2 Moving Westward

As You Read

Explore These Questions

- How did settlers travel westward in the early 1800s?
- What steps did Americans take to improve roads?
- How did steamboats and canals affect transportation?

Define

- turnpike
- corduroy road
- canal

Identify

- Lancaster Turnpike
- National Road
- John Fitch
- Robert Fulton
- *Clermont*
- Henry Shreve
- Erie Canal
- DeWitt Clinton

SETTING the Scene An Irish visitor to the United States described a stagecoach trip through Maryland:

> "The driver frequently had to call to the passengers in the stage, to lean out of the carriage first at one side, then at the other, to prevent it from oversetting in the deep ruts with which the road abounds: 'Now gentlemen, to the right,'... 'Now gentlemen, to the left,' and so on."

In the 1790s, travel was as difficult as it had been in colonial times. Most roads were mud tracks. River travel could be difficult, too, when boats had to push their way upstream against the current. As the young nation grew westward, Americans saw the need to improve transportation.

To the Mississippi

Settlers had been moving steadily westward since the 1600s. By the early 1800s, "the West" referred to the land between the Appalachians and the Mississippi.

In the early 1800s, the stream of pioneers turned into a flood. By 1820, so many people had moved west that the population in some of the original 13 states had actually declined!

Western routes

Settlers took a number of routes west. One well-traveled path was the Great Wagon Road across Pennsylvania. It dated back to colonial days. Some settlers continued south and west along the trail opened by Daniel Boone before the Revolution. Known as the Wilderness Road, it led through the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. (See the map on page 303.)

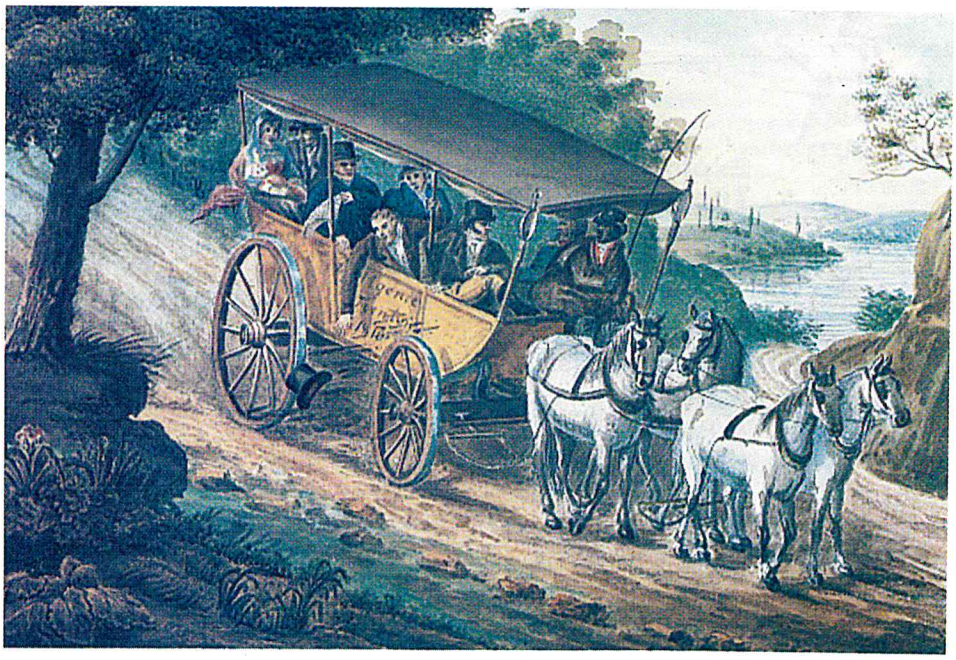
Other settlers pushed west to Pittsburgh. There, they loaded their animals and wagons onto flatboats and journeyed down the Ohio River into Indiana, Kentucky, and Illinois. Flatboats were well suited to the shallow waters of the Ohio. Even when carrying heavy cargoes, these raftlike barges rode high in the water.

Pioneers from Georgia and South Carolina followed other trails west to Alabama and Mississippi. Enslaved African Americans

Many settlers headed west in covered wagons, such as this Conestoga wagon.

