

Lecture 8: *King Cotton: Slavery and the Old South*

Market Revolution was confined to the north of the United States while the south was developing a different economic path.

Cotton is King

- Growing important of slavery in 19th century
- Cotton production doubles every decade from 1840 to 1860
- U.S. produces 75% of world supply
- White gold:
 - Most important commodity, southern planters wealthiest Americans
- Slave population:
 - 1/3 of the entire south in 1860
 - ½ of Deep south
- 1860:
 - 4 million slaves worth 3.5 billion dollars
 - Worth more than railroads, industries, manufacturing together
- King Cotton and West:
 - 1/3 of cotton crop produced West of Mississippi River:
 - Growing political power in west

Summary

Southern states do not industrialize or building canals and there are no large cities except New Orleans (based on slave labor)

Change from Tobacco/Slavery Economy to Cotton/Slavery Economy

Cotton Gin allows for slave-based agriculture based on cotton instead of tobacco

U.S. produces 75% of the worlds cotton and was in high demand

Leads the south to depend on a cotton economy because it was more profitable and stable than the new industrial society noted in the north

Cotton Belt (Deep South) – States that include Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana

- Slaves are sold from Chesapeake areas into the Deep South areas (from Tobacco areas into the Cotton areas)

External slavery is less common and internal slavery becomes the norm (women that had babies and are those babies are born into slavery)

Question during the era of the Civil War:

Will the West be open or closed to slavery?

North = closed (stop slavery westward)

South = open (continue slavery westward)

To A Slave Society

- By 1830's
 - Slave Economy to Slave Society
- Slavery affected every aspect of society
- 3 out of 4 white families owned no slaves
- Planters the exception:
 - Most slaveholders owned only a few slaves

- Yet most poor, non-slaveholding whites identify with planters through racism, regional loyalty, concepts of honor and paternalism
- Rented Slaves, worked on Slave Patrols
- Shared idea that their liberty depended on slavery

Summary

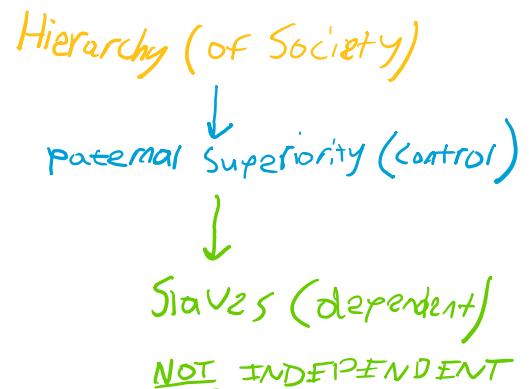
- Slave Economy becomes a Slave Society
 - Affects all aspects of life in the south even if you did not own slaves
 - Racist mentality permeates throughout the south

White male solidarity based on race not wealth (poor whites are invested in slave society even when they do not own slaves because they fight for other whites to have the ability to own slaves)

- They feel “connected” to other white people
 - Regional identity (part of being southern)

Southerners do not believe that “all” men were free

Belief is in the hierarchy of those who “deserved” to be free



Proslavery Arguments

- Paternalism and Racism
- Conservative Argument:
 - Do not upset social order, slavery is natural order
- Positive Good Argument
- Biblical, historical argument
- Economic Argument
 - Property rights

Summary

Argument outlines the **values of the south** (what they believed to be good and bad)

Southerners felt threatened by the new values of the north (abolition of slavery and rights of women)

Opposed to change

South thinks slavery is good because it has helped the south prosper and “freed” the whites and allowed them to become wealthy

South thinks slavery is good because they would have been worst off in Africa (believe it or not this is an argument still used today in America)

South reinforces that slaves are merely property and private property was very valued

- This would prove to be an influential argument for south for awhile
- Default argument when all others failed

Slavery and Freedom

- Freedom:
 - From wage-slavery, freedom as a privilege, freedom for whites depended on power to command blacks
- Richmond Enquirer:
 - “Freedom is not possible without slavery”

Summary

Southerners do not believe in Locke philosophy of (all men are created equal)

