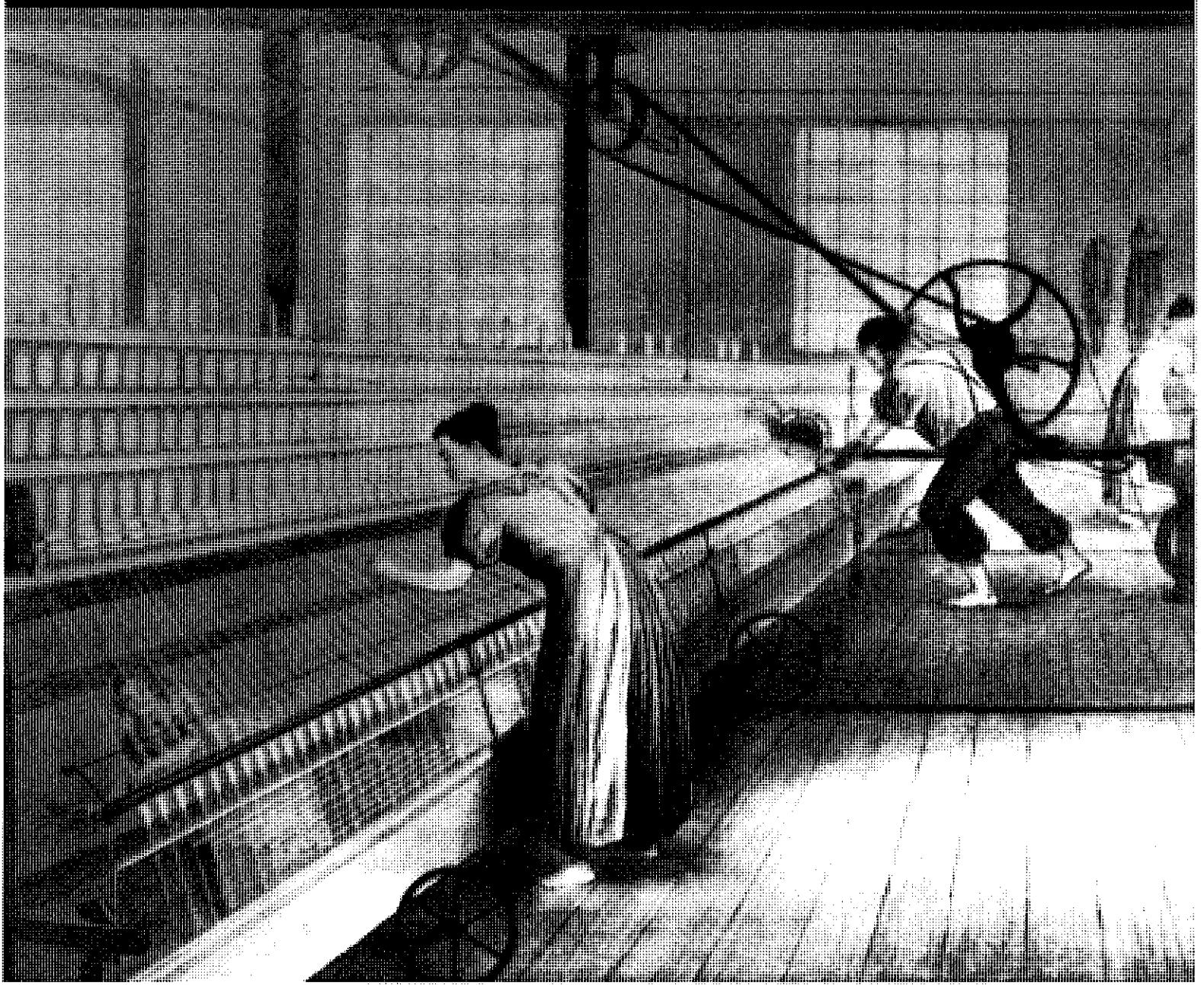
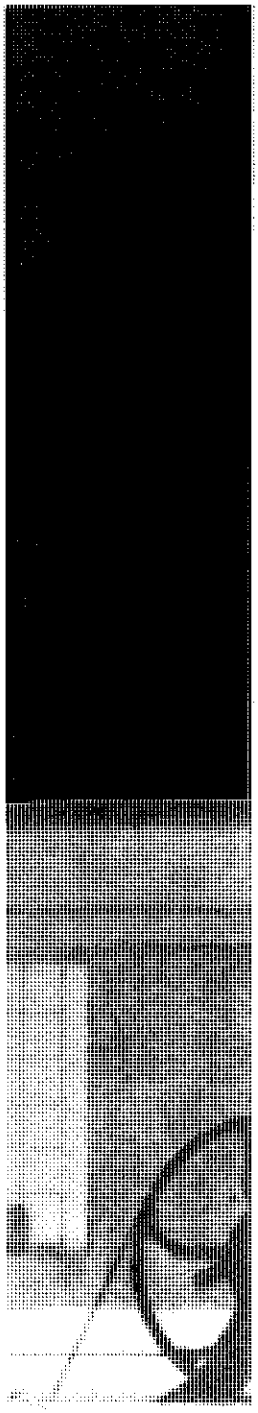
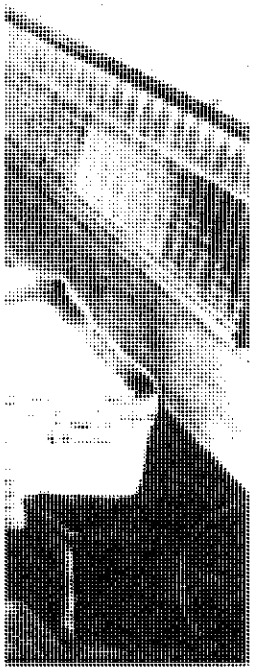
Part Two

Free Labor and Slavery

1790–1850







BETWEEN ROUGHLY 1790 AND 1850, America was transformed from a small agrarian society along the Atlantic coastline into a wealthy, economically diverse country that stretched across the continent to the Pacific. Eighteen new states joined the original thirteen, and the nation's population swelled from four million to over twenty-three million. These numbers included slaves and free blacks as well as native-born and immigrant whites. In 1850, the figure also included those American Indians who did not live on government reservations. With increases in slavery and immigration during the early nineteenth century, the nation's population grew more heterogeneous as it grew larger. One result was that this period of unparalleled growth and prosperity deepened divisions of class, race, gender, and nationality. The most divisive issue—whether America would be a society based on free labor or on slavery—repeatedly sparked crises that, in each case, were settled by legislative compromises. But over the course of sixty years, no long-term solution was reached.

In 1790, however, the issue of slavery seemed of minor importance to most Americans of European descent. The new nation was confidently launching an unprecedented experiment in national republican government, backed by a seemingly limitless supply of land and natural resources. Most white Americans were optimistic about the nation's future. Even African Americans had some reason for hope as substantial numbers gained freedom and organized churches and mutual aid societies in the decade following the Revolution.

In the North, a market economy and a new system of industrial production took root. Here, revolutions in transportation, communication, and manufacturing undermined the old systems of local craft production and family farming. By the 1830s and 1840s, New England capitalists had brought workers—either women or entire families—together in the nation's first factories to weave cloth. Other workers labored in their homes to make shoes and clothing for market. An expanding network of roads, canals, and, later, railroads carried consumer goods from the Northeast to the new settlements in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois and brought raw materials and foodstuffs produced in the west to the east.

The South remained predominantly agricultural, but there, too, Americans felt the profound changes wrought by an international industrial

revolution. Aided by the invention of the cotton gin, Southern landowners replaced tobacco with cotton as their principal cash crop, and large quantities of the raw fiber fueled industrial development in England and New England. As a result, the plantation economy burgeoned, spreading from the Upper South to Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and, by the 1840s, to Texas. As large planters increasingly dominated the South's economy and government, they wielded kinship, religion, and racism to strengthen bonds with the majority of southern whites who owned a few slaves or no slaves at all. Yet economic differences led to growing tensions, particularly between those who lived in areas where slavery flourished and those who lived in areas where it was in decline.

Tensions among whites did not, however, limit the brutality of the plantation system for African Americans. If the bonds of slavery had loosened briefly in the Revolutionary era, they now tightened with renewed vigor. To keep pace with the demand for cotton, the slave labor force expanded both numerically and geographically. For vast numbers of African Americans, these changes worsened working conditions and tore families apart.

American Indians and Mexicans also faced hardships because of whites' insatiable desire for land. As they had during European colonization, many Indian tribes confronted either extermination or migration further westward. Some were forced out of their communities in the Southeast and onto reservations in the Indian Territory of present-day Oklahoma. Many Mexicans were also pushed out of their homes to make way for U.S. settlers in Texas and California. And in the aftermath of Texas statehood in 1845 and the Mexican War of 1846–1848, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans came under U.S. jurisdiction.

The economic growth that drove geographic expansion also dramatically altered the lives of working Americans. By midcentury, millions of Americans—including artisans, factory hands, domestic servants, day laborers, and even some slaves—had been drawn into a market economy in which they sold their labor or their products. In the process, the ideal of the self-sufficient, independent farm or artisan family was undermined as increasing numbers of women and men became dependent on wages. At several points in this era, wage workers (by now, two out of every five American workers) experienced the full impact of that dependency as manufacturing ground to a halt and tens of thousands were suddenly jobless.

Despite periodic recessions and depressions in the early nineteenth century, northern employers were more concerned about a shortage of labor than an oversupply. That concern lessened when, beginning in the 1840s, a massive wave of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe entered the United States, willing to work for all kinds of manufacturing and agricultural enterprises. Most of these new immigrants—many of whom came to escape economic, social, and political injustices at home—became wage

laborers, contributing to the formation of a growing and distinctly multinational working class. They also intensified the effects of the Industrial Revolution: the growth of cities, a new urban culture, and transformations in family structures and gender roles. In addition, some immigrants introduced radical theories and practices, including socialism, to American politics and broadened the base of American religion.

The contributions of immigrants were not always welcomed, however. In the 1840s and 1850s, many native-born Americans blamed new immigrants for the wrenching changes that resulted from industrial and urban development. Some joined anti-immigrant political movements; others initiated moral reform campaigns aimed at controlling the behavior of working-class immigrants; and still others physically attacked immigrants. Although free blacks were also subject to attacks by native-born whites, they rarely made common cause with immigrants. Instead, the two groups clashed with each other as they competed for jobs and housing.

Industrialization and the demographic and cultural changes that accompanied it profoundly affected the nation's political life. Americans engaged in intense debates over what kind of society they were creating. The commercial and industrial elite embraced a liberal capitalist interpretation of the revolutionary legacy, emphasizing the role of self-interest and the marketplace in governing social and economic relations. Many working people, especially those who did well in the new order, were attracted to the idea that liberty meant individual freedom to better themselves and improve their living standards. Others, including many of the working people who were dislocated by industrialization, criticized the emerging order as a betrayal of revolutionary ideals and celebrated instead republican traditions of independence, mutuality, and citizen participation derived from the French and other European revolutions as well as the American Revolution.

Working Americans—men, women, and children; free-born, slave, and emancipated; native-born and immigrant—resisted the dependent status that came with industrial and agricultural development. They insisted that the United States had not been created to make a few men rich and powerful at the expense of all others. They attacked the "tyranny" of their employers and masters, condemning them as "Tories in disguise," in the words of women textile workers in the 1830s. Others argued for liberty and equality as they embraced new religious principles espoused by evangelical, Quaker, and Moravian sects. Poor whites, African Americans, and women were especially keen to claim their spiritual equality and to translate it into practical demands for divinely sanctioned rights whenever they could. Working people defended their interests in a variety of other ways as well, through local workingmen's parties, trade unions, cooperative workshops, utopian communities, strikes (engaged in by free and enslaved workers), and

outright rebellion, most notably among slaves. Some working women demanded rights for their sex, as did their middle-class counterparts. Growing numbers of women and men also denounced alcohol and prostitution and demanded the abolition of slavery.

Of all the diverse claims for social justice that were raised in these years, one — the end of slavery — became the central political issue of the day. Over the decades, the country divided between Americans who desired a nation of free labor, as in the North, and Americans who believed that only a system based on slave labor, as in the South, could guarantee social order. A basic question, one that shaped American politics, moral values, and the economy, thus emerged as the United States expanded westward and new territories sought statehood: should these new states be free or slave? Several political compromises from 1820 onward maintained an uneasy peace between the two systems. By 1850, however, the acquisition of new territories as a result of the U.S. war with Mexico intensified debates and steered the young nation toward civil war.

6

The Consolidation of Slavery in the South

1790–1836

THE WAR OF 1812 wreaked havoc along the northern and western borders of the United States, transforming the lives of all who settled on the frontier: whites, Indians, and African Americans. Disruptions of a different kind shaped the experiences of those who resided in long-settled regions such as the agrarian communities of eastern Virginia. There, the annual round of births, deaths, and marriages redrew family ties for blacks as well as whites. In the midst of the war, Fanny, a slave whose owner had recently died, was sold with two of her children to an up-and-coming young planter, John Cowper Cohoon, Jr. Fanny was forced to leave behind several other children (the records are not clear on how many) and probably a husband and other relatives as well. She was sent to Cedar Vale plantation in Nansemond County, Virginia, located some fifty miles from the lower Chesapeake Bay. The slave community at Cedar Vale included thirty-eight men, women, and children acquired from at least a dozen different owners. Like Fanny, many of the Cedar Vale slaves had been separated from family and friends so that Cohoon and his young bride could stake their own claim to independence.

Cohoon's power over his property set the boundaries of his slaves' lives. Fanny, whether by choice or by force, set up house with another slave, Jacob, whom Cohoon purchased around 1815. Over the next twenty years, Fanny worked in the fields and gave birth to at least seven more children. And although Cohoon apparently never separated a husband and wife by sale when he owned them both, he did sell slaves, including Fanny's daughter Lucy. Cohoon also gave slaves as gifts to his sons; seventeen slaves in all were

"Five Generations on Smith's Plantation, Beaufort, South Carolina"
This African American family was photographed in 1862. Despite the depredations of the internal slave trade, enslaved African Americans maintained a strong sense of family and kinship through naming practices and other methods of remembrance. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

sent away to help younger Cohoons make their fortunes on newly established plantations. When Fanny died in 1857, at age 68, Cohoon noted, "She was a good and faithful servant, leaving many children and grandchildren to mourn her loss." Yet good and faithful as she was, Fanny could not make even the most fundamental decisions about her life: where she lived, whom she married, what kind of work she performed, and what happened to her children.

