

Chapter 3

An Anglo-American Republic? Racial Citizenship, 1760-1860

This government of ours is founded on the white basis. It was made by the white man, for the benefit of the white man, to be administered by white men. ... a negro, an Indian, or any other man of inferior race [should be permitted only those] rights, privileges and immunities which he is capable of exercising consistent with the safety of society ... the signers of the Declaration ... had no reference either to the negro, the savage Indians, the Fejee, the Malay, or any other inferior and degraded race, when they spoke of the equality of men.

Stephen Douglas¹

A contest took place between the middle of the eighteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth over who would be recognized as an American. The decision was largely racial in nature. Political power—hence the authority to determine citizenship—rested squarely in the hands of adult, White, free, male owners of property. White Americans fought their revolution claiming freedom for themselves from British tyranny. During the era of that war and the founding of the republic, some thought to extend liberty to African-descended people and full citizenship to White women. This era saw the loosening of the slave regime in parts of the new United States during that time, the creation of a small but significant class of Blacks who were not legal slaves, and the gradual end to African slave immigration. And it witnessed the hardening of the line between Whites and others via the invention of the one drop rule and the racial character of the first immigrant naturalization act in 1790.

European immigration declined from prewar levels during the first decades of this fragile new country. But by the beginning of the middle third of the nineteenth century, many thousands of European migrants were arriving each year. They gathered together to form the second great American panethnicity: the White race. That race was made up of all the varieties of European-descended people who lived in the United States, although not all of them equally. The White race was defined, not only against African-descended Americans, but also against Asians and Indians. In a sad twist of race-making, the White Americans chose to anchor their new common identity partly by appropriating the symbols and ersatz versions of identities of the Native peoples they were removing and killing. In another twist, they invented the language of the melting pot to characterize ethnic social processes in America, even as they were insisting, in practical fact, on Anglo-conformity.

This chapter overlaps in time somewhat with the ones that precede and follow it, but here the angle of analysis is different. Previously we attended to the beginnings of the European colonial enterprise in North America. Now we turn to focus on the membership question—the Europeans who came, the relations among them, and how they defined who would be an American. Chapter 4 returns to the subject of European American colonialism and carries it farther in time and space, as White Americans marched across the continent and kept making racial hierarchy in the very act of colonizing.

As a caution against thinking that the story of European-descended people is the whole story of America in this period, consider Figure 3.1. It represents the population in 1800 of the territory that would before long be encompassed by the United States. Note, by comparison with earlier, similar charts, that European-instigated warfare and disease had by this time taken their toll: Native peoples had been reduced to one-fifth of the population and Europeans now—for the first time—constituted a solid majority.

Slavery and Antislavery in the Era of the American Revolution

Thinking about Freedom, and Not

In the era of the American Revolution, many European-descended Americans saw themselves as engaged in a political project to free themselves from tyranny at the hands of the British crown and government. Some even spoke of themselves as slaves to the British. It did not escape their notice that, even while they cast their movement for political independence in such extreme rhetorical terms, many among them were holding their fellow human beings in a slavery that was far more tangible. The revolutionary era constituted a brief period of time when the idea of liberty became modestly contagious.²

Slavery meant moral agony for some. Thomas Jefferson, for example, genuinely abhorred slavery, though perhaps more for what he regarded as the moral degradation it thrust on the slave owner than for the suffering it thrust on the slave. Even so he could not bring himself to emancipate more than a few of his own slaves (and those probably his own kin). He did feel guilty for enslaving hundreds of his fellow humans. He envisioned and wrote about, though he did not work to implement, gradual schemes by which he and other slave owners might be relieved of

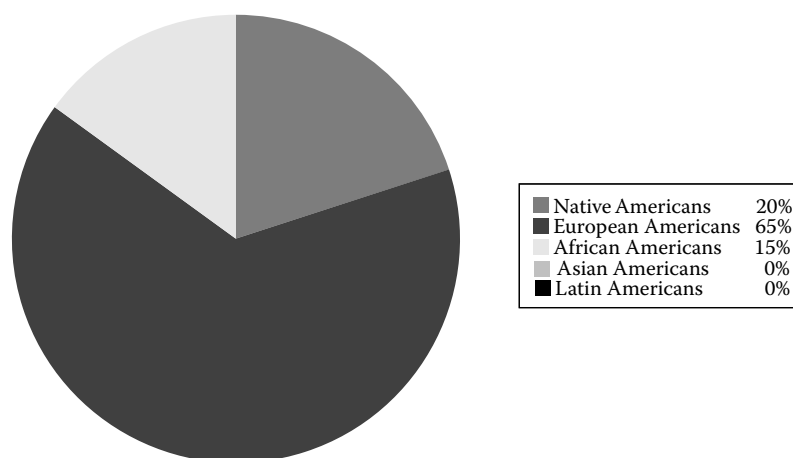


Figure 3.1 Population by race in 1800 of the territory that would become the United States—6.7 million people.

the moral burden of slave owning without having to sacrifice their wealth or social position and without being troubled by the company of large numbers of free Black fellow citizens. But in the end he retreated from emancipation via the comforting twin rationalizations that the country was not ready for free Black people and that African-descended slaves were not yet ready—might never be ready—to be free members of American society.

Patrick Henry, like Jefferson a Virginian, an American patriot, and the owner of many slaves, was in Jefferson's words "The idol of the country beyond any man who ever lived." He was the oratorical firebrand of the Revolution, most famous for his passionate pro-war speech to the Second Virginia Convention in Richmond on March 23, 1775. That speech included these words: "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? ... I know not what other course others may take. But as for me—give me liberty, or give me death!" Yet two years earlier, Henry had written to his Quaker friend Robert Pleasants, thanking Pleasants for a book by Anthony Benezet that called for an end to the slave trade. Henry called slavery "totally repugnant" and spent several paragraphs blaming slavery's existence on encouragement from "the professors of Christianity." And then he weaseled:

Would anyone believe I am a master of slaves of my own purchase! I am drawn along by the general *inconvenience* of living here without them. I will not, I cannot justify it. ... I believe a time will come when an opportunity will be offered to abolish this lamentable evil. Everything we can do is to improve it, if it happens in our day. If not, let us transmit to our descendants, together with our slaves, a pity for their unhappy lot and an abhorrence of slavery.

Patrick Henry would fight British tyranny to the death, but domestic tyranny was too convenient for him to forego.³

Some Whites were more willing to act. In the 1770s, led by Quakers like Benezet and John Woolman, some White Americans began to agitate for an end

to the slave trade, for private manumissions by individual slaveholders, and for the abolition of slavery itself. They launched an intensive campaign of pamphleteering, personal persuasion, and political pressure. Their efforts paid off rather well in the next two decades. The Continental Congress temporarily suspended slave imports in 1774. Many masters North and South—and notably in Virginia, the largest slave state—were persuaded to free their human property during the Revolution and after. Former President George Washington was one, by his will of 1799. The Vermont constitution in 1777 outlawed slavery in that new state. In 1780 the Pennsylvania legislature enacted a gradual abolition law that freed all children born to slaves after its passage, although it left their parents in bondage for life. The following year a Massachusetts court declared that slavery was inconsistent with the rights granted to all humans in that Commonwealth's 1780 constitution. For official purposes, slavery immediately ceased to exist in the Bay State. Three years later Connecticut also enacted gradual emancipation. By contrast, New York did not come to begin gradual emancipation until 1799, and New Jersey took five years more to reach the same conclusion. And states south of Mason's and Dixon's Line, where nine-tenths of all African American people lived, did not end slavery at all.

The crucial difference was the degree to which each locality was economically dependent on slavery—Henry's inconvenience factor. There were only 5000 African Americans in Massachusetts, less than 2 percent of the population; abolishing slavery there was a moral choice, but one without much economic impact. In New York, 20,000 slaves constituted 8 percent of the population and a vital element in the harbor workforce; there, gradual manumission was a more convenient public policy choice than sudden emancipation. Farther south, in Virginia and South Carolina, slaves made up more than 40 percent of the population, they numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and the economic stakes were much higher.⁴ Virginia did make it easier for a time for individual masters to manumit their slaves and for slaves to buy their freedom. But then after Gabriel's Rebellion in 1800 they cracked down hard on the liberties of so-called "free Blacks"—they were not formally slaves, but they were forbidden to own firearms or testify in court—and no more free people of color would be allowed to enter the state. In South Carolina, the master class was so traumatized by news of the bloody slave revolt in Haiti in 1793, which overturned the French slave regime there, that they kept the lid nailed down tight. Calling anti-slavery treason and complaining that free Black people made unfair competition for White working people, they expelled the small number of legally free African Americans who lived in the state and squelched all dissent against the slave regime.

Whites, however, were not the only actors. Gordon Wood reminds us that "By the time of the battle of Yorktown, a quarter of Washington's Continental Army was made up of blacks."⁵ Most had begun the war as slaves and were slaves still in the eyes of the law. But many had a sense they were fighting for their own personal freedom as well as that of their country. One named Saul petitioned for his freedom after the war:

To the Honorable, the Speaker, and Members of the General Assembly.

