**Chapter 12**

**A Regionalized America, 1830–1860**

**Learning Outcomes**

* 1. Describe social life in the commercial North as it developed between 1830 and 1860.

**Objectives**

1. Describe how the continual infusion of immigrants contributed to the swelling numbers in America’s cities, and how this urbanization contributed to what is called the “market revolution.”
2. Explain what everyday life was like for northerners who lived in non-urban areas.
3. Explore the lives of various groups living in the cities, including immigrants, women, and racial minorities.
   1. Describe social life as it developed in the South between 1830 and 1860 as a result of dependence on cotton.

**Objectives**

* 1. Explain how the concentration on cotton farming, both by wealthy plantation owners and small farmers, defined the lifestyle of southern white society.
  2. Discuss how the few slave rebellions in the South were stamped out, and give an account of the various ways in which whites came to defend the system of slavery.
  3. Describe the social networks that developed among slaves in the South, and explain the importance of maintaining a sense of family and community to African slaves.

**Chapter Summary**

Regional differences between the North and the South became more pronounced over time, especially between 1830 and 1860. Three forces dramatically altered life in the northern United States in the three decades before the Civil War: the Market Revolution, massive immigration, and urbanization. The North continued on its path of industrialization, with new immigrants predominately from Ireland and Germany. A large number of these immigrants ended up in the expanding northern cities. Immigrants transformed entire neighborhoods of the largest cities.

There was opposition from Americans, mostly of English descent, reflecting nativist sentiment of the day. The working poor that filled the factories and were otherwise employed in the lowest paying jobs usually were immigrants; this economic status further stigmatized the newcomers in the eyes of the Nativists.

In addition to the formation of racial and ethnic identities, the combination of ethnic enclaves, middle-class professions, and the incredible wealth earned by canal builders and others led to highly visible social divisions. While most of the working class lived in small apartments, wealthy Americans were constructing large mansions. By the 1850s, affluent neighborhoods had access to indoor plumbing and gas lighting.

Along with a slowly forming working-class consciousness, northern cities also became crucibles of the middle class, made up mostly of managers, desk workers, and educators. This group of educated middlemen and their families cultivated a middle-class identity between wealth and poverty. Class divisions manifested in the choice of leisure activities. Simultaneously, racism became a dominant theme of white popular entertainment as demonstrated by the minstrel shows. Free people of color navigated through white-controlled society. They created their own institutions when denied equal participation by the white-controlled society. Most significantly black churches such as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) were established when black Americans discriminated against in Methodist worship services. A rallying cry of the North was that its laborers were free laborers, in contrast to the South. But abolitionists, led by William Lloyd Garrison, signaled the growing discontent over slavery in the north. Congress adopted the “Gag Rule” to ban the discussion of slavery as their solution.

The South clung to its agricultural system dominated by cotton and slavery. The use of slave labor discouraged immigration and the vast gap in wealth stunted the growth of a middle class. Poor white yeoman farmers generally were self-sufficient and rarely could afford to own slaves. For the wealthy, slaves and the slave trade proved to be profitable. Whether due to economic, racist, or class-based reasons, white Southern society defended their use of slaves.

In the 1830s and 1840s, white southerners developed a more militant defense of slavery. In doing so, they were responding to both the growth of the abolitionist movement in the North and to one of the most violent slave revolts in American history. Soon, slave apologists replaced economic reasons with racial, paternalistic, and religious defenses of slavery.

Despite increased surveillance by whites, slaves maintained their unique cultural practices, even after families had been brutally separated. Most slaves lived on plantations; those that lived in the city had significantly different living conditions and occupations from their brethren. Christianity played a critical role in the lives of many slaves who drew inspiration and hope from its message of salvation. Due to repressive white reprisals, slave rebellions rarely occurred; instead, workers resisted through subtle methods, including escape, which would be the most potentially rewarding. The Underground Railroad provided one path to freedom for hundreds of people, including Frederick Douglass. For now, as long as the United States kept an equal number of slave and non-slave states, an uneasy peace between the two sections could be maintained. As Americans began to move west in ever increasing numbers, however, the issue of slavery began to move toward center stage.

**Chapter Outline**

I. Social Life in the Commercial North

* + 1. The Market Revolution
    2. Immigration
    3. Urbanization
    4. Life in the Northern Countryside
  1. Communal Values
  2. Decreased Isolation
     1. City Life
  3. Immigrants
  4. Racial and Ethnic Identities
  5. Class Consciousness
  6. Women and the Middle Class
  7. Leisure
  8. Free People of Color
  9. Abolitionism
  10. Garrison and *The Liberator*
  11. Resistance to Abolition
  12. Congressional “Gag Rule”
      1. “Free Labor”

II. Social Life in the Cotton South

1. Southern White Society
   1. The Planters
   2. Yeoman Farmers
2. The Defense of Slavery
   1. Nat Turner
   2. Legal Restrictions
   3. Proslavery Ideology
3. Slave Society
   1. Work
   2. Quarters
   3. Community
   4. Resistance and Revolt

III. Looking Ahead…

**Suggested Lecture Topics**

* 1. Social Life in Antebellum America: Differences between the North and the South Accelerate
  2. The Impact of Immigration and Industrialization on Northern Cities, including a comparison of labor systems and needs in both the North and South
  3. A Comparison of Immigration Issues in the 1840s and Today
  4. Americans Realize They Didn’t Leave Class Consciousness Back in Europe
  5. Nat Turner’s Failed Revolt and the Beginnings of the Slave Codes
  6. Southerners Adopt New Defenses for the Slave System

**The Reasons Why…**

(12-2a). There are three main reasons why popular images of the antebellum South as portrayed in venues like *Gone with the Wind* are misleading:

* 1. Most white Southerners did not own slaves.
  2. Most slave owners owned few slaves.
  3. Most slaves lived on plantations.

