

**“The Pursuit
of Perfection”**

**in
Antebellum
America**

1820 to 1860

The Age of Reform

- Reasons:
 - The Great Awakening sparked interest that the individual could control their destiny and that “good deeds” will make the nation a better place
 - The middle-class feel that they should be models of behavior for the “unmannered and ill-behaved”
 - Finally, women are driving forces for reform because they are no longer kept at home and now have a voice (predominantly in the church)

AGE OF REFORM

1. Ante-Bellum—1820 to 1860

- **Romantic age**
 - **Reformers pointed out the inequality in society**
 - **Industrialization vs. progress in human rights**
 - **Primarily a Northern movement**
 - **Southerners refused reforms to protect slavery**

- **Educated society through**
 - **newspaper and lyceum meetings**

- **Areas to reform:**

Slavery

Industrialization

Male domination

War

women's rights

public school

temperance (alcohol)

prison reform

2. 2nd Great Awakening---1820's to 1840's

- **religious revival vs. deists**
 - **Rise of Unitarians---believed in a God of love**
 - **Denied the trinity**
 - **heaven through good works and helping others**
 - **social conscience = social gospel**
 - **apply Christ's teachings to bettering society**
- **Contrasted with salvation by grace and getting to heaven through Christ**
 - **Baptists, Methodists, etc.**

3. Formed utopian societies = collective ownership

The Second Great Awakening



“Spiritual Reform From Within”
[Religious Revivalism]



**Social Reforms & Redefining the Ideal
of Equality**



Temperance



**Asylum &
Penal Reform**



Abolitionism



**Women's
Rights**



Education

The Rise of Popular Religion

In France, I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom pursuing courses diametrically opposed to each other; but in America, I found that they were intimately united, and that they reigned in common over the same country... Religion was the foremost of the political institutions of the United States.

-- Alexis de Tocqueville, 1832

The 2nd Great Awakening



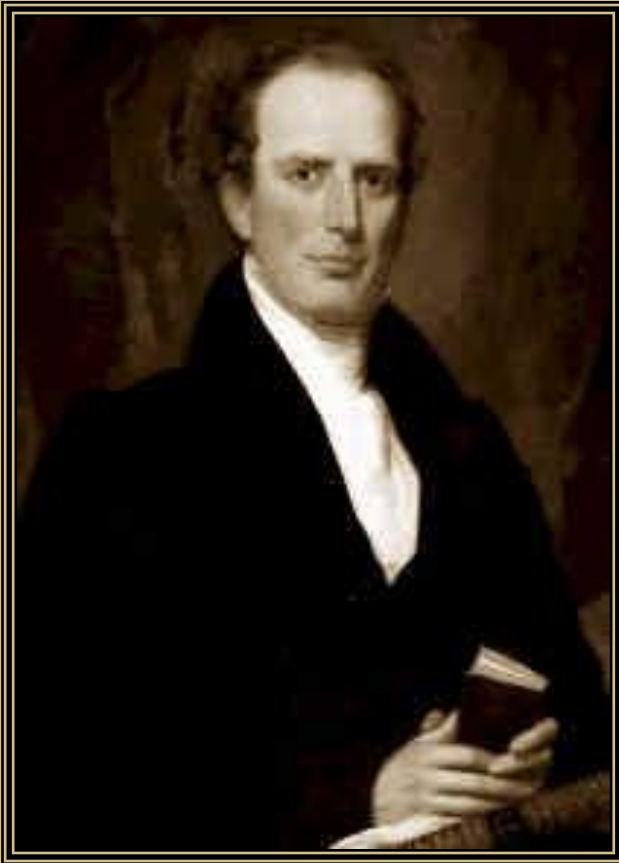
Second Great Awakening

- **As a result of the Second Great Awakening (a series of revivals in the 1790s-early 1800s), the dominant form of Christianity in America became evangelical Protestantism**
 - **Membership in the major Protestant churches—Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist—soared**
 - **By 1840 an estimated half of the adult population was connected to some church, with the Methodists emerging as the largest denomination in both the North and the South**

Revivalism and the Social Order

- **Society during the Jacksonian era was undergoing deep and rapid change**
 - The revolution in markets brought both economic expansion and periodic depressions.
- **To combat this uncertainty reformers sought stability and order in religion**
 - Religion provided a means of social control in a disordered society
 - Church-goers embraced the values of hard work, punctuality, and sobriety
 - Revivals brought unity and strength and a sense of peace

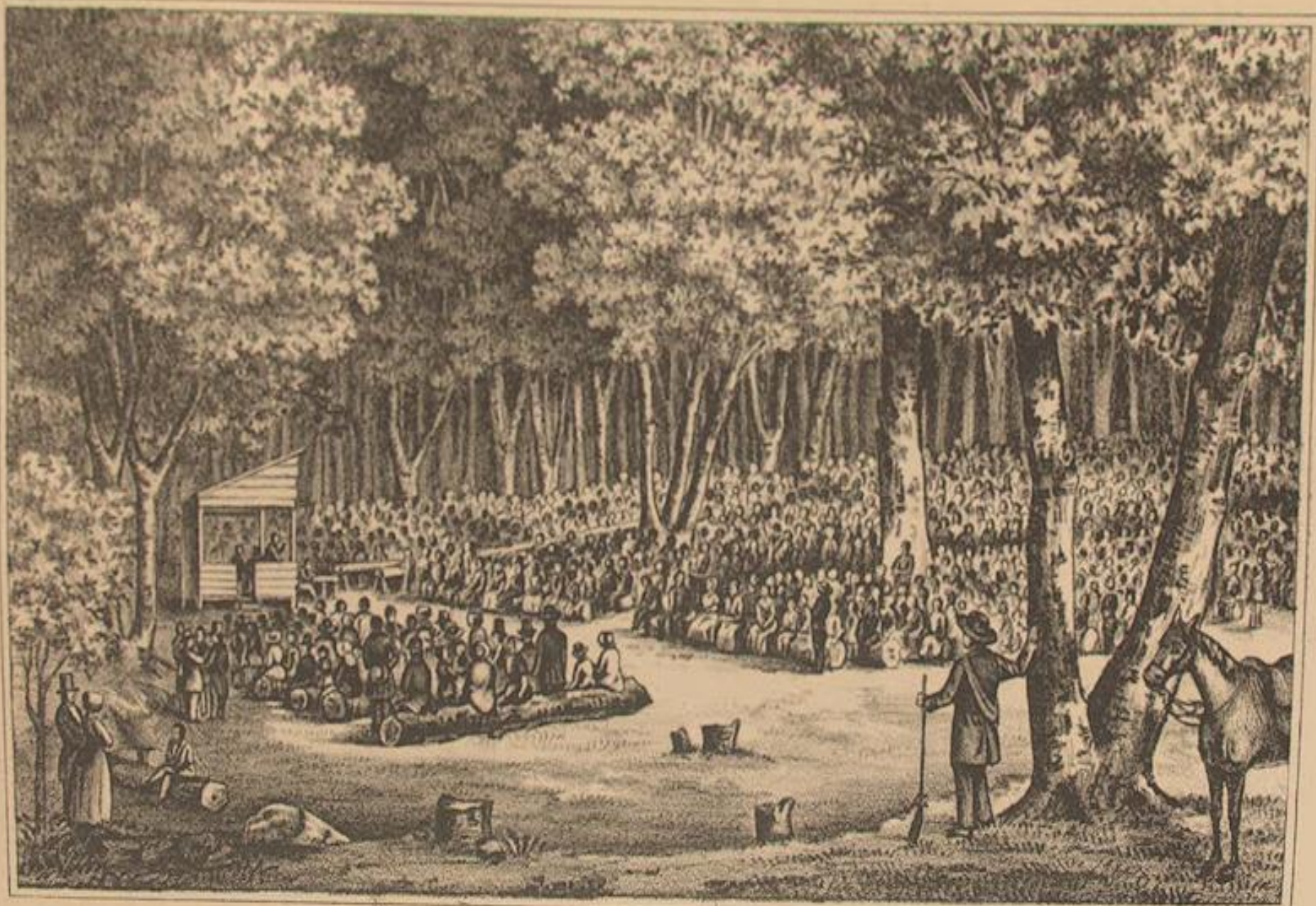
Charles Finney



- Charles Finney conducted his own revivals in the mid 1820s and early 1830s
- He rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination
 - adopted ideas of free will and salvation to all
- Really popularized the new form of revival