The petition of Saul, a black slave, the property of Geo. Kelly, Esqr. Humbly sheweth.—In the beginning of the late War, that gave America Independence, Your Petitioner Shouldered his Musket and repaired to the American Standard. Regardless of the Invitation, trumpeted forth by British Proclamations,

for slaves to Emancipate themselves, by becoming the Assassins of their owners, Your Petitioner avoided the rock, that too many of his colour were Shipwrecked on. [a large number of slaves did achieve freedom by running away to serve in the British army]—He was taught to know that War was levied upon America, not for the Emancipation of Blacks, but for the Subjugation of Whites, and he thought the number of Bond-men ought not to be augmented; Under those impressions, your Petitioner did actually Campaign in both Armies,—in the American Army, as a Soldier,—In the British Army as a Spy.... In this double Profession, Your Petitioner flatters himself that he rendered essential service to his Country, and should have rendered much more had he not, in the Campaign, of 1781, been betrayed by a Negro whom the British had employed upon the same business. ... Your Petitioner was at the time, In Portsmouth, a British Garrison, collecting Information for Colonel Josiah Parker, and his heels saved his neck. ...

Your Petitioner. ... [is] Hoping the Legislatures of a Republick will take his case in consideration and not suffer him any longer to remain a transferable property.

The Virginia General Assembly was persuaded, and on November 13, 1792, Saul was granted his freedom, with the state paying his master for the loss of his property.⁶

The framers of the Declaration of Independence considered calling for an end to slave immigration in that document. Most of us know the noble words about unalienable human rights that begin the Declaration, but the larger part of the document is a list of grievances against British King George III. In an early draft, one clause read:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the person of a distant people who never offended him; captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian king of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where men should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or restrain this execrable commerce.⁷

That clause was excised, apparently on the theory that it would not do to alienate the slave-owning class, many of whose members were leaders of the rebellion—indeed, one of whose members was the Declaration's main author. The matter came up again at the 1787 Constitutional Convention. There, the question was put off for two more decades, to 1808. In that year, the international trade in slaves finally became illegal, the numbers of African immigrants who were imported as slaves each year fell dramatically, and the remaining trade went underground.

Three-Fifths of a Person

The U.S. Constitution does not contain the word “slave” or “slavery,” yet it enshrined African American slavery at the core of American government and self-identity.

Article I, Section 2, Paragraph 3 reads: "Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other persons." Those "other persons" were African American slaves. Indians were outside the matter entirely—not taxed, not citizens, not able to vote, not represented, not people at all in the eyes of the founding document of the United States.

Black slaves, though not named, were on the agenda in the Constitution. The northern states wanted the new government to count slaves for purposes of possible future federal taxation, but not for purposes of representation. If their view had prevailed, then Virginia, South Carolina, and other states with large numbers of slaves would have had fewer representatives in Congress and the Electoral College, and they would have paid more for the government if Congress ever decided on a per capita tax levied directly on the population (it did not ever do so).⁸ The White slave owners who controlled Southern politics wanted the opposite: they did not want slaves counted for tax purposes, but did want them counted for purposes of representation, even though the slaves would not themselves have any say in government.

James Madison of Virginia, himself the lifelong owner of many slaves, was one of the politicians who brokered a compromise: each slave would be counted as three-fifths of a person for purposes of both representation and taxation (remember, the taxation never came to pass). So Southern Whites gained representation in Congress and the Electoral College out of proportion to their numbers; three-fifths of the number of slaves were added to their population for those purposes. It was thus no accident that four of the first five presidents hailed from Virginia. The compromise embodied ambivalence, some would say self-serving, thinking on the part of European Americans about the African-descended people among them who were their fellow countrymen but not their fellow citizens. Madison explained that thinking in *The Federalist Papers*, propaganda sheets designed to drum up support for the Constitution:

We subscribe to the doctrine ... that representation relates more immediately to persons, and taxation more immediately to property, and we join in the application of this distinction to the case of our slaves. But we must deny the fact that slaves are considered merely as property, and in no respect whatever as persons. The true state of the case is that they partake of both these qualities: being considered by our laws, in some respects, as persons, and in other respects as property. In being compelled to labor, not for himself, but for a master; in being vendible by one master to another master; and in being subject at all times to be restrained in his liberty and chastised in his body, by the capricious will of another—the slave may appear to be degraded from the human rank, and classed with those irrational animals which fall under the legal denomination of property. In being protected [sic], on the other hand, in his life and in his limbs, against the violence of all others, even the master of his labor and his liberty; and in being punishable himself for all violence committed against others—the slave is no less evidently regarded by the law as a member of the society, not as a part of the irrational creation; as a moral person, not as a mere article of property. The federal Constitution, therefore, ... views them in the mixed character of persons and of property.⁹

It is worth noting that Madison regarded himself as an opponent of slavery throughout his adult life, although he never manumitted his own slaves.¹⁰

Table 3.1 shows the effects of the three-fifths clause on representation in Congress and the Electoral College. Even in the northern states, formal and informal strictures kept voting mainly in the hands of Whites.¹¹ The three-fifths clause gave extra representation in Congress and in presidential elections to Southern Whites. For example, Virginia had a White population of 442,000, Pennsylvania had 424,000, and New York had 414,000—all of a similar order of magnitude. But with three-fifths of the slave population added in, that White Virginia population had an effective representation of 671,000, vastly more than the 433,000 for Pennsylvania and 432,000 for New York. Virginians had, effectively, one and a half times as much representation per White capita as citizens of the northern states.

Partly-Free People of Color and One Drop of Blood

This is not a book about slavery or race per se, but rather mainly about immigration, so from this point forward I will address the situation of African Americans and other peoples already resident in the United States for several generations only when there is a major shift in the status of a significant group among them. Such was the case in the early decades of the nineteenth century for those African-descended people who had achieved legal freedom. I say “legal freedom” following the logic of Stephen Small: “It is misleading to call people of color who were not enslaved ‘free,’ as if they had the same civil and social rights as White people. Their rights were legally and socially curtailed at all times. I use the term ‘legally free’ in preference to ‘free’ to mark their difference in legal status from those who were enslaved and their difference in social status from Whites, who enjoyed all the rights and privileges of freedom.”¹²

Ira Berlin refers to such legally free African Americans as “slaves without masters.” Certainly that was an accurate description for the slave states of the South. In that region, those African Americans who were legally not slaves nonetheless had few of the rights of European Americans. In most states they could not vote, serve on juries, testify in court against White people, or keep firearms. They were subject to warrantless searches, assaults, and detentions by White law officers and often by any Whites who felt like harassing them. The 1819 Virginia Black code declared that every legally free Black person had to register with the county authorities each year, much like sex offenders at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Legally free Blacks were forbidden to meet with slaves at night. Legally free Blacks were forbidden to administer medicine on pain of death (apparently Whites feared poisoning at Black hands). Legally free African Americans had to pay a special tax each year. If a legally free person of African descent were convicted of a crime, after being punished he or she was liable for deportation. And so on and on.¹³ All such strictures were intended to bind those Blacks who were legally free into something not far different from slavery, so that the White population could control them.

Things were not a great deal better in the North and West. Legal freedom did not mean social equality there either. Whites in the North, as much as in the South, believed African-descended people to be inferior and unassimilable into an American society defined and controlled by European-descended people. At various times between the Revolution and the Civil War, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island,

Table 3.1 Impact of the Three-Fifths Clause on Congressional Representation 1790 Census

<i>States with over 200,000 Population</i>	<i>Whites</i>	<i>Free Blacks</i>	<i>Total Free Persons</i>	<i>Slaves</i>	<i>Total Actual Population</i>	<i>Effective Total for Representation</i>	<i>Ratio Effective Total to Whites</i>
New Hampshire	141,097	630	141,727	157	141,884	141,821	1.01
Massachusetts	373,324	5,463	378,787	0	378,787	378,787	1.01
Connecticut	232,374	2,271	234,645	2,648	237,293	236,234	1.02
New York	414,142	4,682	418,824	21,193	440,017	431,540	1.06
Pennsylvania	424,099	6,531	430,630	3,707	434,337	432,854	1.02
Maryland	208,649	8,043	216,692	103,036	319,728	278,514	1.33
Virginia	442,117	12,866	494,983	292,627	747,610	670,559	1.52
North Carolina	288,204	5,041	293,245	100,783	394,028	353,715	1.23
South Carolina	140,178	1,801	141,979	107,094	249,073	206,235	1.47

Source: US Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790–1915* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 45, 57.

and Pennsylvania disenfranchised Black voters. Ohio passed its own Black code in 1804, which required each African American who entered the state to provide evidence he or she was legally free and to post a bond of \$500, although the latter provision was not always enforced. It also forbade Black people to serve on juries, to testify against Whites, or to join the militia. In 1829, the White citizens of Cincinnati used such laws to expel between 1100 and 2200 of their Black neighbors from the city. Several other northern or western states and territories considered, and some enacted, bars against African-descended people entering their jurisdictions. Many municipalities created segregated schools and other public facilities. All but a few states outlawed marriages between Blacks and Whites. And the Dred Scott decision and the Fugitive Slave Law meant that even legally free people of African descent might be captured by slave hunters and taken south into formal slavery.¹⁴

