



# Notes

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## Chapter 16 - The South and the Slavery Controversy, 1793-1860

### I. "Cotton Is King!"

1. Before the 1793 invention of **Eli Whitney's** cotton gin, slavery was a dying business, since the South was burdened with depressed prices, unmarketable goods, and over-cropped lands.
  - After the gin was invented, growing cotton became wildly profitable and easier, and more slaves were needed.
2. The North also transported the cotton to England and the rest of Europe, so they were in part responsible for the slave trade as well.
3. The South produced more than half the world's supply of cotton, and held an advantage over countries like England, an industrial giant, which needed cotton to make cloth, etc...
4. The South believed that since England was so dependent on them that, if civil war was to ever break out, England would support the South that it so heavily depended on.

### II. The Planter "Aristocracy"

1. In 1850, only 1733 families owned more than 100 slaves each, and they were the wealthy aristocracy of the South, with big houses and huge plantations.
2. The Southern aristocrats widened the gap between the rich and the poor and hampered public-funded education by sending their children to private schools.
  - Also, a favorite author among them was **Sir Walter Scott**, author of *Ivanhoe*, who helped them idealize a feudal society with them as the kings and queens and the slaves as their subjects.
3. The plantation system shaped the lives of southern women.
  - Mistresses of the house commanded a sizable household of mostly female slaves who cooked, sewed, cared for the children, and washed things.
  - Mistresses could be kind or cruel, but all of them did at one point or another abuse their slaves to some degree; there was no "perfect mistress."

### III. Slaves of the Slave System

1. Cotton production spoiled the earth, and even though profits were quick and high, the land was ruined, and cotton producers were always in need of new land.
2. The economic structure of the South became increasingly monopolistic because as land ran out, smaller farmers sold their land to the large estate owners.
3. Also, the temptation to over-speculate in land and in slaves caused many planters to plunge deep into debt.
  - Slaves were valuable, but they were also a gamble, since they might run away or be killed by disease.
4. The dominance of **King Cotton** likewise led to a one-crop economy whose price level was at the mercy of world conditions.
5. Southerners resented the Northerners who got rich at their expense while they were dependent on the North for clothing, food, and manufactured goods.
6. The South repelled immigrants from Europe, who went to the North, making it richer.

### IV. The White Majority

1. Beneath the aristocracy were the whites that owned one or two, or a small family of slaves; they worked hard on the land with their slaves and the only difference between them and their northern neighbors was that there were slaves living with them.
2. Beneath these people were the slaveless whites (a full 3/4 of the white population) that raised corn and hogs, sneered at the rich cotton "snobocracy" and lived simply and poorly.
  - Some of the poorest were known as "poor white trash," "hillbillies" and "clay-eaters" and were described as listless, shiftless, and misshapen.
  - It is now known that these people weren't lazy, just sick, suffering from malnutrition and parasites like hookworm (which they got eating/chewing clay for minerals)
3. Even the slaveless whites defended the slavery system because they all hoped to own a slave or two some day, and they could take perverse pleasure in knowing that, no matter how bad they were, they always "outranked" Blacks.
4. Mountain whites, those who lived isolated in the wilderness under Spartan frontier conditions, hated white aristocrats and Blacks, and they were key in crippling the Southern secessionists during the Civil War.

## V. Free Blacks: Slaves Without Masters

1. By 1860, free Blacks in the South numbered about 250,000.
2. In the upper South, these Blacks were descended from those freed by the idealism of the Revolutionary War ("all men were created equal").
3. In the deep South, they were usually mulattoes (Black mother, White father who was usually a master) freed when their masters died.
4. Many owned property; a few owned slaves themselves.
5. Free Blacks were prohibited from working in certain occupations and forbidden from testifying against whites in court; and as examples of what slaves could be, Whites resented them.
6. In the North, free Blacks were also unpopular, as several states denied their entrance, most denied them the right to vote and most barred them from public schools.
7. Northern Blacks were especially hated by the Irish, with whom they competed for jobs.
8. Anti-black feeling was stronger in the North, where people liked the race but not the individual, than in the South, where people liked the individual (with whom they'd often grown up), but not the race.

## VI. Plantation Slavery

1. Although slave importation was banned in 1808, smuggling of them continued due to their high demand and despite death sentences to smugglers
2. However, the slave increase (4 million by 1860) was mostly due to their natural reproduction.
3. Slaves were an investment, and thus were treated better and more kindly and were spared the most dangerous jobs, like putting a roof on a house, draining a swamp, or blasting caves.
  - Usually, Irishmen were used to do that sort of work.
4. Slavery also created majorities or near-majorities in the Deep South, and the states of South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana accounted for half of all slaves in the South.
5. Breeding slaves was not encouraged, but thousands of slaves were "*sold down the river*" to toil as field-gang workers, and women who gave birth to many children were prized.
  - Some were promised freedom after ten children born.
6. Slave auctions were brutal, with slaves being inspected like animals and families often mercilessly separated; **Harriet Beecher Stowe** seized the emotional power of this scene in her *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

## VII. Life Under the Lash

1. Slave life varied from place to place, but for slaves everywhere, life meant hard work, no civil or political rights, and whipping if orders weren't followed.
2. Laws that tried to protect slaves were difficult to enforce.