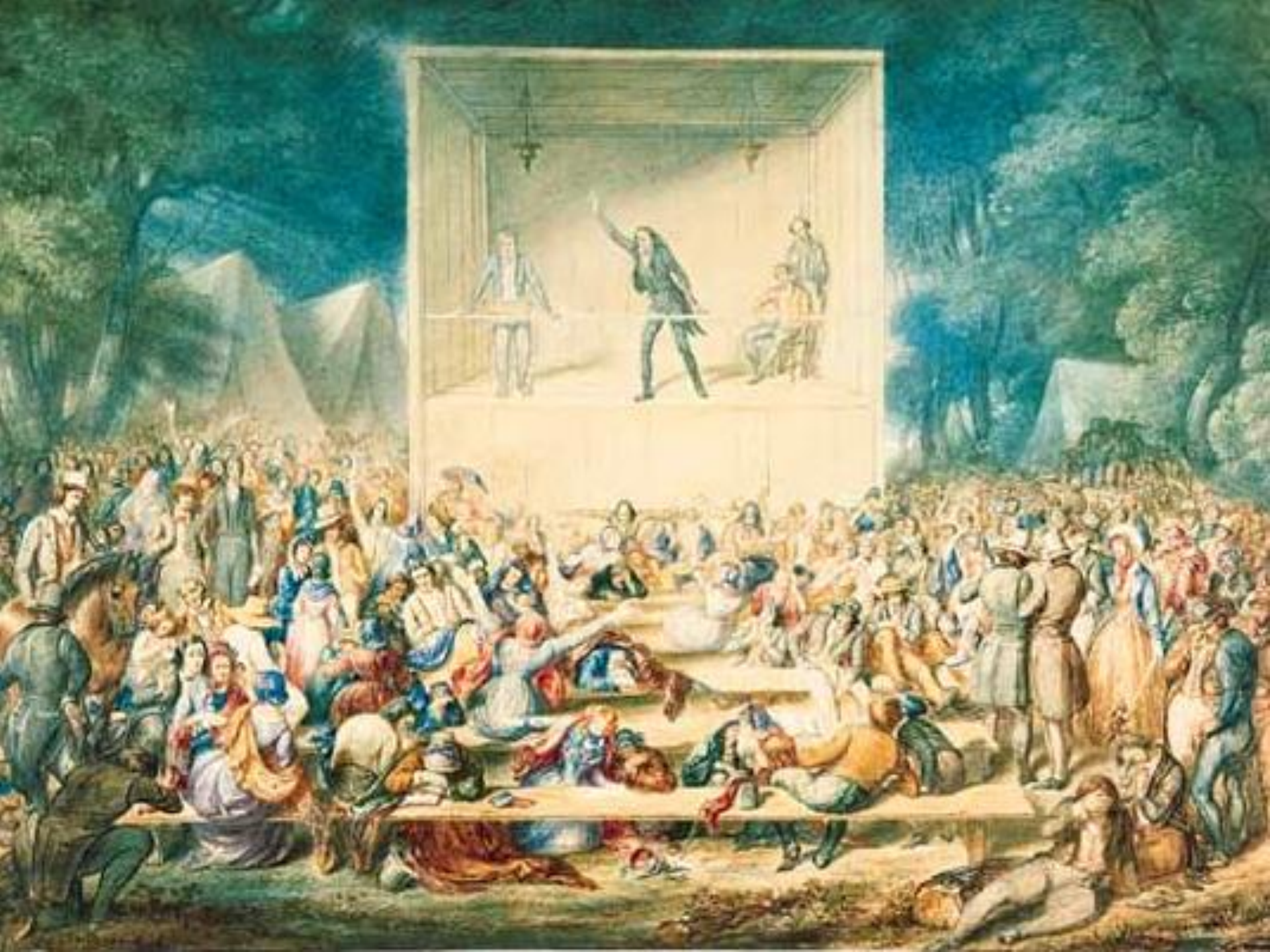
Charles Finney and the Conversion Experience

- **New form of revival**
 - Meeting night after night to build excitement
 - Speaking bluntly
 - Praying for sinners by name
 - Encouraging women to testify in public
 - Placing those struggling with conversion on the “anxious bench” at the front of the church



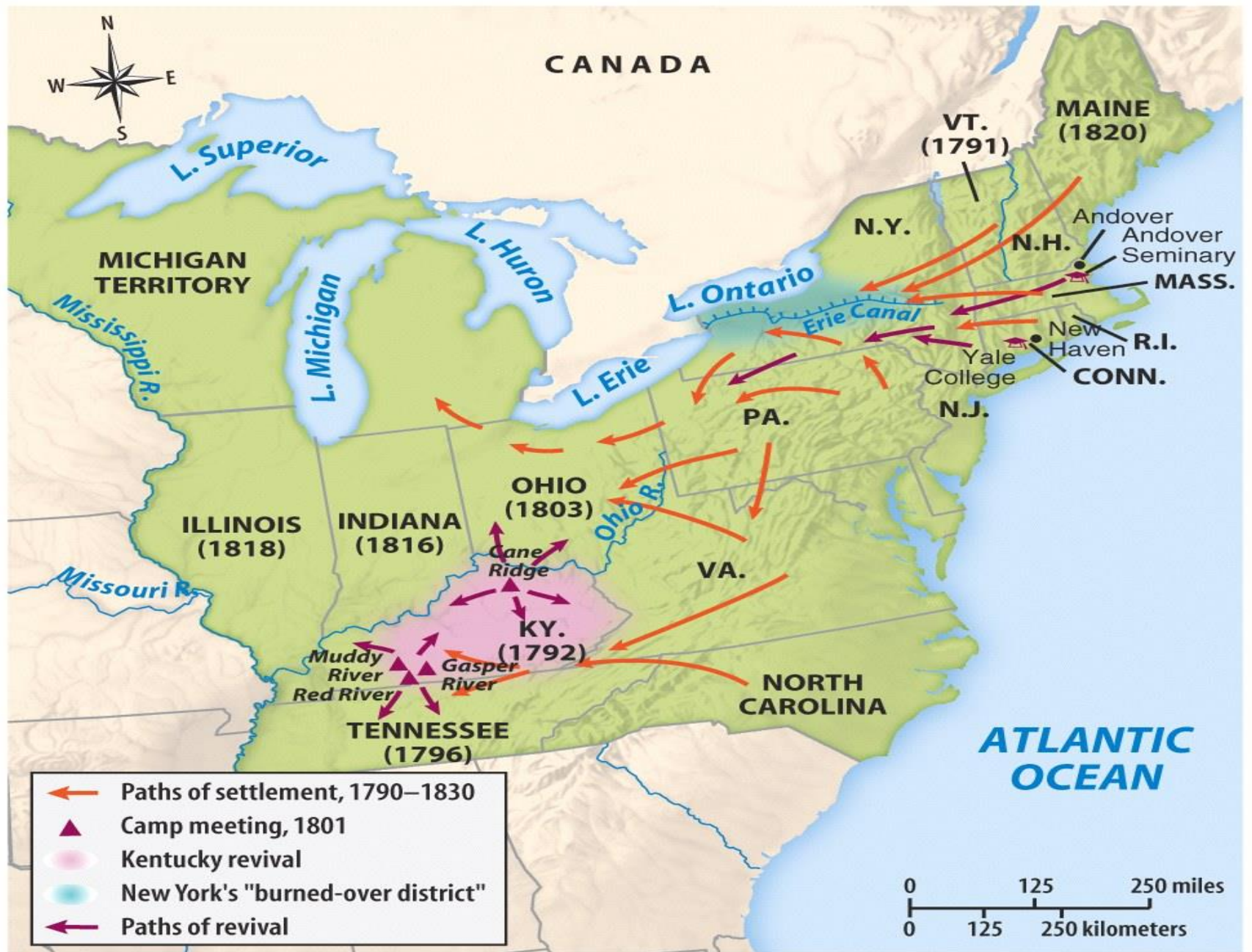
Lith. of P.S. Duvall & Co. Phila.

SACRAMENTAL SCENE IN A WESTERN FOREST.