Despite such limitations, legally free Black people outside the South gradually created communities, built institutions, and secured economic places for themselves. Richard Allen became a Christian, preached to his fellow slaves, converted his master, and bought his freedom. When he and other African-descended Philadelphians were turned away by St. George Episcopal Church in 1787, he walked out and began to form his own congregation. By 1816 it was a denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Allen was its bishop. Black churches, schools, literary societies, and businesses anchored the largely urban, often economically marginal population of legally free Black people and provided a small but growing middle class that would one day give leadership to post-slavery Black America.¹⁵

The story of the many stigmas borne by free people of color was inevitably bound up with definitions of who was Black. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the free population of African origins was visibly lighter, on average, than the slave population. In the seventeenth century, interracial social and sexual mixing took place primarily between Black slaves and White indentured servants, out of sight of the master class.¹⁶ By the first third of the nineteenth century, a tighter regime that made race and not class the primary mode for creating and enforcing hierarchy had reduced social mixing among the lower orders. In its place, however, men of the master race had developed the habit of visiting themselves sexually upon slave women. The numbers of people who carried mixed African and European ancestry expanded much more rapidly than either monoracial population. White men of the master class did not only exploit slave women; sometimes they made families with them. In the antebellum period and even after, it was not unusual for a rich White man to keep a White family in a large house on the front of his property while he also maintained an interracial household in a more discreet location. Most people of mixed ancestry remained in slavery, but some slave owners saw fit to emancipate their offspring. Thus most of those African Americans whose families were legally free during the slave era can trace at least some of their ancestry to European Americans. The proportions are quite striking. A free African-descended population that numbered 60,000 in 1790 grew to 488,000 by 1860. In the latter year, only 10 percent of the slave population had mixed ancestry, but 41 percent of the free African Americans who lived in the southern states recognized some White ancestry.¹⁷

The existence of a substantial group of people with mixed ancestry called into question the racial line that had been drawn between slave and free. The solution was the one drop rule. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the consensus outside a few pockets such as New Orleans and Charleston was that "one drop of Black blood"—one known African-descended ancestor—made one Black. This was an

unusual way to handle the issue of multiraciality. Other multiracial societies that had experienced extensive commingling arranged themselves differently. In South Africa there emerged a Coloured caste, partway between Black and White. In Brazil and Jamaica, there was an elaborate hierarchy based on class, color, and ancestry. In all three of those places, as in the United States, Whites who believed they were unmixed stood at the top of the social system. But only in the United States did Whites draw so radical a line as that created by the one drop rule. In the United States, the one drop rule was the key tool for creating not just the Black race but also the White race. It was the essential means by which Whites could draw a sharp line between themselves and slaves. They might mate with African-descended people, but thanks to the one-drop rule, when they did so their multiracial offspring would be Black, and those offspring would most often remain in slavery.¹⁸

Africans and Indians

The making of mulattoes by European- and African-descended Americans was a mixing of two immigrant stocks. Other mixing also took place, between Europeans and Native peoples, and between Africans and Indians. From Pocahontas on, Native women and men married and mated with European immigrants and their descendants. Her son became an Englishman, as did many other people of mixed ancestry. Just as many became Indians. By the 1830s, about a quarter of the members of the Cherokee and Chickasaw tribes were recognized as having some European ancestry. Osceola, the great Seminole war chief and leader of the resistance against White America, was the son of William Powell, a British trader who lived among the Upper Muskogee Creeks, and Polly Copinger, who was herself of mixed Creek and British ancestry. There was no one drop rule where relationships between Indians and Europeans were concerned. Depending on one's circumstances, one might live one's life on the White side of the line, on the Native side, or perhaps both, and many members of both groups were recognized as mixed. Native ancestry did not disqualify one from membership in the White race, and White ancestry did not prevent one from being an Indian. Indeed, most southeast Indians reckoned lineage through the maternal line, so those like Osceola whose fathers were Europeans were more likely to live as Indians.¹⁹

Just as Osceola was a Seminole of part-White ancestry, so too there were Indians of part-Black ancestry. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Seminole nation came together out of Creeks, Yamasees, and other Indians who broke off from their tribes and migrated into the northern part of Spanish Florida. Some runaway slaves joined the new Indian nation; some among them formed separate African Seminole communities, and other individuals were integrated directly into the nation. Early on, as Theda Perdue describes it: "The Creeks accepted Africans into their society because traditionally Creeks had no concept of race. Kinship, not physical features, distinguished one Creek individual from another, and the Africans whom Indians incorporated had matrilineal ties to Creek clans through birth or adoption." A White man named Samuel Bend killed a woman of the Cherokee Deer clan in the 1770s. As a replacement he gave the clan an African American slave named Molly. The clan adopted Molly, she took the name Chickaw, married a Cherokee man, and had two sons who enjoyed full, free Cherokee citizenship. In time, White influence led many Indians to take up racial slavery and European ideas about

racial hierarchy. The Creek and Cherokee adopted Black codes and kept large African-descended slave populations. Yet these tribes were themselves already mixed multitudes, with ancestry that was Native, European, and also African.²⁰

Free White Persons: Defining Membership

One's race determined one's eligibility for citizenship in the United States right from the start. The 1740 British Naturalization Act endorsed the value of immigrants and encouraged their importation, although its authors seem to have contemplated only European immigrants and it limited naturalization to baptized Christians and Jews. The individual colonies, and then the states, made their own citizenship laws, but in general these followed the outlines of the 1740 act. The tenor of America's self-image on immigration and naturalization was enunciated in 1783 by General George Washington in a letter to his fellow soldiers: "The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respected Stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the enjoyment." Washington, too, seems to have been thinking only of European immigrants.²¹

One of the first acts of the new government of the United States was to pass "An Act to Establish a Uniform Rule of Naturalization" in 1790:

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That any alien, *being a free white person*, who shall have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years, may be admitted to become a citizen thereof, on application to any common court of record, in any one of the states wherein he shall have resided for the term of one year at least, and making proof to the satisfaction of such court, that he is a person of good character, and taking the oath of affirmation prescribed by law, to support the constitution of the United States, which oath or affirmation such court shall administer; and the clerk of such court shall record such application, and the proceedings thereon; and thereupon such person shall be considered as a citizen of the United States. And the children of such persons so naturalized, dwelling within the United States, being under the age of twenty-one years at the time of such naturalization, shall also be considered as citizens of the United States. And the children of citizens of the United States, shall be considered as natural born citizens; Provided, That the right of citizenship shall not descend to persons whose fathers have never been resident in the United States; Provided also, That no person heretofore proscribed by any state, shall be admitted a citizen as aforesaid, except by an act of the legislature in the state in which such person was proscribed.²²

This act set up several themes that have guided U.S. naturalization law ever since. After a period of residence (later laws specified different durations) a noncitizen could apply to become naturalized. State and local governments would set any more detailed procedures, for a person would become a citizen of a state and of the United

States at the same time. State and local courts would handle the investiture. Minor children of the applicant would become U.S. citizens automatically upon a parent's naturalization. An oath of allegiance to the U.S. constitution would be required. Children of U.S. citizens would be considered natural born citizens and would not have to be naturalized. And naturalization would be restricted to "free white person[s]." ²³

African-descended slaves, as we have seen, were not citizens but property. Legally free Blacks had a kind of attenuated citizenship status. Born in the United States, they might have been treated as citizens, but they nonetheless had their citizenship rights sharply limited by state legislatures and local governments. No African-descended person could become naturalized, because such a person, even if free, was not White. White persons, even if they were serving indentures and thus were not fully free, nonetheless were eligible for naturalization. The line drawn was a racial one. Chancellor James Kent of the New York Court of Errors (that is, appeals) pronounced the noncitizen status of Native Americans in an 1823 ruling: "Though born within our territorial limits, the *Indians* are considered as born under the jurisdiction of their tribes. They are not our subjects, born within the purview of the law, because they are not born in obedience to us. They belong, by birth, to their own tribes, and these tribes are placed under our protection and dependent upon us, but we still recognize them as national communities." That same year the federal courts agreed: Indians were "of that class who are said by jurists not to be citizens, but perpetual inhabitants, with diminutive rights. ... [an] inferior race of people, without the privileges of citizens, and under the perpetual protection and pupilage of the government." ²⁴

Native Americans were not citizens, but members of "domestic, dependent nations." They were not quite foreign, for their lands and lives could be trampled by the government with relative impunity, but they did not possess the rights guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the Constitution. A few Native individuals—perhaps 3000 before the Civil War—did become U.S. citizens, but not by going through naturalization. In some cases European-American pressures forced tribes to disband. In others, individuals who had mixed Native and White ancestry left their tribes and melted into the mass of White people. In such cases, the courts and public opinion ruled that they had become Whites and, by virtue of their nativity on U.S.-claimed soil, were U.S. citizens. Asians—and there were a few in early America—were defined as aliens ineligible to citizenship on racial grounds. Later in this chapter we shall have occasion to consider whether there were differences among Europeans with respect to what was meant by "White persons." But certainly that category did not include people of Native, African, or Asian descent, right from the beginning. ²⁵

