Unit 8
Antebellum Reform

Session Preparation

Read the following material before attending the workshop. As you read the excerpts and primary sources, take note of the ***"Questions to Consider"*** as well as any questions you have. The activities in the workshop will draw on information from the readings and the video shown during the workshop.

Unit Introduction

As a response to increasing social ills, the nineteenth century generated reform movements: temperance, abolition, school and prison reform, as well as others. This unit traces the emergence of reform movements instigated by the Second Great Awakening and the impact these movements had on American culture.

Unit Learning Objectives

After reading the text materials, participating in the workshop activities, and watching the video, teachers will

- consider the social, economic, and technological changes to which reformers responded;
- explore the relationship between the Second Great Awakening and the subsequent reform movements;
- understand the breadth and goals of different reform movements.

This Unit Features

- Textbooks excerpts (sections of U.S. history surveys, written for introductory college courses by history professors)
- Primary sources (documents and other materials created by the people who lived in the period), including books, accounts of speeches, a temperance pledge, maps, and an artifact
- An article, "Family Life in the Slave Quarters: Survival Strategies," by historian Marie Jenkins Schwartz, which uses both primary and secondary sources (other articles and books written by historians)
- A timeline at the end of the unit, which places important events in the era of the Reformation

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Content Overview

Change has always defined the United States, but the years between 1800 and 1860 brought about unusually profound social changes. Sheer growth accounted for much of the shift: the population expanded sixfold during this these years — or about 35 percent a decade — the greatest rate of expansion in America's history.

Technological innovations spawned economic and social change. Steam-powered factories, boats, and trains made it much easier to create and move everything from wheat to iron, which in turn fostered wealth and the growth of the middle and working classes. Immigrants from Ireland and Germany flocked to the United States in unprecedented numbers, and the proportion of Americans who lived in cities and worked in factories increased substantially. In the South, though, an explosion in the growth of cotton benefited only a small minority and depended on the expansion of slavery, an institution that some Americans had expected to wither and die.

As the South became more conservative, determined to protect its traditional institutions, the North became more dynamic and reform-minded. The reform impulse sprang from religious revivals in which people sought spiritual salvation in the 1820s and 1830s; the injunction to lead a clean, holy life and seek perfection soon spread far beyond the church.

The growing economy provided both a motive and a means for reform. White, middle-class Northerners in particular were concerned over the unprecedented levels of urban disorder and immigration that accompanied early industrialization. Yet the discipline of producing market goods created a more clock-oriented and self-controlled society: rates of violence and alcohol consumption fell, and schools became more numerous and regimented. But growing numbers of reformers wanted more than a well-disciplined society. They saw no reason why the nation could not drive out all of its impurities: intemperance and sloth, certainly, but also all manner of unhealthy habits, greed, slavery, and even male dominance.

Americans were far from united in their reform impulses, which grew more splintered and ambitious with time. But the combination of economic transformation and religious reformation produced a seedbed for bold expectations and experiments.

Theme One:

The first half of the 1800s brought rapid social, economic, and technological changes, which laid the groundwork for reform.

Theme Two:

The Second Great Awakening, a religious revival of the early 1800s, contributed to the reform impulse by emphasizing individual responsibility and perfection.

Theme Three:

The evangelical revival spawned a number of reforms, aimed at curbing a broad range of social ills.

Historical Perspectives

Industrialization and urbanization contributed to rising social problems and class tensions. Rising levels of prosperity and the increased availability of manufactured goods allowed many women the time to focus more of their attention on moral concerns, a trend encouraged by the Second Great Awakening, which urged Christians to improve the world.

The middle class, especially women, responded by devoting more and more time to missionary schools, temperance, abolitionism, and other reforms.

Faces of America

Just as many nineteenth century reformers shaped the focus and direction of antebellum reform movements, so too were their own lives shaped by their involvement with reform.

Frederick Douglass escaped slavery and soon joined the Garrisonian wing of the abolitionist movement. He gradually became more independent and asserted that abolitionists could use political means to end slavery. He actively recruited African American soldiers during the Civil War and continued to work for a wide range of reforms after the war.

Angelina and Sarah Grimké left their slave-owning family in South Carolina for Philadelphia. They were soon speaking against slavery and male dominance at a time when women who spoke in public were attacked for being unfeminine and immoral.

Sarah Bagley came to work in the textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts in her early thirties. She helped to form the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association in 1844 to protest the mills' deteriorating work conditions.

Hands on History

What disciplines inform the study of historic sites? The Cane River Creole National Historical Park features two intact plantations. Its staff conducts architectural, archaeological, and oral-history research to recapture the history of people who seldom left written records of their lives, particularly slaves.

Theme One

Theme One: The first half of the 1800s brought rapid social, economic, and technological changes, which laid the groundwork for reform.

Overview

At the time of the American Revolution, commerce still depended heavily on access to the ocean: it cost about as much to move goods ten miles on land in a wagon as it did to ship them across the Atlantic Ocean.

The invention of steamboats, canals, and then railroads early in the nineteenth century changed all of this. The transportation revolution—along with the application of steam to manufacturing, and other inventions, such as the cotton gin—made it much more lucrative to produce and move crops and goods in both the North and the South after the War of 1812, particularly by the 1830s.

But this economic transformation began to divide the nation. The gap between rich and poor widened, particularly in the nation's burgeoning cities. Tens of thousands of immigrants, many of them Catholics from Ireland and Germany, arrived annually by the 1830s, and their numbers increased sharply in the 1850s. Southern prosperity boomed, distinguishing itself by relying on cotton rather than manufacturing or urbanization.

Industrialization brought profound cultural changes to the North. Working-class life became more difficult and regimented. Factory workers produced goods consumed by a growing middle class. Middle-class housewives often had the economic means to purchase soap, clothing, and other household goods that they previously had to produce themselves. This freed their time to focus on matters outside the domestic sphere.

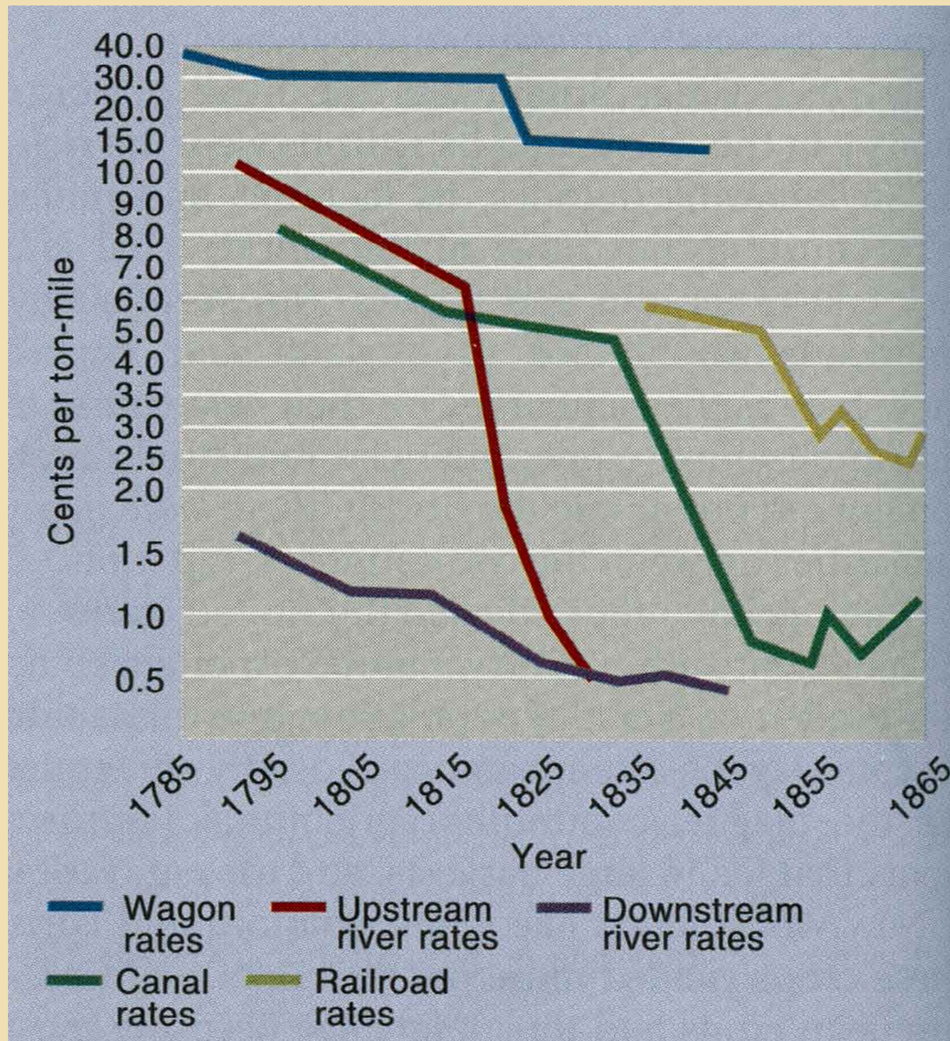
1. Factors Fueling Economic Development

Improved transportation played a key role in bringing about economic and geographic expansion. Early in the century, high freight rates discouraged production for distant markets and the exploitation of resources, while primitive transportation hindered western settlement. Canal-building projects in the 1820s and 1830s dramatically transformed this situation. The 363-mile-long Erie Canal, the last link in a chain of waterways binding New York City to the Great Lakes and the Northwest, was the most impressive of these new canals.

Even at the height of the canal boom, politicians, promoters, and others, impressed with Britain's success with steam-powered railways, also supported the construction of railroads. Unlike canals that might freeze during the winter, railroads could operate year-round and could be built almost anywhere. These advantages encouraged Baltimore merchants, envious of New York's water link to the Northwest, to begin the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in 1828.

Gary B. Nash and others, eds. *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society,* 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Education, 2004), 335–36.

Transportation costs fell dramatically from 1785 to 1865. Which modes of transportation were most and least expensive, and did that change over time?



Item 3347
Nash et al., 336.

Transportation improvements came to different places at different times. Which cities became transportation hubs?

Item 3348
Nash et al., 337.