Burned Over District

- **Burned over district in Western NY got its name from a “wild fire of new religions”**
 - **Gave birth to Seventh Day Adventists**
 - The Millerites believed the 2nd coming of Christ would occur on October 22, 1843
 - Members sold belongings, bought white robes for the ascension into heaven
 - Believers formed new church on October 23rd
- **Like the 1st, 2nd Awakening widened gaps between classes and religions**



The Rise of African American Churches



- Revivalism also spread to the African American community
- The Second Great Awakening has been called the "central and defining event in the development of Afro-Christianity"

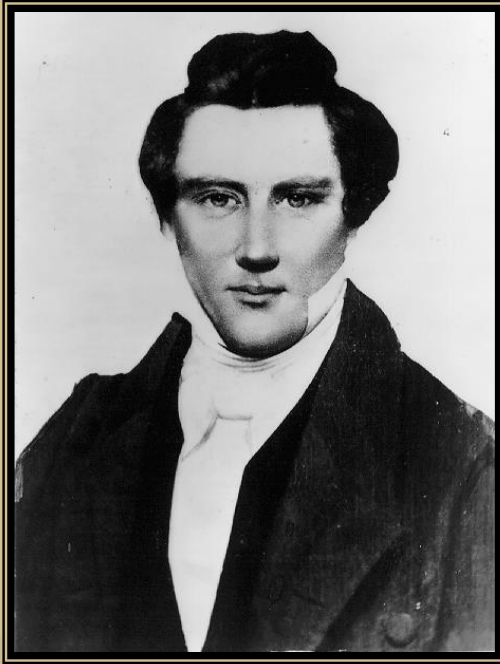
- During these revivals Baptists and Methodists converted large numbers of blacks

The Rise of African American Churches



- This led to the formation of all-black Methodist and Baptist churches, primarily in the North
- African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.) had over 17,000 members by 1846

Other Churches Founded

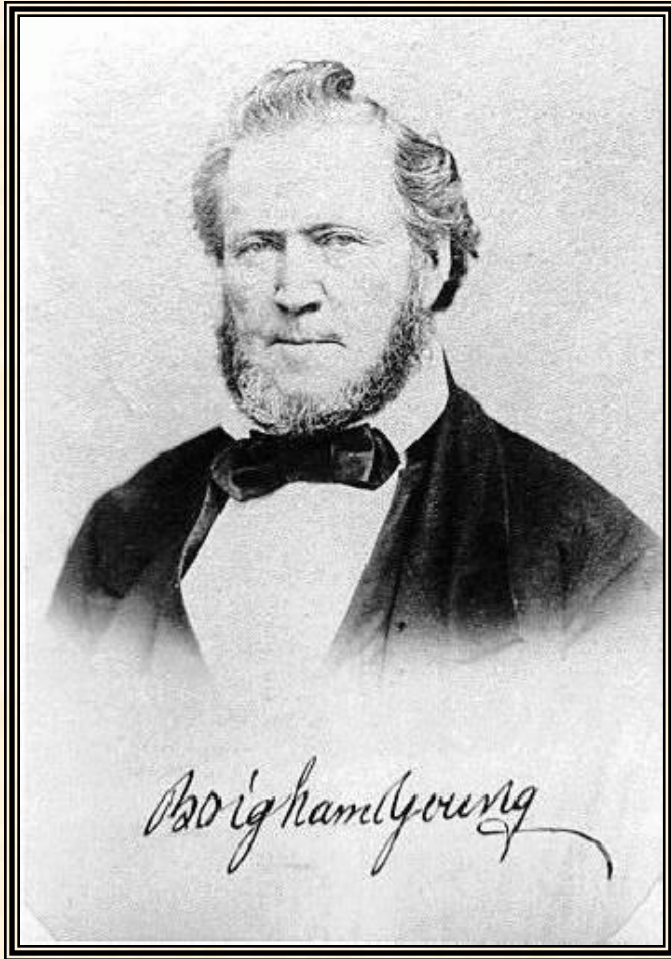


- While the Protestant revivals sought to reform individual sinners, others sought to remake society at large
 - Mormons – The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
 - Founded by Joseph Smith in western NY
-
- In 1827, Smith announced that he had discovered a set of golden tablets on which was written the Book of Mormon
 - Proclaiming that he had a commission from God to reestablish the true church, Smith gathered a group of devoted followers

Mormons

- Mormon culture upheld the middle-class values of hard work, self-control, thrift and material success
- He tried to create a City of Zion: Kirkland, Ohio - Independence, Missouri - then to Nauvoo, Illinois.
- His unorthodox teachings led to persecution and mob violence.
 - Smith was murdered in 1844 by an anti-Mormon mob in Carthage, Illinois.
 - Church in conflict

Mormons



- **Brigham Young, Smith's successor, led the Mormons westward in 1846-1847 to Utah where they could live and worship without interference**

CANADA



Fayette
1830

Kirkland
1831-1838

Nauvoo
1840-1846

Independence
1831-1839

Winter
Quarters
(Omaha)
1846-1848

Ft. Bridger

Salt Lake
City

ATLANTIC
OCEAN

PACIFIC
OCEAN

MEXICO

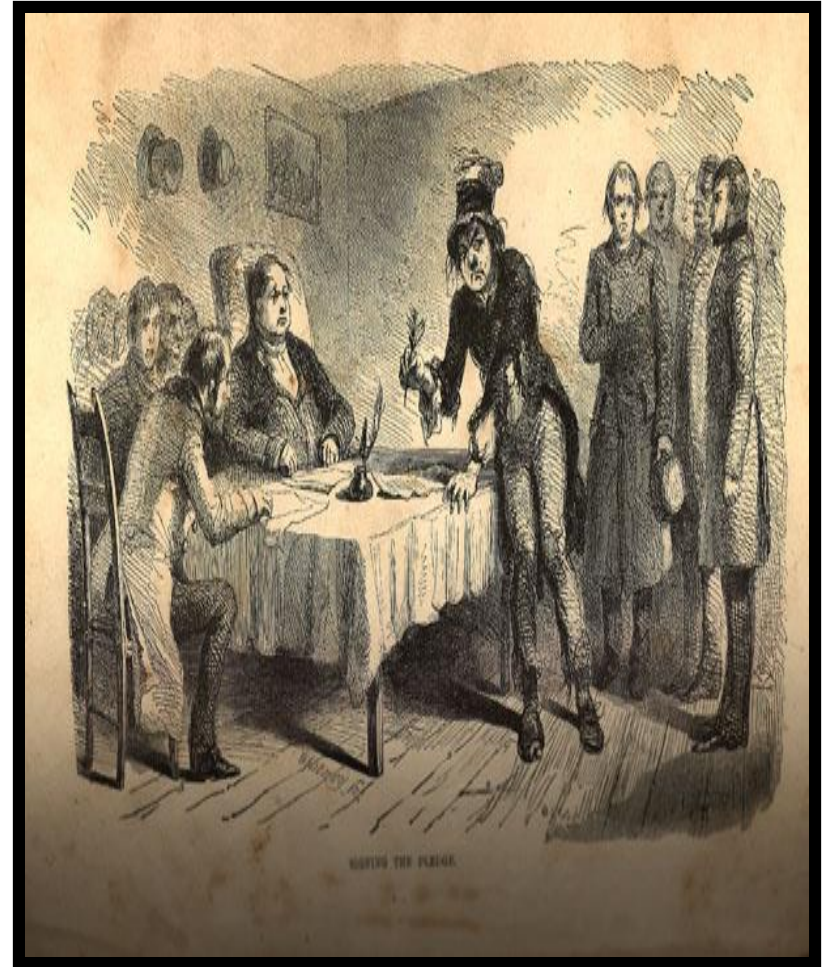
Gulf of Mexico

- ← Mormon Trail
- - - - Proposed state of Deseret
- Area of significant Mormon population in the West, 1960

0 250 500 miles
0 250 500 kilometers

The Temperance Movement

- In 1830, Americans drink an average of 5 gallons of liquor a year
- Reformers argue that drinking causes domestic violence, public rowdiness and loss of family income
- The real problem is Americans have the habit of drinking all day



Temperance Movement

- The most significant reform movements of the period sought not to withdraw from society but to change it directly
- Temperance Movement — undertook to eliminate social problems by curbing drinking
 - Led largely by clergy, the movement at first focused on drunkenness and did not oppose moderate drinking
 - In 1826 the American Temperance Society was founded, taking voluntary abstinence as its goal.

TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

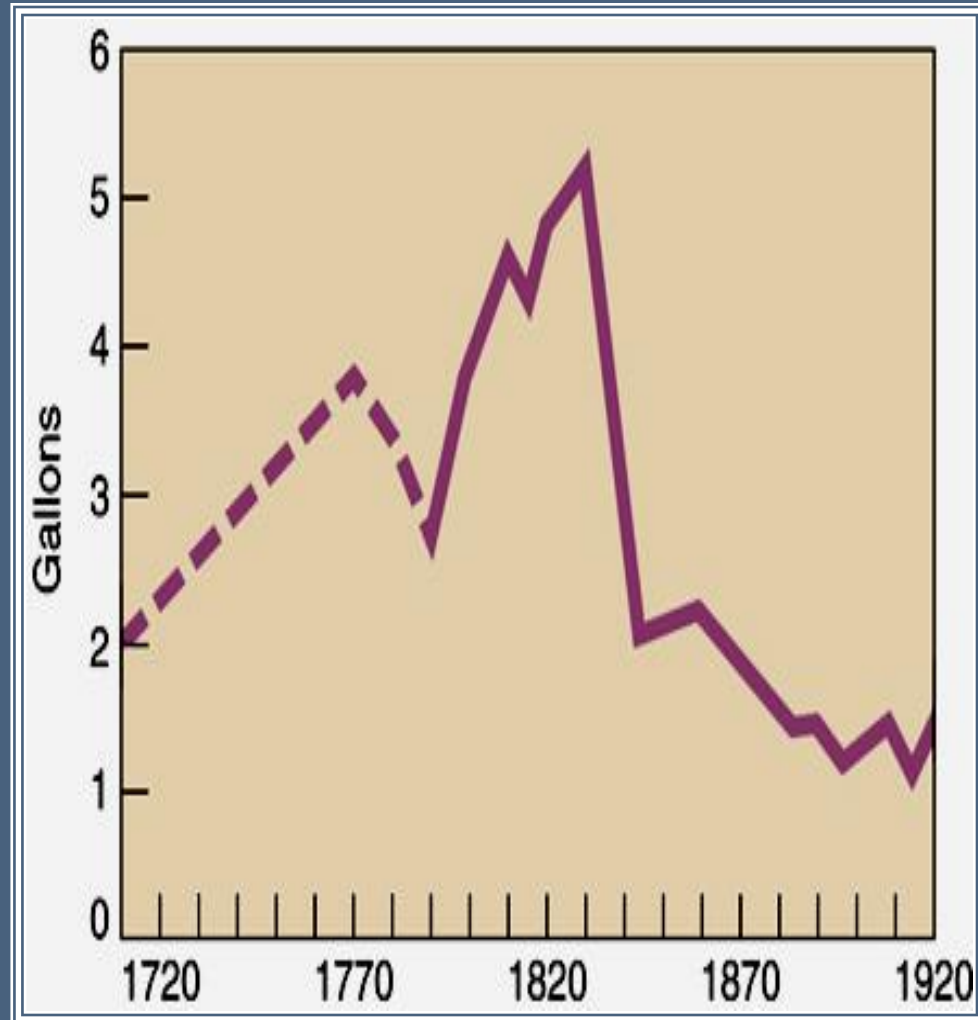


- Lyman Beecher
- Neal Dow
- Lucretia Mott

- Anti-Alcohol movement
- American Temperance Society formed at Boston-----1826
 - sign pledges, pamphlets, *anti-alcohol tract*
 - *10 nights in a Barroom and What I Saw There*
 - “Demon Drink” → adopt 2 major lines of attack:
 - stressed temperance and individual will to resist

The Temperance Movement

- During the next decade approximately 5000 local temperance societies were founded
- As the movement gained momentum, annual per capita consumption of alcohol dropped sharply



The Drunkard's Progress



THE DRUNKARD'S PROGRESS

FROM THE FIRST GLASS TO THE GRAVE.

From the first glass to the grave, 1846

The Drunkard's Progress

Step 1: A glass with a friend

Step 2: A glass to keep the cold out

Step 3: A glass too much

Step 4: Drunk and riotous

Step 5: The summit attained: Jolly

companions → a confirmed drunkard

Step 6: Poverty and disease

Step 7: Forsaken by friends

Step 8: Desperation and crime

Step 9: Death by suicide

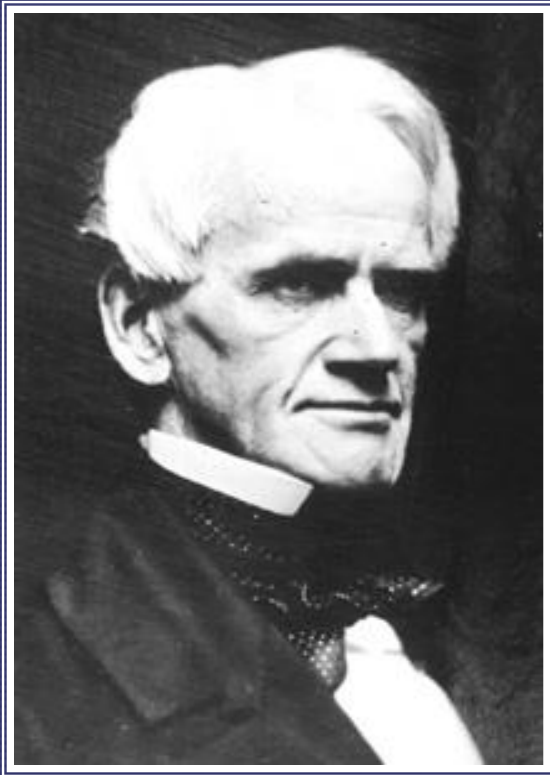
Educational Reform

In 1800 Massachusetts was the only state requiring free public schools supported by community funds



- Middle-class reformers called for tax-supported education, arguing to business leaders that the new economic order needed educated workers

Educational Reform



- Under Horace Mann's leadership in the 1830s, Massachusetts created a state board of education and adopted a minimum-length school year.
- Provided for training of teachers, and expanded the curriculum to include subjects such as history and geography

Educational Reform

- By the 1850s the number of schools, attendance figures, and school budgets had all increased sharply
- School reformers enjoyed their greatest success in the Northeast and the least in the South
 - Southern planters opposed paying taxes to educate poorer white children
 - Educational opportunities for women also expanded
 - In 1833 Oberlin College in Ohio became the first coeducational college.
 - Four years later the first all-female college was founded — Mount Holyoke, Massachusetts

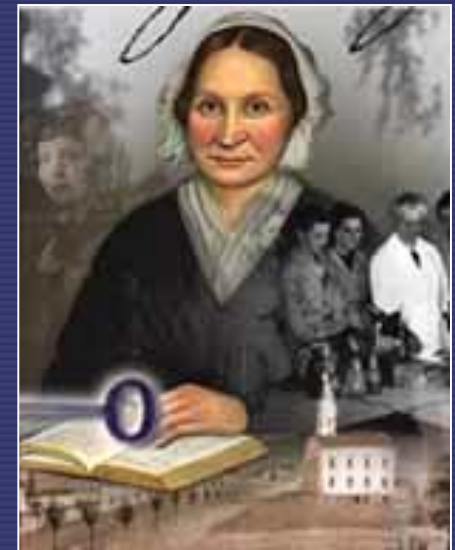
Women Educators



Emma Willard
(1787-1870)

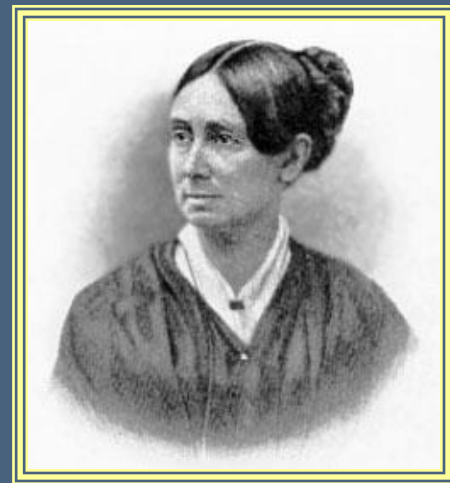
- **Troy, NY Female Seminary**
- curriculum: math, physics, history, geography.
- train female teachers

- 1837 → she established **Mt. Holyoke** [So. Hadley, MA] as the first college for women.



Mary Lyons
(1797-1849)

