

Evaluating Economic Change: 1820-1840

The Making of an American System

Yesterday, we examined an overview of economic policy as it emerged in America between 1815 and 1830. Central to this developing policy was a program of internal improvements and investments designed to assist emerging industrial concerns in the United States. This was Henry Clay's American System. Not without controversy, this system of protective tariffs, government investment, and industrial growth divided the nation's productive capability along regional economic lines. In 1823, this sectional arrangement saw a new development with the growth of Francis Cabot Lowell's textile factory in Waltham, Massachusetts. Today, our task is to examine the impact the development of a mass-production capability had on the American labor force, and ultimately the American vision.

Taking the role of an economic advisory committee to Congress, discuss the impact each issue would likely have had on the emerging American vision. Prepare a summary report on the question -- Was the development of the Lowell Model a positive or negative occurrence in America's social and economic history? (Use the first few sections of chapter 10 in the text to assist your evaluation.)

1. The growth of a national market economy (Sometimes called the Market Revolution)
2. Changing assumptions on gender (decline of home production and piecework)
3. Increased speed of production and consumption (falling prices, lower costs of production)
4. Immigration and growing labor force (Consider unskilled labor, wage slavery, and ethnic competition)
5. Changing structure of the American industrial family (women in the workforce, changing gender roles? American feminism?)
6. The growth of an industrial urban society (environmentalism, increased population)
7. The role of government in fostering a national economy (subsidies? Protective tariffs?)
8. The clock and work-time