?

   Answer: The nation was faced with competing notions of agrarian and industrial economic development that elevated either the farmers or the producers above the other and required the nation to carry the burdens of financial debt or rely on the vagaries of agricultural production to sustain itself. The nation needed to establish and secure its economic basis through trade and international markets. Politically the nation needed to define its institutions of government and test them against the developing precedents of the new realities. The emergence of competing parties was extra-legal and had implications for the inherited traditions from the Revolution.

2. What did it mean to believe in republican agrarianism?

   Answer: It upheld the virtuous ideal of the uncorrupt, hard-working, well-governed society in which those with a stake in the land controlled the directions and values of the government. The foundations of government were based on the notions of independence and self-sufficiency.

3. What were the arguments for and against western expansion?
Opponents claimed that expansion caused environmental damage, soil exhaustion, instability in communities, and fostered mistreatment and even abuse of Indian peoples who continued to be forced out of the way. Proponents argued for the increased markets made available, the ability to expand the nation’s economic base, and the opportunity for more Americans to own land.

4. To what extent was the nation’s Indian policy consistent?

Answer: The nation’s policies with respect to Indians varied widely from president to president and the national policy was often at odds with the will and whims of the people who lived in proximity of the frontier. Treaties were increasingly seen as an expedient means to remove the native peoples and were often forced upon the tribes and rarely honored as the pressures of expansion increased.

5. What did the War of 1812 accomplish?

Answer: It forced the British to recognize many elements of American sovereignty, promoted the rise of Andrew Jackson in national politics, secured American access to markets, caused the demise of the Federalist Party, eradicated much of the native opposition to expansion, and established a temporary feeling of national unity and common agreement on the nation’s future.

Lecture Outline

American Communities: Expansion Touches Mandan Villages on the Upper Missouri

North American Communities
   The New Nation
   British and Russian North America
   Spain, Haiti, and the Caribbean
   Trans-Appalachia Frontier

A National Economy
   Cotton and the Economy
   Neutral Shipping in a World at War

Jefferson’s Presidency
   Republican Agrarianism
   Jefferson’s Government
   The Challenge of the Judiciary
   Louisiana and its Perils
   Texas and Mexico

Imperial Rivalry in North America
   Neutrality Threatened
   Peaceable Coercion Fails
Indian Policy and Problems

The War of 1812
  War Hawks
  Northern and Southern Campaigns
  Native Americans in the War
  The Hartford Convention and Treaty of Ghent

Defining Boundaries
  Moving West
  Monroe and Good Feelings
  The American System
  Adams’ Nationalist Diplomacy
  The Panic of 1819
  Missouri Compromise: Sectional Tensions

Conclusion: Promise and Peril of Expansion

Resources (Web, Films/Video)

Web
Statutes and Treaties of the United States Concerning Native Americans: [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/statutes/native/namenu.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/statutes/native/namenu.htm) provides all the legal documents for students to investigate how the United States conducted its affairs with the native peoples prior to the 1830s and Indian removal.


The West: [http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/) covers the history of the peoples of the West but also focuses on the American government’s engagement and sponsorship of exploration and its changing policies with respect to settlement and the Native Americans.

The White House: [http://www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) features pages, documents, and links on all of the nation’s presidents.

Thomas Jefferson: [http://www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org) is the official website of the home of Jefferson with features on his life, presidency, stance on slavery, and role in the western exploration and expansion.

Films/Video
Alexander Hamilton (120 minutes) PBS, 2007. Covers the political and economic contributions of Hamilton as the personal attaché to Washington, a leading force behind the Constitution, and the architect of America’s economic systems.
Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery (240 minutes) PBS, 1997. Chronicles the efforts by the Corps of Discovery to explore the West and expand the reach of the American nation. Their encounters with the Native peoples of the region, the landscape, and nature’s bounty are all examined.

Thomas Jefferson (180 minutes) PBS, 1997. Examines Jefferson’s contribution following his return from Europe as he played a central role in propagating the ideas of the Enlightenment, his presidency, and his life as an American icon.

My History Lab Connections

Reinforce what you learned in this chapter by studying the many documents, images, maps, review tools, and videos available at www.myhistorylab.com.

Read and Review

Read the Documents
Thomas Jefferson to Meriweather Lewis (1803)
Supreme Court Retains Right to Overrule Legislation (1803)
Constitutionality of the Louisiana Purchase (1803)
Lewis and Clark Meet the Shoshone (1805)
Margaret Bayard Smith, Reflections upon Meeting Jefferson (1809)
A War Hawk Speaks About the British (1811)
Indian Hostilities (1812)
“The Western Country” Letter in Niles Weekly Register
The President Addresses the Union (1823)

See the Maps
Louisiana Purchase
Native American Removal
The War of 1812

Research and Explore

Read the Documents
Exploring America: Continentalism
Whose History Is It: In the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark

Read the Biographies
Dolley Madison
Tenskwatawa

Hear the Audio
Jefferson and Liberty
The Star Spangled Banner
See the Video
*Lewis and Clark: What Were They Trying to Accomplish?*

**Critical Thinking Exercises**

What is an American? Students should be asked to read several of the leading writings by Crevecoeur, Tocqueville, Hamilton, Jefferson, and others who sought to define an American citizenry and character at a stage when the nation was experiencing growing pains. What is an American? What does the pursuit of an answer tell us about ourselves?