John Cowper Cohoon, Jr., and thousands like him grew rich by using slaves such as Fanny and her offspring. Slave labor provided the raw materials, especially cotton, for burgeoning industries in the North and in Europe and grew the food needed to feed the rapidly expanding urban populations in America and abroad. By 1830, a cotton kingdom had been established across the South, with millions of enslaved men, women, and children laboring to produce that crop. Most lived in a broad area in the Deep South that stretched westward like a belt from coastal South Carolina inland through central Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi and then bent southward down the lower Mississippi Valley to New Orleans. The creation of this cotton belt and the consolidation and defense of slavery needed to support it reshaped the lives of all southerners. Whites and blacks, slaves and free people, men and women, wealthy planters, small farmers, and landless whites alike found themselves living in a new era that revolved around slavery and cotton cultivation. Western expansion also put whites on a collision course with indigenous peoples, forcing American Indians off their lands and shattering their economies and cultures. Over time, the great profits to be made in the slave trade and in cotton pushed up the price of slaves; retarded the growth of southern industry, towns, and cities; and shaped all other aspects of economic life in the South.

Cotton and the Expansion of Slavery

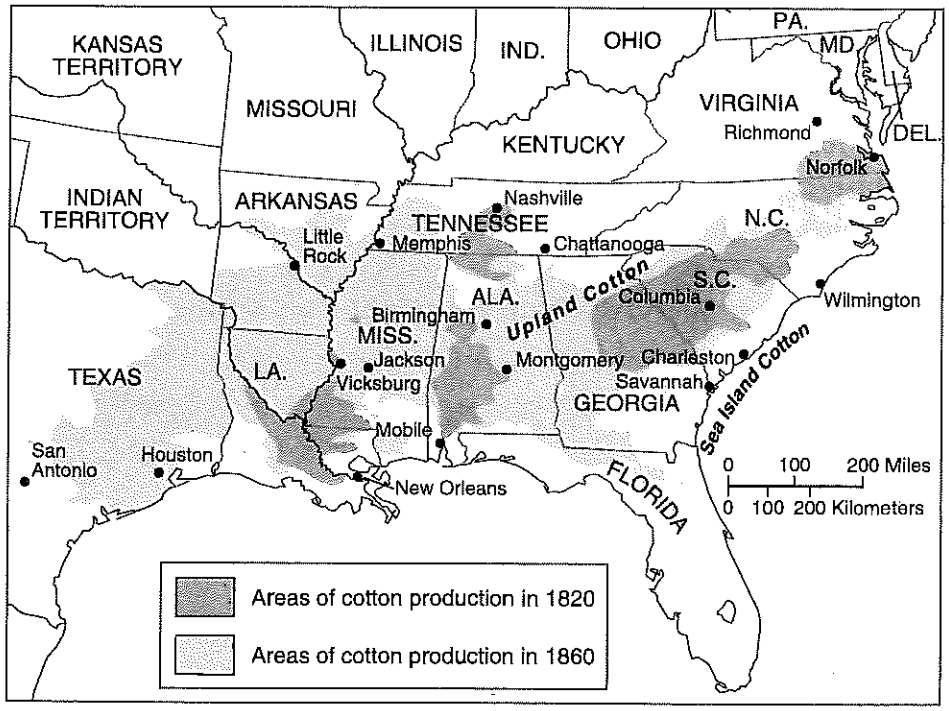
The invention of the cotton gin led to the expansion and consolidation of slavery in the South. This, in turn, encouraged the acquisition of new territories and the establishment of new states and fueled the birth of industry in England and the northern United States. These developments sparked the first major sectional controversy over slavery in the nineteenth century, resulting in the Missouri Compromise of 1821. Cotton's success also led to the forced removal of American Indians from southern soil, to make more room for plantations, and the sale of African Americans from the Upper South to the Lower South.

The Invention of the Cotton Gin In the 1780s, the future of slavery had seemed uncertain as profits from traditional crops—especially tobacco and indigo—declined. As many white southerners began moving west to find

new opportunities, New England–born Eli Whitney, living on a Georgia plantation, revived the southern economy when he invented the cotton gin in 1793. This simple device transformed southern agriculture. Long-staple cotton, with its resistance to rot and characteristic long fibers and smooth seeds, was already profitable in the Sea Islands of the Carolinas and Georgia. By 1791, planters there, responding to demands from British factory owners, had produced some two million pounds. But long-staple cotton could be grown only in the mineral-rich alluvial soils of the southern coast. Short-staple cotton could be grown much more widely, but slaves required substantial time and effort to pluck out its sticky seeds by hand, limiting the crop's profitability.

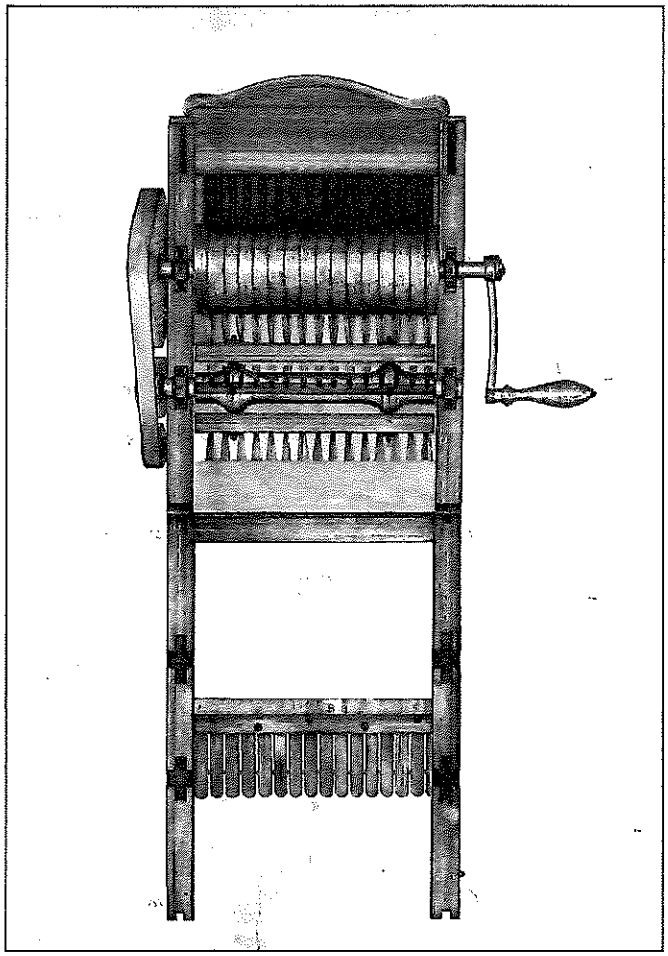
Whitney solved this problem by constructing a wooden box filled with a series of combs attached to a handle. As a worker (usually a slave) cranked the handle, the combs separated seeds from fiber. Using even the most primitive gin (short for engine), a worker could clean ten times more than was possible when plucking seeds by hand. By the early 1800s, cotton could be produced profitably almost anywhere south of Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri (Map 6.1). It was produced not only on large plantations by bound labor, but also on small farms where white families, sometimes assisted by one or two slaves, could hope to turn a profit.

The spread of short-staple cotton generated by the invention of the cotton gin coincided with two other developments that guaranteed "King Cotton" would rule throughout the region. The first happened just after 1750, when a population explosion in Europe created an enormous demand for



MAP 6.1 The Westward Spread of Cotton Production, 1820–1860

In 1793, the invention of the cotton gin made it profitable to grow short-staple cotton in many parts of the South. Between 1820 and 1860, the most important areas of cotton production shifted from the Carolinas and Georgia into Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. This also meant a massive shift in the slave labor force and the painful disruptions of slave life caused by an expanded internal slave trade.

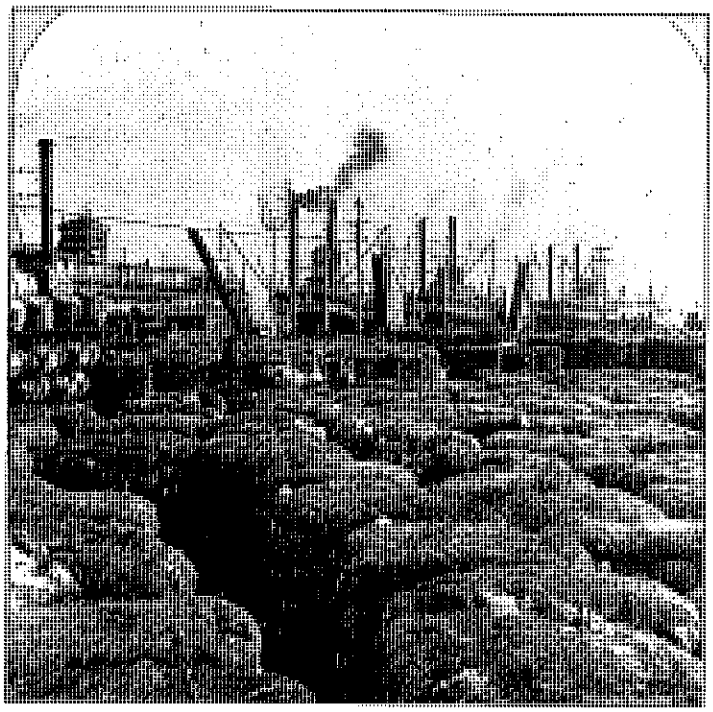


Cotton Gin

This sketch was submitted by Eli Whitney in 1793 when he applied for a patent for his new invention. Eli Whitney Papers, Yale University Library.

food, clothing, and shelter. Technological innovations further fueled the booming market, enabling English textile factories to increase production and lower the price of cotton goods. By the mid-eighteenth century, British craftsmen, utilizing the power of water and steam, had developed machines to drive textile looms and spin thread. Entrepreneurs then built factories where workers, paced by machines, produced much greater quantities of cloth than ever before.

In the early nineteenth century, the domestic demand for cotton also began to grow. While the Embargo Act of 1807 (see Chapter 5) devastated the economy of the nation's young seaports, crippled the business of merchants, and threw sailors and dockworkers out of work, New England's nascent textile manufacturers benefited. Entrepreneurs had managed to replicate some of the most important British inventions and now, for a short time at least, had access to cheap southern cotton and protection from the flood of English cloth. This combination helped to create a domestic market in raw cotton and manufactured cloth. Cotton soon became not just the South's but the nation's leading export, ensuring that a vast army of enslaved workers and huge expanses of fertile soil would be harnessed to produce cotton. Realizing that the importation of slaves would come to an



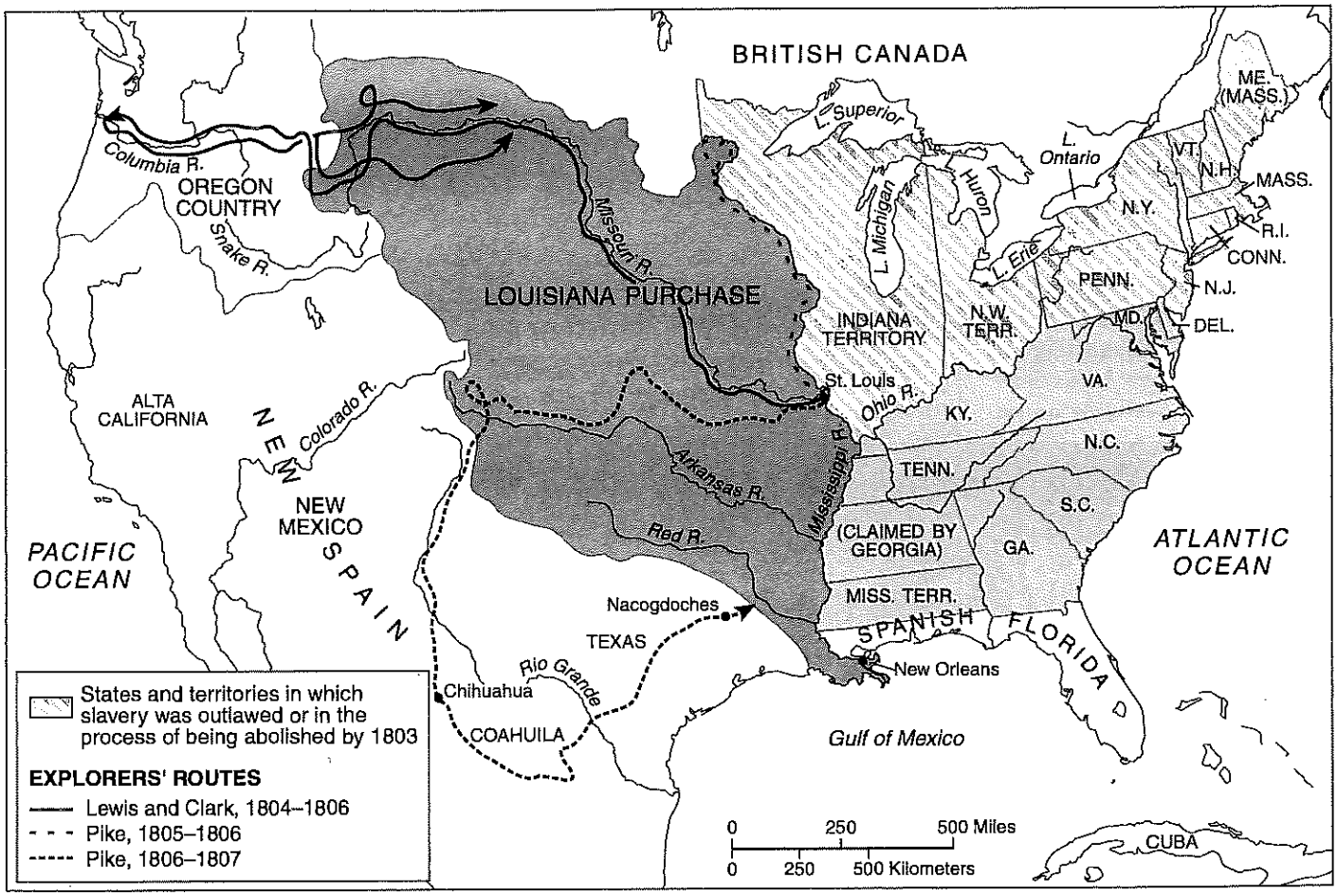
King Cotton
The South's staple, packed into bales and awaiting transport up the Mississippi River, filled a New Orleans wharf. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

end in 1808 (as allowed by the U.S. Constitution), planters undertook frenzied purchases of Africans and then participated in an expanding internal slave trade. By the 1810s, that internal slave trade stretched across the Deep South into the Mississippi Territory and the southern portions of the Louisiana Territory. The invention of the cotton gin, then, transformed the South and the nation and even helped to fuel industrial growth internationally. It also inspired resistance and rebellion among the growing population of slaves, posed new challenges for nonslaveholding whites, and fed antislavery sentiments among wary whites, North and South. As the new republic grew, it was influenced at every turn by the profits and problems associated with slavery and cotton.

Territorial Expansion Throughout the early 1800s, the United States acquired vast tracts of new territory through purchase, the repayment of debts, and military conquest. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 was the most important in opening land to small farmers and large planters (Map 6.2). It also set the stage for the national government to play a new role, as land that was deemed the "frontier" by those living along the eastern seaboard was turned into "property" that could be legally owned by whites. Throughout the 1810s and 1820s, the president and Congress supported explorations of western territories, such as the groundbreaking journey of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in 1804, as well as land surveys and the establishment of legal land titles. They also debated whether the U.S. government should fund internal improvements, such as roads, bridges, canals, and other forms of transportation, to assist settlement in these new territories. They argued as well over whether and how to remove American Indians who lived in regions that white planters and farmers now desired.