2. Factors Fueling Economic Development

Improved transportation stimulated agricultural expansion and regional specialization. Farmers began to plant larger crops for the market, concentrating on those most suited to their soil and climate. By the late 1830s, the Old Northwest had become the country's granary, and New England farmers turned to dairy or produce farming. In 1860, American farmers were producing four to five times as much wheat, corn, cattle, and hogs as they had in 1810. Their achievements meant plentiful, cheap food for American workers and more income for farmers to spend on the new consumer goods.

Nash et al., 335–56.

3: Early Manufacturing

Industrialization created a more efficient means of producing more goods at much lower cost than had been possible in the homes and small shops of an earlier day. Philadelphian Samuel Breck's diary reveals some of the new profusion and range of goods. "Went to town principally to see the Exhibition of American Manufactures at the Masonic Hall," he noted in 1833. "More than 700 articles have been sent . . . porcelains, beautiful Canton cotton . . . soft and capacious blankets, silver plate, cabinet ware, marble mantels, splendid pianos and centre tables, chymical drugs, hardware, saddlery, and the most beautiful black broadcloth I ever saw."

Nash et al., 343–44.

Excerpted from Factory Tracts. *Factory Life as it Is*. –by an Operative

Questions to Consider

1. What aspects of factory work most offend and outrage the author?
2. What techniques did the author use to try to gain the sympathy of readers?

INTRODUCTION.

PHILANTHROPISTS of the nineteenth century!—shall not the operatives of our country be permitted to speak for themselves? Shall they be compelled to listen in silence to [ ] who speak for gain, and are the mere echo of the will of the corporations? Shall the worthy laborer be awed into silence by wealth and power, and for fear of being deprived of the means of procuring his daily bread? Shall tyranny and cruel oppression be allowed to rived the chains of physical and mental slavery on the millions of our country who are the real producers of all its improvements and wealth, and they fear to speak out in noble self-defence? Shall they fear to appeal to the sympathies of the people, or the justice of this far-famed republican nation? God forbid!

Much has been written and spoken in woman's behalf, especially in America; and yet a large class of females are, and have been, destined to a state of servitude as degrading as unceasing toil can make it. I refer to the female operatives of New England—the free states of our union—the states where no colored slave can breathe the balmy air, and exist as such;—but yet there are those, a host of them, too, who are in fact nothing more nor less than slaves in every sense of the word! Slaves to a system of labor which requires them to toil from five until seven o'clock, with one hour only to attend to the wants of nature, allowed—slaves to the will and requirements of the "powers that be," however they may infringe on the rights or conflict with the feelings of the operative—slaves to ignorance—and how can it be otherwise? What time has the operative to bestow on moral, religious or intellectual culture? How can our country look for aught but ignorance and vice, under the existing state of things? When the whole system is exhausted by unremitting labor during twelve and thirteen hours per day, can any reasonable being expect that the mind will retain its vigor and energy? Impossible! Common sense will each every one the utter impossibility of improving the mind under these circumstances, however great the desire may be for knowledge . . .

An Operative.

Author Unknown, ***Factory Life As It Is, By An Operative*** (Lowell, Mass.: Lowell Female Labor Reform Association, 1845).

Creator:	Sarah Bagley or unknown
Context:	Working conditions at Lowell had deteriorated.
Audience:	The general public
Purpose:	To mobilize sympathy and support for the female mill workers in their attempts to improve working conditions

Historical Significance:

Young, white women born in the United States supplied much of the labor in some early textile mills. In the model mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, the women lived in closely supervised boarding houses, and often married and left the mills within a few years. But these mills became more impersonal and less paternalistic in the 1830s and 1840s, and those who labored there—including growing numbers of immigrants—were less and less optimistic about joining the middle class. Labor unions appeared as women and men workers alike identified themselves as members of a growing, often impoverished, working class.

By 1845, visitors were appalled by the conditions women worked and lived under at Lowell: working thirteen-hour days under intense pressure and sleeping two to a bed.

By that time, the workers were themselves speaking out against factory conditions. Some 1,500 Lowell workers had walked out in 1836. In 1845, they began issuing "Factory Tracts," calling attention to the abuses they suffered from. They also formed a union headed by weaver Sarah Bagley and demanded a ten-hour workday.

4. Urban Life

Americans experienced the impact of economic growth most dramatically in the cities. In the four decades before the Civil War, the rate of urbanization in the United States was faster than ever before or since. In 1820, about 9 percent of the American people lived in cities (defined as areas containing a population of 2,500 or more). Forty years later, almost 20 percent of them did. Older cities like Philadelphia and New York mushroomed, while new cities like Cincinnati, Columbus, and Chicago sprang up. Although urban growth was not confined to the East, it was most dramatic there. By 1860, more than one-third of the people living in the Northeast were urban residents, compared with only 14 percent of westerners and 7 percent of southerners.

Nash et al., 350–55.

5. Factories on the Frontier

[Manufacturing quickly spread from the Northeast to the Midwest, as one example shows.] Cincinnati, a small Ohio River settlement of 2,540 in 1810, grew to be the country's third-largest industrial center by 1840. With a population of 40,382, it contained a variety of industries at different stages of development.

Nash et al., 348–50.

6. Urban Life

Until 1840, the people eagerly crowding into cities came mostly from the American countryside. Then ships began to spill their human cargoes into seaboard cities, and a growing number of immigrants began their lives anew in the United States. Immigrants who could afford to leave the crowded port cities for the interior, many of them Germans and Scandinavians, did so. But many had little choice but to remain in eastern cities and search for work there. By 1860, fully 20 percent of the people living in the Northeast were immigrants; in some of the largest cities, they and their children made up more than half the population. The Irish, fleeing famine and poverty at home, were the largest foreign group in the Northeast.

Nash et al., 350–55.

7. Middle Class Life and Ideals

[Industrialization reshaped the lives of middle-class families.] Falling prices for processed and manufactured goods like soap, candles, clothing, and even bread made it unnecessary for women, except on the frontier, to continue making these items at home.

Nash et al., 354.

Table of Contents to the Young Woman's Guide, 10th edition, ca. 1845

Questions to Consider

1. What qualities does Alcott suggest characterize an admirable woman?
2. In what ways is Alcott urging women to improve or reform society?

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE OF IMPROVEMENT.

Female capabilities. Doing every thing in the best possible manner. Unending progress. Every person and every occupation susceptible of improvement, indefinitely. Doing well what is before us. Anecdote illustrative of this principle. Personal duties. Two great classes of persons described. Hopes of reaching the ears of the selfish.

CHAPTER VII.

SELF-GOVERNMENT.

What self-government includes. Cheerfulness a duty. Discretion. Modesty. Diffidence. Courage. Vigilance. Thoughts and feelings. The affections. The temper. The appetites and passions.

CHAPTER XII.

INVENTION.

Why woman has invented so few things. Abundant room for the exercise of her inventive powers. Hints. Particular need of a reform in cookery. Appeal to young women on this subject.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RIGHT USE OF TIME.

Great value of moments. An old maxim. Wasting shreds of time. Time more valuable than money. What are the most useful charities. Doing good by proxy. Value of time for reflection. Doing nothing. Rendering an account of our time at the last tribunal.

Creator:	William Andrus Alcott
Context:	Middle-class women had more time to devote to improving themselves and their society.
Audience:	Middle-class women
Purpose:	Moral instruction on women's proper sphere

Historical Significance:

Industrialization affected middle-class women's lives in complex, often contradictory ways. On the one hand, poor factory workers' manufacture of cheap textiles and other goods that women had once toiled over in their homes freed up their time and talents for more engaging work.

Furthermore, the elaboration of home and domesticity as woman's special realm gave them, at least on paper, an enlarged sphere of influence. But the doctrine of separate spheres also emphasized that women were less fitted than men for public and intellectual life—even as more and more women had the time and inclination to take up such work.

One of the most influential dispensers of advice of his day, William Andrus Alcott authored dozens of books on health and education. Cousin to the noted novelist, Louisa May Alcott, he wrote the first edition of the Young Woman's Guide in the 1830s as a companion to his earlier guide for young men. Though much more sympathetic to women's rights than most men of the period, Alcott believed that they occupied a much different sphere from men.

CHAPTER XVI.

LOVE OF DOMESTIC CONCERNS.

Reasons for loving domestic life.
1. Young women should have some avocation.
Labor regarded as drudgery. 2. Domestic employment healthy.
3. It is pleasant. 4. It affords leisure for intellectual improvement.
5. It is favorable to social improvement. 6. It is the employment
assigned them by Divine Providence, and is eminently conducive
to moral improvement.—The moral lessons of domestic life.
A well ordered home a miniature of heaven.

William Andrus Alcott, *The Young Woman's Guide to Excellence,* 10th edition
(Boston: Waite, Pierce and Company, 1846).

8. The Expansion of Slavery in a Global Economy

[Southern society developed much differently, although it, too, enjoyed substantial economic expansion.] In the 20 years preceding the Civil War, the South's agricultural economy grew slightly faster than the North's . . . If the South had become an independent nation in 1860, it would have ranked as one of the wealthiest countries in the world in per capita income, a wealth based mainly on cotton.

Nash et al., 372–74.

9. The Expansion of Slavery in a Global Economy

Although more acreage was planted in corn, cotton was the largest cash crop and for that reason was called "king." In 1820, the South became the world's largest producer of cotton, and after 1840, cotton represented more than half of all American exports. Cotton spurred economic growth not only in England but also throughout the United States. New England textile mills bought it, northern merchants profitably shipped, insured, and marketed it, northern bankers added capital from cotton sales, and western grain farmers found the South a major market for their foodstuffs.

Nash et al., 372–74.

"Organization of American Historians," *Magazine of History* Article

Although slavery as an institution was intended to dehumanize African Americans, enslaved people expressed their humanity by acting often surreptitiously to ma[i]ntain semblances of family, home, and community.

Excerpt of "Family Life in the Slave Quarters: Survival Strategies," by Marie Jenkins Schwartz

Antebellum southern slaves lived in family units. The one- or two-room cabins located in the slave quarters usually housed one family each, although more than one family occasionally occupied one shelter. Here in the small, cramped indoor spaces, in the yards surrounding each cabin, and in the unpaved streets, slave families tried to fashion a private life for themselves that allowed each member to be more than a slave. They courted and married, bore babies and raised children, all actions that imparted meaning to their lives. In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, about half of all slaves were younger than age sixteen; nearly one-third were under the age of ten. Rather than to act solely in the role of slave, men, women, and children defined themselves as mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles—human beings who experienced life within families despite hardships difficult for modern people to imagine.

