

CHAPTER ONE



The Yankee Narrative of American History

“It is by no means easy to give a clear and just idea of a Yankee ... there is an immense deal within, both of sweet and bitter. In acuteness, cautiousness, industry, and perseverance, he resembles the Scotch; in habits of frugal neatness, he resembles the Dutch; in love of lucre he doth greatly resemble the sons of Abraham; but in frank admission, and superlative admiration of all his own peculiarities, he is like nothing on earth but himself.”

—Frances Trollope,
Domestic Manners of the Americans, 1832

“I think I see the destiny of America embodied in the first Puritan who landed on those shores, just as the whole human race was represented by the first man.”

—Alexis de Tocqueville,
Democracy in America, Volume I, 1835

THERE IS A SCENE in Steven Spielberg’s hit 1989 film, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, in which the film’s hero, Dr. Henry Walton “Indiana” Jones, Jr., enters a cave containing the famed Holy Grail. Having searched throughout the entire film to find this relic, which supposedly contains miraculous powers, “Indy” finally locates the secret cave holding the Grail, and finds the space occupied by an ancient Knight of the First Crusade, who guards the grail and has been kept alive for centuries by its power. Astonished, and working to regain his bearings, Indy is soon joined in the cave by Walter Donovan, a greedy and unscrupulous businessman who has been trailing Indy to locate the Grail and achieve immortality.

The Knight, having dutifully guarded this most prized possession for many centuries, invites his visitors to take the Grail. Donovan, seeing that the cave is strewn with dozens of goblets and other items, implores the Knight to point out which of them is the actual Grail. The Knight explains to his visitors that they can only locate the Grail by choosing for themselves among the many elaborate articles. However, he warns them, they must be careful to choose wisely, for while the actual Grail will give them life, any false grail will take it from them. Donovan, in a rush to achieve the alleged power which the Grail bequeaths to its possessor, selects the most beautiful, ornate chalice in the cave. Confident that he has found his prize, he quickly fills the golden cup with water, and drinks. However, he soon discovers that he has picked the wrong goblet, and he rapidly ages until, within seconds, he is horribly transformed into a skeleton of death,

and finally into a pile of dust. The Knight, observing Donovan's downfall, remarks that his choice was a poor one.

Indiana Jones, ever the shrewd and resourceful hero, goes in the opposite direction. He bypasses the gold, silver, and bejeweled items available for selection, and instead locks in on a small, plain, eroded, nearly-invisible goblet hidden behind all the others. Feeling certain in the accuracy of his choice, Indy wastes no time in filling the cup with water, and boldly drinking the contents. He turns and awaits the verdict of the guardian Knight. The aged warrior pauses, then informs Indy that he has chosen ... *wisely*.

America is in a crisis. This nation, which once held the world by the tail, is quickly losing its grip. The United States, for centuries revered as the home of freedom, an engine of prosperity, a bastion of ingenuity, and a shield against despotism—those elements that define American “greatness—is suffering from a mysterious malady. The land which for so long brimmed with confidence in its providential calling now seems to be questioning its own way, indeed its own value. The country which for millions across the globe represented the zenith of stability, peace, morality, and justice, is now confronted almost daily with dire statistics of mass violence, family disintegration, economic inequality, political instability, and more. The nation, it appears, is coming apart at the seams.

Our country is at a tipping point and faces a decision not unlike that faced by the venerable Dr. Jones. All great nations at some point—usually as they begin to decline—are forced into a Cave of Decision. There, they must sort through the seemingly innumerable variables of their history—the religions, the wars, the political decisions, the economic events, etc.—and identify those elements from their past which led to their greatness. It is not an easy decision. To begin with, the past, as it has been said, is a foreign country. Merely sorting out the attitudes, intentions, and actions of prior generations requires some deftness. Having passed that hurdle, though, the selecting nation is then faced with the task of

separating the historical wheat from the chaff. For most nations, this proves to be an extraordinarily difficult affair. Indeed, if judging by the 100% failure rate of all past great powers, it could be reasonably concluded that no nation has ever “*chosen wisely*.”

