

# Success in the united states' centennial

Business



Former president Barack Obama once said, “ If you’re walking down the right path and you’re willing to keep walking, eventually you’ll make progress” (Brainy). When Thomas Jefferson first signed the Declaration of Independence, the United States was far from united; however, the first 100 years of the United States’ existence changed everything. The United States was able to overcome immense challenges as a new nation and come together to become one of the most successful powers the world has ever seen. As a country, the people were not just able to sustain themselves, but with a series of technological advancements, the country transformed into an economic powerhouse. The increase in productive efficiency allowed for more leisure time and a development of a uniquely American culture that embodied the ideals forged by the country’s founding fathers and early pioneers.

With a new found identity, the United States shed the shackles of European influence and truly became an international power. During its first 100 years as a country, the United States successfully grew from a loose confederation of states to a prosperous country through a series of economic transformations, development of a unique culture, and assertion of foreign power to emerge as a successful country. The United States underwent an economic transformation in its first 100 years that not only caught it up to the other foreign powers of the world, but surpassed them. For the first third of the 19th century the United States was largely agrarian. In 1790 the total population was 3, 929, 214 and 90% of the labor force worked in agriculture. This percentage would decline to around 58% by 1860 (Historical).

What caused this drastic shift in economic activities? One possible explanation is the advancements that made industry more profitable. The Transportation Revolution was a dramatic change in the transportation networks that were established in the United States. New methods of transportation made the shipping of goods across the country a possibility. For example, the first turnpike was created in Pennsylvania in 1790. Since it was profitable, new roads were built around the country. By the 1830s, all major US cities were connected by a system of roads making overland transportation possible.

Another advancement in overland transportation was the canal system. Dewitt Clinton, the governor of New York, had the first canal, an artificial waterway, built to connect the ports of New York to the Great Lakes. The canals were faster than carts pulled by draft animals and cut transportation costs by 95%. (Kennedy 331). The problem with water transportation was that it was only efficient going down stream.

Robert Fulton's steamboat solved this issue. The steamboat was fast and could travel up river faster than any other ship because it was powered by steam engines. These early advancements in transportation led to the realization of a connected economy that made the United States so prosperous—the Market Revolution. Different regions of the United States specialized in different aspects of the economy. Trade between the regions led to a new commerce system that made traditional commerce obsolete.

The northern states were able to industrialize because of advancements as a result of the efforts of many pioneers and new technology as a result of the

Industrial Revolution. Industry suited itself to the north because of a relatively large population, government support, and an increase of capital. Southern states became the source of the raw materials for the industrialized goods the north was producing. Eli Whitney's cotton gin revolutionized the south. It paved the way for an extremely profitable economy that produced 2.

85 million bales of cotton for not just the US, but the world. (Civil). The main crop was cotton, but they also grew their own food and sold crops like tobacco and sugar to Europe to meet the growing demand. In many ways, the Market Revolution was the answer to Europe's Industrial Revolution. Technology and the realization of a connected economy transformed how people approached their work. It brought areas of the country out of isolation, turned simple farmers into businessmen, and changed how and what the United States was trading with foreign nations.

This newly found economic prosperity allowed for the development of American culture. With the first 100 years of American existence came a uniquely American culture made up of a diverse collection literature, art, and philosophy. From the start, America was unique in that it experimented with democratic ideals to form one of the first republics since the ancient Greeks and Romans. A republic is unique because the power resides in elected individuals representing the citizens (republic). This idea of power to the people was evident early on in state constitutions. State constitutions tended to emphasize fundamental freedoms like that of religion, speech, and the press.

The Constitution of Massachusetts established a state government that was nearly identical to the one adopted in the United States Constitution which replaced the Articles of Confederation. Being the first modern republic came with its challenge, but it is now widely regarded as a hallmark of American culture. The first one hundred years were essential in that they defined a republican culture. This development caused nations ruled by monarchs, like dominant foreign powers Britain and France, to reevaluate accepted social hierarchies and consider the role of equality in their society. The French Revolution was inspired by Americans like Jefferson and Locke.

In fact, the French National Constituent Assembly, which replaced the absolute monarchy, passed the “ Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” which was inspired by Thomas Jefferson’s “ Declaration of Independence”. The republican experiment was not the only thing captivating the world, so was American art and literature. American art explored the themes of transcendentalism, westward expansion, American mythology, and Native Americans. “ The Hudson River School was America’s first true artistic fraternity.... And flourished until about the time of the Centennial” (Avery). These celebrated artists depicted the vast landscape of the United States.