In the long run, geographical expansion ensured political conflict as slavery became more entrenched in the South and free labor grew dominant in the North. In 1790, the populations of the North and South were about equal, and so was their representation in Congress. But the North's population grew faster, and the balance of power in Congress shifted accordingly. By 1820, the states that relied on slave labor found themselves with just 42 percent of the votes in the House of Representatives; only in the U.S. Senate was North-South parity maintained.

During these years of declining southern political power, many white southerners left the Piedmont region of the Carolinas and Georgia. More

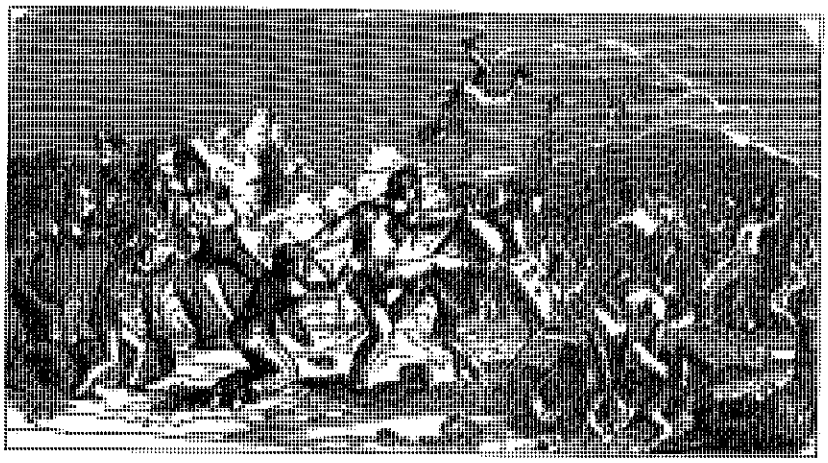


MAP 6.2 The Louisiana Purchase

The Louisiana Purchase doubled the territory of the young United States, providing opportunities for many, mainly white, Americans to seek their fortunes on the new frontier. At the same time, the expansion of settlement into this region over the next forty years sparked conflicts with a number of Indian societies and intensified debates over the place of slavery in a democratic republic.

than 100,000 headed west to Kentucky and Tennessee as early as 1790. Beginning then and increasing throughout the early 1800s, state governments chartered private companies that invested in internal improvements. Most of the charters granted these companies the power of eminent domain, a legal device that allowed them to force owners to sell land at "a reasonable price," thereby allowing states to gain land along the rights-of-way for bridges, roads, and canals. Although eminent domain was challenged by small farmers and others whose land was taken, state courts upheld it on numerous occasions, judges agreeing that "progress for great numbers" of Americans should prevail over the lesser rights of individual property owners.

A number of Democratic-Republican leaders, including James Madison and James Monroe of Virginia and Henry Clay of Kentucky, argued that the federal government should promote internal improvements that benefited more than one state. Clay followed the economic nationalist logic of Federalist Alexander Hamilton, but he proposed an "American System" that would aid the common man as well as planters and merchants by funding roads that linked new western settlements to eastern ports and markets. But President James Monroe's 1817 veto of the Bonus Bill, which



A Regular Row in the Backwoods

The 1841 issue of the *Crockett Almanac*, named after the Tennessee backwoodsman made famous by his self-serving tall tales, portrayed a rough rural "sport." Inexpensive comic almanacs combined illustrated jokes on topical subjects with astrological and weather predictions. *Crockett Almanac* (1841) — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

would have established a national fund for roads and other internal improvements, left the states in charge of internal improvements. Most states continued to charter private companies to perform the actual work of building and improving the nation's transportation system.

New Opportunities As these debates continued, western migration accelerated. The network of roads expanded, and the steamboat was invented and improved. Furnace-heated boilers powered steam engines that allowed these boats to travel as quickly upstream as downstream. Despite early problems with fires, explosions, and sinkings, steamboats greatly increased the speed and ease of transporting goods and people. In 1817, the port of New Orleans welcomed some seventeen steamboats, loaded with migrants and freight. Just three decades later, more than five hundred steamboats arrived and departed each year. A large proportion of the early migrants were single men, seeking adventure as well as economic opportunity. Often as practiced at drinking, gambling, and fighting as at farming, they embraced frontier life.

The level of violence that characterized everyday existence in the region shocked many Americans. Eye-gouging contests, ear biting and teeth bashing, stabbings, and knifings all reflected the rough-and-tumble quality of life on the southern frontier. The stories of Davy Crockett and other legendary figures, who were said to have killed bears or Indian warriors with their bare hands, epitomized the raw virility that defined and dominated much of frontier culture.

The earliest migrants, whether they moved out to the Louisiana Territory or closer to home in western Georgia, Tennessee, or Kentucky, often chose to "squat" on land rather than to buy it. Squatters simply staked claims to what they considered empty acreage by selecting a spot, settling on it, and implementing "improvements": building a rough cabin, clearing the land, and planting crops. In most newly opened frontier areas, squatters were as prevalent as owners. Over time, however, state and federal agents, land speculators, and planters sought to regularize land ownership, demanding land titles and payments to ensure continued occupancy.

The state of Georgia, which claimed lands reaching to the Mississippi River, instituted a lottery to distribute land in the sparsely settled western part of the state. Most winners, however, took cash for their land certificates from speculators, who then resold the land to small farmers. The federal government also sold western land on credit. In 1800 and 1804, Congress hoped to assist cash-poor migrants by lowering both the

Politics on the Tennessee Frontier: The Autobiography of Davy Crockett

Davy Crockett (1786–1836) was a frontiersman, soldier, and politician who used his autobiography to help create an image of himself as a larger-than-life American hero. The description of frontier politics presented here is based on his campaign for a seat in the Tennessee legislature in 1821. He suggests that humor, hunting skills, and male camaraderie were as important to electoral success as a clear stance on the issues of the day.

I . . . set out electioneering, which was a bran-fire new business to me. It now became necessary that I should tell the people something about the government, and an eternal sight of other things that I knowed nothing more about than I did about Latin, and law, and such things as that. . . .

I went first into Heckman country to see what I could do among the people as a candidate. Here they told me that they wanted to move their town nearer to the centre of the county, and I must come out in favour of it. There's no devil if I knowed what this meant, or how the town was to be moved; and so I kept dark, going on the identical same plan that I now find is called "non-committal." About this time there was a great squirrel hunt on Duck river, which was among my people. They were to hunt two days: then to meet and count the scalps, and have a big barbecue, and what might be called a tip-top country frolic. The dinner, and a general treat, was all to be paid for by the party having taken the fewest scalps. I joined one side, taking the place of one of the hunters, and got a gun ready for the hunt. I killed a great many squirrels, and when we counted scalps, my party was victorious.

The company had every thing to eat and drink that could be furnished in so new a country, and much fun and good humor prevailed. But before the regular frolic commenced, I mean the dancing, I was called on to make a speech as a candidate. . . .

The thought of having to make a speech made my knees feel mighty weak, and set my heart to fluttering almost as bad as my first love scrape with the Quaker's niece. But as good luck would have it, these big candidates spoke nearly all day, and when they quit, the people were worn out with fatigue, which afforded me a good apology for not discussing the government. But I listened mighty close to them, and was learning pretty fast about political matters. When they were all done, I got up and told some laughable story, and quit. I found I was safe in those parts, and so I went home, and didn't go back again till after the election was over. But to cut this matter short, I was elected, doubling my competitor, and nine votes over.

David Crockett, *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett of the State of Tennessee* (1973).

minimum acreage for purchases and the price per acre. Again, however, most land ended up in the hands of speculators rather than of individual owners.

By the 1810s, improved transportation facilitated the movement of people and products between the East and the new Northwest settlements in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. With the aid of the steamboat, northwesterners could market their surplus grain and livestock in the new South, just as new planters in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee could sell some sugar, rice, and cotton in the Northwest. Towns and cities along steamboat routes—including Pittsburgh and Cincinnati on the Ohio River and New Orleans and St. Louis on the Mississippi—flourished. In this manner, these newly settled western areas, north and south, became temporarily linked in an economic partnership. Representatives from these areas were among the strongest supporters of federal funds for internal improvements and government removal of American Indians to lands farther west.

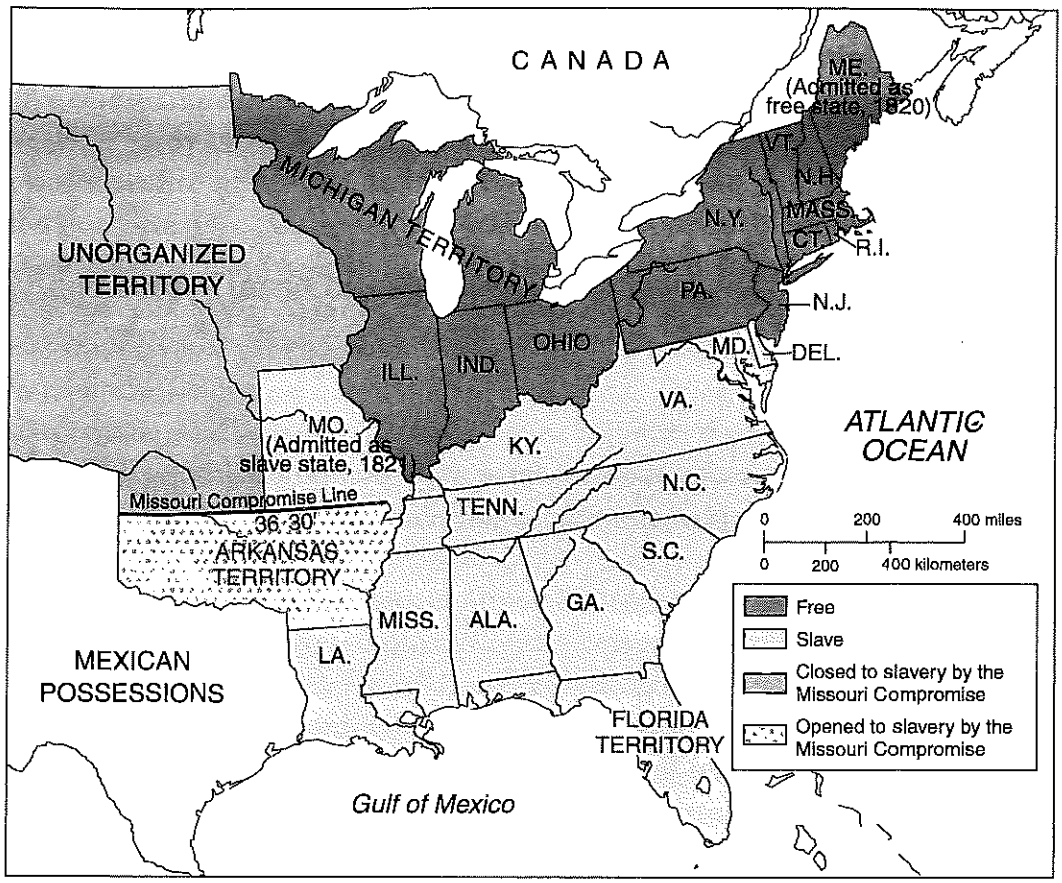
Unlike small farmers who lived in the cotton belt, those on the frontier were less likely to raise crops demanded by the export economy. For most, staking everything on cotton was too risky; a sudden drop in prices could land them in debt, even strip them of their land. Ferdinand Steel farmed a small plot with his brother in Mississippi in the 1830s. He noted in his diary, "I do not think it is a good plan to depend so much on cotton; it takes up all our time. . . . raise corn and keep out of debt and we will have no necessity of raising cotton." Farm families like the Steels concentrated on fishing, hunting, and raising grain to produce the food, tools, and clothing they needed to survive. If they produced more than they needed, they could sell or exchange the surplus locally for such necessities as coffee, molasses, nails, needles, and cooking utensils. Corn was the preferred crop because it was useful regardless of its market price; it could be eaten by family members and by livestock, and it could easily be bartered for other goods. Fishing was another important source of food and income.

For frontier residents, family labor and local exchange networks were the keys to success. Trade among neighbors led to the formation of social as well as economic ties and created communities out of scattered households. In this context, the marriage market was as important as the cotton or produce market for those seeking a larger stake. Landless men hoped to marry the daughters of settled farmers, and farmers sought to marry the daughters of neighbors as a way of increasing their holdings. Wives and daughters enhanced a family's standing by selling domestic manufactures for cash or raising chickens, churning butter, and working in the fields. Expansion, then, shaped not only economic opportunities and choices, but also family and community relations.

The Missouri Compromise in 1820–1821 and the Westward Expansion of Slavery Although these frontier communities seemed far removed from events in the nation's capital, they were in fact deeply affected by both domestic and foreign politics. Small farmers were particularly concerned about the acquisition of territory and the building of roads into the trans-Appalachian region. Threats from Indians, on whose lands white settlers repeatedly trespassed, led to frequent demands that the government provide protection to settlers. The War of 1812 heightened tensions between migrants and local Indians who had hoped that alliances with the British would end white encroachment. Instead, western expansion after the war widened sectional fissures over slavery and sparked heated political conflicts.

The War of 1812 had inspired intense opposition from many merchants and politicians in the Northeast because of its devastating effect on maritime trade (see Chapter 5). Farmers in the South and West, however, enthusiastically supported the war. They hoped that victory would reopen the British cotton market and lessen Indians' ability to thwart white settlement. Indeed, the federal government did open new lands for settlement after 1815, thereby expanding opportunities available to landless sons and daughters, small farmers, and large planters. The U.S. government also rewarded War of 1812 veterans with land warrants, increasing pressure on western territories. In 1820, Congress lowered the price per acre, from $2.00 to $1.25, to make settlement even more appealing. International developments provided the opportunity for further expansion. In 1817, on the heels of a military incursion into Florida led by U.S. General Andrew Jackson, Spain agreed to sell the territory to the United States. According to the terms of the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty, Spain gave Florida to the United States along with its lands in the Northwest, and the United States gave up its claims to Texas.

That same year, one long-term implication of the U.S. expansion became clear. In 1819, the Missouri Territory applied for admission to the Union as a slave state and touched off a fierce debate over the place of slave and free labor in the nation. Confirming planters' fears that the North would apply its political power to weaken the institution of slavery, New York congressman James Tallmadge, Jr., proposed as a condition of Missouri statehood that no additional slaves be admitted within its borders and that all slave children born following statehood be emancipated at age twenty-five. Such gradualist approaches to emancipation were popular among northern whites. Despite the limited form of manumission in Talmadge's proposal, it triggered a sectional battle. Most northern congressmen, 87 of 101, voted for the proposal; the vast majority of southerners opposed it. The U.S. Senate, where slave owners exercised more power, voted to impose no restrictions on slavery in Missouri. But the Senate alone could not admit a state into the Union.