Southern believed in white superiority

South believed freedom depended on slavery

To be free was to own slaves for the south

Value of freedom

Slave Culture and Resistance in the Cotton Kingdom

- Slaves’ desire for freedom and self-determination manifest in efforts to forge semi-independent culture centered on
 - Family and Religion

Summary

The enslaved African Americans understood their identity and values through slave resistance

- That they were human beings NOT property
- Express what they feel is right and wrong

Resistance included running away and rebelling among other forms of obvious resistance

Slave Family Life

- Most slaves married
 - Most married for life
- Disruption through sales, led to more female-centered households, kinship networks
- Different gender roles

Summary

Marriage was not legal or official in any capacity but research has proven that marriage was existent

Slaves form families and relationships as a form of resistance

- Because being a family gave them a life as a human in a dehumanizing time and place for African Americans
- Relationships form a sort of control over their lives
- Female orientated
- Fictive kin – relationship of family not by blood but still provide that role of family

Slave Religion

- Slaves affected by the Second Great Awakening
- Every plantation had black preacher
- Master believe to serve as social control
- Slaves understand Christianity on their own terms
 - Value of Exodus story
 - A front for heroes

Summary

Second Great Awakening touched all parts of the United States, both the north and south, white and black

1. God is knowable to all
 - a. Accessible no matter who you are
 - i. Only requirement is to open your heart
2. Free will
 - a. Once God is revealed you must act accordingly through your actions
 - i. Salvation vs. Sinning (Damnation)

These parts of religion appealed to slaves that you have a soul and control in a time where slaves were taught they did not have a soul and were not in control of their lives (controlled by white slave owners)

Culture is alive

Slaves took the Bible and rebelled with passages from Exodus for example (a slave rebellion)

Bible inspired slaves to rebel

Slave Religion

- Great institutional power vs. desire for freedom
- Day to day resistance, silent sabotage
- Fugitive Slaves:
 - Rampant but dangerous, run to North (Douglass) or cities
 - Role of Native Americans
 - Role of Underground Railroad
- Uprising on slave ships:
 - Amistad (1839), Creole (1841)

Summary

Vast majority do not runaway or grab a pitchfork because the whites were so maintained to keep the institution of slavery

Form of resistance is harder to see (slave family and relationships and slave religiosity)

To rebel so apparent was suicide

If you have a shitty job you find ways to avoid doing that shitty job – Prof Hawkins

Douglass fought as an advocate for ending slavery before 1830's and Civil War

Douglass fought as an advocate for universal freedom and civil rights for women and blacks after 1830's and Civil War

Escaped from freedom and fought for what he thought freedom should be about

Slaves would escape to Canada through underground railroad to Native American tribes where they would be adopted into their tribes as equal members.

Some Native Americans hunted runaway slaves for subsistence in these times

1803 – Majority of African Slave Trade banned in U.S.

Amistad is a Spanish slave ship that in 1839 revolted and rebelled and made its way to New York.

- Inspired Creole American Slave Ship to revolt to British colony to get their freedom

Nat Turner's Rebellion

- Religious origins
- Aug 22nd, 1831
 - Uprising in Virginia, swells in size to 80 slaves, 60 whites killed
- Turner and followers captured and executed
- Turner:
 - "Was not Christ crucified?"
- Increase in "insubordination"
- Widespread panic and anxiety

Summary

Nat Turner turned to book of Revelation in the Bible

- He interpreted the bible on his own terms as a slave rebellion
- Slavery is example of evil and the devils work
- Any rebellion is a blow to the devil and evil itself
- Believed he was a servant of God and could bring the end of the world through his actions
- 1831 freed a number of slaves
- Killing whites (children too) and releasing more and more slaves
- Local militia was called and he was executed

Secular non-religious basis for his rebellion

- Originally planned his uprising for July 4th, 1831
- Was sick and had to postpone

After Math

Slave insubordination and resistance spread to other parts of the United States

- Inspired other slaves to take some sort of action
- Slaves to read and write soon became a crime
 - Whites could not decrease rebellion so they made slaves to not be able to think for themselves