America has not been immune to this shell game. A number of theories have dominated the common historical and educational understanding as to the origins of the country’s rise to prominence. Most of these theories glitter with the jewels of romance, pride, and self-serving narratives. Many of them show us a reflection of ourselves that we want to believe. One example, more recent in origin, holds that America, by opening its doors for centuries to the “huddled masses” from across the world, offering them humane treatment and economic opportunity, and accepting them and their cultures on their own terms – and of course, by holding out the promises of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—created an economic miracle which gave rise to the diverse, prosperous, and free nation that we know today. Another theory, more antiquated but perhaps also more grounded in historical logic, holds that America developed almost accidentally as the conglomeration of disparate European groups, which all came to North America with different objectives. As the young colonies developed and the Enlightenment spread its influence across the Western World, so the story goes, Britain rashly provoked its American subjects with ever-increasing political and financial burdens. Out of the revolution which followed grew a nation founded on laws, liberty, and a written Constitution, which guaranteed various freedoms, implanted limited government, and urged the nation’s citizens to pursue their own happiness within the land of plenty. Because of these freedoms, America naturally grew in strength, influence, and numbers. Yet another hypothesis suggests that America rose to greatness only because its long line of European settlers stole land, labor, and freedom from other groups, and capitalized on the misery of millions.

This book offers a narrative on the origins of American greatness which counters the above prevailing theories, as well as many others. Specifically, the book holds that America has not become the greatest, most successful, most economically and militarily powerful nation in the history of the world because of its Declaration of Independence or its Constitution, nor because of its relatively distinct form of national government, nor because of its history of immigration, diversity, or cultural tolerance.

Rather, this book is rooted in one claim: that America's greatness stems, primarily, from the culture, ideas, and actions of a particular, very peculiar group of people – namely, the Yankees of New England, their descendants, and their cultural cousins of the Northeastern Seaboard. This rather bedraggled, unattractive, and largely overlooked theory, for so long outshone by other, more elegant or appealing narratives, presents the one facet of the nation's success story which has played a larger role than any other. The Yankee is the *sine qua non* of American greatness.

However, the point of identifying the nation's keys to success is not merely to select them, but to apply them. Therefore, this book proposes, if America is to continue to survive and thrive in its historical context, it must take the collective step of analyzing, framing, and reapplying these critical traits to its national culture. The book also offers the promise to America's disadvantaged groups—minorities, recent immigrants, etc.—that the application of these keys is the best guarantor of success and equality, and that these groups, with application, can achieve the same level of prominence as their majority counterparts.

A Journey of Three Thousand Miles

Frances Trollope set foot on the shores of America in 1827, initiating a stay that would last for five years. In time, Ms. Trollope would become a well-known writer and social commentator,

and two of her sons, Anthony and Thomas, would become celebrated authors in their own rights. For the time being, however, she was merely a struggling mother, the wife of a financially-strapped lawyer, in a new land, trying her best to support her family and understand these newly-established “Americans.” Gifted with an observant eye and a talent for writing, Trollope engaged in what was becoming a popular trend in the 1820s and 1830s: travel writing. During this period, opinionated Europeans with adequate means traveled the globe, investigated different societies, and regaled their home readership with tales of their journeys. And no destination was more popular as a subject than the young, mysterious, energetic, and free United States. Respected figures ranging from Alexis de Tocqueville to Charles Dickens visited the States during this period and journaled their intense—and varying—reactions to the society they encountered.