MAP 6.3 The Missouri Compromise

The Missouri Compromise, which provided for the nearly simultaneous admission to statehood of Maine and Missouri, established a pattern that would be followed for the next thirty years. To maintain equal representation of free and slave states in the U.S. Senate, each admission of a free state necessitated the admission of a slave state and vice versa. Although, in the end, the Missouri Compromise did not resolve the debates over slavery in western lands, it did produce a temporary truce that ensured further expansion.

Henry Clay, Speaker of the House, broke the impasse. The architect of the American System, Clay was committed to putting national interests first, politically as well as economically. When Maine applied for statehood in 1820, Clay engineered a compromise that a majority of northern and southern congressmen could support. According to this Missouri Compromise, Missouri would be admitted with no restrictions on slavery. At the same time, Missouri's southern border (see Map 6.3) would be extended westward through the rest of the Louisiana Purchase. Henceforth, no territory north of that line would be admitted to the Union as a slave state. The Missouri Compromise also opened the way for statehood for Maine, which had been blocked in the U.S. Senate until the Missouri issue was resolved

Many northerners bitterly denounced the 1820 compromise as a slaveholder victory. But planters were unhappy, too; the entire affair confirmed their suspicions about the North's attitude toward their labor system. Congress's freewheeling debate over the Missouri Compromise had made public views that southerners considered subversive. Worse, free blacks living in the capital had filled the House galleries during the debates and listened intently to the antislavery speeches. Who knew how far these words might travel and what their effect might be?

Still, the conflicts that were engendered by territorial expansion did not stop southerners from seeking lands farther west. As early as the beginning

of the century, some American whites had settled in the Mexican province of Coahuila-Texas. Despite the terms of the Adams-Onís Treaty, systematic colonization of the area began in earnest during the 1820s, organized by Virginia-born Stephen Austin. Even after Mexico, now independent from Spanish control, outlawed slavery in 1829, southerners continued to move into the region. In 1830, about 1,000 slaves, owned by U.S. citizens, also lived in the province. Austin had secured a special provincial law permitting slavery to operate under a different name: "permanent indentured servitude."

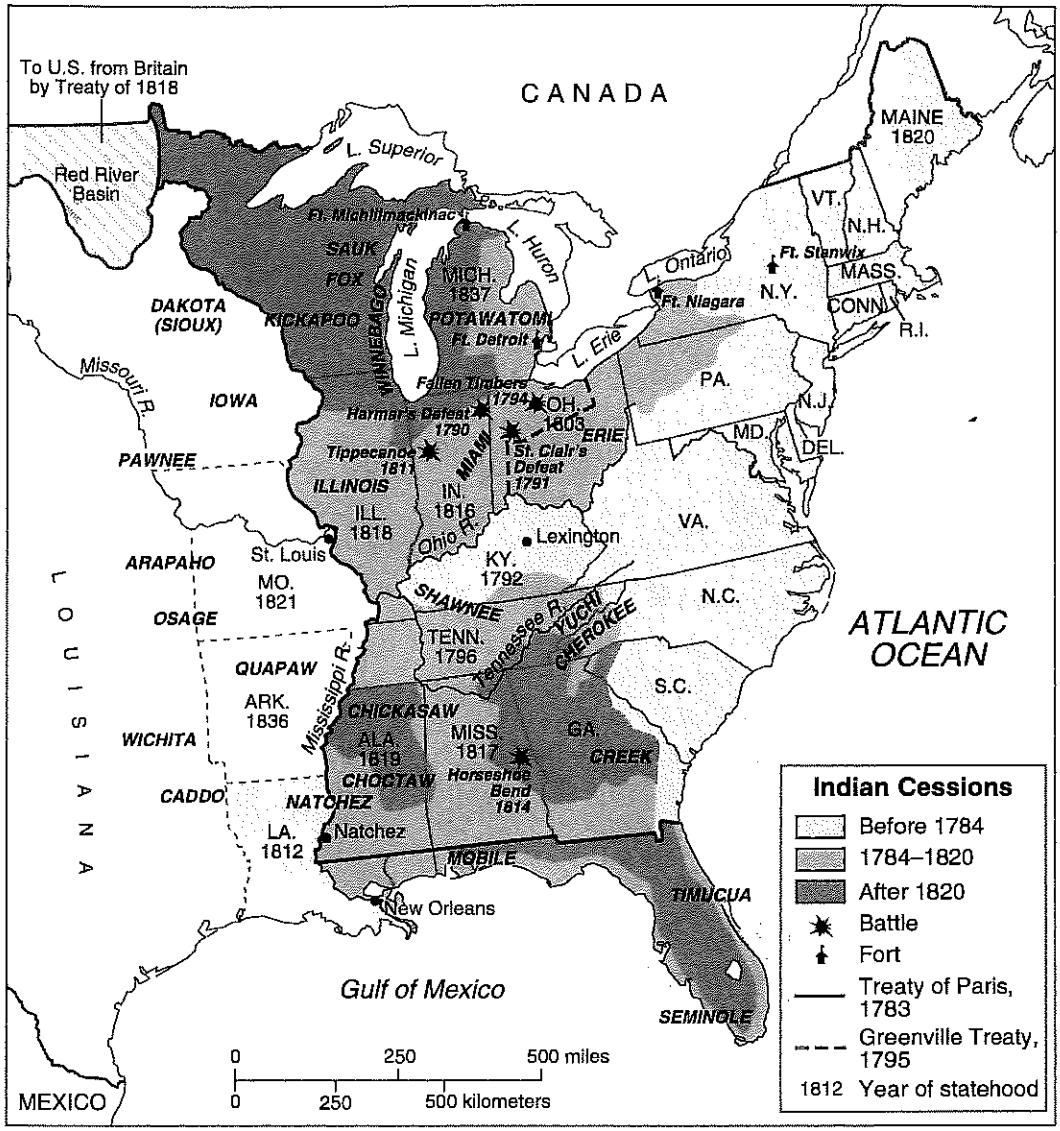
Planters also moved in great numbers into the rich and fertile U.S.-controlled lands along the Mississippi Delta and the Gulf of Mexico. The mixed population of poor whites, small farmers, free blacks, and Indians that had earlier characterized the lower Mississippi was supplanted in the 1820s and 1830s by a vast plantation society in which small numbers of whites controlled the labor of thousands of slaves. Over time, differences in access to land, slaves, and wealth would increase antagonism among southern whites of different classes. In addition, planters increased profits through the massive importation of slaves and more brutal work regimens, prompting growing fears of slave rebellions. These problems would not surface in their most acute forms for another generation, however. In the early 1800s, Indians provided the greatest resistance to white Americans' plans for westward expansion.

American Indians: Resistance and Retreat King Cotton set white settlers on a collision course with Indians. In 1790, Indians occupied villages throughout the twenty-five million acres of what would become the cotton-growing states. During the early 1800s, many were herded onto reservations. Others moved west, voluntarily or not. Still others tried to survive by adopting the ways of white missionaries and farmers. Some tribal members shifted property ownership from women to men, adapted to plows and spinning wheels, and sent their children to English-language schools and Christian churches. Cherokees welcomed Moravian missionaries in 1799, for instance, because they offered to open a school. Some Indian farmers even adopted slavery. Such efforts at integration ultimately failed, however.

Among the largest tribes in the Southeast were the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles (Map 6.4). Despite the fierce resistance offered by the Seminoles to white invaders in Florida, these Indian nations became known among white Americans as the Five Civilized Tribes because they adopted many of the institutions of the surrounding white settlers. For many American Indians, conversion to Christianity seemed to offer one of the best hopes for peaceful coexistence with whites. Moravians, Quakers, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists all sent missionaries into southeastern Indian societies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with limited success. Even where missionaries enjoyed success, however, many Indian converts continued to practice traditional burial and marriage rituals.

MAP 6.4 Indian Cessions, 1790–1820

Between the end of the American Revolution and 1820, most Indian tribes living east of the Mississippi River were forced to cede their lands to the U.S. government. Battles between the U.S. Army and various confederations of Indians in the 1790s and 1810s ensured U.S. control of most Indian territories that could not be obtained by purchase or treaties. Still, Cherokees and Seminoles continued to fight their removal from the Southeast to the Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma into the 1830s.



Government officials hoped to replace tribal institutions and values with those more appropriate to a market-oriented society and specifically targeted communal land ownership. A U.S. commissioner of Indian affairs argued, "Common property and civilization cannot coexist." Yet replacing communal land ownership meant weakening the ties connecting the individual Indian to the community and binding the community as a whole to its land. Dividing tribal land into private plots made it easier for whites to acquire legal title to that land. One method was already tried and true: merchants drew Indians into debt, often through questionable bookkeeping, and then accepted land in payment of that debt.

As a result of government policy, missionary intervention, and trade relations, by the early 1800s, a new class of American Indians (many of mixed Indian and white parentage) embraced Euro-American ways of life. Because clan membership passed through the mother's line in many of these tribes, the sons of white men and Indian women could claim seats on tribal councils. The children of such marriages were often bilingual and

"Saving the Indian from Oblivion"

The lawyer-turned-Indian-portraitist George Catlin trekked across the Great Plains in the 1830s to record the faces and customs of the Assiniboines (a tribe in present-day North Dakota) and other American Indians before they passed into "oblivion." In this dual portrait painted in the late 1830s, Catlin depicted the Indian leader Pigeon's Egg Head, or Wi-Jun-Jon, as a victim of progress. Shown first striking a noble pose before leaving his community, Pigeon's Egg Head is tragically transformed in the second half of the painting; his return from white civilization reveals a foppish figure armed with an umbrella and a fan, a whiskey bottle peeking out of his rear pocket. George Catlin, *Pigeon's Egg Head (The Light) Going to and Returning from Washington*, 1837–39, oil, 29 × 24 inches — Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr.

familiar with both white American and Indian ways. With white backing, these men acquired growing political power within tribal councils and used it to promote the transformation of Indian society into an approximation of white male-dominated America. Indeed, many sought to deprive women of traditional property and tribal membership inheritance rights that were rooted in matrilineal descent.

The decision to embrace white ways spurred resistance within many tribes. For instance, some young Creek warriors became increasingly estranged from Creek elders, who favored accommodating to U.S. authority. In 1813, a bloody war erupted, pitting these young "Red Sticks," as they were known, against thousands of white southern militiamen, as well as against Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw warriors who hoped for

"The Craving Desires of the White Man": Creek Leaders Petition Congress

In this 1832 petition to Congress, leaders of the Creek nation protested their forcible expulsion from the Gulf coast region onto lands beyond the Mississippi River, in present-day Oklahoma. Their arguments and questions reflect a keen understanding of how unreliable the government's assurances often proved.

It has been . . . with alarm and consternation that we find ourselves assailed in these our last retreats. Though our possessions have shrunk to a narrow compass, they contain all that endears itself to our heart. Beneath the soil which we inhabit, lie the frail remnants of what heretofore composed the bodies of our fathers and of our children, our wives and our kindred. . . . Yet we are now menaced with being driven from these narrow limits, and compelled to seek an asylum from the craving desires of the white man, beyond the great river. If the alternative offered us—if the lands offered us be, as we are told, of greater value than those which we derived from our ancestors, and they from God, we freely relinquish all the advantages which they possess, and will be satisfied with that which we already have. If they are inferior in value, we submit it to the justice of our white brethren, whether they will compel us to a disadvantageous exchange. If there be any particular inducements either to individuals or communities which render our lands particularly valuable, why should not we, the rightful proprietors, be suffered to enjoy them? Can any adventitious value enhance them more in the eyes of the white man, than the solemn associations to which we have adverted, do in our own?

We are assured that, beyond the Mississippi, we shall be exempted from further exaction; that no State authority can there reach us; that we shall be secure and happy in these distant abodes. Can we obtain, or can our white brethren give assurances more distinct and positive, than those we have already received and trusted? Can their power exempt us from intrusion in our promised borders, if they are incompetent to our protection where we are? Can we feel secure when farther removed from our father's [the president's] eye than now, when he hears our remonstrances and listens to our complaints? We have heretofore received every assurance and every guarantee that our imperfect knowledge could desire; we confided in it as ample for all our purposes; and we know not what to require which would obviate further embarrassments.

House Document 102, 22nd Cong., 1st Sess. (1832).

greater leniency from whites in exchange for this alliance. The fierce but unequal combat ended in March 1814 at the battle of Horseshoe Bend, where more than 1,000 Indians died. White Americans considered Andrew Jackson, then commanding the Tennessee militia, the hero of this engagement.

Among the losers were those Creeks who allied with Jackson. The Treaty of Fort Jackson, which ended the fighting, transferred fourteen million acres (more than half the land in Alabama) from Creek to U.S. control. Moreover, the Indian defeat at Horseshoe Bend opened the floodgates to southern white migrants. By 1826, the Creek Indians of Georgia had been driven westward, setting a precedent that would eventually unseat almost the entire population of the Five Civilized Tribes. Throughout the 1820s, white southerners repeatedly sought to secure lands owned by Indians, setting off jurisdictional disputes not only between sovereign tribes and state courts, but also between state courts and federal authorities. Georgia led the way, forcing the Creeks to cede land to the state in 1825 and 1827 and claiming in 1828 that the Cherokee was not an independent nation but simply a collection of individuals subject to state laws.

American Indians Seek Justice but Face Removal In response to these threats of removal, some southeastern Indians turned to U.S. courts. Over the course of the early nineteenth century, Indian tribes—although technically recognized as independent nations—were increasingly subject to federal and state laws. They now hoped to use those laws, along with existing treaties, to save themselves from eradication. In 1827, the Cherokees adopted a formal constitution modeled on that of the United States. Whites, however, were less interested in transforming the Indians than in removing them from the region altogether. When it became clear that removal was the ultimate goal of southern whites, a majority of Cherokees opposed further concessions and fought their removal right up to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Led by Chief Justice John Marshall, who had shaped the federal judiciary since his appointment in 1801, the U.S. Supreme Court held responsibility for adjudicating cases between states and foreign governments. Marshall had been involved in many landmark decisions, including *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), which established the court's right to review the constitutionality of acts of Congress and of state legislatures. He was an ardent defender of the authority of the national government. In *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819), the Supreme Court ruled that the establishment of the Bank of the United States was constitutional, and Marshall declared: "The government of the Union, though limited in its powers, is supreme within its sphere of action." In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), Marshall once again reinforced the power of the central government, this time at the expense of Indian tribes as well as states. The plaintiffs argued that their tribe was a sovereign, thereby "foreign," nation, requiring the protection of the federal courts. Sympathetic to the Indians' claims but unwilling to grant them independent political authority, the Court ruled that Indian tribes had a special but still dependent status within the nation. Marshall used the analogy of "a ward to his guardian" to express this special status and, on that basis, argued that the Cherokee tribe had no standing before the U.S. Supreme Court. Still,

"Our Cause Is Your Own": Chief John Ross Protests the Treaty of New Etocha

Chief John Ross was the principal chief of the Cherokee in Georgia; in this 1836 letter addressed to "the Senate and House of Representatives," Ross protested the Treaty of New Etocha that forced the Cherokee out of Georgia, calling it fraudulent, and emphasized the similarities between the Cherokee and white Americans. In 1838, federal troops forcibly displaced the last of the Cherokee from their homes; their trip to Indian Territory (Oklahoma) became known as the Trail of Tears.

