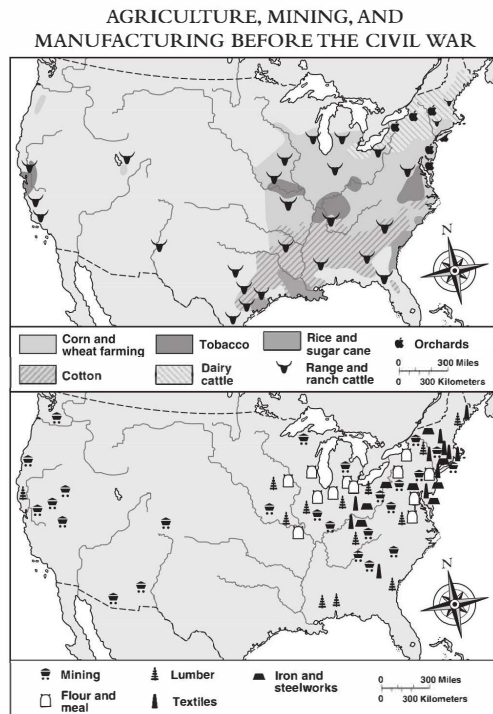


The South

The states that permitted slavery formed a distinctive region, the South. By 1861, the region included 15 states, all but four of which (Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri) seceded and joined the Confederacy.

Agriculture and King Cotton

Agriculture was the foundation of the South's economy, even though by the 1850s small factories in the region were producing approximately 15 percent of the nation's manufactured goods. Tobacco, rice, and sugarcane were important cash crops, but these were far exceeded by the South's chief economic activity: the production and sale of cotton.



The development of mechanized textile mills in England, coupled with Eli Whitney's cotton gin, made cotton cloth affordable, not just in Europe and the United States, but throughout the world. Before 1860, the world depended chiefly on Britain's mills for its supply of cloth, and Britain in turn depended chiefly on the American South for its supply of cotton fiber. Originally, the cotton was grown almost entirely in two states, South Carolina and Georgia, but as demand and profits increased, planters moved westward into Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. New land was constantly needed, for the high cotton yields required for profits quickly depleted the soil. By the 1850s, cotton provided two-thirds of all U.S. exports and linked the South and Great Britain. "Cotton is king," said one southerner of his region's greatest asset.

Slavery, the "Peculiar Institution"

Wealth in the South was measured in terms of land and slaves. The latter were treated as a form of property, subject to being bought and sold. However, some whites were sensitive about how they treated the other humans that they referred to slavery as "that peculiar institution." In colonial times, people justified slavery as an economic necessity, but in the 19th century, apologists for slavery mustered historical and religious arguments to support their claim that it was good for both slave and master.

Population The cotton boom was largely responsible for a fourfold increase in the number of slaves, from 1 million in 1800 to nearly 4 million in 1860. Most of the increase came from natural growth, although thousands of Africans were also smuggled into the South in violation of the 1808 law against importing slaves. In parts of the Deep South, slaves made up as much as 75 percent of the total population. Fearing slave revolts, southern legislatures added increased restrictions on movement and education to their slave codes.

Economics Slaves were employed doing whatever their owners demanded of them. Most slaves labored in the fields, but many learned skilled crafts or worked as house servants, in factories, and on construction gangs. Because of the greater profits to be made on the new cotton plantations in the West, many slaves were sold from the Upper South to the cotton-rich Deep South of the lower Mississippi Valley. By 1860, the value of a field slave had risen to almost \$2,000. One result of the heavy capital investment in slaves was that the South had much less capital than the North to undertake industrialization.

Slave Life Conditions of slavery varied from one plantation to the next. Some slaves were humanely treated, while others were routinely beaten. All suffered from being deprived of their freedom. Families could be separated at any time by an owner's decision to sell a wife, a husband, or a child. Women were vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Despite the hard, nearly hopeless circumstances of their lives, enslaved African Americans maintained a strong sense of family and of religious faith.

