

# Chapter 16: The South and the Slavery Controversy (1793—1860)

## "Cotton Is King!"

- cotton developed into a huge agricultural factory
- farmers bought more slaves and more land for the economic spiral
- northerners sold cotton to the English
  - cotton was half of all American exports after 1840
  - Britain made cotton cloth which gave jobs to about 1/5 of its population, and that cotton came from 75% the United States
- cotton tied Britain to the US and gave them a sense of power
  - the South would win a civil war because they had access to all the cotton that Britain needed

## The Planter "Aristocracy"

- before the Civil War, the South was basically an oligarchy governed by rich farmers
  - they could afford to educate their children in Northern or abroad schools
    - tax-supported education was slow because the rich could just send their kids off, and didn't want to educate the poor
  - widened the gap between the rich and the poor
- southern women usually commanded the female slaves and household staff
  - relationships between slaves and mistresses varied from household to household

## Slaves of the Slave System

- land was cultivated too quickly which caused the population to move Northwest
- many small farmers started selling their land because they couldn't keep up, and their neighbors happened to already be large slaveowners
- it was hard to properly figure out how much money was needed for land and slaves, because while slaves could be fed for little, they could also cause trouble which required more money to fix
- southern planters watching northern planters get rich at their expense
  - kept shipping to middlemen, bankers, agents, shippers
  - served the Yankees for their lives
- cotton repelled large-scale European immigration
  - 4.4% foreign-born compared to 18.7% foreign-born in the North

## The White Majority

- majority of slaveowners had fewer than 10 slaves

- many small southern farmers were similar to northern farmers than southern aristocratic farmers
- about 3/4 of southern white folk did not own slaves at all
  - raised hogs and corn, not cotton
  - lived in mostly isolation with occasional church meetings
- super poor white people were referred to as "hillbillies", "crackers", "clay eaters" and were commonly thought to not contribute to society
  - a lot of them were sick or hungry, not lazy
- many poor folk still eagerly fought for slavery
  - white people still held a notion of race superiority
    - they were afraid they would be washed out if black people were not slaves anymore
  - still wanted to buy slaves for themselves
    - watched as others enjoyed the "American Dream"
- mountain whites, who lived in the valleys of the Appalachian range, had ignored society and maintained British customs
  - hated the rich white farmers and their slaves
  - helped cripple the southerns during the Civil War

## Free Blacks: Slaves Without Masters

- there were about 250,000 free blacks in the South in 1860
  - usually children of a white master and his black mistress
  - some purchased freedom after working farm hours
  - some free blacks even owned slaves, and a lot owned property
- blacks weren't allowed to work certain jobs and could be kidnapped back into slavery at any time
- free slaves were also in the North, but barred from voting and some public schools
  - anti-black feeling was stronger in the North than in the South
    - southerns liked the individual, but not the race
    - northerns liked the race, but not the individual

## Plantation Slavery

- legal importation of African slaves ended in 1808
- Britain outlawed the slave trade in 1807 and the Royal Navy's **West African Squadron** captured hundreds of slave ships and set prisoners free
- slaves were still imported to Brazil and the West Indies, and being snuck into America despite the fact that getting caught with a smuggled slave meant the death penalty
  - suppression of slavery only made it grow more because of the vigorous demand
- slaves reproduced naturally because of the geography and immunity to disease
- planters regarded their slaves as investments, and would rather waste an Irish worker than a slave who was worth money

- more dangerous tasks given to the Irish because slaveowners weren't willing to let slaves die
- economy bent for slavery, and population of deep southern states accounted for about 1/2 of all slaves in the South
- slaves weren't bred like cattle, but women were sometimes promised freedom if they could give birth to 10 children
  - whites would rape the women and then enslave their mulatto child
- families separated at slave auctions