Frances Trollope’s first attempt at the genre, a multi-year diary describing her life in America from the years 1827-1832, was an instant sensation. Published in two volumes, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* sold well from the beginning. The series made Trollope famous, and enabled her to support her struggling family. That was all great news for Frances Trollope. The bad news, at least for many Americans of the time, was that the book painted the citizens of the new republic in a less-than-favorable light. While she had positive things to say about the weather and geography of the new nation, Trollope had less flattering things to say about the people themselves. She ruled unfavorably on everything from their grammar (“*I very seldom, during my whole stay in the country, heard a sentence elegantly turned, and correctly pronounced from the lips of an American*”),⁶ to their dining habits (“*It is rarely [Americans] dine in society, except in taverns and boarding-houses. Then they eat with the greatest possible rapidity, and in total silence*”),⁷ to their so-called liberty (“*All the freedom enjoyed in America, beyond what is enjoyed in England,*

is enjoyed solely by the disorderly at the expense of the orderly").⁸ She even took aim at that classic icon of the American West, the Mississippi steamboat ("*Let no one who wishes to receive agreeable impressions of American manners, commence their travels in a Mississippi steamboat; for myself, it is with all sincerity I declare, that I would infinitely prefer sharing the apartment of a party of well conditioned pigs*").⁹ And just in case the message was not fully understood by her readers, Trollope brutally summarized her feelings toward average Americans: "*I do not like them. I do not like their principles, I do not like their manners, I do not like their opinions.*"¹⁰ Ms. Trollope, it was clear, had little love for either Americans or their newly-minted nation.

However, one group of Americans caught the attention of Trollope as something altogether different, peculiar even. Their mannerisms, their speech patterns, their industry and hustle—all struck Trollope as something truly foreign, a makeup which she had not encountered before either in Britain or in her travels throughout the other regions of the United States. Their culture made such an impression on Trollope that she devoted lengthy passages of her journal to describe what she encountered, almost as if she had discovered a new species.

These people who so impressed Trollope were the Yankees of New England and New York. They were descendants of the original Pilgrim and Puritan settlers who had established the first colonies of New England in the 1620s and 1630s. By the time of Trollope's American travels, the Yankees largely held financial, political, and social hegemony in New England, the colony which had been their home, at that point, for two centuries. The Yankees had by that time also spread significantly into Upstate New York, and their cultural influence was very strong in that region, and across much of the Northeastern Seaboard.

By the 1830s, the Yankees were well known to Americans in other parts of the country, and were typically tolerated, at best, or reviled, at worst. They generally received grudging respect

from the other regions for their excellent schools, their ingenious inventions, and their unquestioned devotion to liberty (they had, after all, picked the fight with the British that led to the Revolutionary War). They were largely despised, and even feared, however, for what other regions believed to be their stereotypically negative traits: deceitfulness in pursuit of a dollar, unending self-righteousness, and a tendency to stick their collective noses into other people's (or regions', or nations') business.

It was into this world that Frances Trollope entered during the northern phase of her American travels. She immediately encountered, through various routine transactions, the "sharp dealing" for which the Yankees had developed such a sour reputation. After several such encounters in which she ended up on the wrong side of a bargain, Trollope became more careful, insisting she "*would not wish to have any business transactions with them, if I could avoid it, lest, to use their own phrase, 'they should be too smart for me.'*"¹¹ She also noted that she was not alone in receiving the rough, manipulative treatment for which the Yankees had become so notorious. Indeed, it seemed that the entire nation had become one big target for Yankee tricks, and the New England reputation suffered for it, according to Trollope, who claimed that she "*never met a single individual in any part of the Union who did not paint these New Englanders as sly, grinding, selfish, and tricking.*"¹²

Yet Ms. Trollope, with her gift for keen observation, recognized something deeper at work in this strange cultural type. Even though Yankees took advantage of her, and had earned a national reputation for manipulation and greed, Trollope maintained that she found them to be "*delightful specimens*" of a "*most peculiar race,*" and that she liked them "*extremely well.*"¹³ She recognized that, although love of monetary gain did seem to be an unfortunate, consistent strain in their culture, they nonetheless possessed many other invaluable qualities which not only benefited the nation, but seemed to typify the best of the American

character: extraordinary intelligence and shrewdness; a profound work ethic and persevering spirit; a great sense of frugality and thrift; and indefatigable zeal in developing the nation's industry and infrastructure.