It is worth noting that the granting and taking on of American citizenship had a ceremonial quality to it from the beginning. A candidate for naturalization had not only to meet the qualifications and make application. The candidate had to appear before a judge, swear an oath of allegiance to the United States, forswear allegiance to any other governments, declare his or her devotion to the principles of the Constitution, and present credible witnesses to his or her good character. This public performance of fealty was inherited from British customs of the feudal era, passed down through colonial practices. A group of Lutherans from Salzburg settled in Georgia in 1733 and went through such a ceremony. Their pastor's diary entry read:

On December 21st, on which day our Saltzburgers were bound by oath and had to promise with hand and mouth to be subject to the English government,

their present authority, and, as subjects, to show obedience in their enjoyment of the rights and freedoms of the land. On this occasion the following ceremony took place: There appeared before us Captain [Thomas] Coram, deputy for the trustees, and also the captain of our ship [Tobias Fry] and an English merchant [William Sale]. In their presence Commissioner [Philip Georg Friedrich] von Reck [who led this group of immigrants] gave a brief address in which he praised the good deeds done for the Saltzburgers and urged upon them gratitude to God and to their benefactors. After they had promised obedience with a loud *yes*, a proclamation, *written in German*, was read to them in the name of the Trustees, which told them about the freedom and privileges they were to enjoy in this land and also about their duties. Hereafter the names of the Saltzburgers were written on the bottom of the proclamation. The Saltzburgers had to touch the paper and were asked whether they meant to honor all of this. They confirmed it with a *yes* and then shook the deputy's hand.

Subsequent ceremonies varied, but there was always a ceremony, performed before a judge, whereby individuals—usually in a group—formally took on the mantle of American citizenship. In Britain, such ceremonies declined. Eventually, all one had to do was fill out a form, swear an oath in a lawyer's office, pay a fee, and wait for one's citizenship papers in the mail. But in the United States, citizenship was bound up right from the start with a performance of fealty and celebration of America as a place with special rights, liberties, and duties for its citizens. Note also that it seemed appropriate in the early republic to hold such rituals, not only in English, but largely in the native language of the immigrants.²⁶

Playing Indian: White Appropriations of Native American Symbols and Identities

About the time that Europeans began to succeed in genocide on a grand scale, in the generations around the American Revolution when the Native population declined rapidly, White Americans started to appropriate Indian identity for their own. Whether it be Boston Tea Partiers donning feathers and paint, Boy Scouts singing *faux* Indian songs and joining the Order of the Arrow, or Kevin Costner dancing with wolves, White Americans seem to feel they have a natural right to style themselves as if they were Indians.²⁷

The logic goes something like this: Native peoples are not full human beings to be interacted with, and do not have rights, opinions, and power that must be respected. Indians are part of the natural landscape, like deer and foxes, perhaps even like rocks and trees. As such, they are fit candidates for being moved or disposed of. In fact, they have been disposed of. Indians *are* not, they *were*. That is, White people view Indians as having died out—hence the overwhelmingly strong narrative of the inevitable disappearance of their race throughout the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. As Robert Berkhofer reflected on this discourse, “civilization was destined to triumph over savagery, and so the Indian was to disappear.” Novelists like James Fenimore Cooper and anthropologists like Arthur Kroeber proclaimed the vanishing Indian in mournful tones; others chose triumphal ones. D. H. Lawrence, in writing about Cooper's novels, critiqued this theme: “Benjamin Franklin had a specious little equation in providential mathematics: Rum [he

might have said genocide] + Savage = 0. Awfully nice! ... Rum plus Savage may equal a dead savage. But is a dead savage nought? Can you make a land virgin by killing off its aborigines?"²⁸

Native Americans, in this view, are nature's noble people. They are part of a common past that is available to anyone, perhaps particularly to those people who extinguished them. Sacajawea the domesticated Indian is our symbolic foremother and her image is on the dollar coin. European Americans or others can feel themselves becoming more American, more rooted in the landscape, in the very earth, by adopting the trappings of what they believe to be an Indian identity. Thus, a White, suburban, 50-something woman feels perfectly comfortable making a New Age statement about what a natural person she is by donning buckskin, beads, and moccasins as she drives to Kroger's in her Jeep Grand Cherokee. Thus, RJR Tobacco markets Natural American Spirit, an additive-free, "natural" cigarette, with a stylized emblem of a thunderbird at the top of the box and a logo of a Plains Indian chief in a feathered headdress, smoking a peace pipe, all in earth tones (Figure 3.2). White people make themselves feel more natural, and more elementally American, when they pretend to Indianness.²⁹

Meanwhile, White Americans were not treating Native peoples very well. The Northwest Ordinance, which organized the lands between the Appalachian Mountains, the Ohio River, and the Mississippi River in 1787, promised "The utmost good faith shall always be observed toward the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and, in their property, rights, and liberty, they never shall be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity shall, from time to time, be made, for preventing wrongs being done to them and for preserving peace and friendship with them." Such noble sentiments masked a more acquisitive set of motives on the part of the Euro-American population. President Thomas Jefferson wrote to Benjamin Hawkins, the U.S. government's agent to the Creeks, in 1803:

I consider the business of hunting as already become insufficient to furnish clothing and subsistence to the Indians. The promotion of agriculture, therefore, and household manufacture, are essential in their preservation, and I am disposed to aid and encourage it. This will enable them to live on much smaller portions of land ... while they are learning to do better on less land, our increasing numbers will be calling for more land, and thus a coincidence of interests between those who have such necessities to spare, and [those who] want lands. ... Surely it will be better for them to be identified with us, and preserve the occupation of their lands, than be exposed to the many casualties that may endanger them while a separate people.³⁰

Few Indians—for that matter few White people—perceived such a benevolent-sounding "coincidence of interests." White people wanted Indian land, and they wanted Indians off it. The Iroquois Confederacy had been overwhelmed by White Americans in the eastern Great Lakes region after the French left North America in 1763. The Iroquois went into a long, swooping decline that was punctuated only briefly by a religious resurgence late in the century in which a prophet, Handsome Lake, counseled accommodation with the Europeans. Many Native groups who nurtured a more resistive mentality bet on the losing side in the war for White American independence from Britain. Alexander McGillivray led his mother's people, the

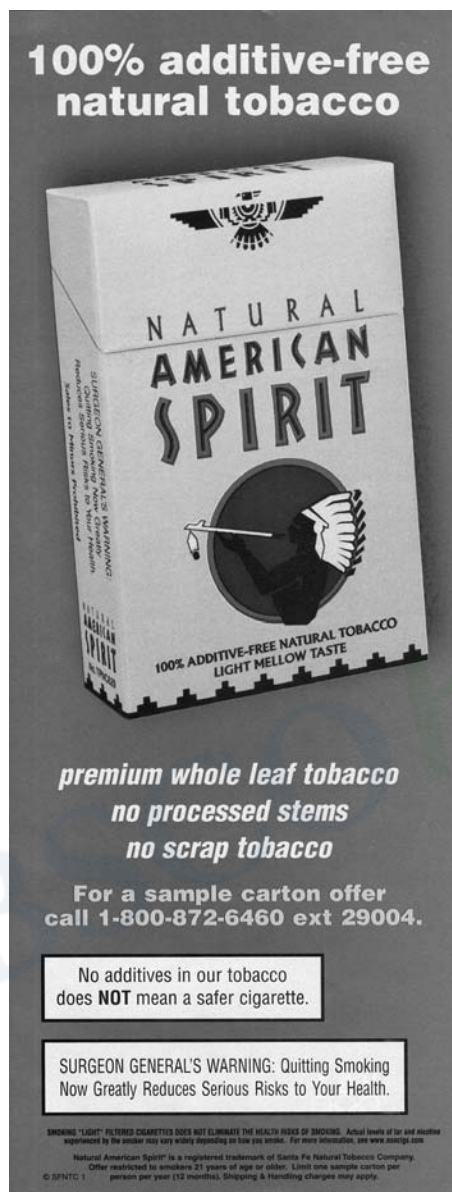


Figure 3.2 Natural American Spirit ad.