Slaveholders thought of the men, women, and children they held in bondage as property. Masters and mistresses considered the slave's most important relationship to be that maintained with an owner. They worried that children reared to respect other authority figures, such as parents, might question the legitimacy of the southern social order, which granted slaveholders sweeping power over the people they held in bondage. Consequently, owners planned activities and established rules intended to minimize the importance of a slave's family life and to emphasize the owner's place as the head of the plantation. Many slaveholders went so far as to refer to their slaves as members of their own families. Of course, they did not treat slaves as equal to their own children or other kin, but speaking of slaves as part of the family helped to justify (in the minds of slaveholders, if not slaves) the owner's power to interfere in the slave's private life. Owners considered it their prerogative to determine what slaves did both day and night, including deciding such mundane matters as what they ate, how they dressed, and when they went to bed.

Slaves did not share their owners' thinking. They, particularly parents, worried about owner interference in their private lives. Slavery could never be made acceptable to the enslaved people, but experiences within families as husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters,

and extended kin allowed them to experience life in human terms. Just as important, families helped to shield people in bondage—particularly children—from some of slavery's worst features. Families engaged in a variety of economic activities that improved the material conditions under which each member lived. For example, some cultivated food for their own consumption. They raised chickens and ate the eggs; grew rice, corn, and vegetables; kept bees and harvested the honey; and hunted and trapped small animals, which were cleaned and cooked for the table.

Slave families placed special importance on having a source of food that was not controlled by owners. Slaveholders provided slave families with "rations," or weekly food allotments, which they considered sufficient for keeping slaves healthy enough to perform the heavy labor demanded of them. From the slave's perspective, however, the rations were insufficient. For one thing, they tended to be monotonous and of a poor quality. Rations regularly consisted of some type of fatty, salted meat, corn meal, and potatoes. More important, they could be withdrawn if the slaveholder decided to punish the slave family for some infraction of plantation rules. For example, if a slave ran away or could not or would not work as the owner specified, the slaveholder could withhold some of the rations from the family or from all the slaves living in the quarters. The owner hoped that this would prompt the recalcitrant slave to return to the plantation or to work harder or better so as to prevent relatives and friends from suffering. The practice helped slaveholders maintain discipline on the plantation, but it also encouraged slave family members to work together to ensure that they would have food and other necessities of life if an owner withheld them.

When no one was watching, children sometimes appropriated items without first securing an owner's permission. Boys and girls, who often spent time in their owner's homes as wait staff, cook's helpers, or nursemaids to the planter's children, returned home with pockets full of salt or whatever else was at hand. Little Henry Baker's mistress found the practice so widespread that she banned the construction of pockets in boys' breeches to make it more difficult to conceal items. Young Tom Morris surreptitiously gathered eggs for his mother to cook. Ben Horry and his father secretly obtained so much rice that they sold some in the local black market (2).

Slaves not only consumed food taken or cultivated, they also sold or traded it, along with other goods and services, and used any cash they obtained to better their living conditions. Rice planter James R. Sparkman, who owned a large number of slaves and observed firsthand many of their economic activities, explained that most of the money slaves made went to purchase "comforts and presents to their families," which included—in addition to food and clothing—household or personal items such as mosquito nets, buckets, sieves, and pocket knives. Mistress Fanny Kemble Butler, whose husband owned cotton and rice plantations in Georgia, recorded in her diary some of the

ways slaves accumulated small amounts of cash. They trapped and sold fowls found in abundance in the region. They also trapped animals and sold the furs. Other slaves earned cash by clearing paths and driveways and making buckets, barrels, and boots for sale (4). All of this they did at night or on Sundays, when slaves usually had time for themselves.

Many of the tales told by adults served didactic purposes; that is, they imparted lessons that adults wanted children to learn. Stories about small, weak animals outwitting larger, stronger ones reminded everyone that slaves might at times use their wits to improve their lives, despite their owner's superior power. In some stories, the larger animals got the better of the smaller ones, a reminder to children and adults alike that enslaved people had always to be on guard against the capriciousness of owners.

Endnotes

2. Benjamin Drew, A North-Side View of Slavery (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1968), 358-59; "Henry Baker," in Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, ed. John W. Blassingame (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 657; Rawick, ed., Supplement, Series 2, Vol. 5, Pt. 4, p. 1885; Series 2, Vol. 11, pp. 208–9; Supplement, Series I, Vol. 9, Pt. 4, p. 1582; Charles L. Perdue Jr., Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 227; and Rawick, ed., Series 1, Vol. 2, Pt. 2, pp. 299–300.

4. "Inclosure," James R. Sparkman to Benjamin Allston, 10 March 1858, in The South Carolina Rice Planter as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston, ed. J. H. Easterby (Savannah: Beehive, 1978), 350; Kemble, Journal of a Residence, 58, 62, 73, 83–84, 90, 146, 217, 313, 317–18, 323. Evidence of slave economic activities is found throughout the Rawick series. Other sources include narratives by former slaves and slaveholders, including Charles Ball, Fifty Years in Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave (Indianapolis: Asher, 18[37]); D. E. Huger Smith, A Charlestonian's Recollections, 1846–1913 (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1950); and Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, eds., Weevils in the Wheat, 210.

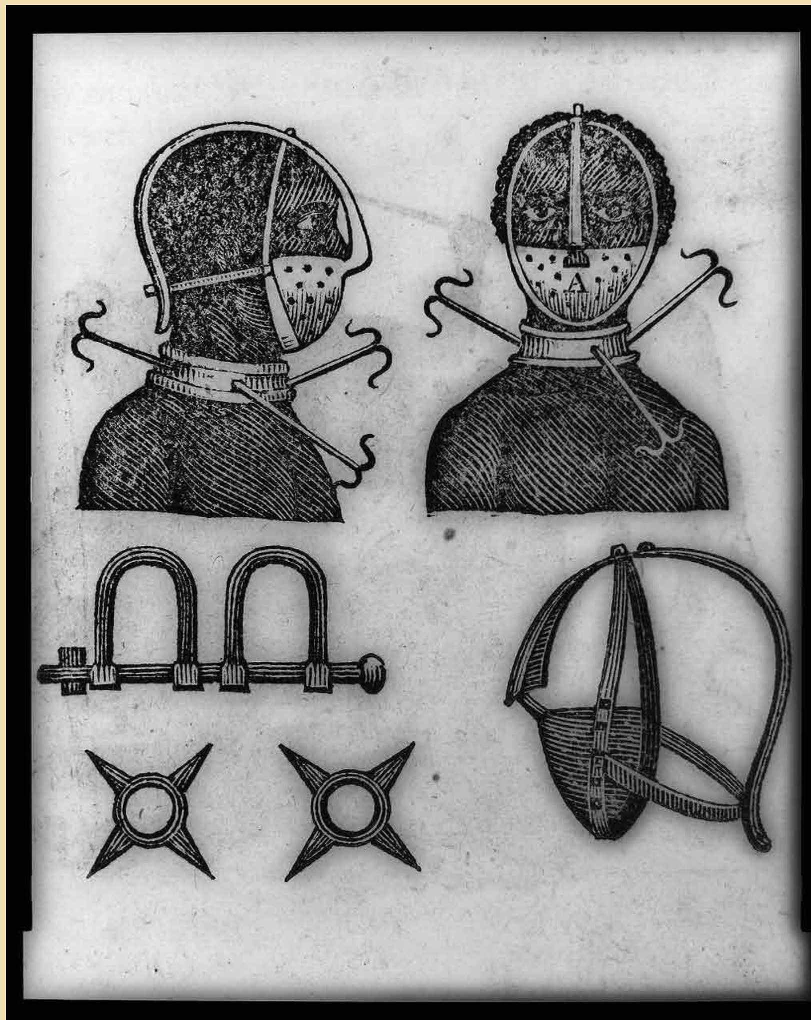
Marie Jenkins Schwartz is an associate professor of history at the University of Rhode Island, Kingston. Her recent book Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South *(2000) explores more completely the experiences of enslaved families.*

Marie Jenkins Schwartz, "Family Life in the Slave Quarters: Survival Strategies," OAH Magazine of History, vol. 14 no. 4 (Summer 2001) 36–41.

Iron Mask, Collar, Leg Shackles and Spurs used to Restrict Slaves in *The Penitential Tyrant*

Question to Consider

1. Why did Branagan include this image in his book of anti-slavery poetry?



Item 3515
Thomas Branagan, IRON MASK, COLLAR, LEG SHACKLES AND SPURS USED TO RESTRICT SLAVES in *The Penitential Tyrant* (1807).
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 47

Creator:	Thomas Branagan
Context:	Slaves suffered from a great deal of violence.
Audience:	The general public
Purpose:	To generate support for the anti-slavery movement

Historical Significance:

Many historians of slavery have emphasized the cruel and violent nature of the institution. So did those who opposed slavery before the Civil War.

Thomas Branagan was an Irish immigrant who had worked as a slave trader and a planter in Antigua. Upon his conversion to Christianity, he became a vocal critic of the institution of slavery. The image below appeared in Branagan's 1807 book of poems, *The Penitential Tyrant.*

Branagan did not support slavery, neither did he desire immediate emancipation. If former slaves were to remain in the United States, Branagan believed that they should colonize the west. He also wrote against miscegenation.

Conclusion

Northern economic development freed up people's time for reform work, particularly middle-class women. But calls for reform were not always heeded. Factory owners resisted worker demands for shorter hours and better conditions, and Southern plantation owners resented and resisted abolitionists. Yet the broad appeal of reform meant that these voices would not soon be stilled.

Questions to Consider

1. **Which people gained power and which people lost power during the industrial revolution from 1820 to 1860?**
2. **What sort of tensions and frictions did the industrial revolution create?**

Theme Two

Theme Two: The Second Great Awakening, a religious revival of the early 1800s, contributed to the reform impulse by emphasizing individual responsibility and perfection.