## Life Under the Lash

- conditions varied from region to master
  - hard work, ignorance, oppression
  - no civil or political rights
- floggings were common as punishment and a visible symbol of ownership
  - strong-willed slaves were sent to **breakers** whose sole purpose was to whip the slaves until they broke
- beatings made production value decrease, so the average planter didn't punish his slaves that often
- most slaves were in the **black belt** by 1860, which went from South Carolina and Georgia to Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana
  - life was harder for these slaves because they produced a lot of the cotton
- in the Deep South, slaves accounted for more than 75% of the population
- most slaves were raised in two-parents households, despite some being separated by the birth of a child or shortly after marriage
  - avoided marriage between first cousins
  - had their own religious culture
    - punctuated sermons with "amen" which was an adaptation of the give-and-take between a caller and dancer in African ringshout dance

## The Burdens of Bondage

- extremely degrading to the victims
  - denied education, dignity, responsibility, independence, ideas
  - the American Dream did not exist for slaves
- slaves often worked as little as they could afford without being whipped, which created the idea of 'black laziness' in the minds of their owners
  - sabotaged equipment and poisoned food
- often ran away to find family
- some rebelled, but never successfully, and leaders were often hanged
  - Nat Turner led a rebellion, known as **Nat Turner's Rebellion**, where they killed about 60 women and children in 1831
  - Africans on Spanish slave ship **Amistad** rebelled in 1839 seized control of the ship and tried to sail it back to Africa

- president John Quincy Adams secured their freedom and returned them to Sierra Leone in West Africa
- whites degraded themselves along with slaves and constantly worried about rebellion

## Early Abolitionism

- abolitionism started with the Quakers
- the **American Colonization Society** was founded to transport Africans back to Africa
  - Republic of **Liberia** was established for former slaves
    - 15,000 freed blacks transported there
- 1830s abolitionist movement started to gain momentum
  - inspired by the British releasing the slaves in the West Indies
- many religious figures spoke about the sin of slavery and were the early abolitionists

## Radical Abolitionism

- William Lloyd Garrison published ***The Liberator*** which was a paper bashing slavery and might as well have started the Civil War
- other abolitionists founded the **American Anti-Slavery Society** in 1833
  - Wendell Phillips was an abolitionist that wouldn't eat cane sugar or wear cotton
- black abolitionists had to disguise themselves
  - David Walker, with ***Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*** in 1829 wrote to end white supremacy
  - Sojourner Truth, a free black woman who fought for emancipation and women's rights
  - Frederick Douglass, who wrote ***Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*** and was a remarkable speaker and runaway slave
- Garrison wanted the North to secede from the South and burned the Constitution at a public showing
- Douglass wanted to influence politics to talk about slavery

## The South Lashes Back

- antislavery societies were more numerous south of the **Mason-Dixon line** than north of it
  - after white abolitionist voices were silenced, Virginia went against emancipation proposals in 1831-1832
    - slave states tightened their slave codes and forbade emancipation of any kind
- Garrison's *The Liberator* came out at around the same time Nat Turner did his rebellion, and Garrison was accused of being a terrorist and inciter of murder
- anyone who tried to talk about slavery in the South was jailed, whipped, or lynched
- slaveowners pushed religion onto their slaves and said that it was God's will for them to be slaves
  - claimed slave relationship was like that of a family's
  - said that they worked outside and not in factories

- did not have to worry about unemployment or wages or sickness and old age
- southerners reacted defensively from northern accusations and grew suspiciously intolerant of antislavery questions
- sensitive Southerners drove Congress to pass the **Gag Resolution** in 1836 which tabled all discussion about antislavery
  - John Quincy Adams fought eight years for its repeal
- slaveowners could tell that blacks knew something was going on, even if they could not read
  - Washington government ordered southern postmasters to destroy abolitionist propaganda and arrest those who didn't

## The Abolitionist Impact in the North

- extreme abolitionists were unpopular in the North
- had a heavy economic stake in slavery, even if they weren't directly owning slaves
  - disrupting trade with England might bring unemployment
  - the Union was bound together by cotton
- mobs often broke out and destroyed things and dragged people around, including Garrison
  - Reverend Elijah P. Lovejoy insulted slavery and something about impugned the chastity of Catholic women and got kicked in 1837 so hard that he became "the martyr abolitionist"
  - ambitious politicians like Lincoln avoided the topic of slavery
- many Northerners in the 1850s were starting to see how unfree the South was
  - they were not prepared to abolish slavery, but readily oppose it as the Civil War approached