Viewing History

A Need for Better Roads



This painting, by a visitor from Russia, shows a stagecoach on its run between Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Trenton, New Jersey. Passengers traveling on rocky, muddy, unpaved roads could expect to be "crushed, shaken, thrown about . . . and bumped." ★ **What details in this painting suggest that these passengers were having a rough ride?**

helped to carve plantations in the rich, fertile soil of these territories.

People from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania pushed into the Northwest Territory. Some settlers traveled west from Albany, New York, along the Mohawk River and across the Appalachians. Some settlers then followed Indian trails around Lake Erie. Others sailed across the lake into Ohio.

New states

Before long, some western territories had populations large enough to apply for statehood. Between 1792 and 1819, eight states joined the Union: Kentucky (1792), Tennessee (1796), Ohio (1803), Louisiana (1812), Indiana (1816), Mississippi (1817), Illinois (1818), and Alabama (1819).

Better Roads

Settlers faced a difficult journey. Many roads were narrow trails, barely wide enough for a single wagon. One pioneer wrote of "rotten banks down which horses plunged" and streams that "almost drowned them." Tree stumps stuck up through the road and often broke the axles on the wagons of careless travelers. The nation badly needed better roads.

Turnpikes and bridges

In the United States, as in Europe, private companies built gravel and stone roads. To pay for these roads, the companies collected tolls from travelers. At various points along the road, a pike, or pole, blocked the road. After a wagon driver paid a toll, the pike keeper turned the pole aside to let the wagon pass. As a result, these toll roads were called **turnpikes.**

Probably the best road in the United States was the **Lancaster Turnpike.** Built in the 1790s by a private company, the road linked Philadelphia and Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Because the road was set on a bed of gravel, water drained off quickly. It was topped with smooth, flat stones.

In swampy areas, roads were made of logs. These roads were known as **corduroy roads** because the lines of logs looked like corduroy cloth. Corduroy roads kept wagons from sinking into the mud, but they made for a bumpy ride.

Bridges carried travelers across streams and rivers. Stone bridges were costly to build, but wooden ones rotted quickly. A clever Massachusetts carpenter designed a wooden bridge with a roof to protect it from the weather. Covered bridges lasted much longer than open ones.

The National Road

Some states set aside money to build or improve roads. In 1806, for the first time, Congress approved funds for a national road-building project. The **National Road** was to run from Cumberland, Maryland, to Wheeling, in western Virginia.

Work on the National Road began in 1811 and was completed in 1818. Later, the road was extended into Illinois. As each new section of road was built, settlers eagerly used it to drive their wagons west.