Overview

America's growing prosperity and the social changes that accompanied it prompted many members of its growing middle class to become both more concerned over the rapid rate of social change and more optimistic about humans' capacity to shape their environments. This blending of anxiety and optimism contributed to a religious revival that had broad social implications.

The religious awakening, which began in the backcountry, moved north and east in the 1820s, where revivalists paired the passion of tent-meeting revivals with the logic and efficiency of the emerging middle class. Their programs of conversion were hardly less detailed and precise than a diagram for manufacturing clocks or firearms. The converted Christian, moreover, was expected to become a productive, orderly, and moral member of the community.

The emphasis on humans' ability to seize salvation put off traditionalists who stressed God's sovereignty or distrusted "emotionalism." But a faith in people's capacity for grace and perfectibility rang true at a time when anything seemed possible.

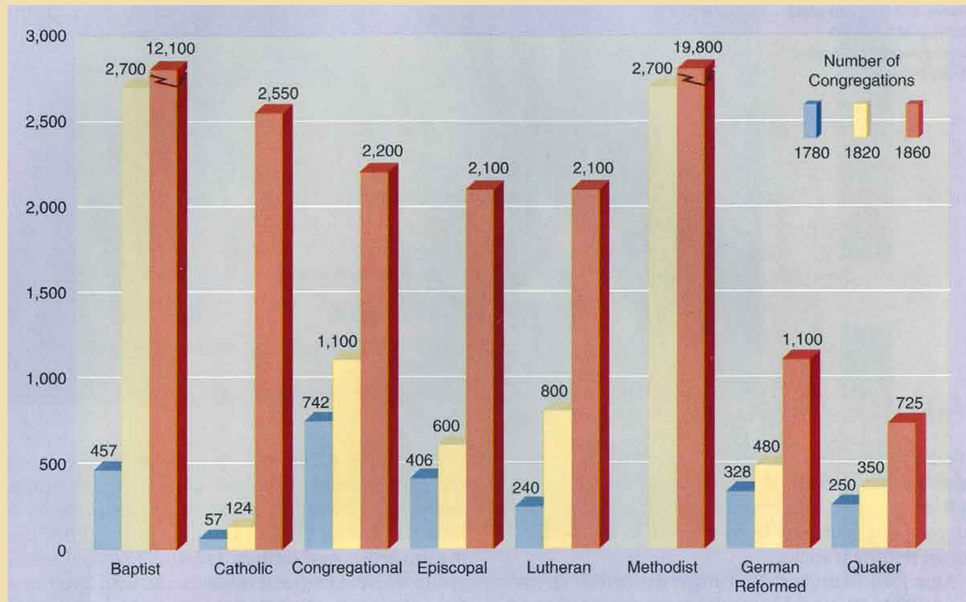
1. Religious Revival and Reform Philosophy

When the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in 1831 and 1832, he observed that he could find “no country in the whole world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America.” What de Tocqueville was describing was a new and powerful religious enthusiasm among American Protestants. Fired by the power of religious rebirth, some discovered that religion provided them with moorings in a fast-changing world. Others were inspired by revivalism to refashion American society, working through new political parties to shape an agenda for the nation or through reform associations organized to eliminate a particular social evil. Although not all evangelicals agreed about politics or even about what aspects of American society needed to be reformed, religion was the lens through which they viewed contemporary events and through which they sought to effect change.

Nash et al., 406–8.

Denominational Growth, 1780–1860

Methodists and Baptists led the nation in revivals and in church membership, and immigration from German and Ireland led to rapid growth among Catholics and Lutherans. Which denominations grew most slowly?



Item 3349
Nash et al., 407.

2. Finney and the Second Great Awakening

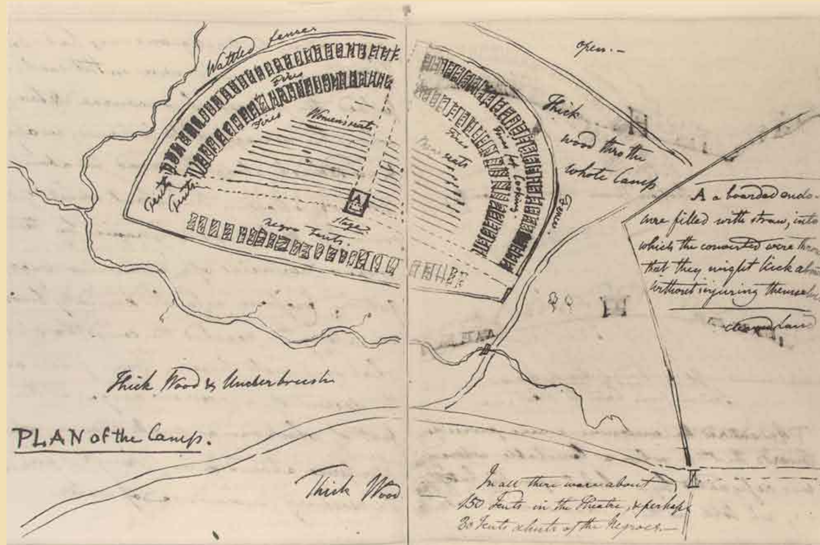
From the late 1790s until the late 1830s, a wave of religious revivals that matched the intensity of the Great Awakening in the 1730s and 1740s swept through the United States . . . The camp meeting revivals of the frontier at the turn of the century and the New England revivals sparked by Lyman Beecher took on a new emphasis and location after 1830. [Charles G. Finney moved revivalism westward.] The Finney revivals followed the Erie Canal across upstate New York and eventually swept into Ohio. These areas had experienced profound economic and social changes, as the example of Rochester, New York, suggests.

Nash et al., 406.

CAMP MEETING PLAN, 1809

Questions to Consider

1. Does the plan for this meeting suggest egalitarian or hierarchical social relations?
2. In what ways does the sketch suggest that revivals were carefully planned?



Item 3366
Benjamin H. Latrobe, PLAN OF THE CAMP, AUGUST 8, 1809 (1809).
Courtesy The Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 48

Creator:	Benjamin Henry Latrobe
Context:	Revivals were carefully planned.
Audience:	Revival leaders
Purpose:	To help organize and plan the revival

Historical Significance:

Camp meetings were commonplace in recently settled areas of the United States from the Carolinas to New York state around the turn of the nineteenth century. The revivals occurred outdoors, as no buildings were large enough to accommodate the thousands of attendees. They featured several preachers, as well as more recent converts who urged their audience to turn to Jesus, to embrace a more intense form of Christianity. Attendees commonly shouted, fell to the ground, and jerked about as the Holy Spirit filled them.

This sketch of an 1809 Methodist camp meeting in Fairfax County, Virginia, suggests that these gatherings were more orderly than they seemed.

3. Finney and the Second Great Awakening

Unlike Jonathan Edwards, who believed that revivals were God's miracles, Finney understood that the human "agency" of individuals and ministers were crucial in causing a revival . . . Perhaps because he was a former lawyer, Finney used logic as well as emotion to bring about conversions, the purpose of which was to play a role in the perfectionist reform of society.

Nash et al., 407.

Excerpted from Charles G. Finney, "What A Revival of Religion Is"

Printed in the *New York Evangelist,* 1834

Lecture delivered by Charles Grandison Finney at the New York Presbyterian Church, December, 1834.

II. I AM TO SHOW WHAT A REVIVAL IS.

It presupposes that the church is sunk down in a backslidden state, and a revival consists in the return of the church from her backslidings, and in the conversion of sinners.

1. A revival always includes conviction of sin on the part of the church. Backslidden professors cannot wake up and begin right away in the service of God, without deep searchings of heart.

The fountains of sin need to be broken up. In a true revival, Christians are always brought under such convictions; they see their sins in such a light, that often they find it impossible to maintain a hope of their acceptance with God. It does not always go to that extent; but there are always, in a genuine revival, deep convictions of sin, and often cases of abandoning all hope.

2. Backslidden Christians will be brought to repentance. A revival is nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God. Just as in the case of a converted sinner, the first step is a deep repentance, a breaking down of heart, a getting down into the dust before God, with deep humility, and forsaking of sin.

3. Christians will have their faith renewed. While they are in their backslidden state they are blind to the state of sinners. Their hearts are as hard as marble. The truths of the Bible only appear like a dream. They admit it to be all true; their conscience and their judgment assent to it; but their faith does not see it standing out in bold relief, in all the burning realities of eternity. But when they enter into a revival, they no longer see men as trees walking, but they see things in that strong light which will renew the love of God in their

Creator:	Charles G. Finney
Context:	Finney was the leading revivalist of his day.
Audience:	Revivalists
Purpose:	To explain how to conduct successful revivals

Historical Significance:

Finney was an intellectual as well as a revivalist, and he engaged in extended and elaborate disagreements with other leading theologians over the nature of conversion and other aspects of Christian faith. He authored a book on systematic theology and taught theology at Oberlin College, where he eventually became president.

Revivals in Religion was drawn from a series of lectures delivered to his New York City congregation. They were published serially then, in 1835, collected in a book. Finney, then, was both a great evangelist and a greater teacher of evangelism. Hundreds, if not thousands, of ministers and preachers read his instructions on how to convert people to Christ.

hearts. This will lead them to labor zealously to bring others to him. They will feel grieved that others do not love God, when they love him so much. And they will set themselves feelingly to persuade their neighbors to give him their hearts. So their love to men will be renewed. They will be filled with a tender and burning love for souls. They will have a longing desire for the salvation of the whole world. They will be in agony for individuals whom they want to have saved; their friends, relations, enemies. They will not only be urging them to give their hearts to God, but they will carry them to God in the arms of faith, and with strong crying and tears beseech God to have mercy on them, and save their souls from endless burnings.

4. A revival breaks the power of the world and of sin over Christians. It brings them to such vantage ground that they get a fresh impulse towards heaven. They have a new foretaste of heaven, and new desires after union to God; and the charm of the world is broken, and the power of sin overcome.

5. When the churches are thus awakened and reformed, the reformation and salvation of sinners will follow, going through the same stages of conviction, repentance, and reformation. Their hearts will be broken down and changed. Very often the most abandoned profligates are among the subjects. Harlots, and drunkards, and infidels, and all sorts of abandoned characters, are awakened and converted. The worst part of human society are softened and reclaimed, and made to appear as lovely specimens of the beauty of holiness.