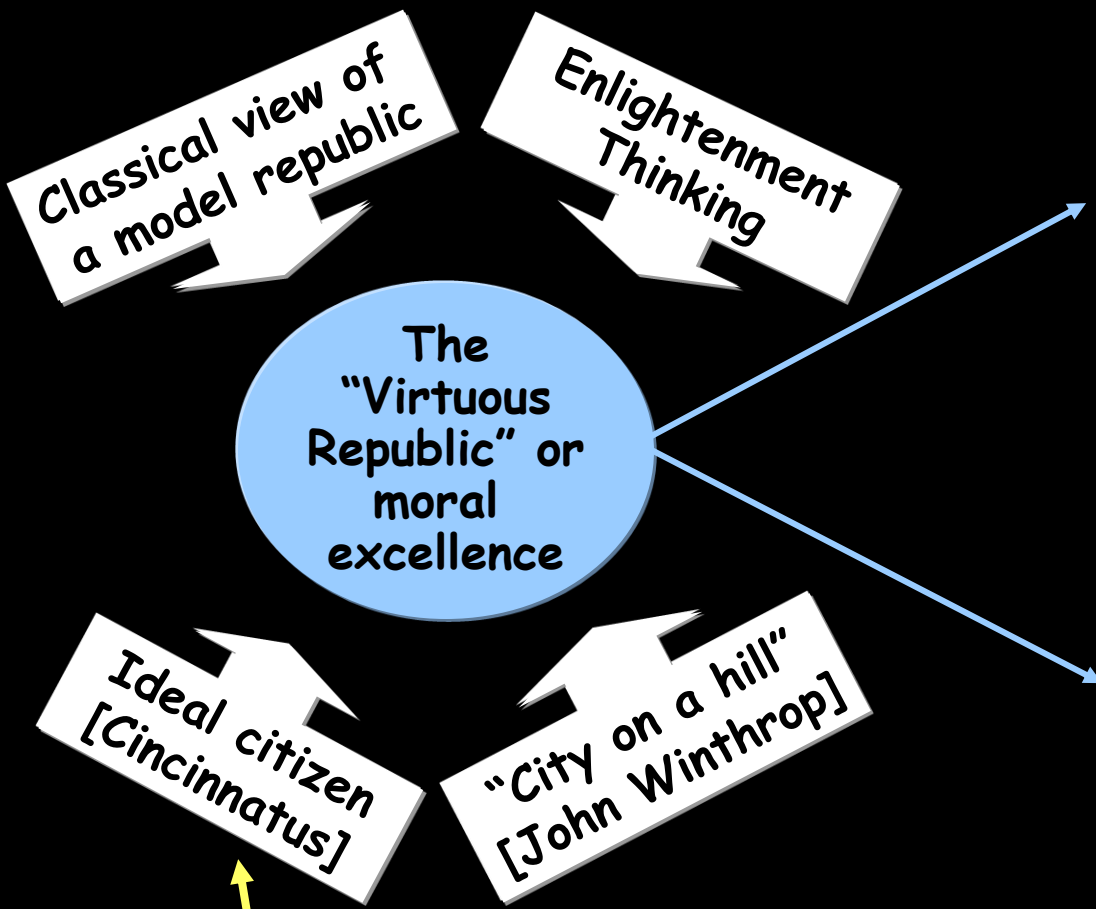
The Asylum Movement



- **Dorothea Dix**, a Boston schoolteacher, took the lead in advocating state supported asylums for the mentally ill
- She attracted much attention to the movement by her report detailing the horrors to which the mentally ill were subjected
 - being chained, kept in cages and closets, and beaten with rods
- In response to her efforts, 28 states maintained **mental institutions** by 1860

Asylums and Prison Reform

- Dorothea Dix also discovered that people were placed in prisons for debt, people were subjected to cruel punishment and children were not treated any different than adults
- She is responsible for helping eliminate sentencing for debt, ending cruel punishment and getting states to establish juvenile court systems
- She argues that people can change if they are placed in proper environments and given an education



1. Government gets its authority from the citizens.
2. A selfless, educated citizenry.
3. Elections should be frequent.
4. Government should guarantee individual rights & freedoms.
5. Government's power should be limited [checks & balances]
6. The need for a written Constitution.
7. "E Pluribus Unum." ["Out of many, one"]
8. **An important role for women → raise good, virtuous citizens. ["Republican Womanhood"]**

Roman statesman regarded as a model of simple virtue; he twice was called to assume dictatorship of Rome and each time retired to his farm (519-438 BC)

Early 19th Century Women

1. Unable to vote
2. Legal status of a minor
3. Single → could own her own property
4. Married → no control over her property or her children
5. Could not initiate divorce
6. Couldn't make wills, sign a contract, or bring suit in court without her husband's permission

“Separate Spheres” Concept

↓
Republican Motherhood evolved into the “Cult of Domesticity”

ℳ A woman’s “sphere” was in the home (it was a refuge from the cruel world outside).

ℳ Her role was to “civilize” her husband and family.

ℳ An 1830s MA minister:

The power of woman is her dependence. A woman who gives up that dependence on man to become a reformer yields the power God has given her for her protection, and her character becomes unnatural!

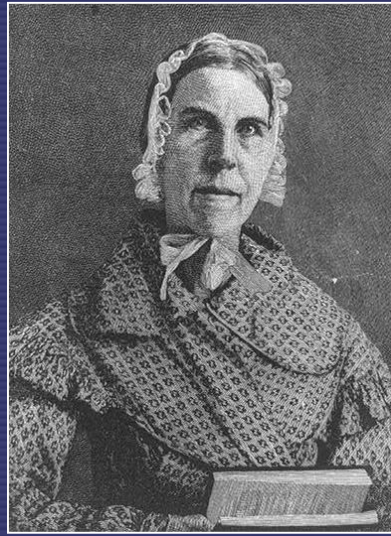
Cult of Domesticity = Slavery

The 2nd Great Awakening inspired women to improve society.

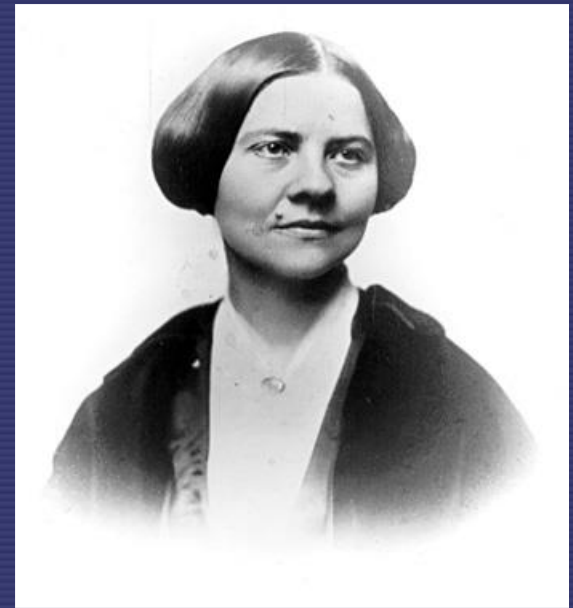


Angelina Grimké

- Southern Abolitionists



Sarah Grimké



Lucy Stone

- American Women's Suffrage Association
- edited *Woman's Journal*

Women's Rights Movement

When abolitionists divided over the issue of female participation, women found it easy to identify with the situation of the slaves

1848: Feminist reform led to Seneca Falls Convention

Significance: launched modern women's rights movement

Established the arguments and the program for the women's rights movement for the remainder of the century

What It Would Be Like If Ladies Had Their Own Way!



Women's Rights

1840 → split in the abolitionist movement
over women's role in it.

London → **World Anti-Slavery Convention**



Lucretia Mott



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

1848 → **Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments**

SENECA FALLS

The first Woman's rights movement was in Seneca Falls, New York in 1849.....

- **Educational and professional opportunities**
- **Property rights**
- **Legal equality**
- **repeal of laws awarding the father custody of the children in divorce.**
- **Suffrage rights**

SENECA FALLS



- The following is an excerpt from the Seneca Falls Declaration written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

- Notice that the language and wording is similar to the Declaration of Independence.

SENECA FALLS

We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.....

SENECA FALLS

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world....

- He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.*
- He has taken from all right in property, even to the wages she earns.*

SENECA FALLS

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband.

In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master; the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

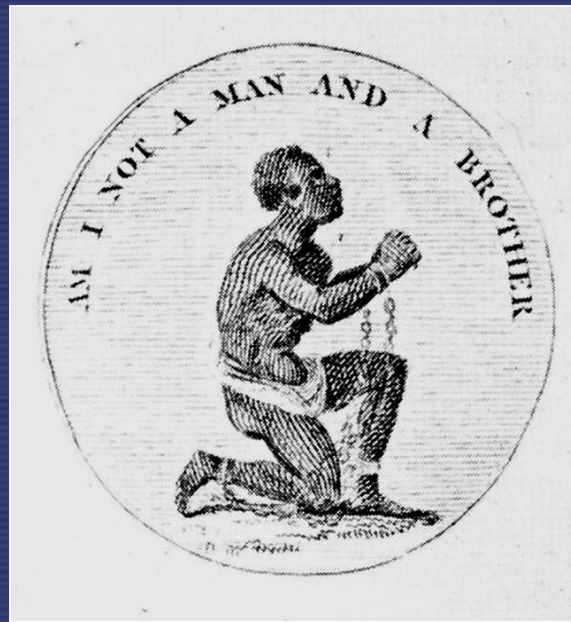
Susan B. Anthony on Marriage and Slavery

“The married women and their legal status. What is servitude? “The condition of a slave.” What is a slave? “A person who is robbed of the proceeds of his labor; a person who is subject to the will of another...”

I submit the deprivation by law of ownership of one's own person, wages, property, children, the denial of right as an individual, to sue and be sued, to vote, and to testify in the courts, is a condition of servitude most bitter and absolute, though under the sacred name of marriage.

Abolitionist Movement

- 1816 → **American Colonization Society** created (gradual, voluntary emancipation).

