

THE DIFFERENT WORLDS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH

As the 19th century passed the halfway mark, the regions of the North and South had developed into two very different and distinctive areas. Slavery was the key issue that identified the two areas – states that continued to use slave labor were considered Southern, while the states of the North had outlawed the practice. The regions also differed in other areas as well. As you read the summary below, notice how each region differed in the areas of economy, transportation, and society. Complete the note-taking sheet as you read. This information will lead us into the turbulent decade of the 1850s.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

In the north, most people identified strongly with their states, which had historic social and economic characteristics. Northerners also had a strong connection to New England or “the West”, the newer states from Ohio to the Mississippi. Most people’s only contact with the federal government was at the Post Office.

82% of Northerners were born in the United States. Many were descended from several generations of Americans and thought they were the true Americans. Native-born Americans generally regarded immigrants as having lower status. Most Northern whites had no contact with African Americans but considered them inferior.

Foreign born Northerners totaled 3,414, 113 (18% of Northerners), with nearly all arriving from Europe. Sven out of eight immigrants settled in the North. Immigrants identified strongly with others from their nationality or language group. They had come to America, not to a state. They had all had contact with the US government through the immigration process. Most immigrants settled in the cities, where they added to the labor force. However, immigrants also faced a great amount of prejudice in the cities. Many nativists opposed immigration, saying that it led to more job competition, disease, and crime. The American Party was formed in order to limit immigration into the U.S.

Northern states had 241,531 free African Americans (1.2 % of Northerners). African Americans were free, but faced prejudice and discrimination. Some created their own businesses, but most of the Northern African Americans worked as laborers or servants. They had limited civil rights, and after the US Supreme Court’s 1857 Dred Scott Decision, under federal law they were not US citizens.

In the South, people identified strongly with their states, which had historic social and economic characteristics. Most people’s only contact with the federal government was at the Post Office. One might feel a strong connection to “Lower South” in the southern tier of states, or to the “Upper south”, where farms were smaller.

93% of free Southerners were born in the United States. Southern whites had little contact with immigrants. Most African Americans were also descended from people born in the United States. Most Southern whites considered African American inherently inferior.

The white population of the South was divided into four groups. Most southern whites were yeoman farmers who did not have slaves and owned their own land. There were also tenant farmers, who rented land and farmed it. The rural poor lived in crude cabins in rural areas, and possibly owned a small plot of land, a hog or cow. They were stubbornly independent. The top of Southern society were the plantation owners, owning large tracts of land, comfortable houses, and multiple slaves. The plantation owners were the most powerful members of society, even if they were a very small minority of the population.

Foreign born Southerners totaled 392,432 (2.7 % of the Southerners). Only one out of every eight immigrants moved to the region due to the dependence on slave labor and less economic independence. Immigrants had come to America, not to a state, and in the South they had few other immigrants with whom to identify. They had all had contact with the US government through the immigration process.

Southern states had 3,953,760 enslaved African Americans (32% of Southerners) plus 253,082 free African Americans (2% of Southerners). Free African Americans benefited from the growth of cities in the South. These cities provided free African Americans with opportunities to form their own communities and work as craftspeople, servants, and laborers. Although spared the horrors of slavery, free African Americans were denied an equal share in economic and political life. Enslaved African Americans were bulk of black population in the South. Most enslaved people worked in fields under the supervision of an overseer and lived in appalling conditions. Slave codes—harsh rules—made their lives more difficult.

Slave or free, the inferior status of African Americans was defined in law, and after the US Supreme Court's 1857 Dred Scott Decision, under federal law they were not US citizens

ECONOMY

Manufacturing was important in the North, as manufacturers built factories to bring specialized workers together. Waterpower and steam power ran machinery to help workers. The sewing machine led to mass production in the textile industry. Factory workers used machinery to perform some of their work. 84% of American factories were in the North. Factory workers included women and children from farms, and many immigrants. Almost two-thirds of textile workers were women in 1850. Many people invested in railroads, textile mills, and factories.

Technology also changed agriculture, with the steel tipped plow and the mechanical reaper leading to an increase in the production of consumable crops. The McCormick reaper, invented by a Virginian, displaced many Northern agricultural workers, making them available for other labor. Agricultural goods could be shipped easily from the West to North on the growing railroads. Railroads provided new jobs for mechanics, engineers, and clerical and managerial workers. Railroad construction required construction crews, which included many immigrant workers.

The North's manufacturing was fast growing, but most customers were Americans. Domestic iron and steel production were replacing imports.

In the South, the economy was based on agriculture. Small farms and large plantations grew various cash crops, including cotton, rice, indigo, tobacco, and sugar cane. The percentage of the workforce engaged in agriculture in the South remained constant at 80% between 1800 and 1860. The cotton gin, invented by Eli Whitney, and Connecticut Yankee, transformed Southern agriculture by making short staple cotton profitable. This increased the demand for slave labor. The South produced 75% of the world's cotton. Traders dealt directly with English textile producers.