Creeks, skillfully, but not successfully, through a series of international negotiations from the 1770s until his death in 1793. He attempted to keep White Georgians from seizing Creek lands: first by siding with the British in the war, then by talking with Midwest tribes about a pan-Indian alliance, later by allying with the Spanish in Florida, then by attempting to build a centralized Creek state, and finally by extracting a treaty from President George Washington that promised Creek autonomy and

control over their ancestral lands. Before long, however, Creek territory was overrun by White Georgia farmers.³¹

The War of 1812 gave some Indians another shot at resistance to the encroachment by Euro-American migrants. Again, they bet on the side that gave up and went back to England. The Shawnee war chief Tecumseh and his brother, the prophet Tenskwatawa, attempted to rally Indians from many tribes in the Ohio Valley and southern Great Lakes, to form a grand, pan-Indian confederation to defend their lands and their way of life against the invaders. Tecumseh spoke eloquently of the need for pan-Indian unity in resistance:

It is true I am a Shawnee. My forefathers were warriors. Their son is a warrior. From them I only take my existence; from my tribe I take nothing. I am the maker of my own fortune; and oh! that I could make that of my red people, and of my country, as great as the conceptions of my mind, when I think of the Spirit that rules the universe. I would not then come to Governor Harrison, to ask him to tear the treaty, and to obliterate the landmark; but I would say to him, Sir, you have liberty to return to your own country. The being within, community with the past ages, tells me, that once, nor until lately, there was no white man on this continent. That it then all belonged to red men, children of the same parents, placed on it by the Great Spirit that made them, to keep it, to traverse it, to enjoy its production, and to fill it with the same race. Once a happy race. Since made miserable by the white people, who are never contented, but always encroaching. The way, and the only way to check and stop this evil, is, for all the red men to unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land, as it was at first, and should be yet; for it never was divided, but belongs to all, for the use of each. That no part has a right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers; those who want all, and will not do with less. The white people have no right to take the land from the Indians, because they had it first; it is theirs. They may sell, but all must join. Any sale not made by all is not valid. ... It requires all to make a bargain for all. All red men have equal rights to the unoccupied land.³²

The attempt to forge a pan-Indian alliance did not succeed, Tecumseh was killed in battle, and Indian resistance deflated. In the years after the war, a young U.S. Army colonel named Andrew Jackson made a national reputation for himself, hunting Indians—any Indians—and independent African-descended communities in Florida and the parts of the Southeast not yet occupied by Whites, torching villages, and slaughtering women and children.³³

European Immigrants

In the preceding pages I have outlined the racial background to the story of European immigration between the time of the American Revolution and the Civil War. Beginning with the revolutionary generation, European Americans declared that the United States would be a White republic. In the eyes of some, it would be an Anglo-Saxon republic.³⁴

Beginnings of U.S. Immigration Policy

In the United States in the twenty-first century, it is frequently uttered as if its truth were self-evident, that no nation can prosper and grow if it does not first control its borders.³⁵ That has not been true in America's own historical experience. For the first two-and-a-half centuries of European residence in North America, and for the first century of the existence of the United States as an independent nation, no government made a noticeable attempt to control U.S. borders, and in that time the American people and nation prospered famously and grew enormously. During much of that period, the locations of the borders between the United States and its northern, southern, and western neighbors were not known in full nor with precision. On several occasions they were in dispute, and they kept changing (see Chapter 4). Even after the United States had extended its claim all the way across the continent, and after theoretical borders had been legally established, there was only light regulation on a tiny part of the vast length of the U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico. No one kept records of the comings and goings of people along the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada until well into the twentieth century (and for that reason, if for no other, government figures for immigration from and emigration to those places were grossly understated). Individuals came and went, and groups migrated back and forth across the borders with impunity and without apparent negative effect.³⁶

Insofar as the U.S. government addressed immigration at all before the Civil War, it was mainly to encourage it. The 1790 naturalization law was intended to facilitate White foreigners becoming American citizens. True, the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 gave the president the power to deport "dangerous" foreigners, but these laws constituted an attempt by the John Adams administration to keep out would-be supporters of his rival Thomas Jefferson, not to limit immigration, which was seen as a good thing. Congress did formally outlaw the bringing of one class of immigrants—slaves—in 1808, but a scaled-down international slave trade continued in violation of the law. In 1819 the U.S. government began for the first time to count immigrants who entered the country. And in 1847 the City of New York began to require the captains of incoming ships to hand in passenger lists. These slight measures were attempts to count, not to control or limit. The various levels of government in the United States kept the door wide open to immigrants until after the Civil War.³⁷

Immigration, But Not "Old" or "New"

The stream was small at first. It arrived uncounted before 1820, and the numbers in those years were probably very small. Only 151,824 immigrants came in the 11 years 1820 to 1830—a bit under 14,000 per year. But the numbers jumped and jumped again: to 599,125 in 1831 to 1840 (that is, nearly 60,000 per year); 1,713,251 in 1841 to 1850; and 2,598,214 in 1851 to 1860—19 times the yearly rate of the 1820s. By the eve of the Civil War, more than 13 percent of the U.S. population was foreign born. Nearly all of these people came from Europe, but the stories of their comings (and goings) are several different stories.³⁸

Once upon a time, a book of this sort would have devoted this entire chapter to “The Old Immigration”: Irish, Germans, and Scandinavians, so went the story; people from the northwestern part of Europe who were perceived to be similar in language, religion, and physical appearance to “American stock”—that is, to English Americans. Carl Wittke made the classic statement of this mode of interpretation:

In the nineteenth century, and with increasing volume after 1830, the tide of emigration set in again from Europe. Wave after wave rolled over the cities and prairies of the New America. The Irish, the Germans, and the Scandinavians, in more or less sharply defined but overlapping streams, poured into the United States; these major groups, together with several minor ones, constitute the “old emigration” from western and northern Europe, in contradistinction to the newer groups that came in the last quarter of the century from the south and east.³⁹

Wittke contrasted this Old Immigration to the “New Immigration”—people from southern and eastern Europe and from Asia whom he regarded as very different from old stock Americans in language, religion, and physiognomy. Such people, in the popular view, posed a much bigger problem for America because they were “unassimilable.” Unlike the Old Immigrants, they could not, in this view, morph into facsimiles of Anglo-Americans. Wittke again:

[I]t is only since 1880 that the “new” immigrant tide reached the proportions of a great inundation. That there were significant and striking differences between the new arrivals and the older German, Irish, Scandinavian, and Anglo-Saxon stock is apparent to even the most casual observer. The newcomers from southern and eastern Europe represented peoples who were strikingly different in language, customs, political experiences and ideologies, and personal standards of living. ... The newer immigrants arrived in great masculine hordes. A large proportion were merely “birds of passage,” a new phenomenon in the history of American immigration; for they came, not to stay and to acquire citizenship, but to save enough money to return as speedily as possible to the fatherland. As a result, they were less concerned with the American standard of living than earlier immigrants, who looked upon the United States as their permanent home.⁴⁰

Wittke liked immigrants, the new ones not much less than the old ones, but he unselfconsciously gave away his alarm by using phrases like “horde of immigrants” and “alarming fecundity” to describe this second batch of newcomers. The Old Immigrants came in waves, but they washed benignly across the landscape; the New Immigrants caused “a great inundation.” They were not, in this view, permanent immigrants, but sojourners who came to make a buck and take it back home. Most ominous, they were different, not just in outward appearance and speech, but in “ideologies, and personal standards.”⁴¹

Lest the reader think that Wittke’s is an antiquated and therefore irrelevant paradigm, a recent survey of U.S. history textbooks revealed that eleven out of fourteen reproduced some version of his Old versus New Immigration schema.⁴² Even more troubling, the best textbooks on immigration history, written beautifully by knowledgeable specialists, fall very close to Wittke’s general interpretation, even as they are so strong on many aspects of immigration history’s details.⁴³

Table 3.2 British Immigration, 1820–2000

<i>Decade</i>	<i>British Immigration</i>	<i>Percent of Total Immigration</i>
1820–1830	27,489	18.1
1831–1840	75,810	12.7
1841–1850	267,044	15.6
1851–1860	423,974	16.3
1861–1870	606,896	26.2
Total 1820–1870	1,401,213	
1871–1880	548,043	19.5
1881–1890	807,357	15.3
1891–1900	271,538	7.4
1901–1910	525,950	6.0
1911–1920	341,408	6.0
1921–1930	339,570	9.7
Total 1871–1930	2,833,866	
1931–1940	31,572	6.0
1941–1950	139,306	13.5
1951–1960	202,824	8.1
1961–1970	213,822	6.4
1971–1980	137,374	3.1
1981–1990	159,173	2.2
1991–2000	151,866	1.7
Total 1931–2000	1,033,937	
Total All Years	5,271,016	8.0

Source: Appendix B, Table 9.

The problem with Wittke, of course, was that he had a lot of his information wrong, blinded as he was by the simple elegance of his paradigm. Consider the evidence of numbers. Wittke and the other authors cited in the footnotes to the paragraph above wrote a lot about immigrants, but English people were never the immigrants under discussion. It was assumed that the English in America all came during the early part of the colonial era and set the pattern for American culture and citizenship thereafter. The issues for English people were never immigrant issues. There weren't significant numbers of English immigrants at any time after the seventeenth century. These were the assumptions of Wittke and those who followed his lead. Yet consider Table 3.2. British immigrants came in large numbers in every decade of U.S. history except the 1820s and during the Great Depression. Great Britain was the third largest source of migrants (after Ireland and Germany) over the course of the nineteenth century. And the reader may choose any decade from the 1840s through the 1920s—more British people migrated to the United States during that decade *alone* than during the *entire* colonial period. The narratives created by

historians have naturalized English people as if they were nonimmigrant Americans already on arrival, when in fact they were one of the largest groups of immigrants who continued to come, right through U.S. history.⁴⁴

The Old vs. New Immigrants paradigm misplaces Scandinavians and Chinese. Wittke's paradigm placed Scandinavians in the Old Immigration because he perceived their Germanic languages, Protestantism, and light-colored skins and eyes to be similar to those of Anglo-Americans; therefore, he thought them susceptible to assimilation without incident. Yet only 411,077 Scandinavians came to the United States during the period of the alleged Old Immigration (1820 to 1880), whereas 1,934,992—nearly five times as many—came during the period of the New (1880–1930). Conversely, Wittke and others following his lead posited Chinese migrants as members of the New Immigration: they came from a land far distant, were speakers of a tongue strange to English lips, heathens, and physically very unlike Anglo-Americans. Yet the only period when Chinese constituted a significant portion of the immigrant stream was before 1882.⁴⁵

So we will have no talk of Old and New Immigration in this book, nor any remnants of that kind of analysis in some other disguise. Instead, we will speak of European migrants to the eastern parts of the United States in the first generations of the republic: British, Germans, Irish, and Jews. Chinese immigrants, who came mainly to the western United States, appear in Chapter 4, not because of chronology, but because that chapter is about America's colonial adventure across the continent, the migration of European Americans into lands recently owned by Mexicans and Indians, and the immigration of others—from Europe, China, and other points of the globe—close on their heels.⁴⁶ Scandinavians appear in Chapter 5, which discusses the very large flow of immigrants from southern, eastern, northern, and western Europe between 1880 and 1930.⁴⁷ Now, to some of the patterns of European migration in the early decades of the republic.