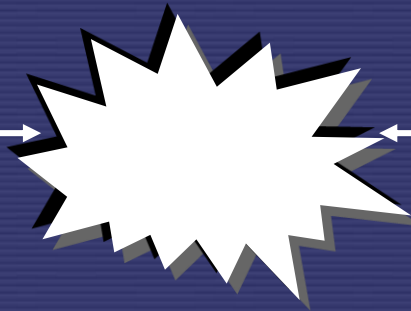


British Colonization Society symbol

Abolitionist Movement

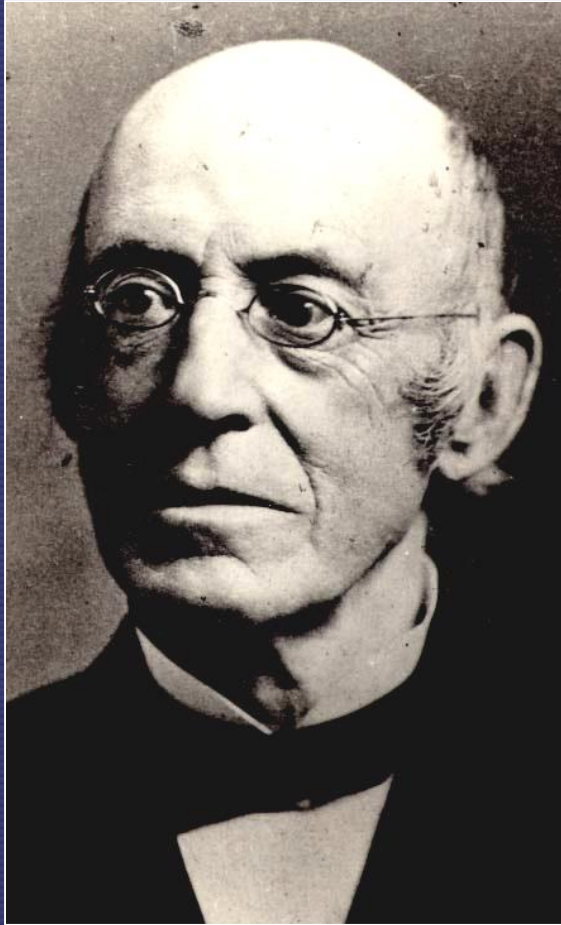
- Create a free slave state in Liberia, West Africa.
- No real anti-slavery sentiment in the North in the 1820s & 1830s.

Gradualists



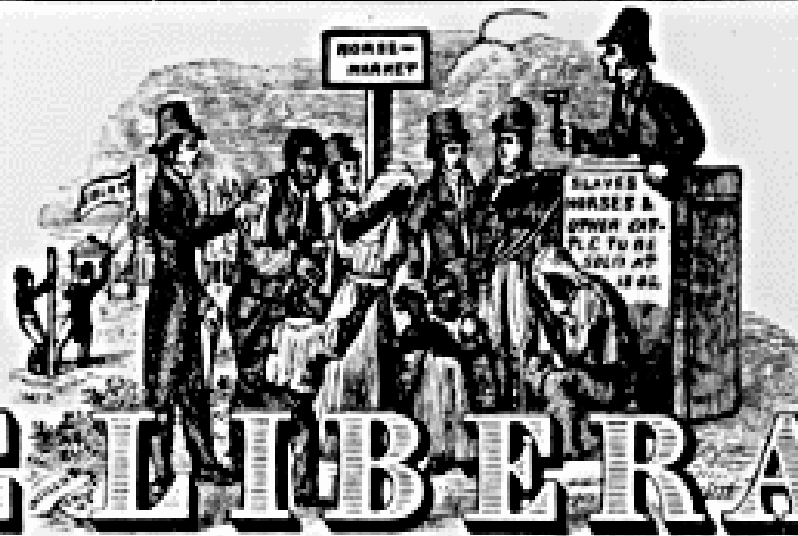
Immediatists

Abolitionism



- William Lloyd Garrison, publisher of the The Liberator, first appeared in 1831 and sent shock waves across the entire country
 - He repudiated gradual emancipation and embraced immediate end to slavery at once
 - He advocated racial equality and argued that slaveholders should not be compensated for freeing slaves.

The Liberator



THE LIBERATOR.

VOL. I.]

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON AND ISAAC KNAPP, PUBLISHERS.

[NO. 22.]

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.]

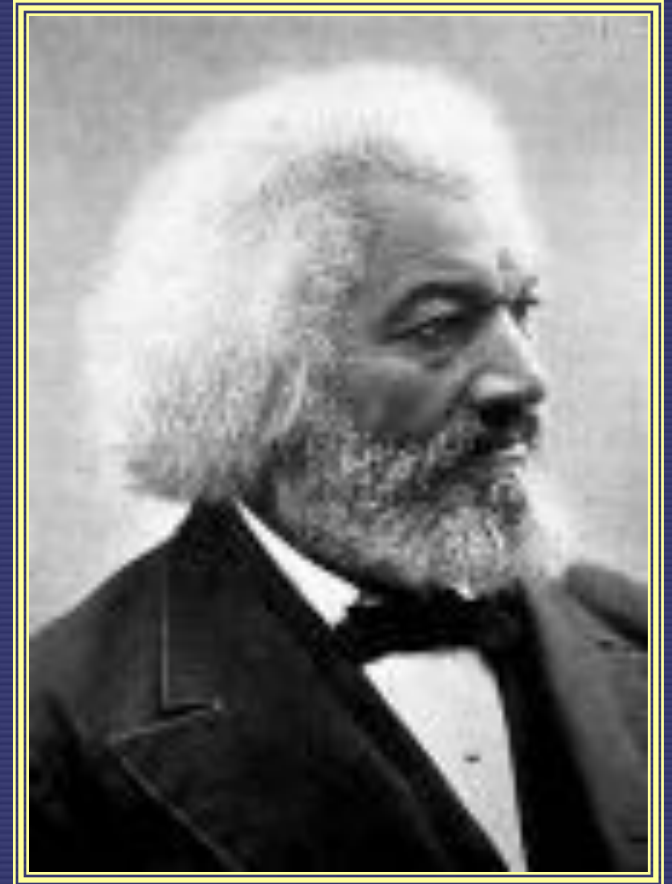
OUR COUNTRY IS THE WORLD—OUR COUNTRYMEN ARE MANKIND.

[SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1831.]

Premiere issue → January 1, 1831

Abolitionism

- Free blacks, such as Frederick Douglass, who had escaped from slavery in Maryland, also joined the abolitionist movement
- To abolitionists, slavery was a moral, not an economic question
- But most of all, abolitionists denounced slavery as contrary to Christian teaching
- **1845 → *The Narrative of the Life Of Frederick Douglass***
- **1847 → “The North Star”**



Anti-Slavery Alphabet



A is an Abolitionist—
A man who wants to free
The wretched slave—and give to all
An equal liberty.



B is a Brother with a skin
Of somewhat darker hue,
But in our Heavenly Father's sight,
He is as dear as you.