Charles Finney, "What A Revival of Religion Is" ***New York Evangelist,***
(Dec. 6, 1834), 194.

4. New Visions of Religious Faith

Finney believed that people could control their own destinies and that they should work through earthly institutions to do it. In one sermon, he declared, "The church must take the right ground in regard to politics . . .The time has come that Christians must vote for honest men." Of course, not all Christians agreed on what constituted the "right ground" in politics. But Finney sought to link the life of the spirit with political and reform efforts, and many men and women responded enthusiastically . . .

Elsewhere, some church leaders sought to purge Christianity of what they saw as its too-worldly nature and to revive the primitive church that Jesus and his disciples had established. On April 6, 1830, a young farmer named Joseph Smith, Jr., founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (also called the Mormons) in Fayette, New York. Smith said that, in a vision, he had received the text of a holy book originally written by a Native American historian more than 1400 years earlier. Transcribed from tablets presented to him by an angel named Moroni, the text was called the Book of Mormon. Together with the Old and New Testaments, it formed the basis of a new faith. Over the next few years, the Mormon Church grew rapidly, claiming 8000 members by the mid-1830s. However, the young church also aroused intense hostility among mainstream Protestant denominations that regarded the new group's theology and textual inspiration with suspicion. It was almost impossible for religious institutions to escape the worldly realm of politics and social fragmentation.

Peter H. Wood and others, *Created Equal: A Social and Political History of the United States* (New York: Pearson Education Inc., 2003), 385.

5. The Transcendentalists

[Bold religious ideas also emerged from the nation's leading thinkers, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson of Concord, Massachusetts.] Emerson's essays of the 1830s—"Nature," "American Scholar," and "Divinity School Address," among others—influenced the generation of reformist American intellectuals coming of age in mid-century and helped inspire artists and writers. The small but influential group of New England intellectuals who lived near Emerson were called Transcendentalists because of their belief that truth was found in intuition beyond sense experience. Casting off the European intellectual tradition and influenced to some extent by Eastern thought, Emerson urged Americans to look inward and to nature for self-knowledge, self-reliance, and the spark of divinity burning within all people. "To acquaint a man with himself," he wrote, would inspire a "reverence" for self and others, which would then lead outward to social reform. "What is man born for," Emerson wrote, "but to be a Reformer?"

Nash et al., 408.

Conclusion

Revivalists condemned Emerson as too liberal or secular, and the Mormons as dangerous apostates. But religious enthusiasm was far too intense and diverse to be contained within even a single religious tradition. All of these varied beliefs, however, shared a faith in people's capacity and responsibility for improving society.

Questions to Consider

1. What did the various religious movements have in common?
2. In what ways were the religious movements a reaction to economic and social change?

Theme Three

Theme Three: The evangelical revival spawned a number of reforms aimed at curbing a broad range of social ills.

Overview

Many middle-class Protestants joined Finney in believing that God expected Christians to make a heaven on earth—to eradicate sin from both their personal lives and their societies.

Many reforms were local, personal, or non-controversial. Converts commonly swore off drinking, for example, or a group of churchwomen might decide to open an orphan asylum.

But reform movements became more divergent and contentious as their numbers and causes swelled. Many proponents urged radical changes in diet, such as vegetarianism; or society, such as communal living, celibacy, and even the destruction of monogamy. Others focused on purging society, rather than the individual, from imperfection and sin. Radical political reformers called on government and society to end social injustices such as poverty, slavery, and women's subjugation. Abolitionism was a particularly diverse and divisive movement, as its members disagreed over whether slavery would be ended through moral suasion, political pressure, or violent slave revolts.

These reformers shared a deeply felt obligation and determination to make the world better—though they often disagreed on what needed to be reformed and how.

Theme Three Excerpts

1. Perfectionist Reform and Utopianism

"Therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect," commanded the Bible. Mid-nineteenth-century reformers, inspired by the Finney revivals, took the challenge seriously. Eventually, many believed, a perfected millennial era of 1,000 years of peace, harmony, and Christian brotherhood on earth would bring the Second Coming of Christ.

The perfectionist thrust in religion fit America's sense of itself as a redeemer nation chosen by God to reform the entire world. Religious commitment fused with patriotic duty. The motivating impulse to reform in the 1830s, then, had many deep-rooted causes. These included the Puritan idea of American mission; the secular examples of founding fathers like Benjamin Franklin to do good, reinforced by Republican ideology and romantic beliefs in the natural goodness of human nature; the social activist tendencies in Whig political ideology; anxiety over shifting class relationships and socioeconomic change; family influence and the desire of young people to choose careers of principled service; and the direct influence of revivalism.

Nash et al., 420–24.

2. Alternative Visions of Social Life

[The perfectionist impulse assumed many forms.] The Scottish industrialist and socialist Robert Owen founded New Harmony in Indiana in 1825 basing his experiment on principles of "cooperative labor." In 1826 Owen released his "Declaration of Mental Independence, " which condemned private property, organized religion, and marriage. By this time, 900 persons had joined the New Harmony order.

Wood et al., 416.

3. Reforming Society

The Mormons and the utopian communitarians had as their common goal, in Brigham Young's words, "the spread of righteousness upon the earth." Most people, however, preferred to spread righteousness by focusing on a specific social evil rather than embracing whole new religions or joining utopian colonies . . .

Nash et al., 424–27.

4. Reforming Society

On New Year's Eve in 1831, a Finney disciple, Theodore Dwight Weld, delivered a four-hour temperance lecture in Rochester. In graphic detail, he described the awful fate of those who refused to stop drinking and urged his audience not only to cease their tippling but also to stop others. Several were converted to abstinence on the spot. The next day, Elijah and Albert Smith, the largest providers of whiskey in Rochester, rolled their barrels out onto the sidewalk and smashed them. Cheering Christians applauded as the whiskey ran out onto Exchange Street.

Nash et al., 424–27.

5. Reforming Society

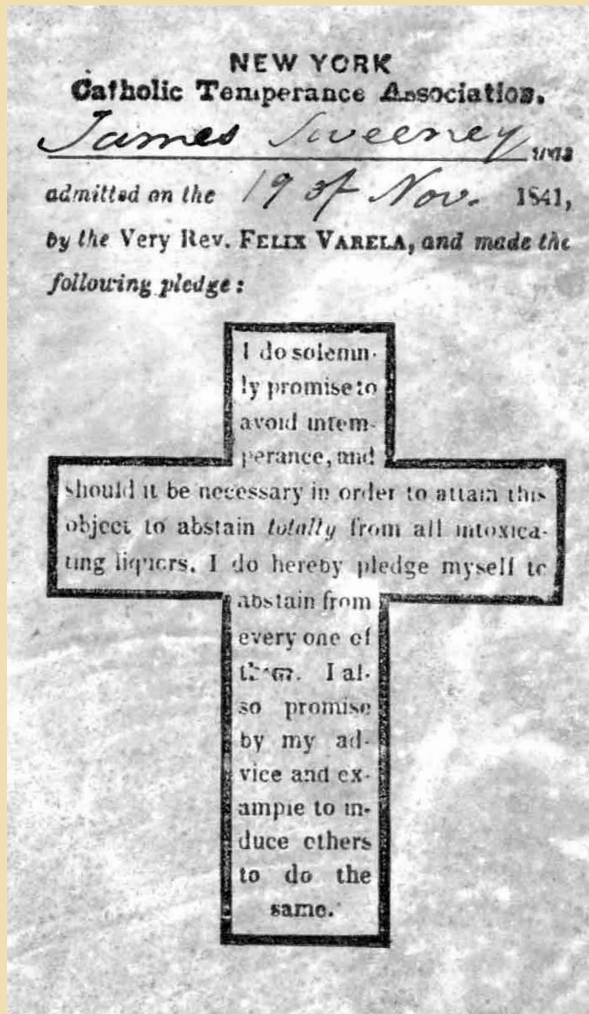
The temperance crusade reveals the many practical motivations for Americans to join reform societies. For some, temperance provided an opportunity for the Protestant middle classes to exert some control over laborers, migrants, and Catholics. Perfectionists saw abstinence as a way of practicing self-control. For many women, the temperance effort represented a way to control drunken abusers. For many young men, especially after the onset of the depression of 1837, a temperance society provided entertainment, fellowship, and contacts to help their careers. In temperance societies as in political parties, Americans found jobs, purpose, support, spouses, and relief from the loneliness and uncertainty of a changing world.

Nash et al., 424–27.

Temperance Pledge

Questions to Consider

1. In what respects is this a religious pledge?
2. Why was this artifact created?
3. What function did it fulfill?
4. Why did Mr. Sweeney feel compelled to sign a pledge?



NEW YORK
Catholic Temperance Association.
James Sweeney was
admitted on the 19 of Nov. 1841,
by the Very Rev. Felix Varela, and made the
following pledge:

I do solemnly promise to avoid intemperance, and should it be necessary in order to attain this object to abstain *totally* from all intoxicating liquors. I do hereby pledge myself to abstain from every one of them. I also promise by my advice and example to induce others to do the same.

Item 1053
New York Catholic Temperance Association,
TEMPERANCE PLEDGE FILLED IN BY JAMES SWEENEY (1841).
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 49

Creator:	New York Catholic Temperance Association
Context:	Temperance organizations often urged people to sign pledges stating that they would no longer drink alcoholic beverages.
Audience:	The person who signed and perhaps his friends
Purpose:	To hold the person who made the pledge to his or her promise

Historical Significance:

Members of the temperance movement blamed alcohol for many of the world's ills, including poverty, violence, and immorality. But the reform was also an attempt to control the personal habits of others. Middle-class reformers were often alarmed both by the growing number of Catholic immigrants and the nation's booming urban population. Many temperance reformers feared that this combination of alcohol, Catholic immigration, and urbanization was creating an undisciplined and unreliable work force—an erosion of self-restraint and self-discipline prized by the middle class.

The rate of alcohol consumption plummeted in the decades before the Civil War—not just because the middle class was so influential, but because many poorer men and women—Catholics as well as Protestants—believed that excessive alcohol consumption harmed themselves and their families. Thousands of Americans from many different walks of life pledged to consume liquor temperately or not at all.