British

Though the migrants were many, sources of information about British immigration into nineteenth-century America are few; almost no historians have bothered to pay attention to the phenomenon. One who has, Charlotte Erickson, refers to them as “invisible immigrants.”⁴⁸

In fact, hundreds of thousands of migrants left the British Isles for the United States in the decades after 1840, as the United States went through an industrial revolution that created millions of jobs and as the portion of the continent available to White farmers expanded rapidly. The total number of British immigrants recorded for just the four decades 1820 to 1860 was nearly 800,000; it was more than five million by the end of the twentieth century. Those were the figures recorded by U.S. immigration officials at East Coast ports of entry, but the actual number of immigrants was far higher. Many British immigrants who came to the United States landed first in Canada and then came across the border uncounted. William E. Van Vugt, the leading scholar of British immigration, believes that U.S. immigration officials regularly recorded many British migrants as being Irish instead. The reader should note that the United States was not the only destination for British emigrants. It is true that in the period 1846 to 1854, for instance, 72.6 percent of recorded British emigrants (442,049 people) came to the United States. But at least 86,000 went to

British North America in those same years, and nearly 72,000 to Australia and New Zealand, with smaller numbers going to other points in the empire.⁴⁹

The motor for the migration from Britain to the United States was the linkage between the two nations' economies. As Van Vugt, put it, "Britain and the United States were from 1820 to 1860 the two most interconnected countries [in the world] in terms of culture and economic growth."⁵⁰ There was no single economic pattern that drove the migration, but rather a number of situations pushing people out of the isles and another bunch attracting them to the United States. The migrants were English, Scottish, and Welsh. They were farmers and city people, miners and industrial workers. A popular ditty went like this:

From Liverpool as I before had stated
We sail'd a motley set we surely were
With coals and iron was our vessel freighted
Scotch Irish Welsh and English were there
Going out to see if emigration was a recipe against starvation
There were ploughboys weavers blacksmiths tailors
Irish peasants and Welsh mountaineers
Together with a family of nailors
Scotch from the lowlands and some highland seers
Butchers bakers carpenters and joiners
There were also a lot of Cornish miners⁵¹

The 1840s were lean times for farmers and other workers in England, and even more so for Scots and Irish people as the potato famine hit those areas. But in fact emigration from Britain was modest in the most depressed years and picked up just as good times began to return in the late 1840s and early 1850s. By 1850 only one-fifth of the British population was engaged in agriculture and more than half the people lived in towns and cities. By comparison, four-fifths of the U.S. labor force still worked the land. But industry was beginning to build, especially in the Northeast, where more than one-third of the labor force worked in textile mills or other industrial enterprises. The United States suffered, as it always has, from a surplus of resources and an inadequate labor supply. Thus wages in Pennsylvania coal mines, Michigan iron mines, and a host of other industries were two or three times what they were in England.

The other big attraction was land, plentiful and cheap. The U.S. government passed a number of acts in the 1840s and 1850s that drove prices down below a dollar per acre on lands the government had recently wrested from Native peoples. Some migrants added religious motives to economic ones. Throughout the mid-century decades, the two nations were in the throes of a transatlantic revival that brought various religious enthusiasms from the United States to Britain and back again, and people followed their congregations. Notable among these were Primitive Methodists, who began in the American Second Great Awakening and secured a burgeoning audience in England, many of whom migrated then to the founding country of their faith. English Mormons, several tens of thousands of them, also made the transatlantic journey.

British immigrants went everywhere in America. They worked in New England textile mills and mid-Atlantic buggy factories, in mines in Pennsylvania and throughout the Midwest. Most of the people who came with farming ambitions and

cash—and this was largely a migration not of impoverished people but of individuals looking to move up—made their homes in the Midwest. Several thousand ventured as far as California to mine or to farm.

Van Vugt argues that “British immigrants ... could assimilate more readily than other immigrant groups thanks to the language and essential cultural traits and traditions they held in common with most native-born white Americans.”⁵² These observations are not incorrect, but they are incomplete. Such analysis misses the essential point of perceived racial sameness. Christmas tree decorating and Halloween costuming are pretty easy for any immigrant to learn to perform. Anyone who has been to a restaurant in small-town America that advertises “Chinese and American food” knows that folkways like food production are easy for non-Europeans to pick up. And the children of the Chinese family that runs such a restaurant speak unaccented American slang. Non-White immigrants might perform Americanness perfectly, but they were still not assimilated as easily as English immigrants because they were perceived by the dominant White American group to be racially foreign. English immigrants, by contrast, disappeared effortlessly into the White American population—indeed, their very status as immigrants was usually ignored—because they were thought of as being already the same people as native, American Whites on the day they arrived, or at most, very shortly thereafter.

That does not mean that individual British immigrants did not have issues relating to cultural adjustment and identity revision. British versions of the English language were different from American Englishes; one could communicate on arrival, but it took time to learn to sound like a native. Immigrants missed the friends, homes, and communities they left behind. It took time to find a job, establish a home, and make new friends. These are processes common to all migrants. But British immigrants were treated as Americans right from the start. One indication of the native status that British immigrants acquired immediately on landing is the fact that, alone among immigrant groups, they voted Whig and Republican—parties with anti-immigrant platforms. All the other immigrant groups of the era except the Chinese (who were forbidden to become citizens and could not vote) supported the Democratic Party.

Mary Wrightson was born in the north English coalfield hamlet of Middlestone, thirty miles southwest of Newcastle, to an English miner and his Irish wife. When she was six, her father and brothers took the family to Pennsylvania, where they worked in the mines near Scranton for the rest of their lives. Mary’s older sisters married coal miners of British and German descent, her brothers the daughters of mining families—some immigrant, some native, but all White. Mary went to grammar and high school, worked for the YWCA, and eventually married Russell Adkins, a medical doctor and Mayflower descendant. She lived the rest of her adult life among the country club set in Chicago, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, and Seattle. Although she was an immigrant and the child of immigrants, she said that, in the ninety-eight years of her life, never once did anyone question her instantaneous, authentic, and unproblematic Americanness.⁵³

In some respects, the British immigrants who came to the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century were very much like the Japanese who came at the end of that century. These British and those Japanese were the two best-educated immigrant groups to enter the United States before the last quarter of the twentieth century. Nearly all were literate (nearly all the Japanese had, in fact, six years of primary education—more than the native White U.S. population). Both these

immigrant populations mixed city people with farmers, and both came to dwell in urban as well as rural areas. The British, like the Japanese, came in families or formed them quickly in the United States, and they both had smaller households with fewer children than was common among many other migrant groups. Some British immigrants, like some Japanese, returned whence they came, and others hoped to but never managed to make it back to their respective homelands. The big difference between British immigrants and Japanese immigrants had to do with the reception they received in the United States. Because of racial sameness, a roughly common language, and a sense of shared history, British immigrants were accepted as natural Americans. They amalgamated with the native White population easily. Native Whites did not see English people, even those who were fresh off the boat, as foreigners. They saw them as natural Americans. Citizenship, intermarriage with the local population, acceptance into the society of native born Americans—these all were easily available to British immigrants, where they were not available to Japanese immigrants. The difference was race.⁵⁴

Germans

Germany contributed the largest number of immigrants to the United States over the course of U.S. history. Germany was either the largest or the second-largest sending country of migrants to the United States in the following decades: the 1830s, 1840s, 1850s, 1860s, 1870s, 1880s, 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the proportion of the immigrant stream that came from Germany ranged as high as 37 percent. More than a million and a half Germans came to the United States between 1820 and the start of the Civil War. Over the whole of the history of the republic, Germany was the source of nearly 11 percent of immigrants to the United States: a total of more than seven million people (see Table 3.3).⁵⁵

It is essential to remember that, strictly speaking, there was no Germany in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. Speakers of Germanic languages lived across a huge territory from Austria to Schleswig-Holstein and from the Rhine Valley to East Prussia—indeed, there was a longstanding colony of German speakers far to the east on the Volga. But Germany as a single people inhabiting a united nation was only an idea then, although it was an idea being pursued in central Europe both by republicans and by would-be makers of a pan-Germanic empire. The dream did not become reality until Bismarck's forces won the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 to 1871. So the "Germans" who came to America in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century were in their own minds Saxons or Prussians, Bavarians or Bohemians, and so on. They were diverse in other ways, as well. About a third were Catholics, more were Lutherans, and others were freethinkers or Jews (German Jewish immigration will be treated in a separate section below). Fewer were Pietists than had been the case in the eighteenth century. The immigrants ranged across the spectra of age and class. They were farmers and townspeople, cottage weavers and industrial workers.