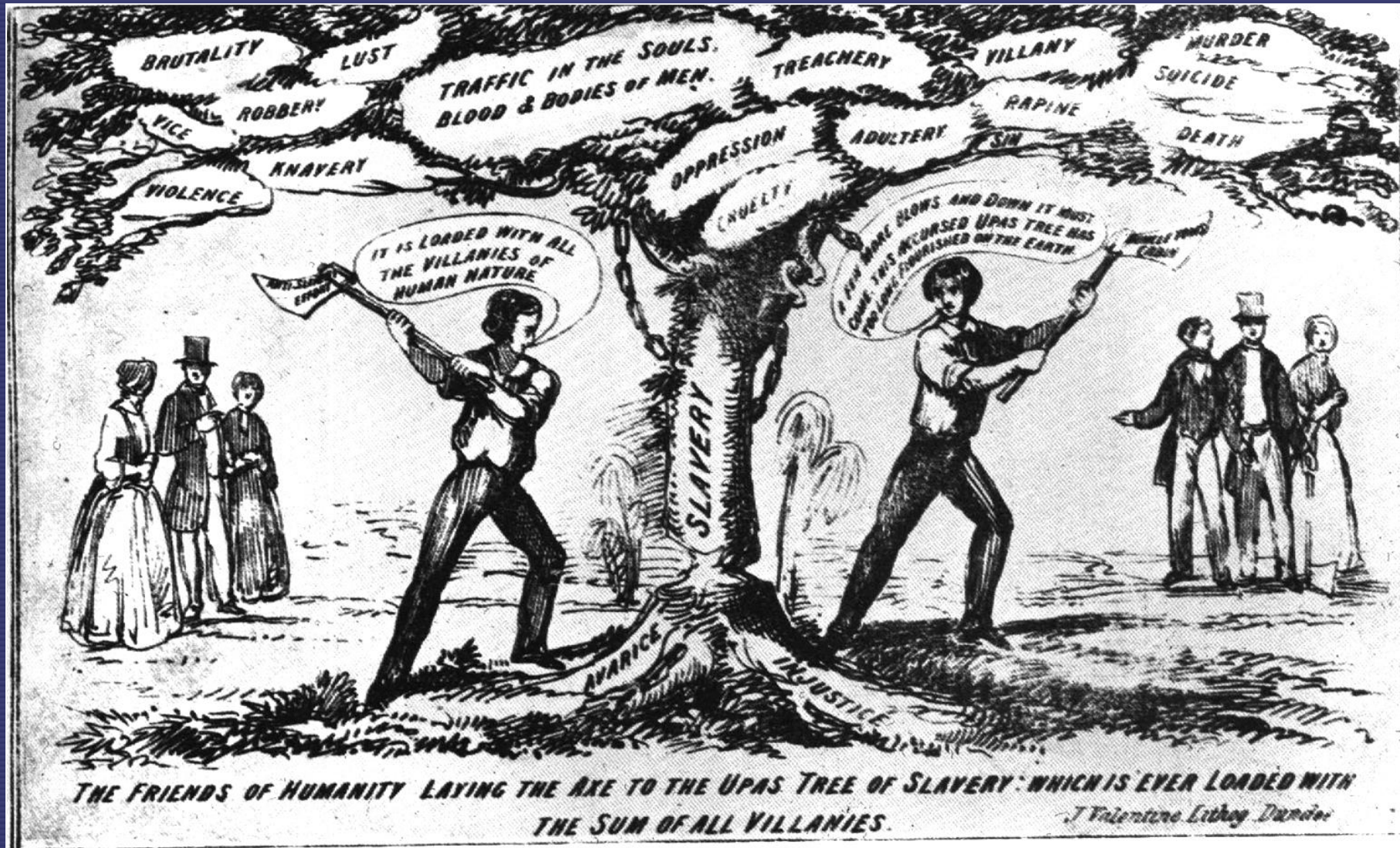


C is the Cotton-field, to which
This injured brother's driven,
When, as the white man's slave, he toils
From early morn till even.



D is the Driver, cold and stern,
Who follows, whip in hand,
'To punish those who dare to rest,
Or disobey command.

The Tree of Slavery—Loaded with the Sum of All Villainies!



Black Abolitionists

David Walker
(1785-1830)

1829 → *Appeal to the Colored
Citizens of the World*

Fight for freedom rather than
wait to be set free by whites.

Sojourner Truth (1787-1883) or Isabella Baumfree

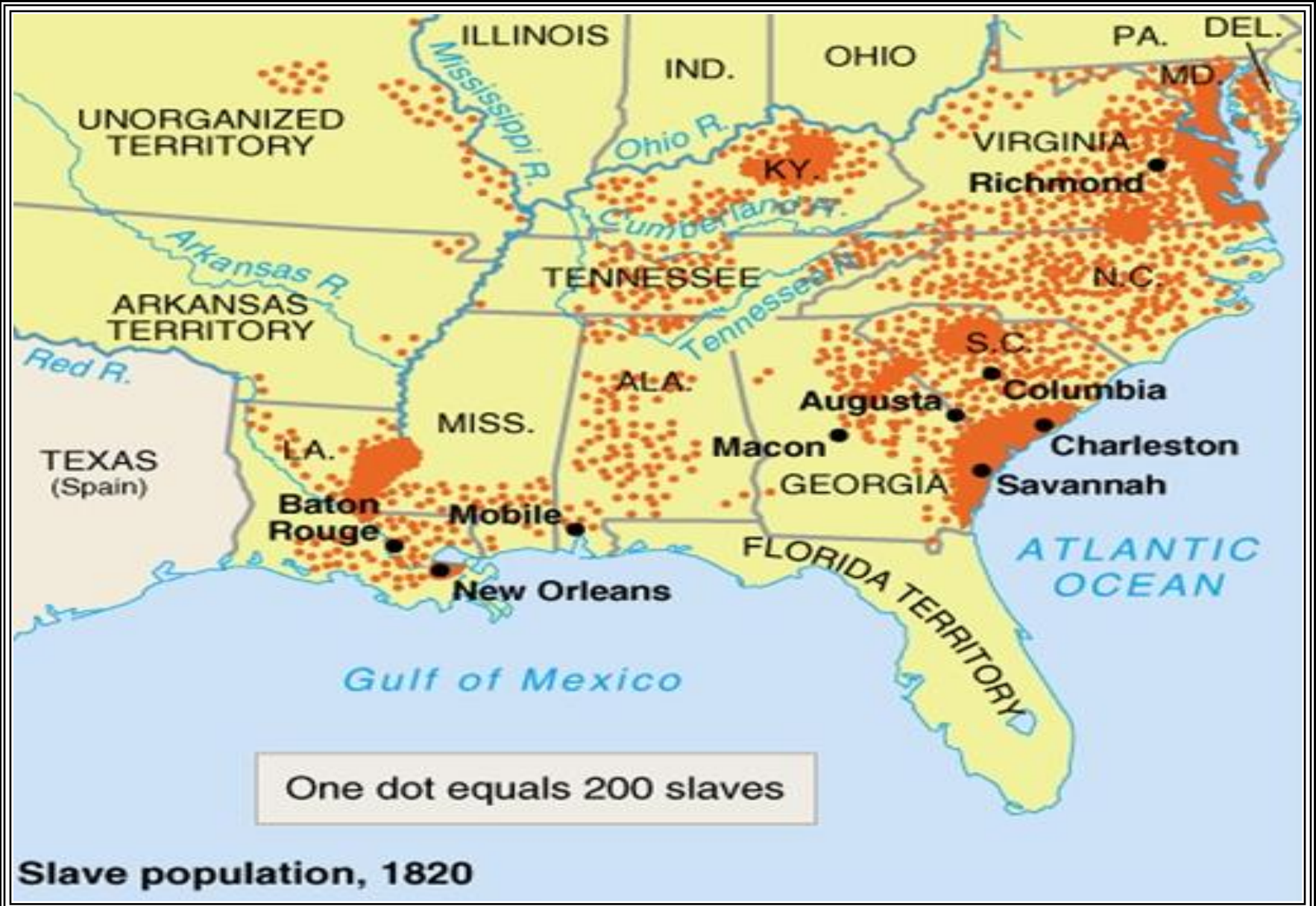


1850 → *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*

The Underground Railroad

- **"Conductor"** ===== leader of the escape
- **"Passengers"** ===== escaping slaves
- **"Tracks"** ===== routes
- **"Trains"** ===== farm wagons transporting the escaping slaves
- **"Depots"** ===== safe houses to rest/sleep

GROWTH OF SLAVERY



GROWTH OF SLAVERY





- **Gag rule** was passed in Congress which nothing concerning slavery could be discussed.

- Under the **gag rule**, **anti-slavery petitions** were not read on the floor of Congress

- The rule was renewed in each Congress between 1837 and 1839.

- In 1840 the House passed an even stricter rule, **which refused to accept all anti-slavery petition.** On December 3, 1844, the gag rule was repealed

(after Opdycke)

Abolitionism: Division and Opposition

- Abolitionism forced the churches to face the question of slavery head-on, and in the 1840s the Methodist and Baptist churches each split into northern and southern organizations over the issue of slavery
- Even the abolitionists themselves splintered
- More conservative reformers wanted to work within established institutions, using churches and political action to end slavery

African Colonization

- The American Colonization Society in 1817 pushed for the release of slaves and their return to Africa
- Some Northerners support this because they believe that blacks should be separate from whites
- Some Southerners support colonization because they would ship away free blacks
- 1,400 African Americans go to Africa → colonize Liberia

Workers & Wage Slaves

- ☞ **With industrial revolution, large impersonal factories surrounded by slums full of “wage slaves” developed**
- ☞ **Long hours, low wages, unsanitary conditions, lack of heat, etc.**
 - Labor unions illegal
- ☞ **1820: 1/2 of industrial workers were children under 10**

Workers & Wage Slaves



1820s & 1830s: right to vote for laborers

- Loyalty to Democratic party led to improved conditions
- Fought for 10-hour day, higher wages, better conditions



1830s & 1840s: Dozens of strikes for higher wages or 10-hour day

- 1837 depression hurt union membership



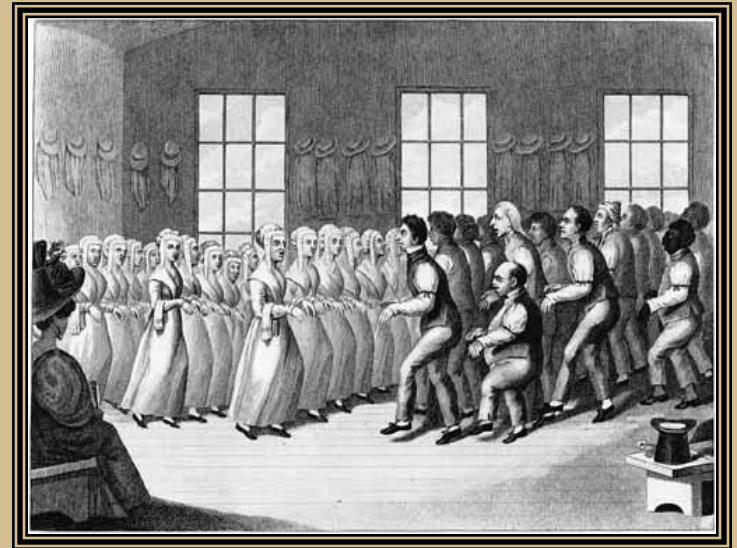
Commonwealth v. Hunt

- Supreme Court ruled unions not illegal conspiracies as long as they were peaceful