. . . By the stipulations of this [treaty] . . . We are stripped of every attribute of freedom and eligibility for legal self-defence. Our property may be plundered before our eyes; violence may be committed on our persons; even our lives may be taken away, and there is none to regard our complaints. We are denationalized; we are disfranchised. We are deprived of membership in the human family! We have neither land nor home, nor resting place that can be called our own. And this is effected by the provisions of a compact which assumes the venerated, the sacred appellation of treaty. . . .

The instrument in question is not the act of our Nation; we are not parties to its covenants; it has not received the sanction of our people. The makers of it sustain no office nor appointment in our Nation . . . we cannot but contemplate the enforcement of the stipulations of this instrument on us, against our consent, as an act of injustice and oppression . . . nor can we believe it to be the design of these honorable and highminded individuals, who stand at the head of the Govt., to bind a whole Nation, by the acts of a few unauthorized individuals. . . .

In truth, our cause is your own; it is the cause of liberty and of justice; it is based upon your own principles, which we have learned from yourselves; for we have gloried to count your [George] Washington and your [Thomas] Jefferson our great teachers; we have read their communications to us with veneration; we have practised their precepts with success. And the result is manifest. The wildness of the forest has given place to comfortable dwellings and cultivated fields, stocked with the various domestic animals. Mental culture, industrious habits, and domestic enjoyments, have succeeded the rudeness of the savage state.

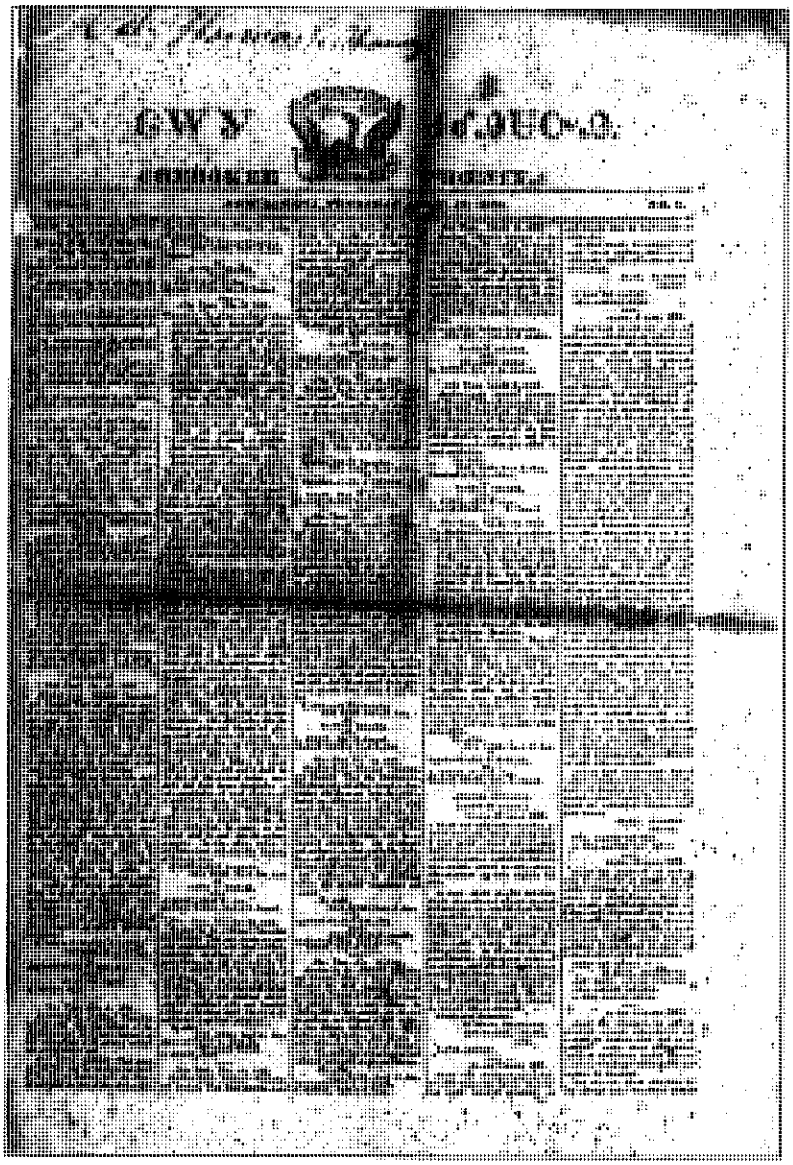
We have learned your religion also. We have read your Sacred books. Hundreds of our people have embraced their doctrines, practised the virtues they teach, cherished the hopes they awaken, and rejoiced in the consolations which they afford. To the spirit of your institutions, and your religion, which has been imbibed by our community, is mainly to be ascribed that patient endurance which has characterized the conduct of our people, under the laceration of their keenest woes. . . . On your kindness, on your humanity, on your compassion, on your benevolence, we rest our hopes. . . . Spare our people! Spare the wreck of our prosperity! Let not our deserted homes become the monuments of our desolation! . . .

John Ross, *Letter from John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation of Indians, in Answer to Inquires from a Friend Regarding the Cherokee Affairs with the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1836), 22–24.

he viewed Indians as federal, not state, wards.

Just a year later, in *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the Marshall Court strengthened federal authority over American Indians while also strengthening tribal sovereignty. The Court determined that Indians were members of "domestic dependent nations" with a right to their own land and "distinct political communities" with exclusive authority within their territorial boundaries. Upholding his earlier commitment to federal authority, the Chief Justice concluded that only the federal government, not the states, could regulate commerce with tribes.

The Court's rulings proved largely meaningless, however. Andrew Jackson, who was elected president in 1828, had pushed through an Indian Removal Act in 1830, offering Indians reservations west of the Mississippi in exchange for their current lands. Despite some opposition from northern religious groups and a massive anti-removal petition initiated by northern women, Indian removal had substantial popular support among whites, especially among southern planters and backcountry settlers. Under pressure from federal agents and threat of military intervention, many tribes, or at least tribal leaders, signed away most of their eastern territory. The federal government quickly set out to relocate all southeastern tribes. Twenty-three thousand Choctaws and some Cherokees were pressured into moving west in 1831–1832. Most of the Seminole Nation was removed between 1832 and 1835. Others were transported by force: the Alabama Creeks in 1836 and the Chickasaws the next year. In 1838, those Cherokees who had refused the government's offer of land in the West were uprooted by federal troops. The troops herded some 15,000 members of the tribe across the 800-mile "Trail of Tears" to present-day Oklahoma. One in four Cherokees died on the way (Map 6.5).

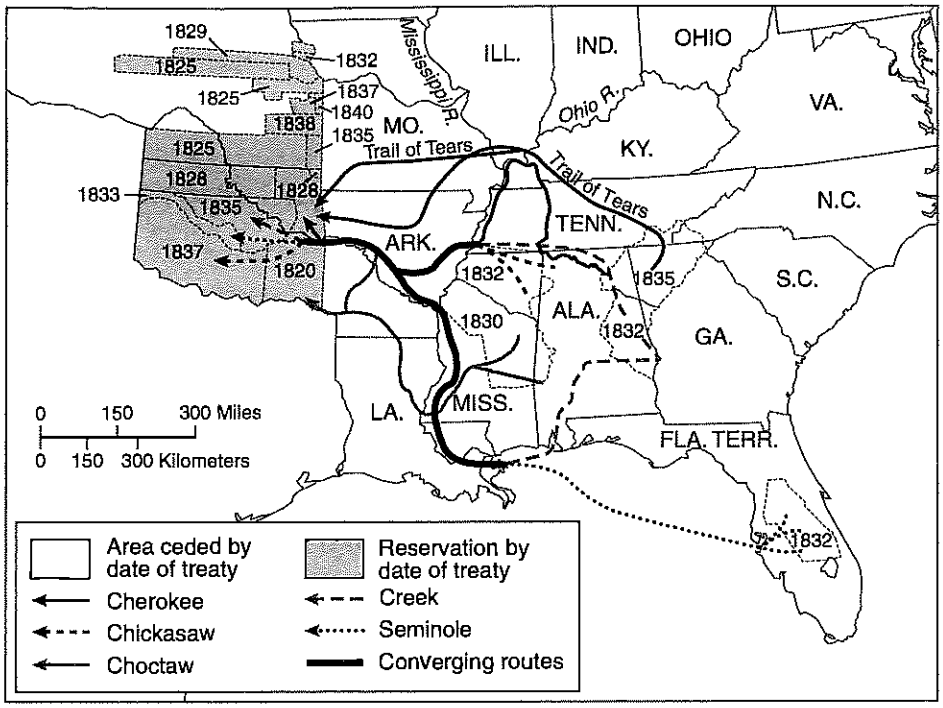


Cherokee Phoenix

The *Cherokee Phoenix*, the first Native American newspaper in the United States, was published in English and in the Cherokee "syllabary" devised by Sequoyah in the 1820s. The General Council of the Cherokee Nation established a printing office in New Echota, Georgia, in the 1820s as part of their effort to further integrate into American society. When Georgia and other states sought instead to remove the Cherokees, the newspaper was started as a tool to elicit public support and unify the Cherokee nation. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Southern Slave Experiences

The removal of the Five Civilized Tribes from lands that could be profitably cultivated in cotton and sugar opened the door to an expanded plantation economy based on slave labor. In the two decades before the 1808 stoppage



MAP 6.5 Removal of American Indians

Those American Indians who retained control of eastern lands after 1820 were forced to move to reservations west of the Mississippi River during the 1830s. The most famous of these compulsory migrations is that of the Cherokees along the Trail of Tears in 1838. Although many Cherokees and other members of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes adopted Anglo-American language, religion, and customs, southern planters still insisted that they be removed west to open their lands for white settlement.

of slave importation, planters purchased some quarter of a million Africans, doubling the number who had been imported in the previous two centuries. In the following years, natural reproduction and the internal slave trade would replace importation from Africa in meeting the demand for workers.

The need for labor was motivated in large part by the rapid expansion of cotton production. "To sell cotton in order to buy negroes," one Mississippian

From Dawn to Dusk

An unknown photographer captured this scene of men, women, and children picking cotton under the watchful eye of an overseer. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

noted, "to make more cotton to buy more negroes, ad infinitum, is the aim and direct tendency of all the operations of the thoroughgoing cotton planter." Yet cotton was not the only source of profit for slaveholders. Rice and sugar also underwrote the expansion of slave labor and, in the case of sugar, the movement westward as well. Following the fate of the Indians, tens of thousands of enslaved black workers from the Chesapeake and the Carolinas were forced to move to new homes and adapt to new work regimens. For slaves, those work regimes were shaped most significantly by the size of the farm or plantation and the particular crops being cultivated: cotton, tobacco, sugar, or rice.

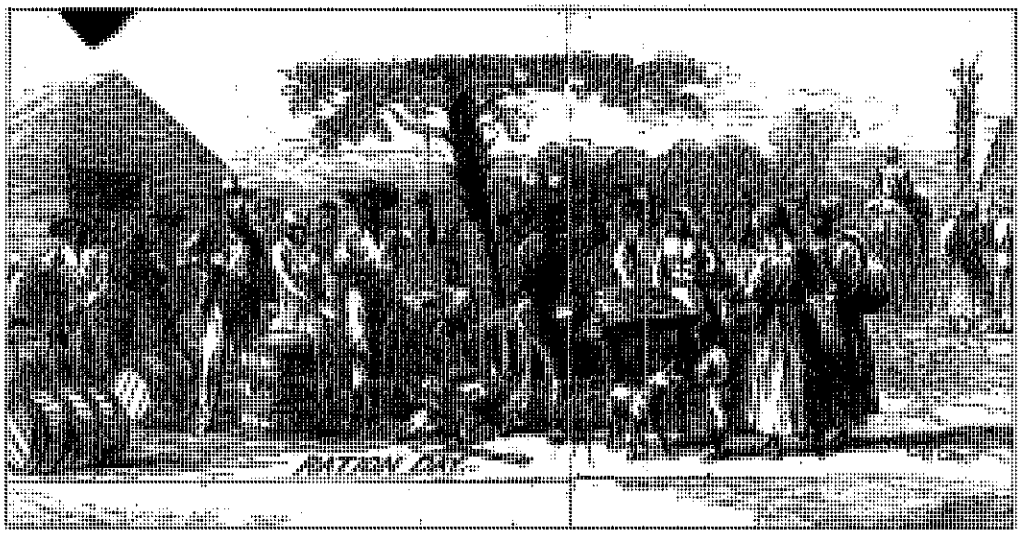
Slavery on Small Farms and Large Plantations The growing number of slaves who were trapped in bondage labored under a variety of conditions. In 1830, a significant portion of slaves still worked on small farms, where a laborer might cook one day and hoe cotton the next. Here, patterns of labor varied from season to season as owners tried to ensure profits and, at the same time, cultivate enough food and raw materials to sustain their own families. In such situations, slaves had more direct interaction with owners and could hope that a successful owner might purchase nearby family members. But African Americans who lived on small holdings also had less chance of developing kin and community ties within their own quarters, and they faced a greater danger that one bad season could cause them to be transferred as payment for debts.

"We Weren't Allowed to Sit Down": Memories of a Slave Childhood

As young female slaves grew old enough, most went to work in the fields. But some became personal servants to their owners, an experience that one of them later recalled in a 1930s interview.

When I was nine years old, they took me from my mother and sold me. Massa Tinsley made me the house girl. I had to make the beds, clean the house, and other things. After I finished my regular work, I would go to the mistress's room, bow to her, and stand there till she noticed me. Then she would say, "Martha, are you through with your work?" I'd say, "Yes, mam." She'd say, "No you ain't; you haven't lowered the shades." I'd then lower the shades, fill the water pitcher, arrange the towels on the washstand, and anything else mistress wanted me to do. Then she'd tell me that was about all to do in there. Then I would go to the other rooms in the house and do the same things. We weren't allowed to sit down. We had to be doing something all day. Whenever we were in the presence of any of the white folks, we had to stand up.

Interview of Martha Showvely, May 19, 1937. WPA Life History Collection, Library of Virginia.



Ration Day

A master distributed provisions in an illustration from a weekly newspaper report on the operations of a plantation around 1860. The engraving suggested that this planter provided his slaves with a varied and nutritious diet, which was not typically the case. It failed to show the gardens and other methods slaves used to supplement often meager or boring fare. *Harper's Weekly* — American Social History Project.

On large plantations, the demands on laborers differed from place to place, from crop to crop, and from job to job. For instance, house slaves lived under quite different conditions from those of field hands. Frederick Douglass remembered that domestic slaves "constituted a sort of black aristocracy" who "resembled the field hands in nothing except their color." Yet house slaves, although privileged in certain ways, still worked hard. Moreover, female domestics lived in closer proximity to whites and were thus more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. Black women washed clothes, cleaned, and cooked, tasks that involved heavy and tedious labor in the early nineteenth century.