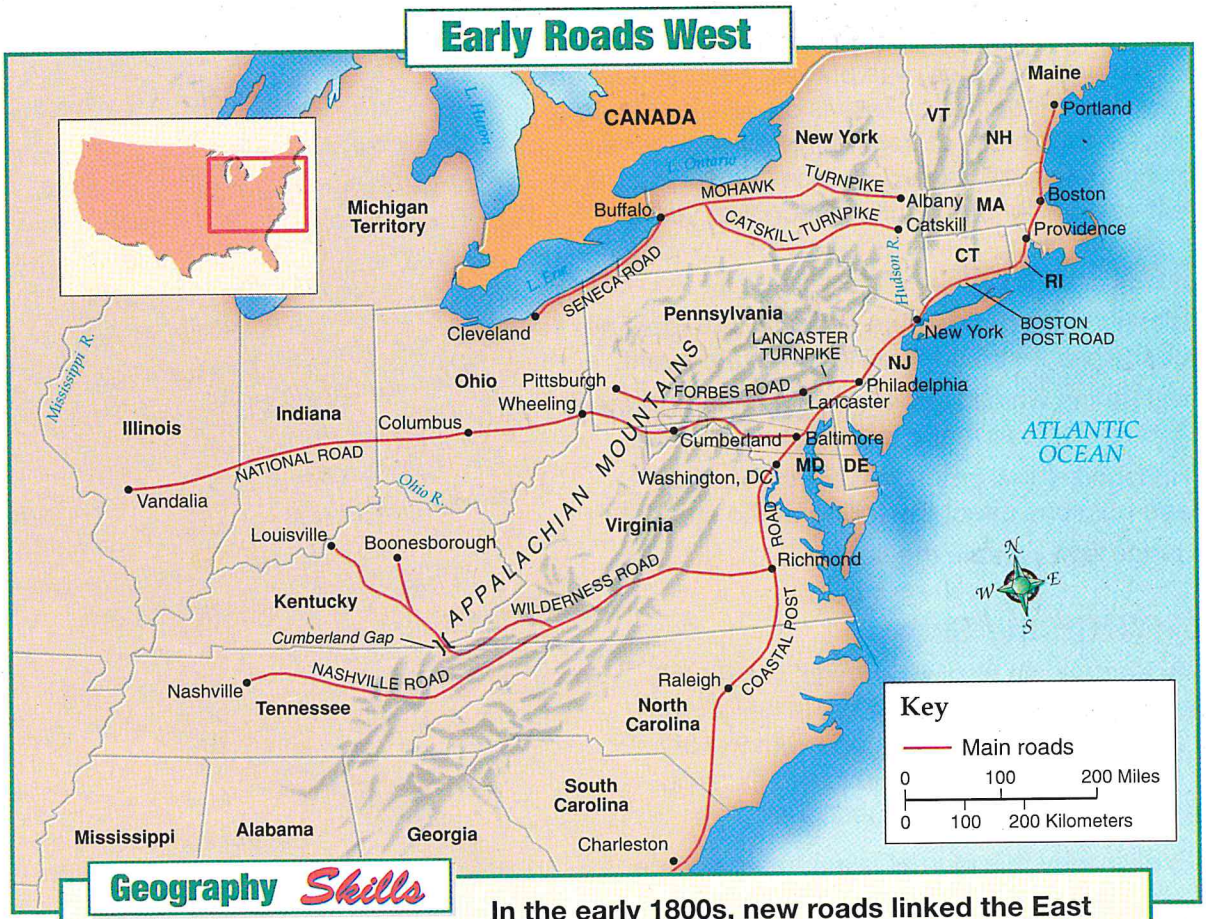
Steam Transport

Whenever possible, travelers and freight haulers used river transportation. Floating downstream on a flatboat was both faster and more comfortable than bumping along rutted roads. It also cost less.

Yet, river travel had its own problems. Moving upstream was difficult. People used paddles or long poles to push boats against the current. Sometimes, they hauled boats from the shore with ropes. Both methods were slow. A boat could travel downstream from Pittsburgh to New Orleans in about six weeks. The return trip upstream took at least 17 weeks!

Fitch and Fulton

A new invention, the steam engine, improved river travel. **John Fitch** improved on steam engines that had been built in Britain.



Geography Skills **In the early 1800s, new roads linked the East to new settlements in the West.**

1. **Location** On the map, locate: **(a)** Appalachian Mountains, **(b)** Cumberland Gap, **(c)** Wilderness Road, **(d)** Lancaster Turnpike, **(e)** National Road.
2. **Movement** What major roads would settlers use to travel from Boston, Massachussetts, to Nashville, Tennessee?
3. **Critical Thinking** Based on this map, what effect do you think roadbuilding had on cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Richmond?

Skills FOR LIFE

Critical Thinking | Managing Information | Communication | Maps, Charts, and Graphs

Analyzing a Primary Source

How Will I Use This Skill ?

A **primary source** is firsthand information about people and events. Historians use primary sources to learn about the past. You, too, use primary sources—when you watch an interview on television, or listen to two friends tell their sides of something that happened. Learning to analyze primary sources helps you determine the reliability of the information that you get.

LEARN the Skill

1. Identify the source of the account. Decide if he or she has firsthand knowledge of the event.
2. Determine which words indicate facts. Are there enough facts to make the speaker reliable?
3. Recognize how emotions, points of view, and opinions affect the telling of the story.
4. Judge how reliable the source is.

PRACTICE the Skill

Fanny Kemble, an English actress, visited the United States in the early 1800s. In her journal, she described a stagecoach ride with her father and some Americans. Read the excerpt, then answer the following questions:

1. Explain why this journal is a primary source.
2. (a) What facts does Kemble include about stagecoach travel? (b) What facts does she include about American rural life?
3. What effect do you think Kemble's nationality and her discomfort may have had on her account?
4. Would you consider this journal a reliable source of information? Explain.

"Bones of me! what a road! Even my father's solid proportions...were jerked up to the roof and down again every three minutes. Our companions... laughed and talked [constantly], the young ladies, at the very top of their voices, and with the national nasal twang....The few cottages and farm-houses which we passed reminded me of similar dwellings in France and Ireland; yet the peasantry here have not the same excuse for disorder and [ruin] as either the Irish or French....The farms had the same desolate, untidy, untended look; the gates broken, the fences carelessly put up."