United States Labor Force, 1800–1860 (in millions)			
Year	Free	Slave	Total
1800	1.4	0.5	1.9
1810	1.6	0.7	2.3
1820	2.1	1.0	3.1
1830	3.0	1.2	4.2
1840	4.2	1.5	5.7
1850	6.3	2.0	8.3
1860	8.8	2.3	11.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*

Resistance Slaves contested their status through a range of actions, primarily work slowdowns, sabotage, and escape. In addition, there were a few major slave uprisings. One was led by Denmark Vesey in 1822 and another by Nat Turner in 1831. The revolts were quickly and violently suppressed, but even so, they had a lasting impact. They gave hope to enslaved African Americans, drove southern states to tighten already strict slave codes, and demonstrated to many the evils of slavery. Revolts polarized the country by making slaveholders more defensive about slavery and nonslaveholders more critical of the institution.

Free African Americans

By 1860, as many as 250,000 African Americans in the South were not slaves. They were free citizens (even though, as in the North, racial prejudice restricted their liberties). A number of slaves had been emancipated during the American Revolution. Some were mulatto children whose white fathers had decided to liberate them. Others achieved freedom on their own, when permitted, through self-purchase—if they were fortunate enough to have been paid wages for extra work, usually as skilled craftspeople.

Most of the free southern blacks lived in cities where they could own property. By state law, they were not equal with whites, were not permitted to vote, and were barred from entering certain occupations. Constantly in danger of being kidnapped by slave traders, they had to show legal papers proving their free status. They remained in the South for various reasons. Some wanted to be near family members who were still in bondage; others believed the South to be home and the North to offer no greater opportunities.

White Society

Southern whites observed a rigid hierarchy among themselves. Aristocratic planters lived comfortably at the top of society while poor farmers and mountain people struggled at the bottom.

Aristocracy Members of the South’s small elite of wealthy planters owned at least 100 slaves and at least 1,000 acres. The planter aristocracy maintained its power by dominating the state legislatures of the South and enacting laws that favored the large landholders’ economic interests.

Farmers The vast majority of slaveholders owned fewer than 20 slaves and worked only several hundred acres. Southern white farmers produced the bulk of the cotton crop, worked in the fields with their slaves, and lived as modestly as farmers of the North.

Poor Whites Three-fourths of the South’s white population owned no slaves. They could not afford the rich river-bottom farmland controlled by the planters, and many lived in the hills as subsistence farmers. These “hillbillies” or “poor white trash,” as they were derisively called by the planters, defended the slave system, thinking that some day they too could own slaves and that at least they were superior on the social scale to someone (slaves).

Mountain People A number of small farmers lived in frontier conditions in isolation from the rest of the South, along the slopes and valleys of the Appalachian and Ozark mountains. The mountain people disliked the planters and their slaves. During the Civil War, many (including a future president, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee) would remain loyal to the Union.

Cities Because the South was primarily an agricultural region, there was only a limited need for major cities. New Orleans was the only southern city among the nation’s 15 largest in 1860 (it was fifth, after New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston). Cities such as Atlanta, Charleston, Chattanooga, and Richmond were important trading centers, but had relatively small populations in comparison to those of the North.

Southern Thought

The South developed a unique culture and outlook on life. As cotton became the basis of its economy, slavery became the focus of its political thought. White southerners felt increasingly isolated and defensive about slavery, as northerners grew hostile toward it, and as Great Britain, France, and other European nations outlawed it altogether.

Code of Chivalry Dominated by the aristocratic planter class, the agricultural South was largely a feudal society. Southern gentlemen ascribed to a code of chivalrous conduct, which included a strong sense of personal honor, the defense of womanhood, and paternalistic attitudes toward all who were deemed inferior, especially slaves.

Education The upper class valued a college education for their children. Acceptable professions for gentlemen were limited to farming, law, the ministry, and the military. For the lower classes, schooling beyond the early elementary grades was generally not available. To reduce the risk of slave revolts, slaves were strictly prohibited by law from receiving any instruction in reading and writing.

Religion The slavery question affected church membership. Partly because they preached biblical support for slavery, both Methodist and Baptist churches gained in membership in the South while splitting in the 1840s with their northern brethren. The Unitarians, who challenged slavery, faced declining membership and hostility. Catholics and Episcopalians took a neutral stand on slavery, and their numbers declined in the South.