Fugitive slave James Curry recalled the burdens his mother faced as a cook on a North Carolina plantation. "My mother's labor was very hard." She milked fourteen cows early each morning, started preparing the bread for breakfast, and churned the cream. After feeding and "clearing away the family breakfast, she got breakfast for the slaves. . . ." Once she had completed chores around the house, she cooked the family dinner, simple or fancy, depending on whether there were guests. She was still working in the kitchen at eight to nine o'clock at night, when the "slaves' dinner was to be ready," and then she milked the cows again. "She would not get to her log cabin until nine or ten o'clock at night. She would then be so tired that she could scarcely stand," so she would sit by the fire and sew and darn clothes for her children until she fell asleep.

James Curry's mother was also responsible for watching the youngest children of the mothers who worked in the field. Although the specific demands on field hands varied from crop to crop, the general conditions of agricultural labor were harsh indeed. From planting time through harvest season, dawn signaled the start of a working day that often extended far into the night. Most fieldwork ended at dusk, but there might be cotton to gin, sugar to mill, corn to grind, or any number of other jobs that could be done

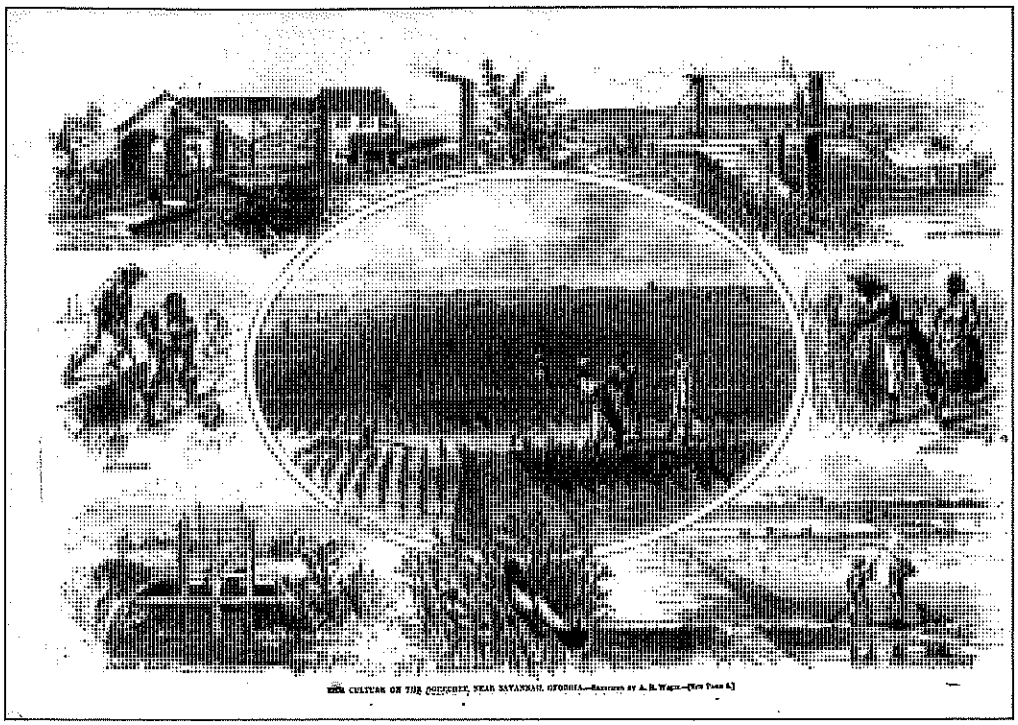
indoors by the light of a lantern. Even in winter, there were miscellaneous chores: fences to build and mend, hogs to slaughter, and wood to chop, haul, and stack. Slaves also performed the carpentry and blacksmithing that kept a plantation productive and in good repair.

Whatever the season, after laboring for the white master, slaves needed to prepare their own meals; feed and wash their children and put them to bed; clean their cabins; wash and mend their clothes; and do all the other chores of daily life. If slaves were fortunate enough to have their own gardens or access to hunting or fishing, late nights and early mornings were almost the only times they could take advantage of these opportunities to improve their diet.

The work that women and men performed in the slave quarters was essential to their survival, since most owners spent as little as they could on food, shelter, and clothing for their slaves. Even generous owners supplied slaves with inferior and inadequate clothing, shelter, and food. Planters typically supplied a weekly food ration of only three and a half pounds of salt pork or bacon and a quarter-bushel of cornmeal. Although high in the calories needed for heavy labor, that diet had serious nutritional deficiencies.

Rice Cultivation and the Task Labor System Slaves on rice plantations worked according to a task system that allowed many of them more time to take care of their own needs. Still, rice cultivation—of major importance in the South Carolina and Georgia low country and in Louisiana—required highly skilled but backbreaking labor. Women generally were responsible for March plantings. Unlike cotton, corn, or wheat, rice could not be scattered about a plowed field; each grain had to be carefully placed in a single row along the deep trenches that had been plowed and shaped earlier. Over the next five months, the fields had to be alternately flooded, left to dry in the sun, and hoed. Delay in any of these steps could ruin an entire crop. Beginning in August, the harvest kept every able-bodied slave in the fields until October. Men cut the rice plants with sickles while women followed, bundling the plants. Later, the plants had to be flailed by hand to separate the grain from the stalk. Rice cultivation involved intricate systems of dams and dikes to flood and drain the land; these were usually built or repaired by slaves after the harvest and before the spring planting.

Much of the work on rice plantations was organized according to the task system, in which each slave was assigned a particular task each day. Those who worked slowly might find themselves working long hours, but if the task was completed early, the rest of the day was free. This arrangement was intended to encourage slaves to do their work quickly even without close supervision. It also shifted some of the responsibility for feeding the slaves onto themselves. Former slave George Gould remembered that his



Technology in the Fields
Cultivating rice involved a multitude of backbreaking tasks. Even before the planting and cultivation of the crop (see the rice field at the center), an elaborate system for controlling the waters had to be completed. This 1867 engraving of a plantation near Savannah, Georgia, shows completed dikes and flood gates and cleared fields. Many scholars believe that much of the technology involved in rice cultivation originated in West Africa's rice-producing regions and was brought by slaves across the Atlantic. Alfred R. Waud, *Harper's Weekly*, January 5, 1867 — American Social History Project.

master "used to come in the field, and tell the overseers not to balk [us], if we got done soon to let us alone and do our own work as we pleased." For some slaves, the task system permitted a degree of personal autonomy and even modest economic well-being. Those who finished their tasks early might spend their free time producing or acquiring fish, game, handicrafts, crops, or even livestock for personal use, barter, and sale.

But rice cultivation also involved special perils. Work in the fields exposed slaves to malaria, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. One visitor attributed the high number of deaths among slaves to the "constant moisture and heat of the atmosphere, together with the alternate floodings and dryings of the fields, on which the negroes are perpetually at work, often ankle-deep in mud, with their bare heads exposed to the fierce rays of the sun. . . . At such seasons every white man leaves the spot, as a matter of course, and proceeds inland to the high grounds; or, if he can afford it, he travels northward to the springs of Saratoga, or the lakes of Canada."

Tobacco, Sugar, Cotton, and the Gang Labor System Unlike rice cultivation, tobacco plantations relied primarily on gangs of slaves performing the largely unskilled work. Plowing began in April. In May, the tobacco plants that had been growing indoors since March were transplanted to the fields. For the next several months, gangs periodically worked in the fields, weeding, hoeing, and pruning the lower leaves of the tobacco plants. The plants were harvested in August and September and hung to dry. Slaves then

stripped the stalks and prepared the leaves for export or manufacturing. Charles Ball, a slave who worked both rice and tobacco, recalled that in the winter, there was "some sort of respite from the toils of the year," as he and other slaves "repaired fences, split rails for new fences, slaughtered hogs, cleared new land, [and] raised tobacco plants for the next planting."

Large gangs also cultivated sugar and cotton, and planters could profit from the labor of the entire slave family—men, women, and children (Map 6.6). In the interest of profit, cotton planters emphasized supervision and discipline, dividing most jobs by age and sex. In general, men plowed and women hoed, working side by side with members of their own sex. As schoolteacher Emily Burke observed, "During the greater part of the winter season, the negro women are busy in picking, ginning and packing cotton for market," while men repaired buildings and cleared land.

During the harvest season, men and women worked together as they swept across one field after another, picking at an unrelenting pace. Solomon Northup, a free black man from New York, was kidnapped and sold to a Louisiana cotton planter. He recalled that the fastest worker took "the lead row," and anyone who fell behind or was "a moment idle [was]

MAP 6.6 Rice, Cotton, Tobacco, and Sugar Production in the 1830s

Although cotton was considered the king of southern agricultural products by 1830, several other crops competed with cotton for labor and profits. Tobacco, rice, and sugar, although they could not be grown in as many parts of the South as cotton, were highly profitable in those sections where the climate and soil were favorable. These crops demanded different kinds of labor and were characterized by different growing seasons and cycles, which contributed to the distinct experiences of slaves on rice, tobacco, cotton, and sugar plantations.

A Map of Servitude
The back of a Louisiana slave named Gordon, photographed in 1863 after he escaped to the Union forces. Whipping was one method of punishment suffered by plantation slaves. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

whipped." Through the heat of August, September, and October, all able-bodied men and women picked the cotton, stooping as they walked, pulling the bolls from the prickly pods, which cut their hands. This unrelenting labor kept them in the fields from sunrise until it was, Northup wrote, "too dark to see, and when the moon is full, they oftentimes labor till the middle of the night." No one stopped "until the order to halt" was heard. Each day ended at the scales, where an overseer weighed the cotton each slave had picked. Those who fell short of their quota were whipped.

Punishment was used more often than reward to induce slaves to work harder, and whipping was the most common means. In the South Carolina rice-growing region, according to former slave Hagar Brown, "Don't do your task, driver wave that whip, put you over a barrel, beat you so blood run down." On the Louisiana cotton plantation of Bennett Barrow, some three-quarters of the incidents that led to physical punishments were work-related: "for not picking as well as he can," for picking "very trashy cotton," "for not bringing her cotton up," and so forth. On average, Barrow whipped one of his slaves every four days. Others were imprisoned, chained, beaten, shot, or maimed in other ways. And with all this, his biographer tells us, Barrow treated slaves better than did many of his neighbors.

The Internal Slave Trade The growing importance of slavery to southern agriculture was accompanied by rising prices for slaves. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, competition from Caribbean sugar planters had begun to bid up slave prices. Congress's 1808 prohibition against the importation of Africans further constricted the supply, boosting prices even higher. These high prices led early-nineteenth-century owners to place a premium on the survival and natural reproduction of the slaves they already owned, sometimes limiting their cruelty and even inspiring them to more generous food and housing allotments. Yet the value of slaves and the movement of plantation agriculture into new areas also ensured the expansion of the internal slave trade. Perhaps nothing symbolized the human cost of bondage as vividly as the wholesale destruction of slave families through this trade—the key to success for some masters, especially in the Chesapeake. Plantation owners there managed to adapt to the declining profits of

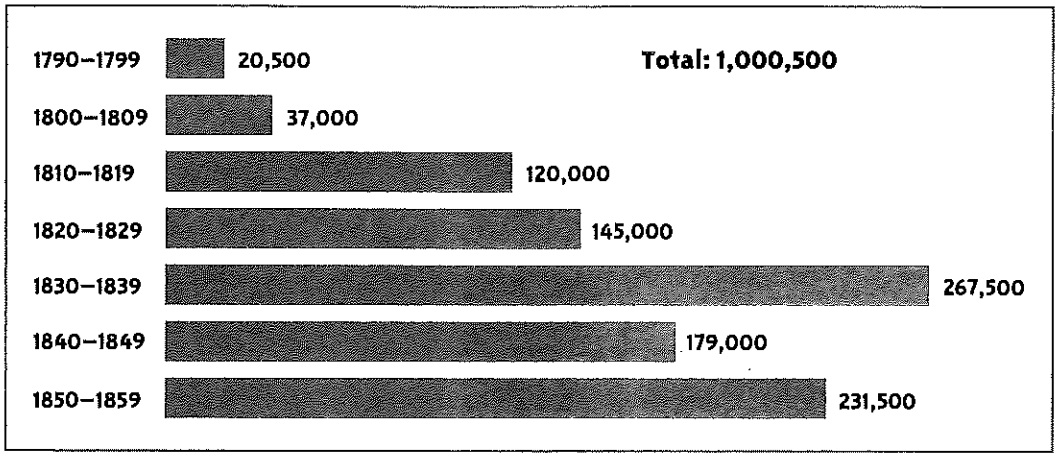


FIGURE 6.1 Movement of Slaves from Upper South to Lower South, 1790–1860

The invention of the cotton gin, the forced removal of American Indians from their lands, and the 1808 federal ban on the importation of slaves all contributed to a boom in cotton cultivation and a concurrent increase in the trade of slaves within the United States. This dramatic increase in the internal slave trade ruptured slave families and communities starting in the early nineteenth century, sending nearly 800,000 slaves from the settled areas of the Upper South to the new plantations of the Lower South and Southwest. From James A. Henretta et al., *America's History,* 6th ed., vol. 1 (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008). Based on data in Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974); and Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).

"Sold to Tennessee"

Lewis Miller, a sometime artist and carpenter whose work often took him to Virginia, observed this "cottle" of slaves en route to new owners in Tennessee. Miller sketched the scene and transcribed the words of the slaves' song. Lewis Miller, *Virginia Sketchbook* — Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia.

tobacco production by turning to the sale of surplus slave labor (Figure 6.1). When sold to an Alabama cotton planter, a Louisiana sugar baron, or a Carolina rice grower, a slave born and raised in Maryland or Virginia fetched his or her master a handsome return on his investment, often thousands of dollars.

Although some planters tried to sell slave families intact or at least to keep mothers and their children together, this practice declined over time. Increasingly, buyers sought younger and less expensive slaves, and sellers ultimately complied with the demands of the market. Of course, some white owners never recognized the existence of slave families at all. Of those who did, many felt no obligation to maintain kin connections when high prices promised otherwise unobtainable profits.

Particularly from the 1820s on, the market in slaves wreaked havoc on the

"The Bargain Was Agreed Upon": A View of the Slave Market

In 1841, Solomon Northup, a free African American living in New York, was kidnapped while visiting Washington, D.C., and sold into slavery. He spent the next twelve years working on plantations in Louisiana, finally attaining freedom in 1853. His book, Twelve Years a Slave, *presented a stark, detailed account of day-to-day slave life, including this depiction of a sale run by a slave dealer named Freeman.*

Next day many customers called to examine Freeman's 'new lot.' The latter gentleman was very loquacious, dwelling at much length upon our several good points and qualities. He would make us hold up our heads, walk briskly back and forth, while customers would feel of our hands and arms and bodies, turn us about, ask us what we could do, make us open our mouths and show our teeth, precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for or purchase. Sometimes a man or woman was taken back to the small house in the yard, stripped, and inspected more minutely. Scars upon a slave's back were considered evidence of a rebellious or unruly spirit, and hurt his sale. . . .

