

Chapter 12: The South Expands, Slavery and Society, 1800-1860

I. Creating the Cotton South

A. The Domestic Slave Trade

1. American slavery took root on the tobacco plantations of the Chesapeake and in the rice fields of the Carolina Low Country.
2. The institution grew to maturity on the sugar fields of Louisiana, the hemp farms of Kentucky and Tennessee, and the cottons states of the Deep South.
3. The massive transplantation of slavery led planters to believe that it could keep expanding forever, and that they had a right to use their land for slavery.
4. By 1817, the southern plantation system was rapidly expanding, as was the demand for slave labor.
5. By 1860, the slave frontier extended into Texas.
6. The federal government played a major role in this expansion of slavery by securing Louisiana from the French in 1803, removing Indians from the southeastern states in the 1830s, and annexing Texas and Mexican territories in the 1840s.
7. To cultivate this vast area, white planters turned first to Africa for slaves and then to the Chesapeake region.
8. Throughout the Old South, the African American population was growing rapidly from natural increases, an average of 27 percent per decade, creating a surplus of slave laborers.
9. After the War of 1812, the internal slave trade expanded rapidly in size and scope, boosting the southern economy.
10. High demand for slaves created a forced migration that was massive in scale, leading to the transfer of one million African Americans from the Upper to the New South.
11. By 1860, a majority of African Americans lived and worked in the New South.
12. The internal slave trade took two forms: a coastal system through the Atlantic seaports and inland commerce using river and roads.
13. The impact on slave families was profound, including breaking up families and destroying one in four marriages.
14. Despite sales, slave families remained strong. Many slave marriages remained unbroken, and the majority of children lived with one or both parents until puberty.
15. Few southern whites questioned the morality of the domestic slave trade.

B. The Dual Cultures of the Planter Elite

1. Westward movement had a profound impact on the small elite of approximately three thousand wealthy planter families of southern society.
2. The plantation elite consisted of two groups: traditional aristocrats of the Old South, and the market-driven entrepreneurs who made their wealth in the cotton industry. 3 Tobacco and rice cultivation in the Chesapeake and Carolinas produced a wealthy class of southern planters by 1700.
3. Planters identified themselves with the English landed gentry and viewed their lives as embodiments of classical republican values; this was their justification for practicing slavery.
4. Most planters criticized the increasingly democratic polity and egalitarian society of the Northeast and Midwest, preferring a society led by wealthy men of talent.
5. To maintain their identity, aristocratic planters entertained lavishly and married their sons and daughters to one another, teaching them to follow in their footsteps.
6. As the nineteenth century progressed, rice planters remained at the top of the plantation aristocracy.
7. In tobacco-growing regions, the lives of planter aristocracy developed differently, in part based on the diffuse ownership of slaves. 9 Planters defended slavery as a benevolent social system and a “positive good” based on Christian ideology. Slavery produced a civilized lifestyle for whites and tutelage for blacks, planters argued.
1. Based on the desire to control their workers, extend Christian teachings, and counter abolitionism, planters increasingly intervened in the lives of their slaves, requiring them to attend religious services.
2. Among the entrepreneurial slave masters, less religious justifications and more capitalistic calculations dictated treatment of slaves.
3. Cotton was a demanding crop because of its long growing season, which motivated planters during the 1820s to begin to use a **gang-labor system**, a disciplined system of assigning work “gangs” closely supervised by black

drivers and white overseers.

4. Cotton planters' use of gang labor had mixed results. The increase in cotton cultivation exhausted the soil and reduced output per acre. Still, the system produced enormous wealth for whites, approximately four million bales of cotton each year.