Their style was radiant and gleaming. Many works depict a rugged landscape, a dramatic sunrise or an ominous storm cloud. American artists learned some of these artistic styles from European counterparts; however they imbued their canvases with very different meanings that can only be called uniquely American (The Hudson). A similar revolution was occurring

with American literature. Early American literature can best be categorized as political essays.

These political essays were essential because they established the republican culture mentioned earlier. A good example is James Madison's Federalist No. 10. In this political Essay, Madison clearly states the argument in favor of the Constitution from his perspective. Although it may be dry, a popular survey conducted by US News found that people today find Federalist No.

10 to be the 20th most influential document in United States History (The People's). This was the writing style of the time. It was captivating in that it was informational and presented revolutionary ideas. Around the same time as the Hudson River School movement was a similar movement in American literature. The ideas can be seen in the works of the Knickerbocker group; Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant.

Their works explored more transcendental ideas. Writing became a way of expressing human emotion that transcends above what people can see, hear, taste, touch, or feel. The celebrated writers of the time were Ralph Waldo Emerson and David Henry Thoreau. "Emerson urged Americans to stop looking to Europe for inspiration and imitation and be themselves" (Transcendentalism). This cultural independence from Europe was realized in the first 100 years of American history and saw a revolution in philosophy and the arts. But in addition to developing a uniquely American culture, the first 100 years were essential in that the United States had to become a respected country around the world.

As a new nation, the United States had to prove itself on a global scale. Over the course of the first 100 years the United States not only proved itself, but it became an emerging world power. The trademark of American foreign policy during its first one hundred years was the Monroe Doctrine. In his most famous work, James Monroe proclaimed to the foreign powers of the world that the United States would not tolerate any further involvement in North America. By saying this, Monroe instituted the pillars of noncolonization and nonintervention. Essentially, he closed North America to any further colonization and said that the United States would be aggressive if any other country violated this assertion.

The Monroe Doctrine added more fuel to the American hate fire. The Europeans resented the American experiment from the start and were offended by Monroe's somewhat arrogant proclamation; however, the Monroe Doctrine was backed by the British Navy. This was the first proclamation of international power from the newly founded United States. Monroe wrote it as more of a self-defense mechanism, but it turned into a safeguard to the United States' dominance in the western hemisphere for the first 100 years. As a result of our growing international jurisdiction, it became widely believed that the United States and its settlers were destined to rule over all of North America. People believed that expansion was our God given right.

In fact, this mantra won James K. Polk the election of 1844. He ran almost exclusively on a platform that embraced American expansionism. The United States expanded to a grand total of 3, 530, 705 square miles of land by 1870 (U. S. Population).

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That is a significant increase from the original 430, 000 square miles governed by the thirteen American colonies (Vast). Americans saw expansion as an opportunity to spread their culture and thoughts. Some historians have inferred that a nation that runs from coast to coast would give the United States fewer borders to be concerned with and enable it to run a more cohesive strategy of foreign policy. Manifest Destiny is significant because the United States was using its foreign power to expand despite resistance from other countries. Polk's campaign slogan in 1844 was, " Fifty-four forty or fight".

Of course, he was referring to the expansion in the northwest. Polk was not afraid of other, more established powers in his conquest for Manifest Destiny. Polk led the campaign against Mexico in the Mexican American War. It was " the first time the United States fought on a foreign territory and occupied another nation's capital. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo granted the United States half a million more miles of territory which lead to the discovery of gold and silver in California and significantly contributed to the national economy and westward expansion" (Singley). With Mexico out of the way and the Monroe Doctrine in place, the United States faced little resistance on North American soil from this point forward.

During the first 100 years of US history, the United States was able to shed the reputation of being the World's Ugly Duckling and blossom into a beautiful swan. Americans were not shy when it came to asserting international power and by the end of the centennial; the United States proved that it had the muscle, money, and people to be an international powerhouse. The United States did in a hundred years what took other

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countries centuries. The country not only established itself, it put itself on the map as a power not to be messed with. This power will become absolutely vital in the next 100 years when world tensions finally boil over.

The first 100 years saw the United States transform from an agricultural society into a connected, continental economy that had special interests in industry. A new culture, based upon ancient ideals, was created. It was a new era of art, literature, and philosophy. Lastly, the United States grew from a collection of rebellious colonies into a foreign power. In the words of Vince Lombardi, “ The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary” (Brainy).

There were many challenges facing the United States as a new nation, but the people who were inspired by the ideals of freedom and liberty overcame these challenges to establish what would become one of the most influential and powerful nations on the Earth.