A member of a New York Catholic temperance organization signed this temperance pledge in 1841.

6. Health and Sexuality

[But if the temperance movement prompted some reformers to oppose immigration, it led others to seek bodily perfection.] Reformers were quick to attack too much eating, too many stimulants, and, above all, too much sex. Many endorsed a variety of special diets and exercise programs for maintaining good health. Some promoted panaceas. One of these was hydropathy, whereby clients sojourned at one of 70 special resorts for bathing and water purges of the body. Many of these resorts especially attracted women who not only found an escape from daily drudgery in the home but also found cures for chronic and untreated urogenital infections. Other panaceas, including hypnotism, phrenology (the study of bumps on the head), and various "spiritualist" seances, sought to cure problems of the mind.

Nash et al., 425.

7. Public Education

[Education reform, like temperance, mingled social reform and social control.] Members of a growing middle class wanted to provide their children with schooling beyond basic literacy instruction (reading and writing skills) and had the resources to do so. Factory owners, for their part, supported education that would produce a self-motivated, disciplined labor force.

Horace Mann, a Massachusetts state legislator and lawyer, was one of the most prominent educational reformers. In 1837 Mann became secretary of the first state board of education. He stressed the notion of a common school system available to all boys and girls regardless of class or ethnicity. In his annual report of 1848, he noted, "Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance-wheel of the social machinery." In an increasingly diverse nation, schooling promoted the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills. But it also provided instruction in what Mann and others called American values: hard work, punctuality, and sobriety.

Wood et al., 413–16.

8. Abolitionism and the Women's Rights Movement

[The antislavery or abolitionist movement emerged as the era's most consequential and divisive reform.] As a young man of 22, William Lloyd Garrison passionately desired to improve, if not to perfect, the flawed world in which he lived. On January 1, 1831, eight months before Nat Turner's revolt, Garrison published the first issue of The Liberator, soon to become the leading antislavery journal in the United States. "I am in earnest," he wrote. "I will not equivocate—AND I WILL BE HEARD." After organizing the New England Anti-Slavery Society with a group of blacks and whites in a church basement in Boston, in 1833 Garrison and 62 others established the American Anti-Slavery Society, which called for an immediate end to slavery.

Until then, most antislavery whites had advocated gradual emancipation by individual slave owners. Many joined the American Colonization Society, founded in 1816, which sent a few ex-slaves to Liberia. But these efforts proved inadequate and racist, the main goal being to rid the country of free blacks. Rejected by African Americans and violently attacked by Garrisonians, colonization lost much of it support . . .

American antislavery reformers did not agree on how to achieve their goal. Some found the Garrisonian abolitionists far too radical for their tastes. Other abolitionists preferred more direct methods. The main alternative lay in political action, such as bringing antislavery petitions before Congress and forming third parties. Boycotting goods made by slave labor was a third tactic.

A fourth approach was to call for slave rebellion, as did two northern blacks, David Walker in an 1829 pamphlet and Henry Highland Garnet in a speech at a convention of black Americans in 1843.

Nash et al., 427–36.

EXCERPTED FROM WALKER'S APPEAL, IN FOUR ARTICLES; TOGETHER WITH A PREAMBLE, TO THE COLOURED CITIZENS OF THE WORLD, BUT IN PARTICULAR, AND VERY EXPRESSLY, TO THOSE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, WRITTEN IN BOSTON, STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS, SEPTEMBER 28, 1829.

Questions to Consider

1. On what grounds does Walker object to slavery?
2. Does Walker contradict or call upon mainstream American values?

The man who would not fight under our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in the glorious and heavenly cause of freedom and of God—to be delivered from the most wretched, abject and servile slavery, that ever a people was afflicted with since the foundation of the world, to the present day—ought to be kept with all of his children or family, in slavery, or in chains, to be butchered by his cruel enemies.

Are we MEN!!—I ask you, O my brethren! are we MEN? Did our Creator make us to be slaves to dust and ashes like ourselves? Are they not dying worms as well as we? Have they not to make their appearance before the tribunal of Heaven, to answer for the deeds done in the body, as well as we? Have we any other Master but Jesus Christ alone? Is he not their Master as well as ours?—What right then, have we to obey and call any other Master, but Himself? How we could be so submissive to a gang of men, whom we cannot tell whether they are as good as ourselves or not, I never could conceive. However, this is shut up with the Lord, and we cannot precisely tell—but I declare, we judge men by their works.

The whites have always been an unjust, jealous, unmercifu1, avaricious and blood-thirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority.—We view them all over the confederacy of Greece, where they were first known to be any thing, (in consequence of education) we see them there, cutting each other's throats—trying to subject each other to wretchedness and misery—to effect which, they used all kinds of deceitful, unfair, and unmerciful means. We view them next in Rome, where the spirit of tyranny and deceit raged still higher. We view them in Gaul, Spain, and in Britain.—In fine, we view them all over Europe, together with what were scattered about in Asia and Africa, as heathens, and we see them acting more like devils than accountable men. But some may ask, did not the blacks of Africa, and the mulattoes of Asia, go on in the same way as did the whites of Europe. I answer, no—they never were half so avaricious, deceitful and unmerciful as the whites, according to their knowledge.

David Walker, Appeal in Four Articles, together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World . . . (September 1829) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965).

Creator:	David Walker
Context:	Radical abolitionism, which called for the immediate abolition of slavery, was just starting to become a strong reform movement in 1829.
Audience:	African Americans
Purpose:	To help to create revolts against slavery

Historical Significance:

David Walker was born in the 1790s in North Carolina to a free mother and was therefore able to settle in Boston, where he had a store that sold used clothes. There he joined other African Americans in denouncing slavery.

Most abolitionists focused on white politicians and slave holders. Walker's Appeal, first published in 1829 and again in 1830, spoke to free blacks and to slaves. Walker smuggled copies of his pamphlet into the South, where it buoyed slaves and enraged whites, who put a price of $3,000 on Walker's head.

Walker died shortly less than a year after his pamphlet appeared. Many of his friends understandably suspected poisoning, though he may have had tuberculosis.

9. Abolitionism and Racism

[Racism extended well beyond slavery. Free blacks faced violence, segregation, and other forms of discrimination in the North and the South. Even many white abolitionists refused to treat blacks as their equals.] Many antislavery businessmen refused to hire blacks. The antislavery societies usually provided less than full membership rights for blacks, permitted them to do only menial tasks rather than form policy, and, sometimes unknowingly, perpetuated racial stereotypes in their literature. One free black, in fact, described a white abolitionist as one who hated slavery, "especially that slavery which is 1,000 to 1,500 miles away," but who hated even more "a man who wears a black skin."

Nash et al., 427–36.

10. Cooperation Among Abolitionists

Black and white abolitionists, however, agreed more than they disagreed and usually worked together well. They supported each other's publications. The first subscribers to Garrison's Liberator were nearly all African American, and an estimated 80 percent of the readers of Douglass's paper were white. Weld and Garrison often stayed in the homes of black abolitionists when they traveled. In addition, black and white "stations" cooperated on the Underground Railroad, passing fugitives from one hiding place to the next (for example, from a black church to a white farmer's barn to a Quaker meetinghouse to a black carpenter's shop).

Nash et al., 427–36.

Abolitionist Silk Purses

Questions to Consider

1. Why did abolitionists put these sorts of images and messages on household objects?
2. How does the tone of the picture and message on the purse compare to the tone of Walker's Appeal? How does their use of religion differ?

Item 1520
Anonymous, SILK PURSES (c. 1830).
Courtesy National Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 50

Creator:	Perhaps manufactured in England
Context:	Abolitionists used many means to communicate their message.
Audience:	Abolitionists and the general public
Purpose:	To remind people located far away from slavery of its cruelties

Historical Significance:

These silk purses were evidently owned by Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, who belonged to a prosperous Philadelphia Quaker family. Like many Quakers, Chandler was an abolitionist; she wrote anti-slavery poems and edited the ladies' section of an abolitionist journal.

Abolitionists commonly printed abolitionist images on household objects, such as sugar bowls or pin holders. Many reform leaders were successful capitalists, and they sold these items to raise money for their movement. The square purse with the pink ribbon depicted here bears this statement on the side opposite of the picture: "Negro Woman who sittest pining in captivity and weepest over thy sick child; though no one seeth thee, God seeth thee; though no one pitieth theee, God pitieth thee; raise they voice, forlorn and abandoned one; call upon him from amidst thy bonds for assuredly He will hear thee."

11. Abolitionism and the Women's Rights Movement

The more active women became in antislavery activities, the more hostility they encountered, especially from clergymen quoting the Bible to justify female inferiority and servility.

At the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840, attended by many American abolitionists, the delegates were divided about women's role and refused to let them participate. Two upstate New Yorkers who met each other in London, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, a Quaker minister, had to sit behind curtains and were forbidden to speak. "Mrs. Mott was to me an entirely new revelation of womanhood," Stanton wrote later, "I sought every opportunity to be at her side." They talked with each other about theology and women's conditions. Returning to the United States, they resolved to "form a society to advocate the rights of women." In 1848, in Seneca Falls, New York, their intentions (though delayed) were fulfilled in one of the most significant protest gatherings of the antebellum era.

In preparing for the meeting, Mott and Stanton drew up a list of women's grievances. Chief among them were the right to vote and the right for married women to control their own property and earnings. Modeling their "Declaration of Sentiments" on the Declaration of Independence, the women at Seneca Falls proclaimed it a self-evident truth that "all men and women are created equal" and that men had usurped women's freedom and dignity. The Declaration of Sentiments charged that a man "endeavored in every way he could, to destroy [woman's] confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life." The remedy was expressed in 11 resolutions calling for equal opportunities in education and work, equality before the law, and the right to appear on public platforms. The most controversial resolution called for women's "sacred right to the elective franchise." The convention approved Mott and Stanton's list of resolutions.

Nash et al., 427–36.

Sojourner Truth

Questions to Consider

1. What sort of femininity is Truth advocating?
2. In what respects is Truth bringing attention to both racism and sexism?
3. How does Christianity inform these speeches?
4. Does the language or style of the two speeches vary? How? How, if at all, do you think Gage changed Truth's words in the first speech?