Fellow Travelers

The distinctive cultural traits of the Yankees also impressed other visitors to the U.S. in the antebellum period. Isabella Lucy Bird, an English writer and explorer of the period—and, incidentally, the first woman Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society—made her own journey to the States in the years just before the Civil War. Bird's travels spanned a wide area, taking her from Canada to the still-developing American West. She detailed her observations in her 1856 work, *The Englishwoman in America*. She too noticed something different about the sons and daughters of New England, admiring their industriousness, business savvy, and persistence. While in Canada, Bird faulted the citizens of Nova Scotia for relying too heavily upon their government to build up local ports, rather than taking the initiative on their own as did their more energetic cousins in New England. “Consequently,” she declared, “*their astute and enterprising neighbors the Yankees, the acute speculators of Massachusetts and Connecticut, have seized upon the traffic which they have allowed to escape them, and have diverted it to the thriving town of Portland in Maine.*”¹⁴

Bird's wonderment was not limited to water ports, however. She was also astonished at the rate at which railroads were being built, even in locations otherwise undeveloped. “*Extensive districts of Ohio are still without inhabitants,*” she noted while traveling through that state, which was settled in large part by New England natives, “*yet its energetic people have constructed within a period of five years half as many miles of railroad as the whole of Great Britain contains ...*” Awestruck at the enormous productive

energy of the region, and recognizing it to be of the same type she had witnessed in New England, Bird remarked admiringly, “they are a ‘great people,’ they do ‘go a-head,’ these Yankees.”¹⁵

The most enduring voice of all antebellum travelers, however, belonged to Alexis de Tocqueville. A French diplomat and historian, Tocqueville undertook an assignment from the French monarchy in 1831 to tour and study prisons in the United States. While that was his official mandate, Tocqueville used the mission as an opportunity to travel widely in the United States, observe many subcultures, and attempt to discover just what made America tick. His seminal work on the subject, *Democracy in America*, published in 1835, remains the most insightful and influential work of the genre—still quoted regularly by politicians and cited by scholars—and it stands as an inspiration to many Americans for its warm portrayal of the young nation, by an outside, seemingly objective narrator. Tocqueville is, in fact, largely credited with being the source of the phrase “American Exceptionalism,” due to one of his quotes from *Democracy in America*: “The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no other democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one.”¹⁶

Democracy in America does provide powerful insights into the antebellum American character, and presents the nation as a bustling, good-hearted, liberty-loving society, in stark contrast to the portrayal offered by Frances Trollope. As such, it stands as something of a politico-cultural icon to millions of patriotic Americans, and the politicians who seek to lead them. However, many readers miss a central theme in Tocqueville’s work: that he saw the culture and spirit of colonial New England as the true “soul” of American liberty and prosperity.

Tocqueville visited many places throughout his North American journey, which included stops in Canada, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Tennessee. He observed numerous varieties of regional cultures and commented astutely on many of them. Tocqueville,

however, like so many other writers and commentators of the period, was struck by the culture of New England, recognizing it as something set apart from the other environs he visited. While Tocqueville acknowledged the value afforded the nation by the peoples and cultures of other regions, he saw in New England and its people the true origins of America. “*In the English colonies of the North, more generally known as the States of New England,*” he stated, “*the two or three main ideas which now constitute the basis of the social theory of the United States were first combined.*”¹⁷ With the keen observational eye that guided most of his work, Tocqueville fleshed out how radical, isolated Puritan colonies could so deeply influence the national American character by 1831: “*The principles of New England spread at first to the neighboring States; they then passed successively to the more distant ones; and at last, if I may so speak, they interpenetrated the whole confederation. They now extend their influence beyond its limits, over the whole American world. The civilization of New England has been like a beacon lit upon a hill, which, after it has diffused its warmth immediately around it, also tinges the distant horizon with its glow.*”¹⁸ Tocqueville praised the order, morality, and strong family values of New England culture, seeing in them the bedrock of American freedom.

Who Were These People?