During the day, however, a number of sales were made. David and Caroline were purchased together by a Natchez planter. They left us, grinning broadly, and in a most happy state of mind, caused by the fact of their not being separated. Sethe was sold to a planter of Baton Rouge, her eyes flashing with anger as she was led away.

The same man also purchased Randall. The little fellow was made to jump, and run across the floor, and perform many other feats exhibiting his activity and condition. All the time the trade was going on, Eliza was crying aloud, and wringing her hands. She besought the man not to buy him, unless he also bought herself and Emily. She promised, in that case, to be the most faithful slave that ever lived. The man answered that he could not afford it, and then Eliza burst into a paroxysm of grief, weeping plaintively. Freeman turned round to her, savagely, with his whip in his uplifted hand, ordering her to stop her noise, or . . . he would take her to the yard and give her a hundred lashes. . . . Eliza shrunk before him, and tried to wipe away her tears, but it was all in vain. She wanted to be with her children, she said, the little time she had to live.

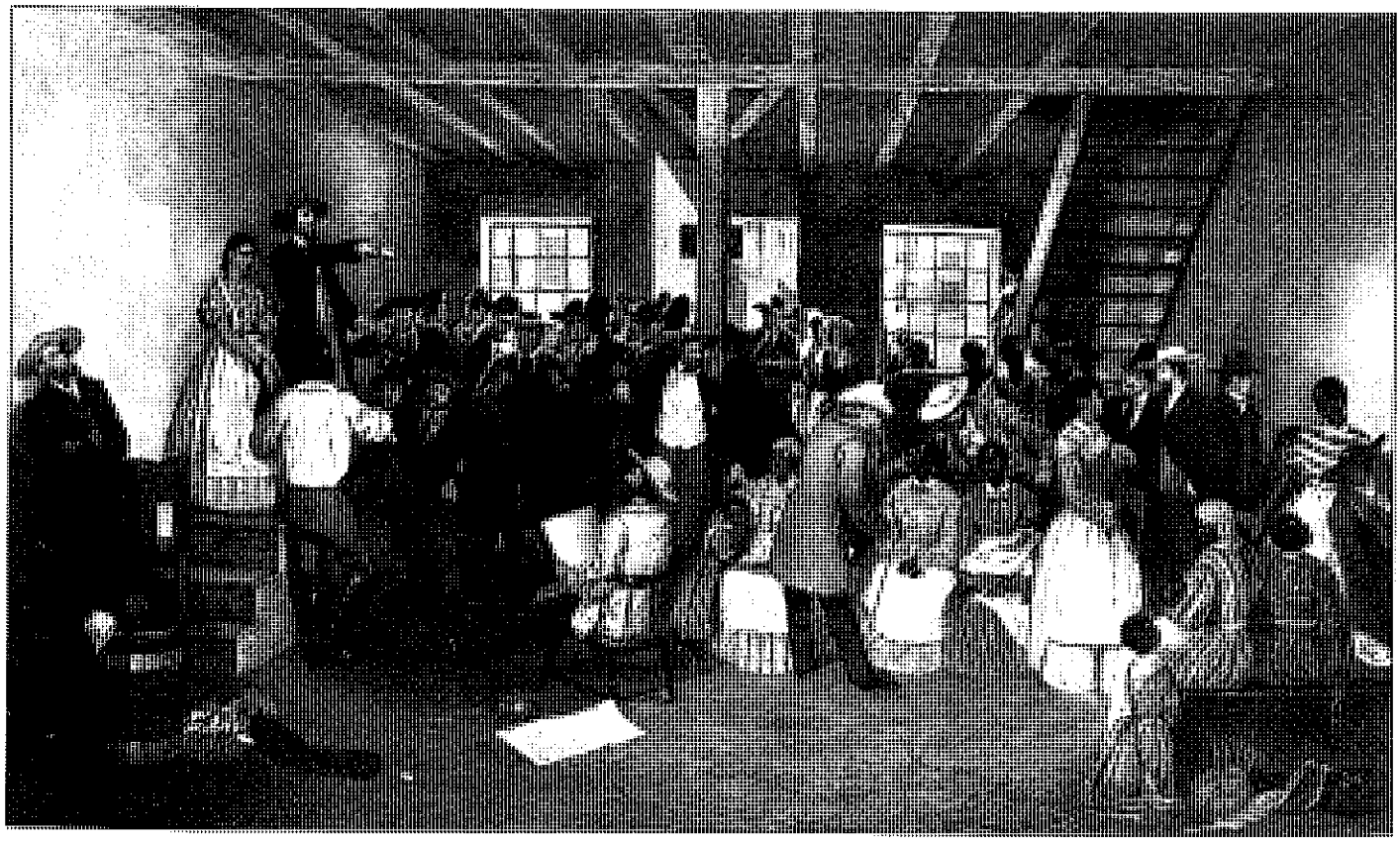
All the frowns and threats of Freeman could not wholly silence the afflicted mother. She kept on begging and beseeching them, most piteously, not to separate the three. Over and over again she told them how she loved her boy. A great many times she repeated her former promises—how very faithful and obedient she would be; how hard she would labor day and night, to the last moment of her life; if he would only buy them all together. But it was of no avail; the man could not afford it. The bargain was agreed upon, and Randall must go alone. Then Eliza ran to him; embraced him passionately; kissed him again and again; told him to remember her—all the while her tears falling in the boy's face like rain. . . .

> The planter from Baton Rouge, with his new purchase, was ready to depart.
>
> 'Don't cry, mama. I will be a good boy. Don't cry,' said Randall, looking back, as they passed out the door.
>
> ---
>
> Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853).

families of African Americans, causing them enormous anguish. In March 1829, a Virginia resident wrote to the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, an antislavery paper, describing "a most tragic occurrence . . . occasioned by those monsters who traffic in HUMAN FLESH." A planter in the town of Hillsborough had sold a group of slaves to a trader, who held the chattel in a room overnight. In the morning, a middle-aged woman among those sold was found dead, "choosing death rather than be dragged off by these tyrants." Henry Watson, another Virginia slave, recalled his agony when, as a small child, his mother was sold away. An older woman tried to comfort him, but Watson was inconsolable. "Every exertion was made on my part to find her, or hear some tidings of her, but all my efforts were unsuccessful; and from that day, I have never seen or heard from her."

The Slave Auction

Slavery, and particularly slave auctions, left an indelible impression on many visitors to the antebellum South. One of them was a British artist, Eyre Crowe, who sketched a Richmond slave sale in 1853. During the Civil War, he painted a series of pictures based on his earlier drawings and notes that delineated the auction and subsequent separation of slave families. Eyre Crowe, 1862, oil on canvas, 13 ×21 inches — Kennedy Galleries, Inc., New York.



Slave families were also broken apart by the death of owners, which led to the division of estates for inheritance or payment of debts. Slave families might be broken up through the marriage of white planters, which were often accompanied by "gifts" of young slaves to the new couple. Or a slave owner moving from one county to another might take his chattel with him, thereby severing connections between slave husbands and wives who lived on neighboring plantations. Slaves, then, were dependent on their owners not just for food, clothing, and shelter, but for the very existence of their families.

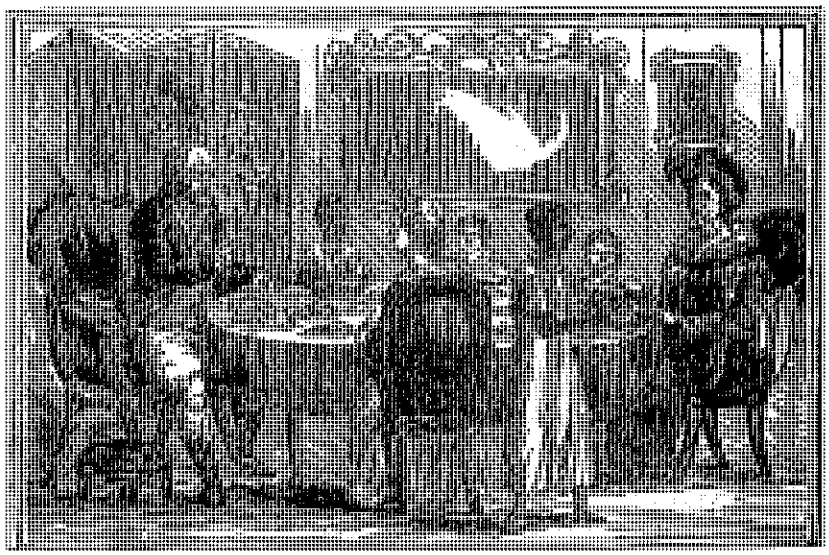
Southern White Experiences

Although the lives of all whites in the South were affected by the spread of slavery, they did not all have the same relationship to that institution. Wealthier whites, who obtained larger and larger numbers of slaves, formed an elite planter class that controlled much of the economic and political power in the region. Small farmers often became dependent on neighboring planters for the transportation and sale of their cotton, yet they also challenged planters' right to fence off property, dam rivers, and in other ways encroach on the customary privileges of local residents. Poorer whites generally lived short and brutal lives. The most fortunate hired themselves out to planters and farmers or headed west in hopes of finding cheaper land and new opportunities.

The planter class was a powerful group economically and politically, but they were not united on every issue. They differed in their ideas about slave management, in the roles played by women in their families, and in their ideas about the future of slavery. These differences were shaped in part by the size of their holdings in land and slaves. Nonslaveholding whites also differed in their wealth, ideas about slavery, and attitudes toward those above and below them in the southern social order. Successful farmers might hope to rise into the planter class one day, while those barely scratching out a living often resented the wealth and power wielded by local and regional elites. During the 1820s and early 1830s, the future of slavery, at least in Upper South states such as Virginia, hinged not only on relations between blacks and whites, but also on relations between planters and nonslaveholding whites.

The Planter Class Planters were, of course, dependent on their slaves. Slavery was first and foremost a way of controlling the labor that produced profits from the commercial production of cotton, sugar, rice, and tobacco. Yet planters responded in different ways to the black workers who served as the foundation of their world. Some planters were incredibly cruel, frequently employing the lash and the branding iron. Others, particularly

those with close ties to the church, believed in a more benevolent style of authority. They might teach a few slaves to read, allow them to attend church, and provide lighter workloads for pregnant and nursing women. At the same time, many planters who embraced evangelical teachings used religion to defend slavery as an institution and assert their authority over slaves.



Family Amalgamation Among the Man-Stealers

An illustration from an 1834 antislavery tract depicted an unlikely domestic scene in a plantation household, with slave children joining their owners at the dinner table. Some antislavery advocates viewed the potential for intimacy between whites and blacks as one of the demoralizing effects of the "peculiar institution." George Bourne, *Pictures of Slavery in the United States of America* (1834) — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Plantation mistresses as well as masters varied in their responses to slaves. Most mistresses were responsible for directing the house slaves and for organizing clothing, food, and health care for field hands. While many mistresses complained about these responsibilities, few thought that slavery should be eliminated. At most, they sought to improve slaves' living conditions and to diminish harsh punishments. But some were as likely as their husbands to inflict the whip or the branding iron. Plantation mistress Lucilla McCorkle, angry at "some disobedience, much idleness, sulleness and slovenliness" among the slaves on her plantation, "Used the rod." Others, like Sophia Smede, reminded her daughters that slaves "are not machines, they are just like you, made from the same flesh and blood."

The ranks of slave owners expanded steadily in the early nineteenth century. By 1830, some 225,000 white Southerners owned slaves. Because slave labor yielded slaveholders their wealth, power, and leisure, successful planters felt compelled to accumulate more slaves. Although the absolute number of slave owners grew, the total white population grew faster. Slaves were becoming more expensive, and a shrinking proportion of all southern whites could afford to own them. The 36 percent of white families who owned slaves in 1830 shrank to 31 percent in 1850 and to 26 percent by 1860. Nonetheless, it was this slave-owning segment of the white population that controlled the great bulk of the region's wealth and wielded most of its political power.

Of course, not all slaveholders were wealthy planters. The elite among plantation owners were those who held fifty or more slaves and owned enough land to make such an investment in labor profitable. Next were the more numerous but less wealthy middling planters who owned between fifteen and fifty slaves. Even more numerous were the small farmers who owned five or six slaves and land valued at about $3,000. Even that much property made the small southern slave owner many times wealthier than the average northerner. But dependence on the export economy left the southern farmer vulnerable to sharp decreases in crop prices or increases

The Old Plantation Home
This lithograph by the popular firm of Currier and Ives portrayed the slave quarters as a carefree world, basking in the glow of the planter's benevolence. The plantation as the perfect extended family was a common theme of proslavery prints before the Civil War — and after. Currier and Ives, 1872, lithograph, 9 × 12 1/2 inches — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

in the cost of land, transport, and, most significantly, slaves. Debt and economic uncertainty affected such people much more than they did the planter aristocracy. And as eastern lands became depleted, some elite planter families were compelled to uproot themselves, join the southwestern migration, and submit to the ruder life on the cotton frontier.

We know the planter elite best from its self-descriptions and later from novels and films that romanticized their life as elegant, cultured, and removed from the hectic pace and pressures of commerce or industry. Planters liked to see themselves in the role of stern but loving fathers guiding the lives of their plantation families—especially their slave "children"—with paternal wisdom and justice. But the story of slave masters and mistresses seated on the porches of grand mansions sipping mint juleps and ordering others benevolently to do their bidding was largely fictive and had little to do with life on most plantations in the 1820s and 1830s. Instead, many planters along the coast and on the frontier built modest homes on their country estates. When Pierce Butler brought his new wife, British actress Fanny Kemble, to his South Carolina Sea Islands rice plantation in 1834, she considered herself "on the outer bounds of civilized creation." The house, she noted in despair, "consists of three small rooms . . . a wooden recess by way of a pantry, and a kitchen detached from the dwelling."

At least through the 1830s, the expansion of planters' power was visible mainly in cities and towns rather than in the more remote agricultural hinterlands where their wealth was produced. Urban centers offered the chance to inhabit fancier living quarters, participate in the best social and political circles, join in courting rituals and marriage arrangements with other planter families, buy new furniture and the latest fashions, and keep up with news on national and international markets and prices.

On election and court days, held in county seats and major cities, planters could mingle with nonslaveholding whites, small farmers, and lesser masters to cement ties of credit, kinship, and political clout. Meanwhile militia musters, market days, and slave auctions in cities and towns provided regular opportunities for elite whites to demonstrate their mastery, authority, and largesse. The wives of wealthy planters did their part by assisting the sick and poor and planning church and social events. Such functions were particularly important in the first three decades of the

nineteenth century, when unstable markets, slave rebellions, antislavery campaigns, evangelical revivals, and the pressure for westward expansion buffeted the planter elite.

Still, despite the uncertainties of the early nineteenth century, the planter class was increasingly in control of the South's economy and politics. Southern elites controlled political offices in their home states and maintained a powerful presence in the nation's capital. In towns and cities across the South, they established a strong political, religious, and economic presence. These elites stood on the cusp of a new era, in which cotton was king and the plantation owner its favored subject.