Frances Gage's account of a speech given by Sojourner Truth at the Women's Rights Convention, 1851, in Akron, Ohio.

"Dat man ober dar say dat womin needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to hab de best place everywhar. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gibs me any best place!" And raising herself to her full height, and her voice to a pitch like rolling thunders, she asked "And a'n't I a woman? Look at me! Look at me! Look at my arm! (and she bared her right arm to the shoulder, showing her tremendous muscular power). I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And a'n't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear de lash a well! And a'n't I a woman? I have borne thirteen chilern, and seen 'em mos' all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And a'n't I a woman?

"Den dey talks 'bout dis ting in de head; what dis dey call it?" ("Intellect," whispered some one near.) "Dat's it, honey. What's dat got to do wid womin's rights or nigger's rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye be mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?" And she pointed her significant finger, and sent a keen glance at the minister who had made the argument. The cheering was long and loud.

"Den dat little man in black dar, he say women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wan't a woman! Whar did your Christ come from?" Rolling thunder couldn't have stilled that crowd, as did those deep, wonderful tones, as she stood there

Creator:	Sojourner Truth
Context:	Sojourner Truth was a determined abolitionist and women's rights advocate.
Audience:	For the speeches, the audience was those in the room when she spoke
Purpose:	To persuade listeners to her point of view

Historical Significance:

Concern over slavery often led to a sensitivity to how women were oppressed. Sojourner Truth was one of the most determined and outspoken advocates of both reforms—though some white advocates of women's rights felt that black women should not speak at "their" conventions.

Born as Isabella, a slave in New York state, she escaped from slavery in 1827, one year before the state abolished it. She worked as a domestic to support her young children and joined a religious commune. Commanded by God to travel and preach in 1843, she changed her name to Sojourner Truth. Blessed with a low and powerful voice, Truth was a compelling speaker.

English was not Truth's first language and she could not read. We are left with other people's accounts of her speeches. The first account was written, perhaps from memory, some thirty years after Truth spoke. The writer, Frances Gate, chaired the 1851 Women's Rights Convention, at which Truth gave this speech. The second account was transcribed at the time of Truth's 1853 speech in New York City.

with outstretched arms and eyes of fire. Raising her voice still louder, she repeated, "Whar did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothin' to do wid Him." Oh, what a rebuke that was to that little man.

Turning again to another objector, she took up the defense of Mother Eve. I can not follow her through it all. It was pointed, and witty, and solemn; eliciting at almost every sentence deafening applause; and she ended by asserting: "If de fust woman God ever made was strong enough to turn de world upside down all alone, dese women togedder (and she glanced her eye over the platform) ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now dey is asking to do it, de men better let 'em." Long-continued cheering greeted this. "Bleeged to ye for hearin' on me, and now old Sojourner han't got nothin' more to say."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others, *The History of Woman Suffrage, Volume 1* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881), 134–35.

Transcription of a speech given by Sojourner Truth, excerpted from the Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention held at the Broadway Tabernacle, in the city of New York, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 6th and 7th, 1853.

I was a-thinkin', when I saw women contending for their rights, I was a-thinkin' what a difference there is now, and what there was in old times. I have only a few minutes to speak; but in the old times, the kings of the earth would hear a woman. There was a king in old times, in the Scriptures; and then it was like the kings of the earth would kill a woman if she came into their presence: but Queen Esther came forth, for she was oppressed, and felt there was a great wrong, and she said I will die or I will bring my complaint before the king. Should the king of the United States be greater, or more crueller, or more harder? But the king, he raised up his sceptre and said, 'Thy request shall be granted unto thee—to the half of my kingdom will I grant it to thee!' Then he said he would hang Haman on the gallows he had made up high. But that is not what women came forward to contend. The women want their rights, as Esther. She only wanted to explain her rights. And he was so liberal that he

said, ‘the half of my kingdom shall be granted to thee,’ and he did not wait for her to ask, he was so liberal with her. Now women do not ask half of a kingdom, but their rights, and they don’t get them. When she comes to demand them, don’t you hear how sons hiss their mothers, like snakes, because they ask for their rights; and can they ask for any thing less? The king ordered Haman to be hung on the gallows which he prepared to hang others; but I do not want any man to be killed, but I am sorry to see them so short minded.

But we’ll have our rights; see if we don’t: and you can’t stop us from them; see if you can. You may hiss as much as you like, but it is comin’. Women don’t get half a much rights as they ought to; we want more, and we will have it. Jesus says, ‘What I say to one, I say to all—watch!’ I’m a-watchin’. God says, ‘honor your father and your mother.’ Sons and daughters ought to behave themselves before their mothers, but they do not. I can see them a-laughin’, and pointin’ at their mothers up here on the stage. They hiss when an aged woman comes forth. If they’d been brought up proper they’d have known better than hissing like snakes and geese. I’m ‘round watchin’ these things, and I wanted to come up and say these few things to you, and I’m glad of the hearin’ you gave me. I wanted to tell you a mite about Woman’s Rights, and so I came out and said so. I am sittin’ among you to watch; and every once and awhile I will come out and tell you what time of night it is.”

Stanton, 76–7.

Conclusion

Few reformers were as radical as Sojourner Truth. But many women and men found themselves drawn from mild reforms to ones that required major changes in the nation's political and social fabric.

Questions to Consider

1. **Why did so many reformers focus on changing society rather than just reformers' personal habits?**
2. **Why did abolitionism often lead to advocating for women's rights?**
3. **How did racism shape the actions of abolitionists?**

Unit Conclusion

Economic, social, and religious developments interacted with each other in the decades before the Civil War to create an environment in which reform seemed both necessary and attractive. But a great deal of variety prevailed both between and within the reform movements. Americans disagreed over what needed to be reformed—and how.

Abolitionism emerged as one of the most radical and certainly most powerful reforms; it directly challenged the morality and the economy of the southern half of the country. For more and more Americans, slavery was an inhumane and sinful institution that had to be rooted out.

Timeline

1790 First American cotton spinning mill opens in Pawtucket, Rhode Island

1808 Congress prohibits Americans from engaging in international slave trading

1825–56 Canals link the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and the Great Lakes

1829 David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World

1831 Nat Turner's slave revolt in Virginia; William Lloyd Garrison's The Liberator begins publication

1832 Cherokee Supreme Court case Worcester v. Georgia; Black Hawk War

1833 Great Britain abolishes slavery in the West Indies

1834 Philadelphia race riots; first strike by Lowell mill workers to protest wage cuts

1836 Republic of Texas founded; Angelina Grimké's Appeal to the Christian Women of the South; Sarah Bagley begins working at a cotton mill in Lowell, Massachusetts

1837–44 Financial panic and depression

1837 Sarah Grimké's Letters on the Equality of the Sexes

1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London

1844 Sarah Bagley organizes Lowell Female Labor Reform Association

1845 Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass; Irish potato famine

1846 Mexican-American War begins

1847 Mormons move westward from Illinois

1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends Mexican-American War; Women's Rights Convention, Seneca Falls, NY

1849 Cholera epidemic in New York, St. Louis, and Cincinnati

1850 Compromise of 1850 brings the Fugitive Slave Law

1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin; Frederick Douglass delivers Fourth of July speech

1857 Financial panic

1859 John Brown and supporters raid federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry

1860 Cotton production and prices peak; South Carolina becomes first state to secede from Union

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Further Reading

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2 - Patterson Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

3 - Stevenson, Brenda. "Distress and Discord in Virginia Slave Families, 1830–1860," chapter 7 in *In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South.* Edited by Carol Bleser. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991.

4 - *Godey's Lady's Book Online,* University of Rochester History Department, http://www.history.rochester.edu/godeys/.

5 - *Making of America,* Cornell University Library and University of Michigan Library, http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/ and http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/moagrp/.