Who exactly were these New Englanders, and what gave rise to this culture which so profoundly impressed—or enraged—multitudes of observers? The Yankees were direct descendants of the Pilgrims and Puritans who left England primarily between 1620 and 1640, fleeing the persecution which they suffered at the hands of the English government and the Church of England. The Puritans, a radical Calvinist sect based mostly in England, were disliked by many in England’s established order for their republican leanings, austere lifestyles, and attacks on

the Church of England, which the Puritans felt still held on to too many Catholic-esque traits and needed to be further “purified” (hence the name).¹⁹ Seeking to escape the political, academic, and economic handcuffs which burdened them in the Mother Country, these radical Protestants sought the wilderness of North America. While it is often remarked that these groups came to America seeking religious freedom—and that is certainly true—it must be stated that they also came for much more than that. From the beginning, the goal of this “Great Migration,” as announced by its leaders, was to form a Godly Puritan nation, a “city upon a hill,” which would not only provide the freedom and religious richness that its inhabitants yearned for, but also serve as a model to other nations around the world as to the power, prosperity, and justice available to any society that chose a righteous path.²⁰

The Puritan migrants achieved their escape from England and settled in what is now New England. However, political and religious tensions continued back home between the Puritans who stayed behind and the ruling authorities, which eventually culminated in the English Civil War. With the Puritan victory in that war and the establishment of the Commonwealth of England, many Puritans no longer saw the need to abandon their home country and flee to the New World. Because of this fluke in history, the initial group of Puritan migrants to America, numbering between 20,000-30,000, was, from about 1650, sealed off from any further massive English immigration, isolated, and permitted to develop a culture in what was nearly a political and social vacuum.²¹

The result of this intense, isolated development would be the Yankee culture of later years. The distinctive traits of those early, sealed-off Puritan colonies—ferocious religiosity, republican government, commitment to the traditional family, insistence on education and learning, and others—would form the core of the Yankee²² identity in the decades and centuries to come. The Puritans’ view of themselves as God’s new “chosen people” would

also deeply affect the personality and worldview of the Yankee character in coming generations, giving rise to many of the future assaults against Yankees from outsiders as self-righteous, hypocritical, condescending, and overly-aggressive. All these inputs created the unique, easily-identifiable Yankee culture that proved in later years to be admirable or disdainful, depending on the observer. It cannot be disputed, however, that the culture and its achievements were remarkable.

Just how remarkable? From the time the original New England settlers landed on the shores of Plymouth in 1620, until what is largely seen as the culture's dying breath in 1960, the Yankees and their direct descendants, stemming from the original group of roughly 30,000 Puritan migrants, achieved the following:

- Drafted and enacted what are considered the world's first written constitutions
- Established the first free, universal education system in the history of the world
- Initiated the American Revolution, and played a major role in prosecuting and winning the war
- Founded Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Cornell, Brown, the University of Pennsylvania, Stanford, and a host of other world-class higher education institutions
- Ended slavery in America, and played a leading role in establishing many of the finest Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- Drafted and enacted the first sweeping civil rights legislation in American history
- Invented the airplane
- Invented the lightbulb
- Played the leading role in developing American industry, including the railroad and automotive industries
- Played the leading role in developing American banking and finance, including the development of Wall Street,

and the elevation of New York City to the financial capital of the world

- Played the leading role in founding many of the most powerful and recognizable corporations in the world, including General Motors, Exxon Mobile, AT&T, Wells Fargo, and J.P. Morgan Chase
- And much more

Why Does All This Matter?

By some miracle of history, the Yankees—perhaps the most important, influential cultural group in the history of the world—have been almost completely overlooked, either written out of history books altogether as a separate, recognizable community, or included only in limited narratives discussing witch burnings or Thanksgiving. It is probable that a great proportion of Americans under the age of fifty, perhaps 80-90%, could not identify the meaning of the word Yankee, other than as a home run slugger, or as some vague reference to fast-talking northerners with aggressive driving habits. Somehow, some way, serious scholars write histories about the United States every year and give nary a mention to the role of this remarkable people. Doing so is akin to writing a history of the National Football League without ever making a single reference to the Dallas Cowboys—that is, it can be done, but the result is likely to be inaccurate, and not representative of the whole truth.