C. Planters, Smallholding Yeomen, and Tenants

1. Although slavery impacted all of southern society, most whites did not own slaves. In 1830, 36 percent of southern whites owned slaves. By 1860, less than 25 percent did.
2. Slave ownership varied by region: in the cotton belt, 40 percent of whites owned slaves, compared to only 10 percent in the hilly Appalachian Mountains.
3. In 1860, the richest planter families, which constituted 5 percent of the South's white population, held over twenty or more slaves each. Along with the rest of the southern aristocracy, they collectively owned 50 percent of all slaves.
4. Middle-class planters owned 40 percent of the slave population. Most pursued dual careers as skilled artisans or professional men.
5. Smallholders constituted the majority of slave owners. They were similar to the yeomen of the North because they worked the land themselves along with their slaves. They held from one to five black slaves.
6. Influenced by the patriarchal ideology of the planter class, these yeomen farmers ruled their smallholdings with a firm hand.
7. Most yeomen lived and died hardscrabble farmers, working alongside their slaves in the field and moving regularly in search of new lands to farm.
8. Some whites became propertyless due to debts, enjoying few of the benefits of slavery and suffering many of its ill consequences. Many fled the slavery region to work farms in the free labor region of the Appalachian hill country and further west.

D. The Settlement of Texas

1. After winning independence from Spain in 1821, the Mexican government, short on population and cash for settling the region, encouraged settlement by Mexicans and by migrants from the United States.
2. As the Mexican government asserted greater political control over Texas in the mid-1830s, the Americans split into two groups: the "peace party," led by Stephen Austin, wanted more autonomy for the province, and the "war party" wanted independence from Mexico.
3. After provoking a rebellion, the war party proclaimed the independence of Texas on March 2, 1836, and adopted a constitution legalizing slavery.
4. Vowing to put down the rebellion, Santa Anna's army wiped out the war party's rebel garrison that was defending the Alamo and then captured Goliad.
5. Hundreds of American adventurers influenced by press reports and lured by offers of land grants flocked to Texas to join the rebel army. Led by General Sam Houston, the war party routed the Mexicans in the Battle of San Jacinto.
6. The Mexican government abandoned efforts to reconquer Texas, but refused to accept its status as an independent republic.
7. Texans quickly voted for annexation to the United States, but President Van Buren refused to act on the issue, knowing that adding Texas as a slave state would divide the Democratic Party and the nation and almost certainly lead to war with Mexico.

E. The Politics of Democracy

1. Despite their economic and social prominence, the slave-owning elite did not dominate the political life of the Cotton South.
2. Planters lived in a republican society with democratic institutions that had granted suffrage to all white men and provided for a **secret ballot** and apportionment based on population. Thus they had to compete with other classes of whites for popular favor.
3. Southern Democrats endorsed low taxes to curry popular support, while Whigs advocated government support for banks, high taxes, and internal improvements.
4. Most southern state legislatures enacted policies that reflected the interest of the slave-owning population, since the overwhelming majority of legislators were slave owners. But most were careful not to alienate non-slave-owning whites and taxed slaves as a result.
5. In some southern states, wealthy planters divided the white population along class lines by influencing

legislators to exempt taxes on slaves and luxury goods.

6. The top 10 percent of white southerners grew rich from cotton, but the standard of living for most southerners did not improve over time. In fact, compared to the North, the South lagged far behind in average income.
7. Southerners invested most of their wealth in land and slaves, neglecting economic diversification and industrial investment in favor of short-term profits. Only 10 percent of the nation's manufactured goods were produced in the South. Few planters invested in railroads, and only to service cotton regions.
8. Slavery worked in other ways to deter industrialization. Fearing competition from slave labor, European immigrants avoided the South, depriving the region of needed free workers to reclaim the land for development.
9. Thus the South remained an economic colony of Europe and the North and did not enjoy real economic independence and diversity despite outward signs of wealth and prosperity.

II. The African American World

A. Evangelical Black Protestantism

1. The emergence of a black form of evangelical Christianity exemplified the synthesis of African and European culture that composed a new African American culture.
2. Evangelical Protestantism came to the South in the late eighteenth century with the Second Great Awakening and the conversion of thousands of whites and blacks.
3. Until the Second Great Awakening, the overwhelming majority of African American slaves retained an African religious culture.
4. Many assimilated blacks crusaded for Protestantism, and after being traded to the Deep South, spread evangelical Christianity to slaves there.
5. Enslaved blacks and unofficial black ministers reinterpreted the teachings of Christianity to emphasize oneness of people and the antislavery ethos of Christ and God.
6. Despite believing in a European religion, black slaves expressed their spirituality in African ways, including the use of ring shouts and the creation of a joyous brand of Protestant worship to sustain them under slavery.