Excerpt from Journal by Frances Anne Kemble Butler

APPLY the Skill

Watch or read an interview given by an eyewitness to an event. Using the steps above, decide whether you think the interview is a reliable source of information.

AmericanHeritage
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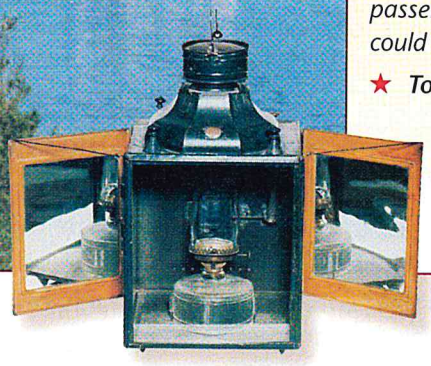
HISTORY HAPPENED HERE

The Erie Canal

The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 launched an age of canal building. Today, at the Erie Canal Village in Rome, New York, you can relive life along the old Erie Canal. Here, passengers ride atop a canal boat, pulled along by a team of mules, just as they did 150 years ago. Riding up top could be risky, though. When the boatmen yelled "Low bridge!" passengers who did not duck could bump their heads.

★ ***To learn more about this historic site, write:*** *Erie Canal Village, 5789 New London Road, Rome, NY 13440.*



◀ *Canal boat lantern*

In 1787, he showed members of the Constitutional Convention how a steam engine could power a boat. He then opened a ferry service on the Delaware River. However, few people used the ferry, and Fitch went out of business.

Inventor **Robert Fulton** may have seen Fitch's steamboat in Philadelphia. In 1807, Fulton launched his own steamboat, the ***Clermont,*** on the Hudson River. On its first run, the *Clermont* carried passengers from New York City to Albany and back. The 300-mile (480-km) trip took just 62 hours—a record at the time.

The age of steamboats

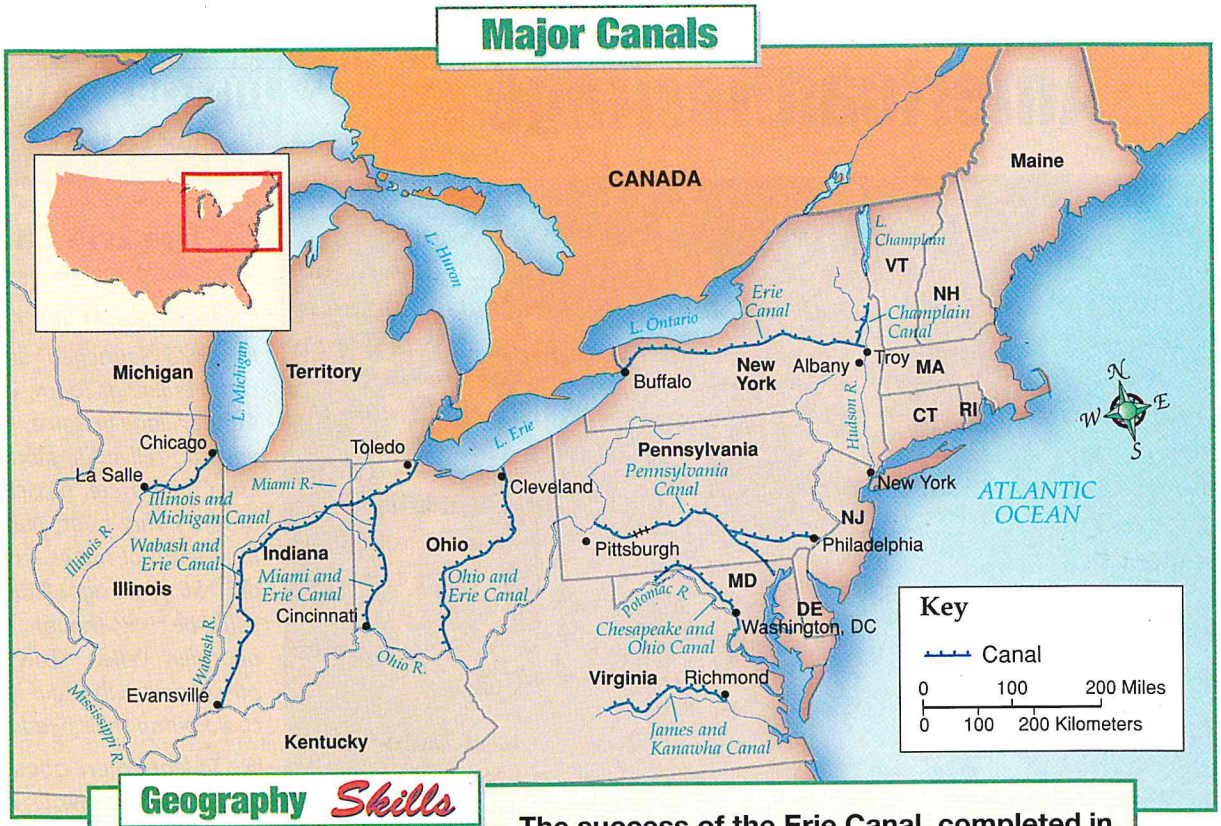
Fulton's success ushered in the age of steamboats. Soon, steamboats were ferrying passengers up and down the Atlantic coast. More important, they revolutionized travel in the West. Besides carrying people, steamboats on the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri rivers gave farmers and merchants a cheap means of moving goods.