Only 16% of US factories were in the South. There was some industry in the South, including the successful Tredgar Iron Works. Southern textile mills remained a small percentage of the nation's total. There were few industrial cities compared to the North. In 1860, the South's agricultural economy was beginning to stall while the Northern manufacturers were experiencing a boom. Industry faced many barriers in the South, especially the popularity and profit of cotton. There was also a lack of capital in the South, so it was difficult to start new industries. There wasn't a large market for manufactured goods in the South due to slavery and the rural lifestyle. Finally, many people in the South simply opposed industry. One Alabama politician said, "We want no manufactures; we desire no trading, no mechanical or manufacturing classes. As long as we have our rice, our tobacco, and our cotton, we can command wealth to purchase all we want."

DAILY LIFE

Most Northerners still lived on farms, but more and more were moving to the growing cities in the North. By 1860, one quarter of all Northerners lived in urban areas. Most towns of 2,500 or more were in the North. Chicago grew by 375% between 1850 and 1860. The North had 49% of the land and 61 % of the population. The North had 77 of the largest 100 towns in the US. 25% of Northerners lived in urban areas. The North's African Americans lived mainly in towns and cities, especially Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati.

Cities sprang up around factories, harbors, and where rail lines met. They often lacked sewers or paved streets. In dirty and crowded neighborhoods, diseases spread rapidly. In New York, "The streets are filthy, and the stranger is not a little surprised to meet the hogs walking about in them, for the purpose of devouring the vegetables and trash thrown into the gutter."

Northerners were doing twice as well as Southerners on average. They enjoyed healthier food, bigger homes, better clothes, and more newspapers. More families were becoming part of the middle class.

The North had more people enrolled in public schools, partly because more people lived in towns and cities. The North had excellent private universities. Women attended female seminaries and went on to teach after graduation. Many of the seminaries became universities later in the century.

While there more men eligible for military service in the North, fewer chose military careers, since it could compete with expanding opportunities in manufacturing, finance, and railroads.

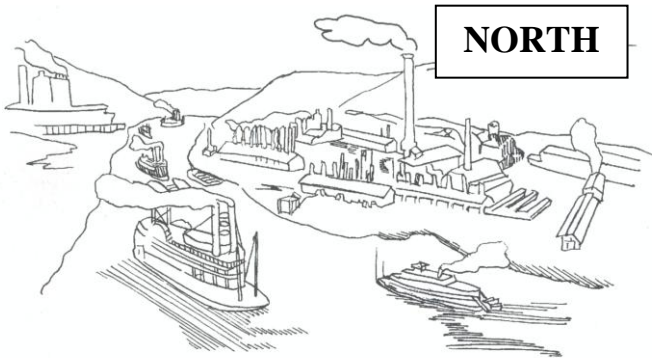
The South was primarily rural, as 90% of the South lived in rural areas. The South only had 21 of the 100 largest towns in the US, and the only Southern city over 100,000 was New Orleans. Free African Americans were concentrated in the Upper South. The greatest concentration of slaves was in the "cotton belt" along the Gulf of Mexico and the lower Mississippi River Valley.

A slightly smaller percentage of white Southerners were literate than their Northern counterparts, and Southern children tended to spend less time in school. Public schools were not as widespread due to the rural nature of the South, so many private tutors educated only the privileged children. Southern states pioneered and established state universities.

Less than half as many men in the South were available for military service, but more chose military careers than their Northern counterparts. Two-thirds of the American army participants in the Mexican War were southerners.

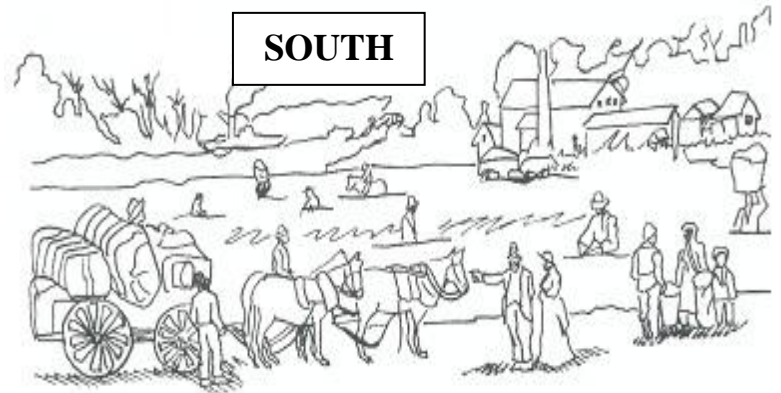
TRANSPORTATION

The North's transportation system relied on roads, waterways, and railways, and the government sponsored different programs to improve the roads. River travel remained faster, cheaper, and more comfortable than roads, but most rivers were navigable only a short distance from the sea. The development of the steamboat and canals played an essential role in the Northern economy. The new clipper ships, with more sails and a narrow bow, cut ocean travel time in half. This spurred Northern trade with ports around the world, and New England seaports, New York City and Philadelphia became important trade centers.