The West

As the United States expanded westward, the definition of the “West” kept changing. In the 1600s, the West referred to all the lands not along the Atlantic Coast. In the 1700s, the West meant lands on the other side of the Appalachian Mountains. By the mid-1800s, the West lay beyond the Mississippi River and reached to California and the Oregon Territory on the Pacific Coast.

American Indians

The original settlers of the West—and the entire North American continent—were various groups of American Indians. However, from the time of Columbus, American Indians were cajoled, pushed, or driven westward as white settlers encroached on their original homelands.

Exodus By 1850, the vast majority of American Indians were living west of the Mississippi River. Those to the east had either been killed by disease, died in battles, emigrated reluctantly, or been forced to leave their land by treaty or military action. The Great Plains, however, would provide only a temporary respite from conflict with white settlers.

Life on the Plains Horses, brought to America by the Spanish in the 1500s, revolutionized life for American Indians on the Great Plains. Some tribes continued to live in villages and farm, but the horse allowed tribes such as the Cheyenne and the Sioux to become nomadic hunters following the buffalo. Those living a nomadic way of life could more easily move away from advancing settlers or oppose their encroachments by force.

The Frontier

Although the location of the western frontier constantly shifted, the *concept* of the frontier remained the same from generation to generation. The same forces that had brought the original colonists to the Americas motivated their descendants and new immigrants to move westward. In the public imagination, the West represented the possibility of a fresh start for those willing to venture there. If not in fact, at least in theory and myth, the West beckoned as a place promising greater freedom for all ethnic groups: American Indians, African Americans, European Americans, and eventually Asian Americans as well.

Mountain Men From the point of view of white Americans, the Rocky Mountains in the 1820s were a far-distant frontier—a total wilderness except for American Indian villages. The earliest whites in the area had followed Lewis and Clark and explored American Indian trails as they trapped for furs.

These mountain men, as they were called, served as the guides and pathfinders for settlers crossing the mountains into California and Oregon in the 1840s. (See Chapter 12.)

White Settlers on the Western Frontier

Whether the frontier lay in Minnesota or Oregon or California in the 1840s and 1850s, daily life for white settlers was similar to that of the early colonists. They worked hard from sunrise to sunset and lived in log cabins, sod huts, or other improvised shelters. Disease and malnutrition were far greater dangers than attacks by American Indians.

Women Often living many miles from the nearest neighbor, pioneer women performed myriad daily tasks, including those of doctor, teacher, seamstress, and cook—as well as chief assistant in the fields to their farmer-husbands. The isolation, endless work, and rigors of childbirth resulted in a short lifespan for frontier women.

Environmental Damage Settlers had little understanding of the fragile nature of land and wildlife. As settlers moved into an area, they would clear entire forests and after only two generations exhaust the soil with poor farming methods. At the same time, trappers and hunters brought the beaver and the buffalo to the brink of extinction.

Population by Region, 1820 to 1860			
Region	1820	1840	1860
Northeast: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania	4,360,000	6,761,000	10,594,000
North Central: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas	859,000	3,352,000	9,097,000
South: Delaware, Maryland, Washington DC, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas	4,419,000	6,951,000	11,133,000
West: Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Washington, Oregon, California	-----	-----	619,000
All States	9,618,000	17,120,000	31,513,000

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*. All figures rounded to the nearest thousand.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF SLAVERY?

Slavery was of fundamental importance in defining both the character of the South and its differences with the North. Until about 1950, the prevailing scholarship on slavery followed Ulrich Phillips' *American Negro Slavery* (1918). Phillips portrayed slavery as an economically failing institution in which the paternalistic owners were civilizing the inferior but contented African Americans. Later historians challenged Phillips' thesis by showing slaves and owners to be in continual conflict. Today the older view of slavery as a paternalistic and even benign institution has been discredited.

The newer views were summarized by Kenneth Stampp in *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (1956). Stampp acknowledged that the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s stimulated many of the new interpretations: "There is a strange paradox in the historian's involvement with both present and past, for his knowledge of the present is clearly a key to his understanding of the past."

Historians continue to debate how destructive slavery was. Some have argued that the oppressive and racist nature of slavery destroyed the culture and self-respect of the slaves and their descendants. In contrast, others have concluded that slaves managed to adapt and to overcome their hardships by developing a unique African American culture focused around religion and extended families.

