



## THE ECONOMY OF THE NORTH



*U.S. Postage Stamp Commemorating the Anniversary of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad*

### Unit Overview

Although Americans took great pride in their victory over Mexico, the sectional rivalry between the North and the South continued to intensify. Because they built different economies, both regions were determined to protect their interests. In the North, advancements in technology, transportation and communication encouraged the development of new industries and the expansion of established ones. During the 1850s, the population of the northeast grew rapidly due to the ongoing arrival of large numbers of immigrants. They provided a ready supply of cheap labor in the factories but were often subjected to discrimination and prejudice. African-Americans living in the North also faced unfair treatment and were denied the right to vote in most states. Let's see how it all happened.

## Northern Society

Although many northern industries made large profits by the mid-nineteenth century, the region's wealth was not equally distributed. The **upper class** made up 10% of the North's population, but its members owned 40% of the entire nation's assets. This elite group included bankers, shippers, manufacturers and merchants. They owned factories, mines, railroads and other advantageous businesses. Their families vacationed in Europe, belonged to exclusive social clubs and attended college, a privilege available to only about 1% of Americans at that time. Many upper-class northerners maintained mansions in the city and at the seashore or in the mountains.



*Going to the Opera: Seymour Joseph Guy, 1874*

About 40% of the North's citizens belonged to the **middle class**. It mainly consisted of small-business owners, lawyers, doctors, religious leaders and farmers who owned land. Members belonging to this social category generally enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle and were able to afford the newest conveniences, such as indoor plumbing and central heat. Those who could finance it often sent their

children to private schools with the hope of making connections with the upper class.

The **lower class** composed the remaining 50% of the North's society. Agricultural workers that did not own property and manual laborers in factories were part of this group. For the most part, they had little control over their working conditions, salaries or hours. Most put in twelve or fourteen hours daily six days a week. Industrial accidents were common, and those injured on the job were simply fired. Children of lower-class families often went to work at an early age. This left them little time for school or play. Without training or education, most were destined to earn low wages and had few opportunities to escape poverty.



*A Young Textile Worker in New Hampshire*

In the 1830s, factory employees began organizing and demanded better conditions. Groups of skilled workers involved in the same trades formed **trade unions**, such as the **General Trades Union of New York**. Unskilled workers followed their example. To put pressure on employers for higher wages and shorter work days, workers engaged in **strikes**. During a strike, employees refused to work and tried to disrupt production or service. Strikes were illegal in the early 1800s, and workers were fired for participating in them. However, a Massachusetts court ruled in 1842 that workers did have a right to carry out these activities.



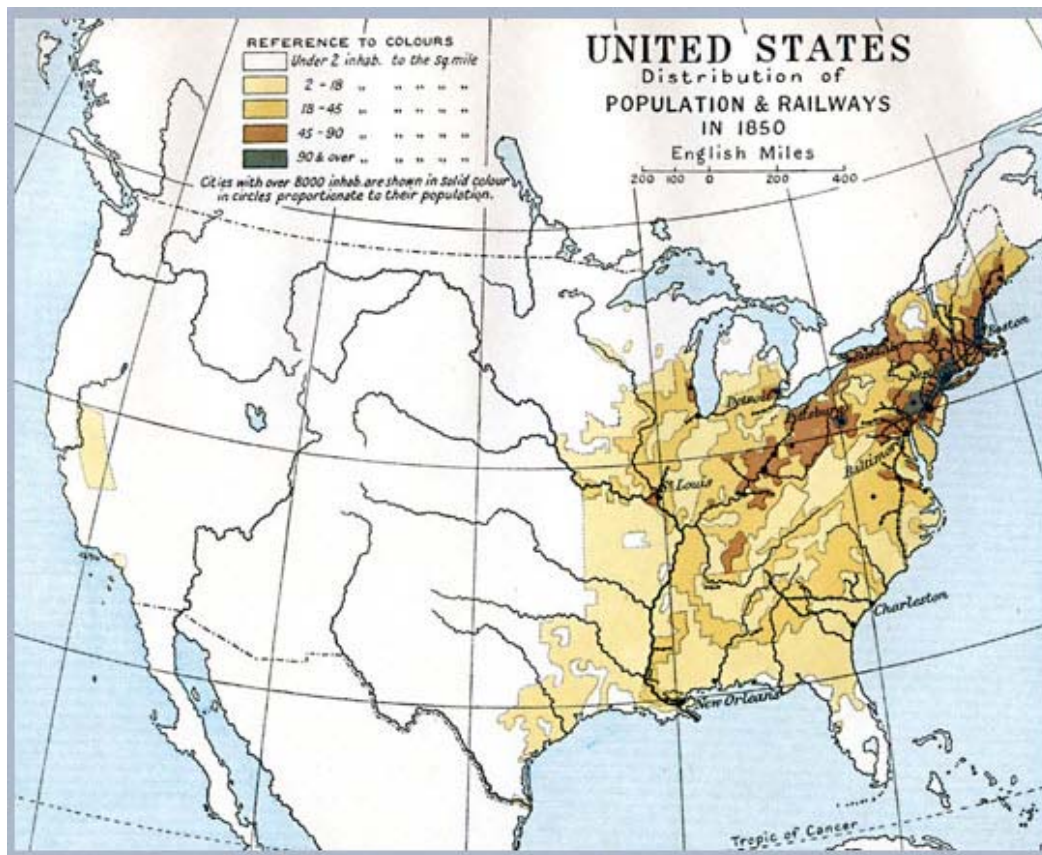
Nonetheless, many years passed before a worker's right to strike was actually respected.