Germans who left their homeland did so, often, because of a complex of economic circumstances that rendered their situation there tenuous. Partly it had to do with customary rules of inheritance. Most parts of Germany practiced primogeniture, with a family farm passing from father to oldest son (German women were not allowed to inherit land in this period). This kept the landholding together so it could

Table 3.3 German and Irish Immigration, 1820–2000

<i>Decade</i>	<i>German Immigration</i>	<i>Percent of Total Immigration</i>	<i>Irish Immigration</i>	<i>Percent of Total Immigration</i>
1820–1830	7,729	5.1	54,338	35.8
1831–1840	152,454	25.5	207,381	34.6
1841–1850	434,626	25.4	780,719	45.6
1851–1860	951,667	36.6	914,119	35.2
Total 1820–1860	1,546,476		1,956,557	
1861–1870	787,468	34.0	435,778	18.8
1871–1880	718,182	25.5	436,871	15.5
1881–1890	1,452,970	27.7	655,482	12.5
1891–1900	505,152	13.7	388,416	10.5
1901–1910	341,498	3.9	339,065	3.9
1911–1920	143,945	2.5	146,181	2.5
1921–1930	412,202	10.0	211,234	5.1
Total 1861–1930	4,631,417		2,613,027	
1931–1940	114,058	21.6	10,973	2.1
1941–1950	226,578	21.9	19,789	1.9
1951–1960	477,765	19.0	48,362	1.9
1961–1970	190,796	5.7	32,966	1.0
1971–1980	74,414	1.7	11,490	0.2
1981–1990	91,961	1.3	31,969	0.4
1991–2000	92,606	1.0	56,950	0.6
Total 1931–2000	1,268,278		212,499	
Total 1820–2000	7,176,971	10.9	4,782,083	7.2

Source: Appendix B, Tables 10 and 11. Irish figure includes Northern Ireland through 1925.

sustain that son's family, but in an age of expanding population it cast younger sons adrift. They were ripe for the lure of opportunity abroad. In some other parts of Germany like Hesse and the Rhineland, farmers bequeathed their land by *Realteilung*, that is, in equal shares to all their sons. In such cases, holdings got smaller and smaller. Farm families took up ancillary trades such as linen weaving and other cottage industries to make ends meet. In the middle of the nineteenth century, textile factories began to replace cottage weaving. In some regions, former farmer-weavers made the transition to industrial labor. In others, no factories were built and the former weavers simply lost that source of income; this forced many to look for opportunities elsewhere. There was one other force pushing Germans to migrate: political strife. German intellectuals supported a series of attempts in various principalities to overthrow monarchies. Some people fled the unrest, which reached its zenith in 1848. More left because they were on the losing—that is, the republican—side.⁵⁶

It is worth noting that most German emigrants, like most British migrants, were not “poor, huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” They were people of mid-dling economic circumstances who had at least family memories of owning farms, who may have fallen temporarily on harder times, but who still could manage to pay for passage to America and on into the hinterlands, and who could reasonably hope to be able to afford to buy land in America, if not at once, then in the course of their lives. Very few of them came because of religious or political persecution, although after 1848 politics was a minor theme in the German emigrant saga.

Migrants were drawn to America by the same things that attracted English, Irish, and others in the same period: jobs at better wages than in Europe, and the possibility of owning land. The pattern of their settling in the United States reflects the sinews of the transportation system. Going by ship, significant numbers of Germans ended up in port cities like New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New Orleans. In the latter half of the century, in fact, New York was the third most populous German city, after Berlin and Vienna. Many immigrants went on to regional transportation hubs: Cincinnati, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, or St. Louis. One might even say that immigrants built a town like Milwaukee. In 1835 the outpost had only 125 inhabitants. By 1848 they numbered 16,521—58 percent of those were immigrants, 35 percent Germans. A dozen years later the town had grown to 45,246 inhabitants and 49 percent were native born. But many of those surely were the American-born children of immigrants, and Germans of the immigrant generation still accounted for 35 percent of the total; one must conclude that at least half the city’s people were members of German immigrant families.⁵⁷

They clustered together with other Germans at first—friends, relatives, at least people who spoke a language the immigrants could understand, ate familiar food, and brewed good beer.⁵⁸ They founded places called Germantown in several states—in New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, plus two each in Tennessee, Ohio, and Illinois—and countless other towns and neighborhoods echoing German names, from New Leipzig in North Dakota to New Braunfels in Texas. James Bergquist wrote in 1984:

A century ago nearly every major American city had its “German district,” a visible and tangible reminder of the presence of the country’s largest foreign-speaking element, and an image which hovered in the minds of most native-born Americans when the question of immigration was discussed. Typically, the German area began not far from the central business district, and extended outward to more newly-settled neighborhoods, including some small acreages on the edge of the city. Within it a visitor could walk for blocks, perhaps for miles, hearing little else but strange Teutonic sounds. The pervasive “foreignness” [read: non-Englishness] of the district was reinforced by the sight of shops bearing signs in German, restaurants and public housing advertising their German fare, German bookshops and newspaper offices, German physicians, grocers and banking houses—all the elements of a rather complete and self-contained community. To many native Americans, of course, such a place seemed to be almost defiantly proclaiming German separateness and resistance to American standards.⁵⁹

Old-country divisions persisted in the new land. In cities like Chicago and New York the migrants from each of the German principalities tended to form their own separate newspapers, schools, mutual aid societies, literary circles, theaters,

singing societies, and the like. A town with a large German population might have several varieties of German Lutheran church depending on the derivation of the majority of the congregation. They also would have at least one Catholic parish where Germans numbered prominently among the faithful. In general, the Catholic church adhered to the parish principle: one church building and congregation per locality. The church hierarchy did grant German Catholics the right to form separate ethnic parishes, something the church made difficult for later French Canadian immigrants and denied to twentieth-century Mexican Americans. But even in the German case, the ethnic parishes proved difficult to maintain in multiethnic cities, as the numbers of Irish people in the same neighborhoods were high and they came to church, too. There were not many German American priests, and some German Catholics chafed under the leadership of French or Irish American priests.⁶⁰

The same was true in rural areas, which contained more than half of the German American population. Few of the German migrants were rich, but a lot came with sufficient money to purchase a ticket to the Midwest, and some even had enough to buy a plot of land and begin farming. Some did this as individuals, but more often they came in groups to plant German farm communities in American soil. Early in the century, some of these were pietist communal societies like Harmony, Pennsylvania, in 1805; Economy, Pennsylvania, in 1825; and Amana, Iowa, in 1843. As the century wore on and German migration expanded and became more secular, aristocrats and real estate speculators led bands of immigrants whom they had gathered both in Germany and in the German neighborhoods of U.S. cities to plant agricultural colonies in places like Berlin, Wisconsin, in 1846; New Ulm, Minnesota, in 1854; and New Braunfels, Texas, a year later.⁶¹

We can see several ethnic processes at work on German Americans in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. One of these is panethnic formation. Germany was just coming together as a unified nation in those decades, and so were German Americans. But by the latter decades of the century, they were seeing themselves and referring to themselves, as they were referred to by others, as Germans, not Westfalians or Rhinelanders any longer. Those subethnic Lutheran churches became simply German Lutheran churches by the end of the century. As we shall see later in Chapter 5, similar processes of panethnic fusion took place for Japanese and Italian immigrants between the 1880s and the 1920s.

As the second generation grew up, in areas of high German population concentration, they grew into German America, more than into the wider Anglo-American-defined White community. Consider the concentrated German population in southeast Pennsylvania. That was the first state where Germans congregated, during the eighteenth century, and one of its notable features was its longstanding commitment to maintaining bilingualism. In the late 1900s, it became fashionable to believe that English had always been the near-official U.S. language and that a bilingual citizenry could not hold together. To the contrary, Pennsylvania managed a thriving bilingual existence for more than a century and a half, as did German American communities in other states to lesser degrees. German was the language of the German community in southeast Pennsylvania, not just in the colonial period, and not just among those who were immigrants themselves (an ever-renewing set of people), but also among those born and raised in the state, and through the second half of the nineteenth century. It began early in the eighteenth century, with public officials disregarding Benjamin Franklin's warnings and publishing official documents—including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—in both languages.⁶²

In that same early era, from the 1710s, German-language schools thrived in towns and rural areas that had large German populations. The Pennsylvania Germans saw this as a matter more of religious fealty than of language autonomy. They were deeply dedicated to the Lutheran, Reformed, and Mennonite churches that nourished their souls and gave them community. Communal spiritual life included raising up each young generation in family and in faith. The historian of Pennsylvania German schools, Clyde Stine, put it this way:

The Pennsylvania German farmer, when the public school system was introduced in the nineteenth century, could not understand why the state wanted to educate his children. For him real education took place on the farm, where children were already at nine years of age integral parts of the farm community. The school, he thought, was to teach his children how to read, write, and calculate enough for the purposes of the rural economic and social world in which they lived. *His* was the responsibility for their turning out to be worthwhile members of the community.