Economics has also provided a focus for viewing the nature of slavery. Historians have debated whether slave labor was profitable to southern planters, as compared to using free labor. Unlike Phillips, many historians have demonstrated that slavery was generally profitable. A more complex analysis of the economics, social, and cultural nature of slavery is found in Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. In this work, southern society is shown centered on a paternalism that gave rise to a unique social system with a clear hierarchy, in which people were classified according to their ability or their economic and social standing. For whites this paternalism meant control, while for slaves it provided the opportunity to develop and maintain their own culture, including family life, tradition, and religion.

Recently, historians have focused more on regional variations in slavery. For example, compared to slaves on South Carolina rice plantations, slaves on Virginia tobacco plantations lived longer lives, worked in smaller groups, and had more contact with whites. In South Carolina, slaves kept stronger ties to their African heritage.

The changing interpretations of slavery since the early 1900s reflect changing attitudes toward race and culture. While all interpretations do not seem equally accurate today, each provides readers a perspective to consider as they develop their own views.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

<p>Identities & Conflict (NAT) Northeast Old Northwest sectionalism Nativists American party Supreme Order of the Star-Spangled Banner Know-Nothing Party Free African Americans planters Codes of Chivalry poor whites hillbillies mountain men the West the frontier</p>	<p>Urban Growth (MIG) urbanization urban life new cities Irish; potato famine Roman Catholic Tammany Hall Germans Old Northwest immigration</p> <p>The Slave Industry (MIG/WXT) King Cotton Eli Whitney "peculiar institution" Denmark Vesey Nat Turner slave codes Code of Chivalry</p>	<p>Changing Politics (POL) Daniel Webster Tammany Hall</p> <p>Ignorance (GEO) environmental damage extinction</p>
<p>Migration (NAT, MIG) Deep South American Indian removal Great Plains white settlers</p>	<p>Industry & Problems (WXT) Industrial Revolution unions <i>Commonwealth v. Hunt</i> ten-hour workday Cyrus McCormick John Deere</p>	

American Colonization Society The idea of transporting freed slaves to an African colony was first tried in 1817 with the founding of the American Colonization Society. This appealed to moderate antislavery reformers and politicians, in part because whites with racist attitudes hoped to remove free blacks from U.S. society. In 1822, the American Colonization Society established an African-American settlement in Monrovia, Liberia. Colonization never proved a practical course. Between 1820 and 1860, only about 12,000 African Americans were settled in Africa, while the slave population grew by 2.5 million.

American Antislavery Society In 1831, William Lloyd Garrison began publication of an abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*, an event that marks the beginning of the radical abolitionist movement. The uncompromising Garrison advocated immediate abolition of slavery in every state and territory without compensating the slaveowners. In 1833, Garrison and other abolitionists founded the American Antislavery Society. Garrison stepped up his attacks by condemning and burning the Constitution as a proslavery document. He argued for “no Union with slaveholders” until they repented for their sins by freeing their slaves.

Liberty Party Garrison’s radicalism soon led to a split in the abolitionist movement. Believing that political action was a more practical route to reform than Garrison’s moral crusade, a group of northerners formed the Liberty party in 1840. They ran James Birney as their candidate for president in 1840 and 1844. The party’s one campaign pledge was to bring about the end of slavery by political and legal means.

Black Abolitionists Escaped slaves and free African Americans were among the most outspoken and convincing critics of slavery. A former slave such as Frederick Douglass could speak about the brutality and degradation of slavery from firsthand experience. An early follower of Garrison, Douglass later advocated both political and direct action to end slavery and racial prejudice. In 1847, he started the antislavery journal *The North Star*. Other African American leaders, such as Harriet Tubman, David Ruggles, Sojourner Truth, and William Still, helped organize the effort to assist fugitive slaves escape to free territory in the North or to Canada, where slavery was prohibited.

Violent Abolitionism David Walker and Henry Highland Garnet were two northern African Americans who advocated the most radical solution to the slavery question. They argued that slaves should take action themselves by rising up in revolt against their owners. In 1831, a Virginia slave named Nat Turner led a revolt in which 55 whites were killed. In retaliation, whites killed hundreds of African Americans in brutal fashion and put down the revolt. Before this event, there had been some antislavery sentiment and discussion in the South. After the revolt, fear of future uprisings as well as Garrison’s inflamed rhetoric put an end to antislavery talk in the South.