Because western rivers were shallow, **Henry Shreve** designed a flat-bottomed steamboat. It could carry heavy loads without getting stuck on sandbars.

Still, steamboat travel could be dangerous. Sparks from smokestacks could cause fires. As steamboat captains raced each other along the river, high-pressure boilers sometimes exploded. Between 1811 and 1851, 44 steamboats collided, 166 burned, and more than 200 exploded.

The Canal Boom

Steamboats and improved roads did not help western farmers get their goods directly to markets in the East. To meet this need, Americans dug canals. A **canal** is an artificial channel filled with water that allows boats to cross a stretch of land.



Geography Skills

The success of the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, set off an age of canal building.

1. **Location** On the map, locate: **(a)** New York City, **(b)** Troy, **(c)** Buffalo, **(d)** Lake Erie, **(e)** Erie Canal.
2. **Movement** What two bodies of water were linked by the Illinois and Michigan Canal?
3. **Critical Thinking** Use the map to describe an all-water route from Evansville, Indiana, to New York City.

The earliest American canals were no more than a few miles long. Some provided routes around waterfalls on a river. Other canals linked a river to a nearby lake. By the early 1800s, however, Americans were building longer canals.

Building the Erie Canal

Some New Yorkers had a bold idea. They wanted to build a canal linking the Great Lakes with the Mohawk and Hudson rivers. The **Erie Canal** would let western farmers ship their goods to the port of New York. It would also bring business to towns along the route.

To many people, the idea of such a canal seemed farfetched. When Thomas Jefferson heard of the plan, he exclaimed:

> "Why, sir, you talk of making a canal 350 miles through the wilderness—it is little short of madness to think of it at this day!"

New York governor **DeWitt Clinton** ignored such criticism. He persuaded state lawmakers to provide money for the Erie Canal. Scoffers referred to the project as "Clinton's Ditch."

Work on the Erie Canal began in 1817. At first, workers dug the waterway by hand. To speed up progress, inventors developed new equipment. One machine, a stump-puller, could pull out nearly 40 tree stumps a day. In two places, workers had to find ways to build stone bridges to carry the canal over other rivers along the way.

An instant success

By 1825, the immense job was finished. On opening day of the Erie Canal, a cannon fired a volley in Buffalo, New York. When the sound got to the next town along the route, it, too, fired a cannon. Town after town fired their cannons—all the way to New York City. The thunderous salute took 80 minutes to complete.

The Erie Canal was an instant success. It reduced travel time. The cost of shipping goods dropped to about 1/20 of what it was before the canal was built. The canal also helped to make New York City a center of commerce.

The success of the Erie Canal led other states to build canals. (See the map on the opposite page.) These canals created vital economic links between western farms and eastern cities.

Transportation Builds Prosperity

In 1831, a young Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville (TOHK vihl), made a nine-month tour of the United States. In his writings, Tocqueville described what he admired about the young nation. One of the things that impressed him most was the American transportation system.