Why have Yankees been so overlooked, despite their enormous contributions to the country? Two ideas as to the answer might be briefly presented. First, every other ethnic, cultural, and racial group in America has a vested interest in minimizing the credit given to the Yankees, since many Americans—proud as they are of their country—are prone to see its history through the lens which provides their particular community the most honored position. Therefore, in the competitive jostling for

pride of ethnic place in the American story, the Yankees often get left out. This is exacerbated by the fact that Yankee descendants—never quite interested, as a group, in blowing the Yankee horn—are becoming a smaller and smaller proportion of the overall population, with a commensurately decreasing voice.

A second reason why Yankees are often overlooked in American historiography is the fact that, without question, their culture was firmly entrenched in extreme religious belief and devotion. Yankee ancestors were aggressively, zealously, and whole-heartedly committed to the Protestant faith, the Bible, and highly moral and ascetic lifestyles. The stern brand of Christianity practiced by the Puritans was all-consuming, and brooked no cultural competitor. While it is certainly true that Yankee culture, over time, diminished in its religious fervency, at no time during the peak years of Yankee activity did religion totally cease to be a significant factor in the culture. The resulting conclusion—that many of the accomplishments of the Yankees that will be outlined in this book were actually born out of a hyper-religious and sternly moral backdrop—is anathema to many scholars and historians, who do not wish to connect so great a portion of America’s foundation to the bounds of such an extreme faith.

Both of these ideas are outside the immediate scope of this book, and will not be explored in any great detail. What is explored is the sweeping scale of Yankee achievements, the group’s powerful impact on American history and culture, and the points of heritage that all Americans enjoy or are burdened with as a result of Yankee history. Each strand of the “Yankee Way” will be examined in-depth, to give the reader a deeper understanding of its meaning, influence, and relevance to modern American culture.

This book is not, however, a paean to the extinct Yankee tribe, nor some whitewashed history written in the worship of an ideal that never existed. The Yankees, for all their great

achievements, were full of flaws, as well. Many, particularly in the early colonial years, were slave owners, and some Yankees were heavy participants in the slave trade itself. Even after slavery was abolished in much of New England towards the end of the 18th century, racism and prejudice were still prevalent throughout the region, and Yankee racial intolerance—though never a defining trait of most of the community—was nevertheless prominent enough in later Yankee settlements. Yankees were even more hostile toward Jews, and their antisemitism made it difficult, for decades, for Jews to enter elite universities in large numbers, practice in “white shoe” professional firms alongside the Protestant elite, or even live in the same neighborhoods as Yankees. Such antisemitism existed in obvious form well into the 20th century.

Additionally, the Yankee stereotypes for greed, deceit, and manipulation were not without merit. While some Yankees were building the rudiments of what would later become the powerful American financial infrastructure, others, such as Jay Gould, were undermining it through their constant machinations and greed-driven schemes. Yankees were also condescending to cultures which they did not deem as elevated as their own (i.e. all others), and as a result were often justifiably resented by Southerners, foreigners, and many others. The Yankee community also, like any other community, experienced its fair share of adulterers, murderers, broken families, poverty, and all other manner of social ills.

So, if this book is not meant to be in praise of the Yankees, and if they had so many shortcomings, what is the point of writing about them at all? Because lying deep in Yankee culture, tucked away on the shelves of history, dusty from years of abandonment, lie the keys to America’s greatness. The great visuals that pepper our collective American mindset—General Washington on his great white steed, Thomas Jefferson writing his world-changing words under candlelight, the hopeful eyes of thousands of

immigrants entering the ports of Ellis Island—all go to obscure a great secret about America, which it has not come to terms with. That secret is this: America got lucky, in that it possessed a tribe of people, with a culture unlike anything which had been seen before, who would, through their incredible energy, shrewdness, morality, and sense of mission, turn a loose grouping of disregarded colonies into the most powerful, wealthy, and beneficent society the world has ever known. The set of anomalous characteristics growing out of the Puritan religion, and nurtured in the isolated, homogeneous villages of New England, collectively formed the larger part of the American character, and led to the rise of America as an unparalleled superpower.