Railroads became the most dominant form of transportation in the North. Inspired by steamboats, inventors developed steam engines for trains. Soon, trains ran faster than steamboats. They crossed even rugged mountains. Companies were building rail lines faster and more cheaply than canals. Railroads became the most significant transportation in the North, spurring trade and improvement everywhere. By 1860, the North had over 20,000 miles of rail, linking factories to distant towns. In 1860, the North had 65% of US railroad miles and 49% of the land area. Northern rails were growing into an interconnected network, linking population centers.

The gradual slope and broad channels of Southern rivers made ship travel easy. And water transportation generally cost less than other ways of moving goods. Cotton growers found the rivers convenient and satisfactory. On plantation docks, slaves loaded cotton bales directly onto steamships. The large boats then traveled hundreds of miles downriver. Ships loaded at plantations west of the Appalachians steamed along rivers to the Mississippi, the mightiest of all Southern waterways. In early years, traders had to transfer cotton to sailing ships at ocean ports in order to reach England or Northern mills. New Orleans, the port at the mouth of the Mississippi, became one of the South's few big cities. By the 1850s, improved steamships started traveling across the Atlantic to England.



No other form of transportation was as successful in the South as river travel. The region's small towns sprang up along the rivers, so people simply visited other settlements by boat. Feeling less need for roads, Southerners opposed bills in Congress that would pay for roads and canals, which they believed benefited the North much more than the South. Some Southern railroads did develop, helping southern farmers to ship products to the North and linking inland areas to rivers and seaports. Only a few railroads crossed the mountains between the eastern and western states of the South. By 1850, the South only had 26% of the nation's railroad mileage. With fewer cities and factories to link, Southern rails were less interconnected.

POLITICAL ISSUES

Usually, Northerners felt that federal authority outranked state authority whenever the two conflicted. In general, Northerners supported taxes on imported goods in order to protect American industry and generate revenue. They wanted the federal government to encourage and assist the construction of roads, canals, and railroads in order to promote trade. They also wanted the government to provide small parcels of land in the west for homesteaders to

develop small family farms. In regards to fugitive slaves, some Northerners favored personal liberty laws that protected runaways in opposition to federal law.

Slavery was still a crucial issue in the North, even though it was outlawed in every state. The idea of slavery expanding to the western parts of the nation was opposed by most Northerners, but as a whole they were split on the overall abolition of slavery. The growing population of the North gave the region an advantage in the House of Representatives, and settlement patterns and previous laws would give them an advantage in the Senate as well.

Southerners felt that the federal government only had the specific powers granted to it in the Constitution and that law enforcement was the responsibility of the states. Southerners opposed tariffs on imports to ensure lower prices of manufactured goods that the South did not produce. They felt that the states and private investors should pay for the construction of roads, canals, and railroads. The government should grant large landholdings in the west to expand plantation farming, and all personal property should be allowed to go west, including slaves. In regards to fugitive slaves, Southerners wanted the federal government to strictly enforce laws that forced states to capture and return escaped slaves to the South.

Although most Southerners did not own slaves, they did support the institution. Southerners felt slavery was a state concern and not something that applied to the federal government. Southern states were worried about the growing imbalance between free and slave states in Congress. Southern population was not growing with immigration, and slaves only counted as three fifths of a person for representation. In the 1850s, southerners were the dominant force on the Supreme Court.

Author James Stirling may have summarized the differences of the two regions in his observations on the South and North. In looking at the South, *“...one is struck with the rough look of the whole face of civilization. The country is nowhere well cleared; towns and villages are few and far between, and even those which you have seen have an unfinished look... How different from the face of a New England State, dotted over with neat farm-houses. In Illinois the cars were crowded with emigrants, or speculators, or men looking as anxiously for new homes... At every station a new city, at lowest a new farm or village was springing up; and on every hand the click of the hammer and the rasping of the saw... In Georgia, how different! Some growth there is in one or two towns; some increase of cotton, too there may be; but there lacks the animation and spirit of Illinois. There is none of that bustle or hopeful eagerness.”* The Museum of the Confederacy, [The Road to War](#)

The two regions were able to co-exist through their mutual dependence upon each other. The Northern textile mills relied heavily on Southern cotton, while the South purchased many of its manufactured goods from the North. Politically, the two sides were able to compromise over the issue of the expansion of slavery with the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The balance of slave states and free states in the Senate had remained even for the 30 years after the compromise. What would happen after the era of Manifest Destiny, when the U.S. expanded its borders? Would the two sides continue to compromise over the issues of slavery, states' rights, and the different economies? We will find out this week as we look at the 1850s, a very crucial “Decade of Decisions”