Cults

- **The Shakers**

- Ann Lee – 1774
- The Shakers used dancing as a worship practice
- Shakers practiced celibacy, separating the sexes as far as practical
- Shakers worked hard, lived simply (built furniture), and impressed outsiders with their cleanliness and order
- Lacking any natural increase, membership began to decline after 1850, from a peak of about 6000 members



Mother Ann Lee (1736-1784)

The Shakers

- *If you will take up your crosses against the works of generations, and follow Christ in the regeneration, God will cleanse you from all unrighteousness.*
- *Remember the cries of those who are in need and trouble, that when you are in trouble, God may hear your cries.*
- *If you improve in one talent, God will give you more.*

Shaker Meeting





Shaker Hymn

***'Tis the gift to be simple, 'Tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where you ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.***

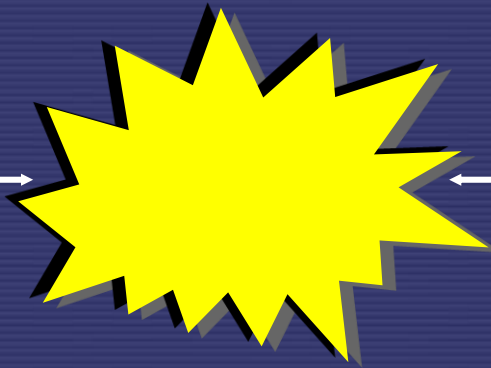
***When true simplicity is gained
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
'Till by turning, turning we come round right.***

Utopian Communities

- **The Oneida Community**
- **Brook Farm**
- **New Harmony**
- **Transcendentalists**

Secular **Utopian** Communities

**Individual
Freedom**



**Demands of
Community Life**

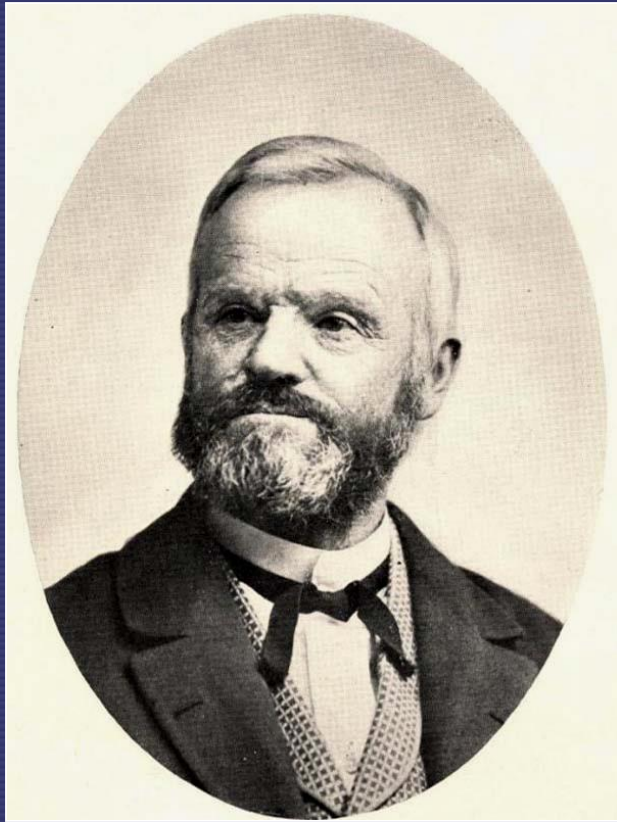


- spontaneity
- self-fulfillment

- discipline
- organizational hierarchy

The Oneida Community

New York, 1848



John Humphrey Noyes
(1811-1886)

- **Millenarianism** --> the 2nd coming of Christ had already occurred.
- Humans were no longer obliged to follow the moral rules of the past.
 - all residents married to each other.
 - carefully regulated "free love."

George Ripley (1802-1880)



Brook Farm
West Roxbury, MA

Transcendentalism

- m. "Liberation from **understanding** and the cultivation of **reasoning**."
- m. "Transcend" the limits of intellect and allow the **emotions**, the SOUL, to create an original relationship with the Universe.

Transcendentalist Intellectuals/Writers

Concord, MA

Ralph Waldo
Emerson

Nature
(1832)

Self-Reliance
(1841)

*"The American
Scholar"* (1837)

Henry David
Thoreau

Walden
(1854)

*Resistance to Civil
Disobedience*
(1849)

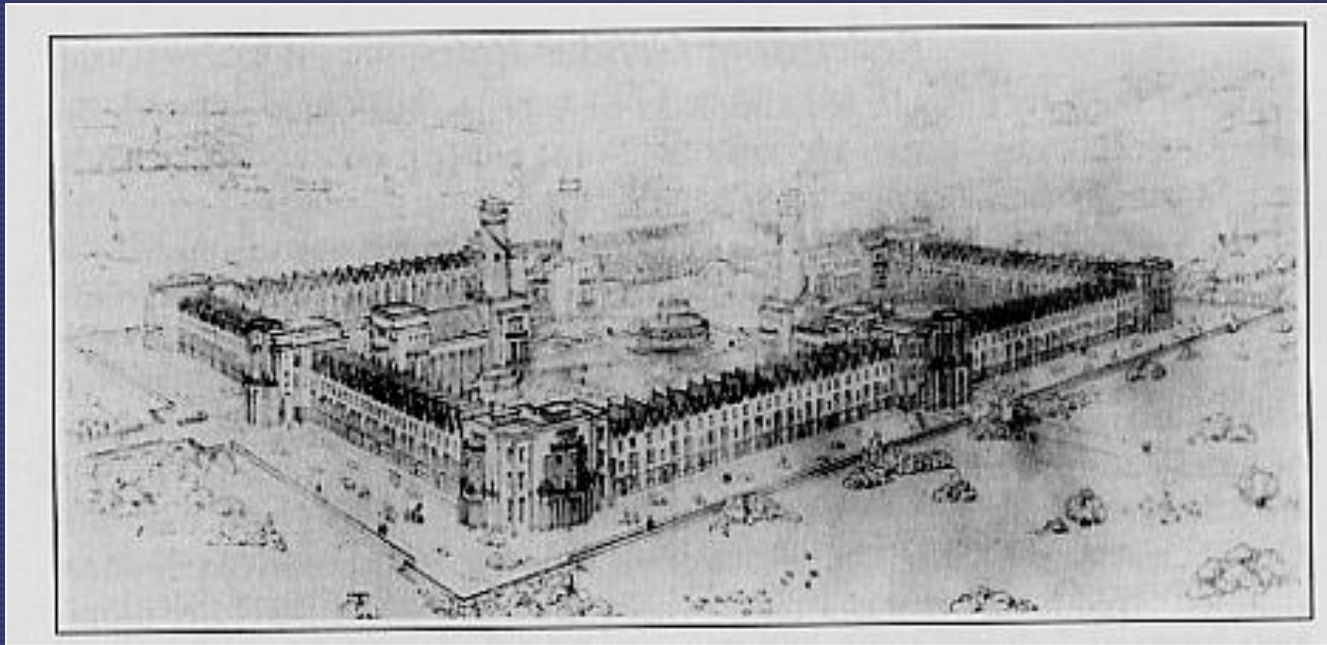
Robert Owen (1771-1858)



Utopian Socialist

"Village of Cooperation"

Original Plans for New Harmony,



New Harmony in 1832

New Harmony, IN



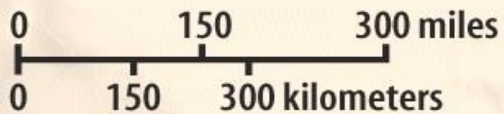
David Lenz House, with Bake Oven
(photo by Ruth Reichmann)



New Harmony Inn
(photo by Ruth Reichmann)



Labyrinth
(Historic New Harmony photo)



CANADA

MAINE
Brook Farm
 1841-1846

Oneida Community
 1836-1881

N.H.

VT.

NEW YORK

MASS.

R.I.

CONN.

PA.

N.J.

MD.

DEL.

ATLANTIC OCEAN

DAKOTA TERRITORY

WISCONSIN TERRITORY

MICHIGAN

IOWA

Amana
 1843-1932

NEBR. TERR.

ILLINOIS

INDIANA

OHIO

VIRGINIA

KANSAS

New Harmony
 1824-1827

KENTUCKY

NORTH CAROLINA

UNORG. TERR.

ARKANSAS

TENNESSEE

SOUTH CAROLINA

Icaria
 1848-1849

Nashoba
 1825-1830

GEORGIA

MISS.

ALABAMA

TEXAS

Experimental Communities

- Fourierists
- ▲ Owenites
- Shakers
- ◆ Others

(after Bestor and Meinig)