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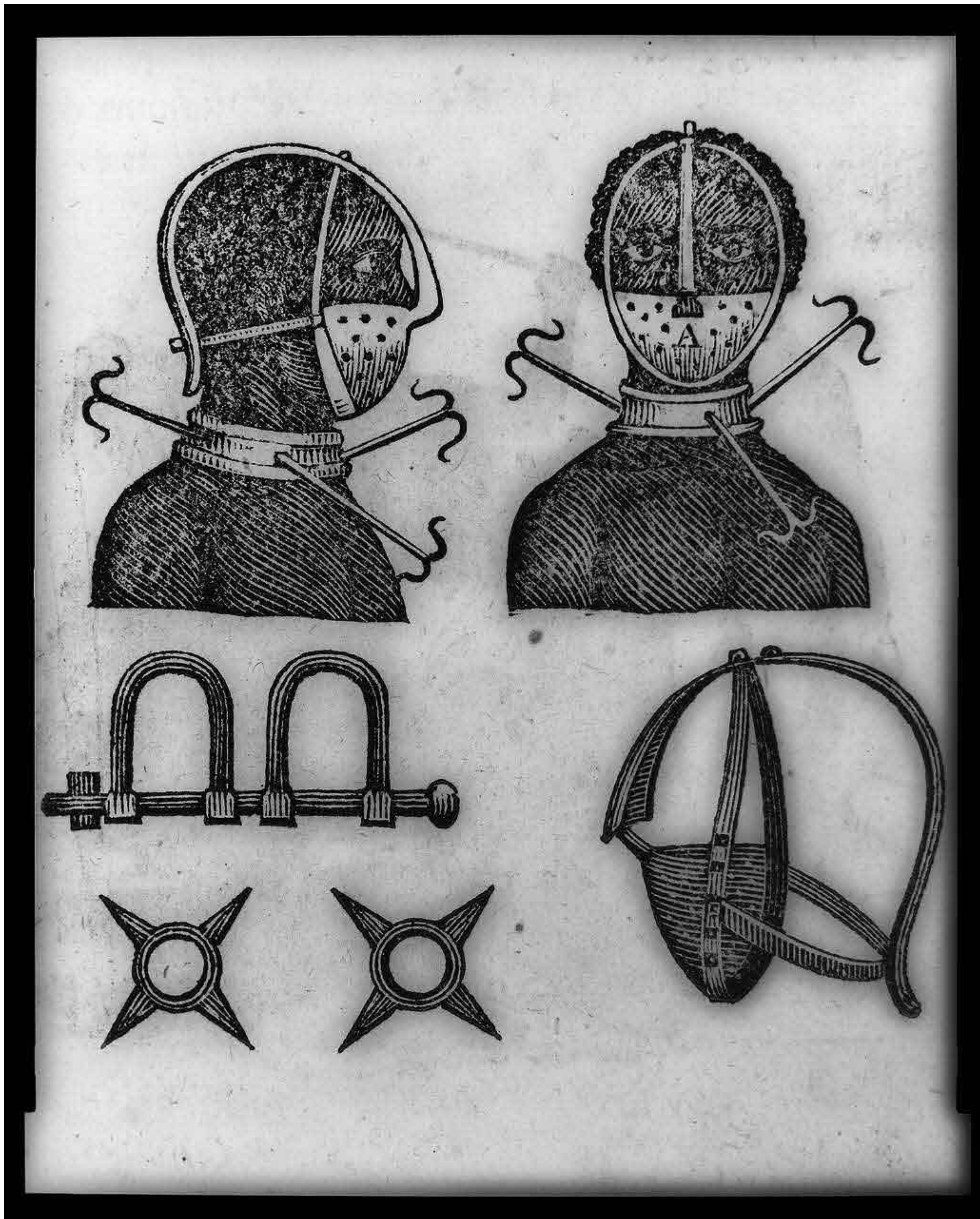
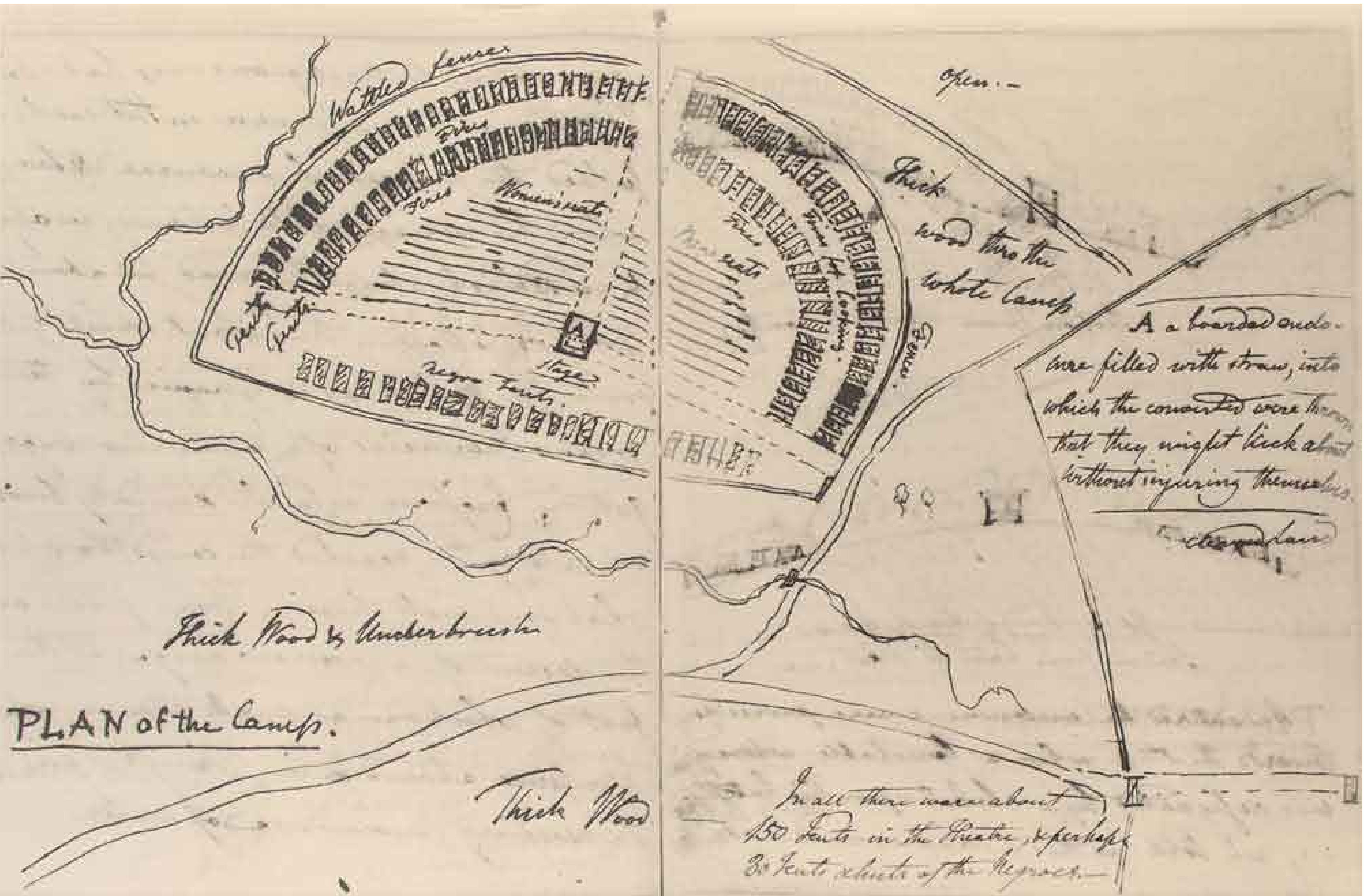
APPENDIX 1-1



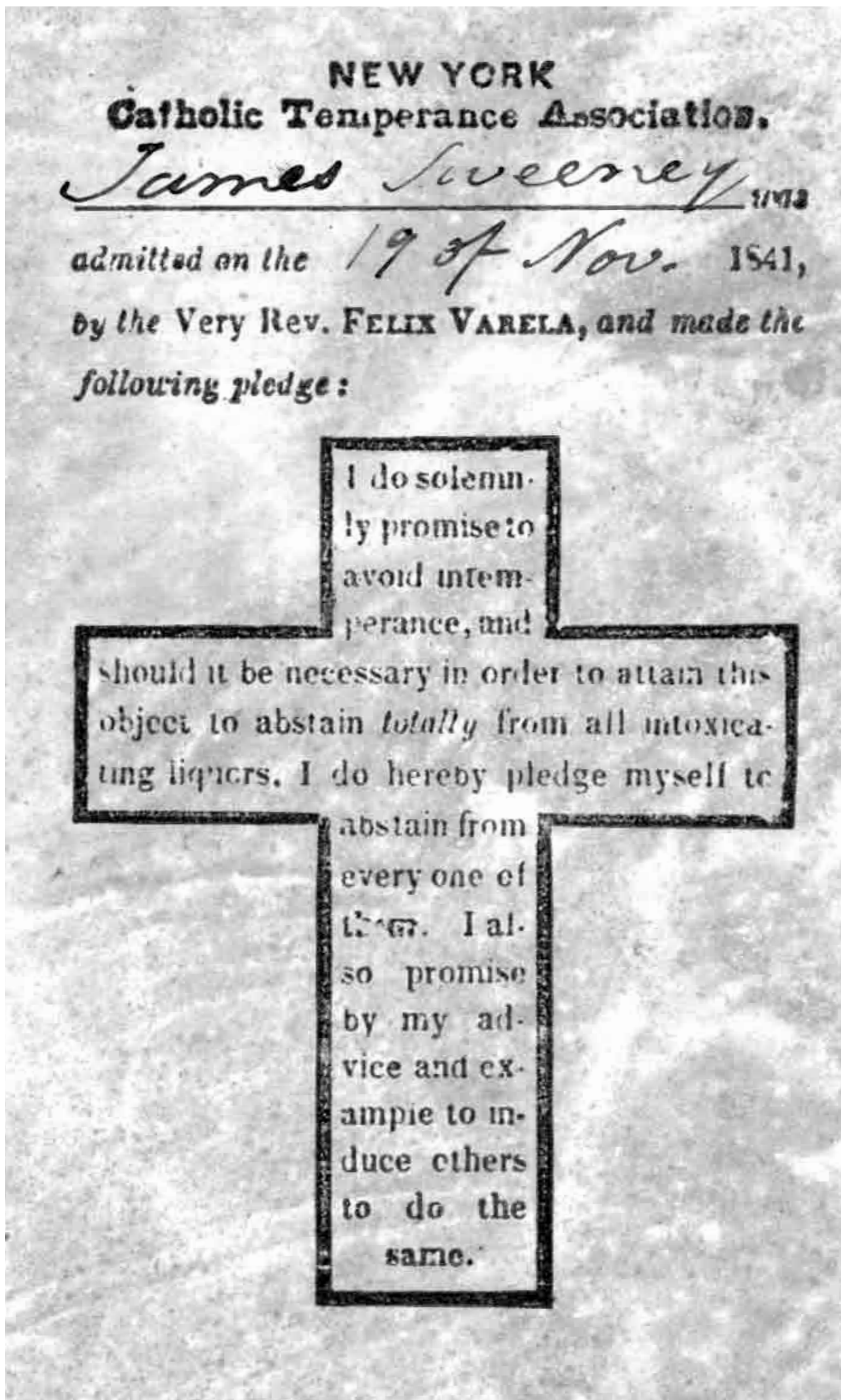
THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 3515
Thomas Branagan, IRON MASK, COLLAR, LEG SHACKLES AND SPURS USED TO RESTRICT SLAVES in *The Penitential Tyrant* (1807). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Appendix 2-1



THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 3366
Benjamin H. Latrobe, PLAN OF THE CAMP, AUGUST 8, 1809 (1809).
Courtesy The Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

APPENDIX 3-1



NEW YORK
Catholic Temperance Association.

James Sweeney ——

admitted on the 19 of Nov. 1841,
by the Very Rev. FELIX VARELA, and made the following pledge:

I do solemnly promise to avoid intemperance, and should it be necessary in order to attain this object to abstain *totally* from all intoxicating liquors. I do hereby pledge myself to abstain from every one of them. I also promise by my advice and example to induce others to do the same.

THEME THREE PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 1053
New York Catholic Temperance Association,
TEMPERANCE PLEDGE FILLED IN BY JAMES SWEENEY (1841).
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Appendix 3-2

THEME THREE PRIMARY SOURCE
Item 1520
Anonymous, SILK PURSES (c. 1830). Courtesy National Society Daughters of the American Revolution.