Go to Questions 1 through 6.

## A Growing Population

Between 1845 and 1860, the number of immigrants entering the United States steadily increased. American manufacturers in the Northeast welcomed the new arrivals because many of them were willing to work long hours for little pay. By 1860, the population of the twenty-three states that defined themselves as the North was 21 million. The southern states, on the other hand, accounted for a little over 9 million people, 3.5 of which were enslaved Africans. The map below shows the population distribution throughout the United States in 1850.



Map Courtesy of FCIT and the Roy Winkelman Collection

The largest group of immigrants came from **Ireland**. A census taken in 1850 noted that there were 961,179 people in the United States that were born in Ireland. That number exceeded 1.5 million by 1860. Irish immigrants lived primarily in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio and New Jersey. The men found jobs in factories, in coal mines and on railroads. Women accounted for nearly half of the Irish who came to America. Some found employment in industry; others worked as maids, cooks and nannies in the households of the upper class. The video listed below explains more about the arrival of these future Americans and their impact.



The Immigration Boom



Go to Questions 7 through 10.

## Prejudice and Discrimination

Immigrants brought with them their languages, religions, customs and ways of life. Many of their practices eventually became part of American culture, but some viewed immigration as a threat to the futures of native, or American-born, citizens. Those who opposed the arrival of large numbers of foreigners were called **nativists**. Because many immigrants accepted low salaries, the nativists often blamed them for keeping wages low. They also claimed that foreigners increased crime and disease in cities like New York and Boston.

The anti-immigration sentiment led to the formation of the **American Party**. When asked about their organization, members frequently responded by saying, “I know nothing.” Therefore, the group became known as the **Know-Nothing Party**. The Know-Nothings campaigned for stricter immigration laws and tried to ban foreign-born citizens from running for public office. However, the movement collapsed when the party split over the issue of slavery.



Flag of the Know Nothing Party: 1850

Free African Americans living in the North were also subjected to prejudice and discrimination. Although slavery had been outlawed by most northern states by 1830, African Americans were generally denied the right to vote in public elections. Communities did not permit them to use public facilities and demanded that they have separate hospitals and schools. The overwhelming majority of African Americans living in the North were extremely poor. However, there were some notable exceptions. In 1845, for example, **Macon B. Allen** became the first African American in the United States to practice law. **Henry Boyd** established his own furniture-manufacturing company in Cincinnati, Ohio, while **John B. Russwurm** and **Samuel Cornish** founded *Freedom's Journal*, the country's first African-American newspaper in New York City. At the same time, **abolitionist**, or anti-slavery, organizations formed in many cities and towns throughout the North. These societies included black and white members who hoped to end the practice of slavery in all regions of the United States.



Go to Questions 11 through 13.

## Connecting North and West


Although better roads and canals improved transportation in the United States, northern manufactures and mid-west farmers continued to look for cheaper, faster ways to exchange goods. Following the British example, Americans began experimenting with railroads in the 1830s. The **Baltimore and Ohio** was the first U.S. railroad line. It offered regular passenger service along a thirteen-mile track with carriages pulled by horses. *Tom Thumb*, the first American steam locomotive, was designed and built by **Peter Cooper**. Although it quit working in its first race with a horse-drawn train, steam locomotives quickly became a reliable source of power. Soon a railway network connected the major cities in the Northeast and stretched into the Midwest. Grain, dairy products and livestock moved from mid-west farms to the cities along the eastern seaboard. Because manufactured goods traveled faster and more cheaply by train, producers offered lower prices. This made their products more affordable for settlers in the West.



62 ADVERTISEMENTS.

# Baltimore & Ohio Railroad

RE-OPENED.



