

Reform Movements of the 19th Century

Social Reform

- In the decades before the Civil War, transcendentalists (inspired by their belief in human goodness) and Christians from the Second Great Awakening began a number of reform movements in an effort to improve American society.

Temperance Movement

- The **temperance** movement sought to limit or even ban the consumption of alcohol.
- Strongly supported by American Protestants, there were thousands of individual temperance societies at the local level by the 1830s.
- Alcohol was considered a social evil and was blamed for more of society's problems than any other problems.

Education

- Few schools existed outside of Massachusetts; children were taught at home by parents or tutors or were sent away to a boarding school.
- 1837, Horace Mann took control of the new Massachusetts Board of Education and pursued free, equal, non-religious schooling for all social classes.
- Set the standard for public education in the United States, and by 1870, all states had at least some free elementary schools.

Feminist Movement

- **Lucretia Mott** and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** led the fight for women's rights after working together in the abolition movement.
- Called for women to have an improved legal status, economic opportunity, and the right to vote.
- The Seneca Falls Convention is widely considered the start of the modern feminist movement. And though it was eventually successful in many ways (including suffrage with the **19th amendment**).

Prisons and Asylums

- Americans with all kinds of disabilities had also been kept in prison-like warehouses
- 1843, **Dorothea Dix** (later known for her work establishing the nursing corps in the Civil War), told the Massachusetts legislature that the mentally ill were kept 'in cages and treated terribly.
- Reformers helped in the creation of public institutions dedicated to the treatment of mental illness.

Abolitionist

- The best-known of the social reform movements of the antebellum era may be **abolition** - the effort to end slavery in the United States.
- The American Colonization Society advocated purchasing all existing slaves and then relocating them.
- William Lloyd Garrison suggested that slaves should immediately be set free without compensation to owners and granted full rights and citizenship within America.