3. Lash beatings weren't that common, since a master could lower the value of his slave if he whipped him too much.
4. Forced separation of spouses, parents and children seem to have been more common in the upper South, among smaller plantations.
5. Still, most slaves were raised in stable two-parent households and continuity of family identity across generations was evidenced in the widespread practice of naming children for grandparents or adopting the surname of a forebear's master.
6. In contrast to the White planters, Africans avoided marriage of first cousins.
7. Africans also mixed the Christian religion with their own native religion, and often, they sang Christian hymns as signals and codes for news of possible freedom; many of them sang songs that emphasize bondage. ("Let my people go.")

## VIII. The Burdens of Bondage

1. Slaves had no dignity, were illiterate, and had no chance of achieving the "American dream."
2. They also devised countless ways to make trouble without getting punished too badly.
  - They worked as slowly as they could without getting lashed.
  - They stole food and sabotaged expensive equipment.
  - Occasionally, they poisoned their masters' food.
3. Rebellions, such as the 1800 insurrection by a slave named **Gabriel** in Richmond, Virginia, and the 1822 Charleston rebellion led by **Denmark Vesey**, and the 1831 revolt semiliterate preacher **Nat Turner**, were never successful. However, they did scare the jeepers out of whites, which led to tightened rules.
4. Whites became paranoid of Black revolts, and they had to degrade themselves, along with their victims, as noted by distinguished Black leader **Booker T. Washington**.

## IX. Early Abolitionism

1. In 1817, the **American Colonization Society** was founded for the purpose of transporting Blacks back to Africa, and in 1822, the Republic of **Liberia** was founded for Blacks to live.
  - Most Blacks had no wish to be transplanted into a strange civilization after having been partially Americanized.
  - By 1860, virtually all slaves were not Africans, but native-born African-Americans.
2. In the 1830s, abolitionism really took off, with the **Second Great Awakening** and other things providing support.
3. **Theodore Dwight Weld** was among those who were inflamed against slavery.
4. Inspired by **Charles Grandison Finney**, Weld preached against slavery and even wrote a pamphlet, *American Slavery As It Is*.

## X. Radical Abolitionism

1. On January 1st, 1831, **William Lloyd Garrison** published the first edition of *The Liberator* triggering a 30-year war of words and in a sense firing one of the first shots of the Civil War.
2. Other dedicated abolitionists rallied around Garrison, such as **Wendell Phillips**, a Boston patrician known as "abolition's golden trumpet" who refused to eat cane sugar or wore cotton cloth, since both were made by slaves.
3. **David Walker**, a Black abolitionist, wrote *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* in 1829 and advocated a bloody end to white supremacy.
4. **Sojourner Truth**, a freed Black woman who fought for black emancipation and women's rights, and **Martin Delaney**, one of the few people who seriously reconsidered Black relocation to Africa, also fought for Black rights.
5. The greatest Black abolitionist was an escaped black, **Frederick Douglass**, who was a great speaker and fought for the Black cause despite being beaten and harassed.
  - His autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, depicted his remarkable struggle and his origins, as well as his life.

- While Garrison seemed more concerned with his own righteousness, Douglass increasingly looked to politics to solve the slavery problem.
  - He and others backed the Liberty Party in 1840, the Free Soil Party in 1848, and the Republican Party in the 1850s.
6. In the end, many abolitionists supported war as the price for emancipation.

## XI. The South Lashes Back

1. In the South, abolitionist efforts increasingly came under attack and fire.
2. Southerners began to organize a campaign talking about slavery's positive good, conveniently forgetting about how their previous doubts about "**peculiar institution's**" (slavery's) morality.
3. Southern slave supporters pointed out how masters taught their slaves religion, made them civilized, treated them well, and gave them "happy" lives.
4. They also noted the lot of northern free Blacks, now were persecuted and harassed, as opposed to southern Black slaves, who were treated well, given meals, and cared for in old age.
5. In 1836, Southern House members passed a "gag resolution" requiring all antislavery appeals to be tabled without debate, arousing the ire of northerners like John Quincy Adams.
6. Southerners also resented the flood of propaganda in the form of pamphlets, drawings, etc...

## XII. The Abolitionist Impact in the North

1. For a long time, abolitionists like the extreme Garrisonians were unpopular, since many had been raised to believe the values of the slavery compromises in the Constitution.
  - Also, his secessionist talks contrasted against Webster's cries for union.
2. The South owed the North \$300 million by the late 1850s, and northern factories depended on southern cotton to make goods.
3. Many abolitionists' speeches provoked violence and mob outbursts in the North, such as the 1834 trashing of **Lewis Tappan's** New York House.
4. In 1835, Garrison miraculously escaped a mob that dragged him around the streets of Boston.
5. Reverend **Elijah P. Lovejoy** of Alton, Illinois, who impugned the chastity of Catholic women, had his printing press destroyed four times and was killed by a mob in 1837; he became an abolitionist martyr.
6. Yet by the 1850s, abolitionist outcries had been an impact on northern minds and were beginning to sway more and more toward their side.

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