THIS GREAT NATIONAL THOROUGHFARE  
IS AGAIN OPEN FOR

## FREIGHTS & TRAVEL.

The Cars and Machinery destroyed are being replaced by  
NEW RUNNING STOCK,  
With all recent improvements; and as the  
Bridges and Track are again in Substantial Condition,  
The well-earned reputation of this Road for  
**SPEED, SECURITY and COMFORT**  
Will be more than sustained under the re-organization of its business.

In addition to the *Unequalled Attractions of Natural Scenery* heretofore conceded to this route, the recent *Troubles upon the Border* have associated numerous points on the Road, between the Ohio River and Harper's Ferry, with painful but instructive interest.

### CONNECTIONS

At the Ohio River, with Cleveland and Pittsburg, Central Ohio, and Marietta and Cincinnati Railroads; and through them with the whole Railway System of the Northwest, Central West and Southwest.  
At Baltimore with Five Daily Trains for Philadelphia and New York.

**TWO DOLLARS ADDITIONAL ON THROUGH TICKETS**  
To Baltimore or the Northern Cities, give the  
Privilege of Visiting **WASHINGTON CITY** en route  
This is the **ONLY ROUTE** by which Passengers can procure *Through Tickets and Through Checks to or from WASHINGTON CITY.*

**W. P. SMITH, Master of Transportation, Balt.**

Poster for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad

Canals and railroads engaged in a bitter competition for customers, but the railroads proved superior in service. They could be built anywhere and could operate year-round. In 1840, the United States had 3000 miles of railroad track. By 1860, 31,000 miles of track, mostly in the North and Midwest, had been built. In 1869, railroad companies completed the transcontinental railroad line, which ran from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast.





*Samuel Morse and a Telegraph Receiver*

Faster travel inspired faster communication. **Samuel Morse**, an American inventor, developed the electric telegraph. For the alphabet, he substituted a code of dots and dashes that could be typed and transferred through a network of telegraph wires. In 1837, he demonstrated his idea by typing a message from a terminal in Washington D.C. A few moments later, an operator in Baltimore sent the same message to Morse as a reply. Soon words were flying back and forth between the two cities. Americans immediately formed telegraph companies and strung telegraph wires across the country. Newspapers used the telegraph to send stories over great distances. Information that once took weeks to travel from East to West arrived in a few moments. For example, election results were spread rapidly across the country with the telegraph. Railroads were able to send information concerning delays or changes in schedules to train stations along their lines.



Go to Questions 14 through 17.

## Revolutionizing Farming

As railroads provided farmers with access to more markets for their crops, mechanized farming equipment offered the ability to increase the size of their harvests. When they first came to the Great Plains, settlers feared that their wooden plows were not strong enough to break up the sod for planting. **John Deere** solved this problem in 1837 with the invention of the steel-tipped plow. This sturdy, metal tool easily cut through the hard-packed soil and simplified the sowing of wheat, a grain that grew in abundance once it took root.



*A Re-enactment of the Use of the McCormick Reaper*

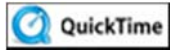
Traditionally, farmers had harvested their crop by cutting it with handheld sickles. This was a slow, time-consuming task. It also limited the amount of wheat that a farmer could manage. That changed when **Cyrus McCormick** designed and built the mechanized reaper. This invention enabled a single farmer to cut more wheat than five farmers working by hand. Learn more about the impact of technology on the lives of Americans by watching the video below.



Technological Developments during the Jacksonian Era

Settlers on the prairie were able to grow wheat for shipment as a cash crop to the Northeast. Then, farmers in the Northeast concentrated on growing fruits and vegetables, products that were better suited to the region's soil and climate. These

changes resulted in what has been called the **Marketing Revolution**. Learn more about its effect on the American economy by watching the video listed below.



### The Market Revolution

The new economy had both positive and negative results. Although farmers and factory owners profited from the growth of agriculture and manufacturing, there were sometimes severe economic downturns and heavy losses. Farmers were dependent on weather conditions and had no control over the fees charged by the railroads. A lack of government regulation left workers and small business owners at the mercy of wealthy industrialists. By the 1930s, reliance on wheat as the cash crop of the Great Plains had destroyed the area's system of natural grasses. This was a major factor in creating the Dust Bowl, an ecological disaster that took years to correct.



Go to Questions 18 through 20.

## What Happened Next?

The economy of the South also prospered between 1820 and 1860. A boom in cotton sales made agriculture profitable, and most southerners believed that the trend would continue. To meet the demand, planters increased their reliance on slave labor and were determined to continue the practice of slavery. Before examining the economy of the southern states in the following unit, review the names and terms in Unit 29; then, complete Questions 21 through 30.



Go to Questions 21 through 30.