The only interference he would brook in this system of education was from the church, which undertook to teach his children what he regarded as the eternal truths. And since both he and the pastor were agreed that one of the aims of learning to read and write was to read with understanding the Scriptures, he took it for granted that the church would supervise directly or indirectly the school where his children were to learn reading, writing and arithmetic.

Of course, the instruction in the schools was to be in German, since that was not only his own language, but that of the Luther Bible, the book of books for the early Pennsylvania Germans. English might be taught sufficiently to let the children get enough for the occasions when business or exercise of voting privileges brought them in contact with that language, but it had no real place in the well-knit farm community.⁶³

The state attempted to get into the education business as early as 1802, but it had no impact on the German-language schools. German Pennsylvanians and other Pennsylvanians simply went to separate schools for many decades. By the 1830s the Reformed Church supported 160 schools, the Lutherans nearly 250, and there were also German-language neighborhood schools that proceeded without church affiliation. English-speaking public officials made several attempts to curb German-language education, but with very little effect. It was only after an 1873 revision of the state constitution that English-advocating state authorities began to make inroads, starving the German-language schools of money and trained teachers. The last German-language schools closed by about 1890, but many other schools continued to teach on a bilingual basis. German continued to be the language of the people, even as formal schooling in German declined. It was not until 1911 that the English-speaking-dominated legislature dared to declare that English would be the sole language of instruction henceforth.⁶⁴

German American communities were a century younger in most other places and so less well entrenched, yet similar conflicts occurred in St. Louis, New York, and Chicago over German American desires to maintain institutional and language autonomy. At the same time, there were always German Americans who were leaking into the generic White population, speaking English, forgetting most of their German, moving out of German towns and neighborhoods, marrying non-German-descended

White people, and perhaps anglicizing their names. German American separatism was mainly a self-asserted thing, not an imposition from the majority group. As I will explain below, British-descended Americans did mount an anti-Catholic nativist movement in the 1840s and 1850s, but that was only a temporary impediment to the absorption of the German American population into an almost undifferentiated White America. Even in the places with the largest German concentrations, by the third generation most German Americans were just White people with some vestigial family memory of German this or that—village festivals, perhaps, or favorite beers—what Herbert Gans later called “symbolic ethnicity.” The fact of their assimilation was masked to the view of outsiders because more Germans kept coming to renew the immigrant membership and folk culture of German American neighborhoods and institutions. As James Bergquist put it, “[T]he German-American community was a way-station rather than a permanent home.” Throughout the nineteenth century and ever since, in most places, Germans slipped into White America almost as smoothly as did their contemporaries who were immigrants from Britain.⁶⁵

Peasants into City People: The Famine Irish

The presence of Irish people in the United States is related to the long, troubled, colonial history between England and Ireland. Prior to the era of emigration, Ireland was fairly sparsely inhabited by peoples of mainly Celtic and Anglo-Norman ancestry, the latter themselves immigrants from England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. British monarchs from Henry VII to James I used military and political means to create a subject state in Ireland. They gave control over Irish lands and peasants to their loyal, ethnic English supporters. As England embraced a version of the Protestant Reformation, the Irish common people remained almost all Catholics. England imported Protestant Scots into Ulster by the tens of thousands and Protestant English to rule the other provinces. The English overlords discriminated against Irish Catholics: James I closed Catholic schools and forced Catholic children to attend Protestant schools. Another law forbade any Catholic to buy land from a Protestant. Oliver Cromwell confiscated Catholic landholdings. In 1801 England annexed Ireland outright. By the end of the seventeenth century, Catholics in Ireland were confined to a social position not unlike the one occupied by free Blacks in America: legally not enslaved, but not entitled to full citizenship, either. The salient differences were that Catholics in Ireland constituted a large majority of the population, not a tiny minority, and they were the bottom rung of society. American free Blacks were a middle set of people, between the majority free White population and the large and severely oppressed Black slave class.⁶⁶

The Irish who came to America in the colonial period were almost all Protestants—either Ulster Scots who had been planted in Ireland a generation or two earlier, or Protestant Anglo-Irish from the southern provinces. The bulk of Irish migrants to the United States continued to be Protestants up through the 1830s. Overall U.S. immigration numbers were just beginning to pick up in those years, and Ireland contributed more than one-third of the total: 54,000 in the 1820s, 107,000 in the 1830s. Then disaster struck Ireland, and emigration exploded.⁶⁷

Ireland's agricultural economy was relatively prosperous until the peace of 1815 ended the Napoleonic Wars and prices for Irish grain began to drop. Thereafter, landlords (mainly Protestants but some Catholics, many English but also many

Irish) found it efficacious to remove the peasants who lived on their lands. Some began to use labor-saving farm machinery, which left cottagers unemployed. Others shifted from cultivation to animal husbandry. They enclosed their fields, planted grass, and ran herds of sheep, which, like mechanized farming, required fewer hands and threw people out of work. Meanwhile, agricultural disaster was brewing. The potato had been brought from the Americas to Europe in the 1570s. Hardy, nutritious, and requiring only small plots of land to support a large population, after 1780 the potato became the staple crop of the Irish peasantry—nutritious and cheap enough to set off a population boom.

So the Irish peasant population was expanding, just as landlords were pushing peasants off the land. And then the potato crop failed. There had been partial crop failures in several earlier years, due to poor weather or disease. But in 1845 a hitherto unknown fungus attacked the potato plants. Leaves blackened and crumbled at the touch, tubers turned into black, gooey, stinking, inedible globs. Thirty to forty percent of the country's crop was destroyed that year, and people began to starve. In 1846 the blight returned, and destroyed all but 20 percent of the crop. People were reduced to eating their seed potatoes. In 1847, although the fungus was gone, only one-fifth as many acres were planted as had been planted two years before.

Thus came the Great Hunger. Between 1845 and 1851, at least a million and perhaps as many as a million and a half people died of starvation and disease. A visitor to the northern midlands reported in 1846 that he "saw sights that will never wholly leave the eyes that beheld them, cowering wretches almost naked in the savage weather, prowling in turnip fields, and endeavoring to grub up roots ... little children ... their limbs fleshless, ... their faces bloated yet wrinkled and of a pale greenish hue, ... who would never, it was too plain, grow up to be men and women." Historian Kerby Miller describes the scene: "[O]thers fed on grass, seaweed and shellfish, rotten potatoes, dead animals, even human corpses. Weakened by malnutrition, thousands fell victim to typhus or 'black fever,' scurvy, 'famine dropsy,' cholera, relapsing fever, and dysentery or the 'bloody flux.' Many simply barricaded themselves in their hovels and waited for death; others wandered about searching for food, spreading disease throughout the island."⁶⁸ The British government did nothing. They blamed the suffering on congenital Irish indolence.

Another two million Irish, perhaps, went abroad. The very poorest, even if they avoided starvation, could not manage the £2 to £5 fare to North America, nor the cost of food for that trip. Several hundred thousand made their way by boat or barge to British ports like Liverpool, Glasgow, and London, where they filled up slum districts and where some of them found jobs in factories, construction, or domestic service. Those with a few more resources scraped together the fare and took ship for America (smaller numbers went to Australia and New Zealand) (Figure 3.3). The voyage was not easy: in their weakened condition, as many as one-third of the migrants from British ports to Canada in 1847 died at sea or shortly after arrival.

The nature of Irish emigration had changed. Before the famine, the emigrants were mainly Protestants from Ulster and people of a middling sort—farmers, artisans, and shopkeepers who were hoping to move up. Famine emigrants came from all four regions of Ireland. They were overwhelmingly poor, rural, and Catholic. A significant number spoke Gaelic rather than English.

We should not imagine that all the Irish who migrated to America came as a result of the potato famine. Those who fled the famine were not the first Irish to emigrate in large numbers, nor were they the last. The population of Ireland continued



Figure 3.3 Leaving Queenstown.

to drop until the end of the nineteenth century, and Irish migration to the United States did not falter until the 1910s. Yet that cataclysmic event seized the imagination of generations of Irish people in both Ireland and America, and it is their self-defining collective diasporic memory, much as slavery is for African Americans, wartime imprisonment is for Japanese Americans, or the Great Trek is for Boers. Ask an Irish American when his or her ancestors came to the United States, and like as not you will hear they came fleeing the famine—even if that particular person's ancestors, in fact, came earlier or later or under different circumstances. The symbol of the famine meant Irish immigrants to America were not, in their minds, voluntary migrants trying to better their lot, but rather desperate individuals fleeing a holocaust. Historian Florence Gibson characterized them as homesick exiles: “Many Irish-Americans had moved to the United States physically, but spiritually