Have students in groups or individually write down single-word descriptions of slavery. Then see how many of the students match “Gone with the Wind” imagery with slavery. Compare and contrast the plantation life with other slavery-related issues such as difference in occupations, gender dynamics, and city vs. country life.

**Research Topics—Projects and Papers**

Students might choose to complete a project to be presented in class or to write a more traditional research paper. Or as an instructor one could assign the topics to the students. Below are a few topics that are relevant to this chapter. Instructors may, of course, choose to develop their own topics.

* 1. Gather drawings and paintings of slaves at work in the South, and present them in a folder or on a poster board, with accompanying narration.
  2. Collect information on the number of immigrants arriving in the United States each year from 1830 to 1860. Chart the rising numbers from England, Italy, France, Poland, and Germany.
  3. Collect samples of the coverage of Nat Turner’s Rebellion. Use contemporary newspapers to illustrate the intensity of the fear Turner instilled in the white communities.
  4. How did most slaves spend their time in the rural South? What kinds of communities did they establish? If and when they resisted their conditions, what kinds of things did they usually do?

**Additional www Resources**

“Free Blacks in the Antebellum Period,” The African American Odyssey: A Quest for Full Citizenship Exhibition. Library of Congress.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/exhibit/aopart2.html>

“Gag rule,” The free dictionary by farlex.

<http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/gag+rule>

“Irish and German Immigration”

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/25f.asp>

“The Know-Nothing and American Crusader, 1854,” [newspaper articles] The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<http://hsp.org/sites/default/files/legacy_files/migrated/nativistpress.pdf>

Vlach, John Michael. “Back of the Big House: The Cultural Landscape of the Plantation.” Traveling Exhibition based on book of same title. George Washington University website.

<http://www.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/index.html>

“Revolutionary Achievement: Yeomen and Artisans”

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/13g.asp>

“Flight to Freedom,” Bowdoin College’s History department. Underground Railroad online simulation.

<http://ssad.bowdoin.edu:9780/projects/flighttofreedom/intro.shtml>

**Primary Source Discussions**

**Assignment Name: Irish Immigrant Song: “No Irish Need Apply”**

*Introduction:* This rowdy drinking song is somewhat of an enigma. NINA has long been accepted as an acronym used to signify in job advertisements that Irish would not be hired. According to some historians, however, the usage of NINA in newspaper ads is almost nonexistent. What do you think? Was there *really* that much discrimination against the Irish? Be sure to scroll all the way through this webpage so that you can see the Irish pronunciation of the lyrics.

Folksinger Brendan Nolan recorded the song and sometimes includes it on his website with a few of his other songs. These change frequently, however, so if you click on the active links on this page, the odds are against your being able to listen to the audio. Give it a try, though—Nolan performs it very well. You *can* do a search for Nolan’s CDs and find samples of the audio wherever they are for sale, or search for “No Irish Need Apply” on YouTube; you’ll probably hear it.

*Visit URL:* *http://tigger.uic.edu/~rjensen/song.htm*

[Read a song written by a recent Irish Immigrant about his struggle to find a job](http://tigger.uic.edu/~rjensen/song.htm) and then take a brief quiz, by using the player at the left, to check your understanding.

*Reflection Questions*:

1. What is your impression of the author of this song? Do you think he was Irish or anti-Irish? Is the song a protest song or one for singing in the pub just for fun? How would you analyze it from a psychological standpoint?
2. In what circumstances would you feel comfortable singing such a song today? In what situations would you be uncomfortable?
3. How do you think you would have felt had you been that Irish Immigrant? What would you have felt like singing about? Expound on your answer.

**Assignment Name: Harriet Jacobs’ Account of life in the South after Nat Turner’s Rebellion**

*Introduction:* As you will read on this website, Harriet Jacobs escaped slavery and went on in later years to write her unusual autobiography, including a description of life as a young slave girl. Click on the link for the original text of this piece, “Fear of Insurrection.” When you have finished reading it, use the back button on your browser and then click on the link to “Harriet Jacobs,” where you will find a bit more information about this interesting woman. As with any biography, one must be careful to sift the information included as well as ferret out information that has been excluded.

*Visit URL:* *http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3h1519.html*

[Read Harriet Ann Jacobs’ account of life in the South after Nat Turner’s Rebellion](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3h1519.html) and then take a brief quiz, by using the player at the left, to check your understanding.

*Reflection Questions*:

1. How would you describe Jacobs’ demeanor as she wrote about the experiences in her community in the weeks and months following Nat Turner’s rebellion?
2. In comparison to their total number, very few slaves escaped to freedom in the North. Which of Jacobs’ early life experiences indicated that she would have the courage to take a chance on trying to escape?
3. What part of society made up the mob that “mustered” in Jacobs’ town? What reason does she give for their participation? What does this case illustrate about white society in the slave South?
4. Why do you think Jacobs subjected herself to living in an attic crawlspace for years before her escape to the north?