B. Forging Families and Creating Culture

1. By 1820, most black slaves in America had been born in the United States, helping to create a homogenous black culture based on evangelical Christianity, English as a common language, and labor in a slave regime.
2. Although the black population was becoming more homogeneous, African cultural influences remained important, such as dancing, marriage, and religion.
3. Unlike white marriages, slave marriages were not recognized in law, and followed African forms of union, such as jumping the broomstick, the naming of children, and adopting older unrelated slaves as aunts and uncles.
4. The creation of fictive kinship networks was part of a complex community building process of order in which family and community values remained intact despite the slave trade and slavery itself.

C. Negotiating Rights

1. Planters worried constantly that enslaved African Americans would rebel against them.
2. African American passive resistance severely limited a master's power. Slaves slowed the pace of work by feigning illness, breaking tools, and running away.
3. Fear of slave resistance reduced a white master's use of violence and increased the use of positive incentives and work discipline as control mechanisms.
4. The violence of the slave regime, such as rape and beatings, meant that violent slave resistance was infrequent.
5. Coordinated large-scale slave revolts, such as the Prosser revolt (1800) and Turner revolt (1832), were rare.
6. Blacks realized the futility of violent resistance and favored escape instead. But escape was difficult since families would be left behind and the distance to the North was great, leading some blacks to escape to Florida or form hidden communities in swamps and woods and intermarry with Indians.
7. Given these limitations, most slaves created the best possible lives for themselves and their families, in part by demanding from masters a greater share of the fruits of their labor as slaves, such as the right to have a garden or time off.

D. The Free Black Population

1. Some enslaved blacks found freedom through escape or manumission. In 1790, the proportion of free blacks in the total black population was 8 percent. Between 1820 and 1840, it became 13 percent and then dropped to 11 percent by 1860 because of southern white restrictions on black avenues to freedom.
2. Half of all free blacks lived in the North. Most were southern refugees. A minority were the offspring of

families that had been free for generations.

3. Even in the North, few free blacks enjoyed a truly free existence.
4. Most whites viewed blacks as socially inferior economic competitors and thus confined them to low-paying menial work. In rural areas, they were farm laborers. In urban areas, they worked as domestic servants and day laborers. Only a small number owned any land.
5. Only a few states allowed free black men to vote, attend public schools, and sit next to whites in churches. Only in Massachusetts could blacks testify against whites in court. The federal government forbade blacks from being employed in postal service, claiming public lands, or holding a U.S. passport.
6. Despite limitations, a few free blacks amassed relative wealth. Mathematician Benjamin Banneker, painter Joshua Johnston, and merchant Paul Cuffee achieved public distinction for their work for whites.
7. To improve American institutions and give blacks a sense of autonomy, prominent blacks formed groups to create churches, orphanages, and fellowship groups. One of the most famous was the African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded by Bishop Richard Allen.
8. Class distinctions developed in the black community based on elite appeals to white beneficence and working-class rejection of white violence and oppression.
9. Most free blacks in the South (225,000 in 1860, up from 94,000 in 1810) lived in large coastal cities, especially in the Upper South.
10. Free southern blacks consisted almost entirely of the artisan class of skilled workers, due in part to the lack of European immigration to the South.
11. Free southern blacks accused of crimes were often denied a jury trial and were sometimes forced back into slavery.
12. Free blacks had to possess freedom papers and could be resold or kidnapped without them.
13. Some wealthy, free southern blacks distanced themselves from working-class free blacks and identified more with the planter aristocracy, even owning slaves.
14. Most free blacks found racial solidarity with other blacks and worked toward the end of slavery by helping fugitive slaves, officially supporting the antislavery movement, plotting insurrection, or entering black politics.