"Of all the countries in the world," Tocqueville wrote, "America is that in which the spread of ideas and of human industry is most continual and most rapid." Tocqueville was amazed by "immense canals" and roads built in the middle of the wilderness. He also praised the American postal system:

> "In America one of the first things done in a new state is to make the post go there. In the forests of Michigan there is no cabin so isolated, no valley so wild but that letters and newspapers arrive at least once a week."

Tocqueville noted that Americans could easily ship goods from the western frontier to any part of the country. (By contrast, in his native France—a much smaller country—many large towns could not be reached by road at all!) Faster, easier transportation thus contributed to the growing prosperity of the United States.

★ Section 2 Review ★

Recall

1. **Locate** **(a)** Kentucky, **(b)** Tennessee, **(c)** Ohio, **(d)** Louisiana, **(e)** Indiana, **(f)** Mississippi, **(g)** Illinois, **(h)** Alabama.
2. **Identify** **(a)** Lancaster Turnpike, **(b)** National Road, **(c)** John Fitch, **(d)** Robert Fulton, **(e)** *Clermont,* **(f)** Henry Shreve, **(g)** Erie Canal, **(h)** DeWitt Clinton.
3. **Define** **(a)** turnpike, **(b)** corduroy road, **(c)** canal.

Comprehension

4. What means of transportation did settlers take to the West in the early 1800s?
5. **(a)** Why did the nation need better transportation in the early 1800s? **(b)** Describe two ways that travel improved.

Critical Thinking and Writing

6. **Linking Past and Present** Today, airplanes provide a faster means of travel than land transportation. Why do you think roads are still important to the nation?
7. **Identifying Alternatives** Examine the maps in this section. Then, describe two alternate ways a farmer might have shipped a cargo of grain from Cleveland, Ohio, to New York City.

History AND YOU

Activity **Designing a Monument** You have been asked to design a monument honoring the two-hundredth anniversary of the Erie Canal. Draw a rough sketch of the monument, showing what design you would use. You may also include an inscription describing the importance of the canal.

3 Building National Unity

As You Read

Explore These Questions

- How did Congress try to strengthen the national economy?
- What were the goals of Henry Clay's American System?
- How did the Supreme Court strengthen national unity?

Define

- dumping
- sectionalism
- interstate commerce

Identify

- James Monroe
- John C. Calhoun
- Daniel Webster
- Henry Clay
- American System
- *McCulloch* v. *Maryland*
- *Gibbon* v. *Ogden*

SETTING the Scene After his visit to the United States, Alexis de Tocqueville described what he saw as the character of the American people. He wrote:

> "The American . . . is less afraid than any other inhabitant of the globe to risk what he has gained in the hope of a better future. . . . There is not a country in the world where man more confidently takes charge of the future, or where he feels with more pride that he can fashion the universe to please himself."

Tocqueville echoed the confidence Americans felt in themselves. After the War of 1812, the country grew rapidly. New lands opened to settlers with improved transportation. New industries appeared. In Congress, a new generation of political leaders sought to direct this expansion.

An Era of Good Feelings

In 1816, the Republican candidate for President, **James Monroe**, easily defeated the Federalist, Rufus King. Once in office, Monroe spoke of creating a new sense of national unity.

Monroe was the last of three Presidents in a row to come from Virginia. He was also the last Revolutionary War officer to become President.

In 1817, Monroe made a goodwill tour of the country. Not since George Washington had a President made such a tour. In Boston, crowds cheered Monroe. Boston newspapers expressed surprise at this warm welcome for a Republican from Virginia. After all, Boston had been a Federalist stronghold. One newspaper wrote that the United States was entering an "Era of Good Feelings."

By the time Monroe ran for a second term in 1820, no candidate opposed him. The Federalist party had disappeared.

Three Sectional Leaders

While conflict between political parties declined, disputes between different sections of the nation sharpened. In Congress, three ambitious young men took center stage. All three played key roles in Congress for more than 30 years, as well as serving in other offices. Each represented a different section of the country.

Calhoun of the South

John C. Calhoun spoke for the South. He had grown up on a frontier farm in South Carolina. Later, he went to Yale College in Connecticut. Calhoun's immense energy and striking features earned him the nickname "young Hercules." His intense way of speaking sometimes made people uncomfortable in his presence.

Calhoun had supported the War of 1812. Like many southerners, though, he generally opposed policies that would strengthen the power of the federal government.