Other Reforms

Efforts to reform individuals and society during the antebellum era also included smaller movements such as:

- the American Peace Society, founded in 1828 with the objective of abolishing war, which actively protested the war with Mexico in 1846
- laws to protect sailors from being flogged
- dietary reforms, such as eating whole wheat bread or Sylvester Graham’s crackers, to promote good digestion
- dress reform for women, particularly Amelia Bloomer’s efforts to get women to wear pantaloons instead of long skirts
- phrenology, a pseudoscience that studied the bumps on an individual’s skull to assess the person’s character and ability

Southern Reaction to Reform

The antebellum reform movement was largely found in the northern and western states, with little impact in the South. While “modernizers” worked to perfect society in the North, southerners were more committed to tradition and slow to support public education and humanitarian reforms. They were alarmed to see northern reformers join forces to support the antislavery movement. Increasingly, they viewed social reform as a northern threat against the southern way of life.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHAT MOTIVATED REFORMERS?

In her history of antebellum reform, *Freedom’s Ferment* (1944), Alice Tyler portrayed the reformers as idealistic humanitarians whose chief goal was to create a just and equitable society for all. Other historians generally accepted Tyler’s interpretation.

However, in recent years, historians have questioned whether reformers were motivated by humanitarian concerns or by a desire of upper- and middle-class citizens to control the masses. According to their argument, the temperance movement was designed to control the drinking of the poor and recent immigrants. The chief purpose of penitentiaries was to control crime, of poorhouses to motivate the lower classes to pursue work, and of public schools to “Americanize” the immigrant population. Schools were supported by the wealthy, because they would teach the working class hard work, punctuality, and obedience. Revisionist historians also have noted that most of the reformers were Whigs, not Jacksonian Democrats.

Some historians have argued that the reformers had multiple motivations for their work. They point out that, although some reasons for reform may have been self-serving and bigoted, most reformers sincerely

thought that their ideas for improving society would truly help people. For example, Dorothea Dix won support for increased spending for treatment of the mentally ill by appealing to both self-interest and morality. She argued that reforms would save the public money in the long run and were humane. Historians point out further that the most successful reforms were ones that had broad support across society—often for a mix of reasons.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

<p>Alternative Groups (NAT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> utopian communities Shakers Amara Colonies Robert Owen New Harmony Joseph Henry Noyes Oneida community Charles Fourier phalanxes Horace Mann <p>Reforming Society (POL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> temperance American Temperance Society Washingtonians Women's Christian Temperance Union asylum movement Dorothea Dix Thomas Gallaudet Samuel Gridley Howe penitentiaries Auburn system Horace Mann public school movement McGuffey readers American Peace Society <p>Abolition Efforts (POL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Colonization Society 	<p>American Antislavery Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> abolitionism William Lloyd Garrison; <i>The Liberator</i> Liberty party Frederick Douglass; <i>The North Star</i> Harriet Tubman David Ruggles Sojourner Truth William Still David Walker Henry Highland Garnet Nat Turner <p>New Ideas (CUL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> antebellum period romantic movement transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar" Henry David Thoreau, <i>Walden</i>, "On Civil Disobedience" Brook Farm George Ripley feminists Margaret Fuller Theodore Parker George Caleb Bingham William S. Mount Thomas Cole Frederick Church Hudson River school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washington Irving James Fenimore Cooper Nathaniel Hawthorne Sylvester Graham Amelia Bloomer <p>Thoughts on Religion (CUL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second Great Awakening Timothy Dwight revivalism; revival (camp) meetings millennialism Church of Latter-Day Saints; Mormons Joseph Smith Brigham Young New Zion <p>Women's Rights (CUL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> women's rights movement cult of domesticity Sarah Grimké Angelina Grimké <i>Letter on the Condition of Women and the Equality of the Sexes</i> Lucretia Mott Elizabeth Cady Stanton Seneca Falls Convention (1848) Susan B. Anthony
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