Although the Yankees were the leading community in embodying and carrying out these characteristics, the focus of this book also encompasses the wider swath of Protestant communities of the Northeastern Seaboard, due to their similar cultural backgrounds and possession of the same traits, to one degree or another. This grouping includes settlers of English, German, Dutch, Swedish, and Scots-Irish origin, and religious backgrounds ranging from Presbyterianism to Quakerism. Although the ethnic tensions between these groups cannot be overlooked, and although their theological differences often led to violence and even death, such inter-group strife distracts from a more salient and impressive fact: while these communities differed greatly in their opinions on religion, church structure, and ethnic loyalty, they were largely on one accord in their views on how civil society should be constructed, and how individuals should live their lives in the secular world. They largely shared a belief in a separated church/state leadership, believed in and practiced the Ten Commandments, and otherwise embodied the Yankee traits discussed in this book.

Just what are these traits, these magic seeds of power and prosperity? There are ten, and they are collectively referred to in this book as the “Yankee Way.” They are:

The Yankee Way

- Religion and Morality: The bedrock of all that would follow, the spiritual foundation that was the direct source for all the other traits.
- Family: A commitment to the nuclear, Judeo-Christian model of family, a mandate to “be fruitful and multiply”; a standard of one husband and one wife providing stability, discipline, and love for children.
- Law, Order and Government: The preeminence of written laws, and the understanding by all in a community of each individual’s responsibility to follow not only those laws, but also the leaders selected to enforce and uphold them; a distrust of monarchies or authoritarian systems of any kind; a tendency toward republicanism.
- Grit: Toughness, patience, perseverance, aggressive focus in pursuit of goals; overcoming obstacles to build great things.
- Work Ethic: Extraordinary industry, persistence, and focus in the carrying out of tasks; the belief in and pursuit of a specific calling for each individual; the abhorrence of idleness and time-wasting.
- Frugality and Thrift: A high value placed on saving, low value on (and even dread of) unnecessary spending, in particular spending for luxuries or mere pleasure.
- Education: An insistence that all should be granted at least a minimum level of education; reverence for learning and the written word; strong support for schools and educators.
- Ingenuity: Making the most of every resource available; creativity in the service of usefulness; constant innovation and invention.
- Good Works: A respect for the dignity and equality of all men; concern for human rights and liberty; protection of the weak or less-fortunate; strong missionary impulse, and a compulsion to create “shining cities on hills.”

- Civic Virtue: Beyond mere obedience to the law, a commitment to respect, support, and be accountable to one's neighbors in the community.

The Yankees and the other groups mentioned above, in applying these cultural superpowers, built the nation over time into an economic juggernaut, and in the process created the Protestant, or Northeastern, Establishment which held sway over the nation's corporate, financial, and cultural heights for centuries. This ruling caste, often referred to collectively (and at times inaccurately) as "WASPs," or White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, set the primary moral tone for the nation, ran its most prestigious universities and academies, published its most widely-circulated newspapers, and headed its largest businesses. These groups also lived out the culture considered for decades to be the American Standard, and to which millions of immigrants and minorities once aspired.

This book does not seek to glorify the Yankee or his cultural cousins, to overlook his glaring faults, or to denigrate other cultures or undermine their valuable contributions to this nation. The book does hold firmly, however, to the thesis that these powerful Yankee traits—which, combined, have no precedent in history—are what led, more than any other factor, to America's status as First Nation. Equally important, this book will make the argument that the abandonment of these cultural hand-me-downs, which has occurred with increasing intensity and rapidity over the past five decades, will inevitably lead to the decline—if not outright collapse—of America's premier position in the world. Finally, this book presents the argument that these Yankee traits, which formed the foundations of American culture, are not exclusive to any race, nationality, or historical era, and can and should be resurrected and consciously implemented in our society. Doing so—*choosing wisely*—will inevitably restore American stability, power, and influence. Failing to do so—*choosing unwisely*—will inevitably spell the end of America's run as a great nation.