Poor Whites and Small Farmers Confront a Slave Society After about 1820, opportunities began to narrow for the South's small farmers, known as yeomen. The frontier no longer offered them the chance to start a better life, as large planters took over the most fertile areas. The removal of Indians, however, provided access to new lands in the Georgia upcountry, the western Carolinas, and northern sections of Louisiana and Mississippi. Here, many independent farm families managed to secure a comfortable livelihood, while others at least succeeded in owning their own home and land.

The South's small farmers were never completely isolated from the plantation economy. But from the 1820s on, they became more enmeshed in its web as cotton, rice, and sugar became more central to the region's economy. Small farmers often depended on planters for credit in hard times, and members of yeoman families might be employed on plantations as overseers or skilled laborers. In addition, the extensive family networks that character-

Woodcutter's Cabin on the Mississippi

French artist August Hervieu sketched a poor white family in 1827. The drawing later appeared as an illustration in British author Frances Trollope's acerbic and very popular account of a stay in the United States, *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* published in 1832. (August Hervieu) Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) — Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

ized southern life ensured that some small farmers and even poor whites might claim kinship with their more well-to-do slaveholding neighbors.

Despite their ties to the planter elite, yeomen farmers did not always side with planters in their defense of slavery. By the 1820s and 1830s, throughout the Upper South—in Missouri and Kentucky as well as Maryland and Virginia—residents questioned the financial profitability of slavery. Many farmers turned from tobacco to other crops, such as wheat, that did not require year-round labor. In 1831–1832, the Virginia state legislature considered resolutions that supported the gradual emancipation of slaves or their shipment to Africa. Representatives from the western part of the state (what is today West Virginia), where yeomen rather than planters dominated the population, supported most of these resolutions. The resolutions received a substantial number of votes but failed to pass. This debate and the defeat of the resolutions was the result, in part, of timing, for in 1831 a major slave rebellion (see pages 311–312), led by Nat Turner, erupted in Virginia. Nonetheless, the existence of such a debate suggests the problems Upper South planters faced in sustaining the institution of slavery.

In states such as North Carolina and Georgia that had strong plantation economies in their coastal counties, residents who lived in more mountainous regions often questioned the wisdom of expanding slavery. Small farm families in the South also objected to the ways in which wealthy planters usurped their rights and privileges as landowners. In the post-Revolutionary era, southern legislators had expanded the voting rights of white men and the representation from newly settled western counties. Wielding their increased political clout, yeomen petitioned for better fence laws, payment for wartime damages, and fishing rights. In Georgia and the Carolinas in the early 1800s, upcountry farmers found their access to shad, a source of cheap and abundant food, severely curtailed by plantation owners who built dams and millraces downriver, thereby diminishing the fish supply upriver. Arguing that "the allmity [sic] intended" the fish "for all man kind," petitioners complained, "We are rogued out of a part of our rights." These non-slave-owning yeomen may have accepted slavery as an institution, but they continued to protest when planters trampled on rights they held dear.

Poor whites, who owned neither land nor slaves, were largely at the mercy of planters and yeomen for their sustenance. In frontier areas, they might survive by hunting, fishing, and trapping, but in established regions, poor white women and men generally sold their labor to more well-to-do neighbors. Some moved to southern seaport cities, seeking work along the docks or as seamstresses or day laborers, but there they had to compete with free black as well as slave labor, making steady employment unlikely. Although some managed to remain in the same community for years, others drifted from place to place, seeking opportunities wherever they might be.

By the 1830s, then, poor whites and small farmers across the South found themselves simultaneously pushed to the margins and enmeshed in a slave-based market economy. The plantation economy rewarded single-crop agriculture and reinforced a clear social hierarchy. Of course, being white and male promised some measure of status and protection against dependency. But increasingly, it was large slaveholders who ruled the South, politically, socially, and economically.

Religion, Resistance, and Rebellion

As slavery grew and spread into new areas of the South, African Americans sought new sources of support and honed older forms of resistance. The evangelical church provided one of the few arenas in which more harmonious relations between the races could develop in the eighteenth century. By the early 1800s, however, white churches had become more deeply involved in sustaining slavery even as growing numbers of blacks embraced evangelical Protestant beliefs. All-black congregations offered one means of resisting white domination, but most were located in cities. For the vast majority of African Americans enslaved in rural areas, more direct means of resistance were necessary.

On plantations and small farms, slave women and men employed a variety of methods to slow the pace of work, subvert the owners' authority, and create a sense of identity and community distinct from whites. A small number of slaves chose open rebellion over everyday resistance. Although none of these uprisings succeeded in toppling the institution of slavery, or even doing significant damage to it, each sent a shock wave of fear through the white South. Along with a small but growing movement opposed to slavery in the North, southern blacks' embrace of religion, resistance, and rebellion made clear that the institution of slavery could be maintained only by physical force and a strong political will.

Blacks Embrace Evangelical Religion In the early 1800s, evangelical Protestantism had questioned the sense of hierarchy favored by most large planters, but by the 1820s, this challenge had begun to fade. Nationwide, churches that embraced the new evangelical creed—Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians—saw their combined formal membership multiply more than thirteen times between 1800 and 1860. African Americans made up nearly one-third of Baptist membership and perhaps one-quarter of Methodists. Yet a vision of a Christian community united across race and class lines did not materialize.

In the 1820s, southern evangelical churches still housed diverse congregations, but increasingly, such mixed bodies of worshippers reinforced rather than subverted social and political hierarchies. Although poor whites

"The Meeting Continued All Night, Both by the White & Black People"

Camp meetings such as this one, held near Sparta, Georgia, in 1807, were a manifestation of the nationwide Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century. Like the first Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, the Second Great Awakening was notably egalitarian, with men, women, blacks, and poor whites mingling together in worship.

The Methodists have lately had a Camp Meeting in Hancock County, about three miles south of Sparta in Georgia. The meeting began on Tuesday, 28th July, at 12 o'clock, and ended on Saturday following. We counted thirty-seven Methodist preachers at the meeting; and with the assistance of a friend I took an account of the Tents, and there were one hundred and seventy-six of them, and many of them were very large. From the number of people who attended preaching at the rising of the sun, I concluded that there were about 3000 persons, white and black together, that lodged on the ground at night. I think the largest congregation was about 4000 hearers.

We fixed the plan to preach four times a day-at sunrise, 10 o'clock, 3 o'clock and at night; and in general we had an exhortation after the sermon.

. . . The first day of the meeting, we had a gentle and comfortable moving of the spirit of the Lord among us; and at night it was much more powerful than before, and the meeting was kept up all night without intermission however, before day the white people retired, and the meeting was continued by the black people.

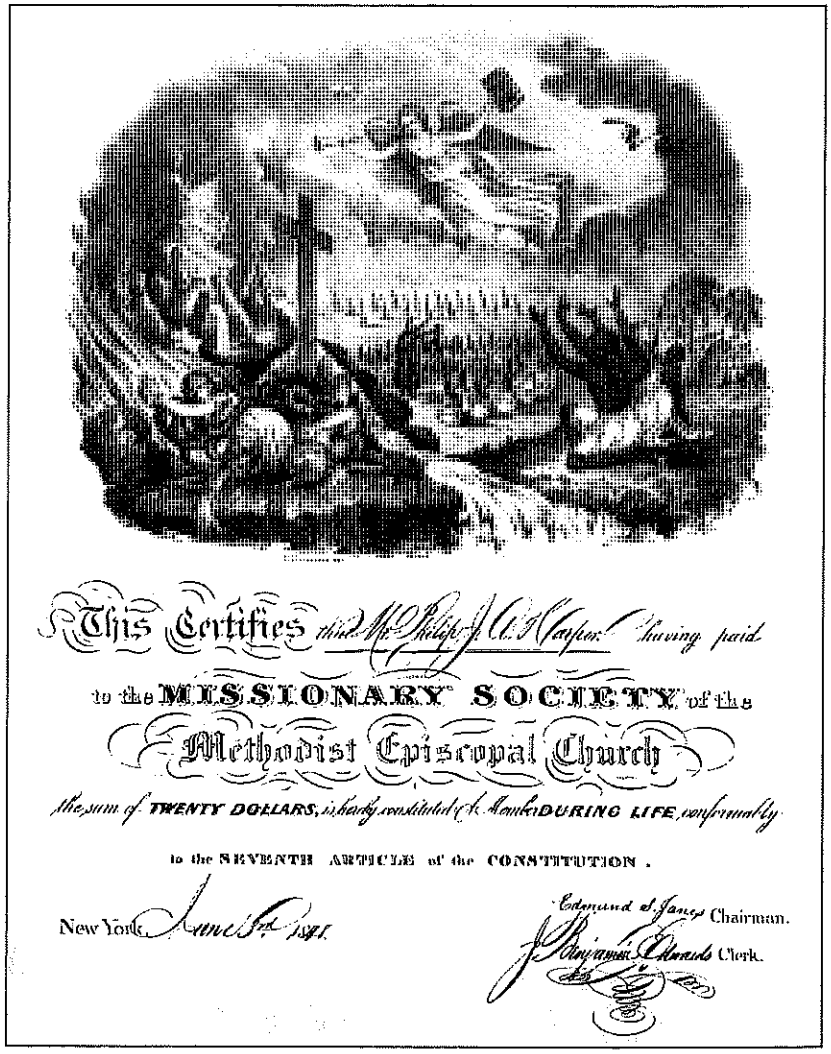
On Wednesday at 10 o'clock the meeting was remarkably lively, and many souls were deeply wrought upon; and at the close of the sermon there was a general cry for mercy; and before night there were a good many persons who professed to get converted. That night the meeting continued all night, both by the white & black people, and many souls were converted before day. . . .

Friday was the greatest day of all. We had the Lord's Supper at night, by candlelight, where several hundred communicants attended; and such a solemn time I have seldom seen on the like occasion; three of the preachers fell helpless within the altar; and one lay a considerable time before he came to himself. From that the work of convictions and conversion spread, and a large number were converted during the night, and there was no intermission until the breake of day at that time many stout hearted sinners were conquered.

Farmer's Gazette (Sparta, GA), Aug. 8, 1807, signed Jesse Lee, reprinted U. B. Phillips, *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society: Plantation and Frontier* vol. 2 (Cleveland: A. H. Clark, 1910), 284–286.

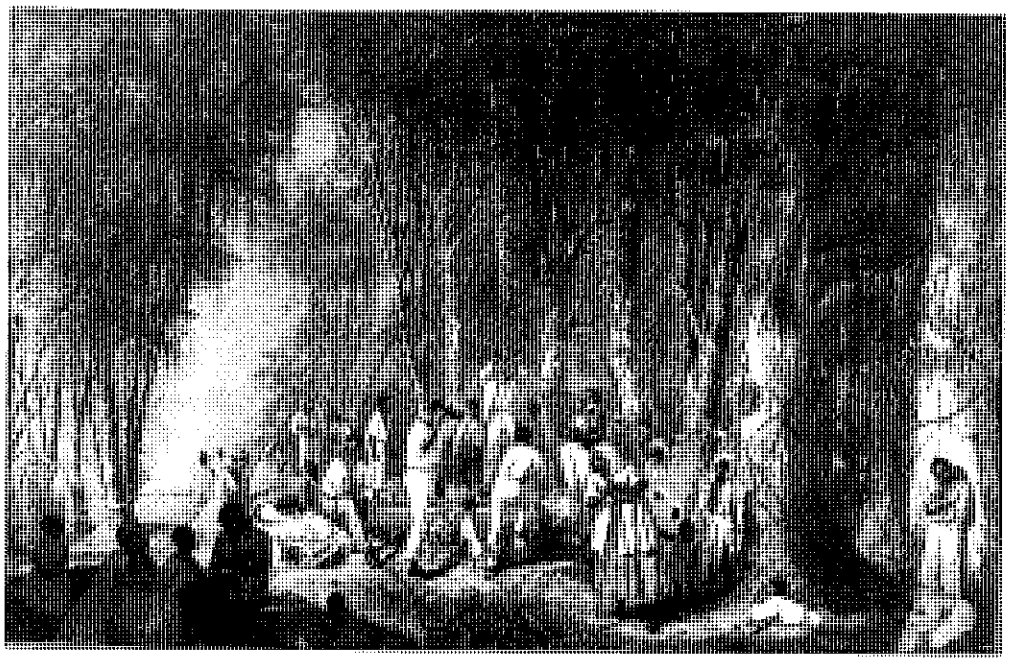
and slaves might pray alongside yeomen farmers and large planters, the minister to whom they listened was beholden to the wealthier parishioners. The denominations and ministers who continued to preach a more radically egalitarian message—the Quakers and Wesleyan Methodists, for instance—found themselves marginalized in the South, even silenced. Religion still provided solace for the less fortunate, but at least among southern whites, it no longer provided a powerful vehicle for resistance against planter domination.

From its emergence in the late 1700s, evangelical religion held a strong appeal for blacks as well as whites. Many African Americans sought to combine traditional African beliefs with elements of Christianity introduced by white preachers or by their owners. Although owners often used Christian beliefs to support the institution of slavery, claiming that it was God's will that Africans were in bondage and whites were free, slaves still found solace in religion. By accepting Christianity, slaves could claim membership in the same spiritual world as whites. Indeed, one unnamed black man, probably a slave of the Reverend John Fort, challenged a white preacher to include slaves equally in his ministries. "If God sent you to preach to sinners," the man asked, "did he direct you to keep your face to the white folks constantly or is it because these give you money[?]" The money might be "handed to you by our master," he noted, but "we are the very persons who labor for this money."



Missionary Society
The iconography on the certificate of the Methodist Episcopal Church's Missionary Society espoused the church's evangelical creed but obscured growing division among its members over the issue of slavery. Smithsonian Institution.

Some Protestant denominations allowed independent black congregations to form in the early 1800s. They were often linked to free black denominations in the North, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Although frequently sponsored and supervised by whites, these churches were the first and only community-wide institutions that allowed slaves membership. Their deacons and preachers (commonly free blacks) were some of the only African Americans whom whites permitted to play any kind of leadership role among slaves. Some black ministers even attracted a white following.



Plantation Burial
Funerals were sad occasions in the slave quarters, but they gave African Americans a chance to confirm their community identity. They were often held at night, so that friends and family members from neighboring farms could attend. John Antrobus, 1860, oil on canvas, 53 × 81 1/2 inches (1960.46) — The Historic New Orleans Collection.

In rural and frontier areas, ordained black ministers and established black or mixed-race congregations were harder to find. There, charismatic individuals gathered groups of believers around them, opening leadership roles to slaves and to African American women, who were largely excluded from the ordained ministry. A traveler in the Georgia backcountry in the 1830s witnessed a group of some two hundred slaves attending an open-air funeral service under the direction of a "preacher" from the local slave community.

Black women were especially active in the evangelical movement. Evangelical practices could replace traditional African birth rituals as protection for their children. Evangelicalism could also be wielded as a weapon against sexual abuse, as when women called on church authorities to discipline owners, employers, and even ministers who exploited them. Women made up well over half of black evangelical converts throughout the early 1800s, and some women drew on African customs that recognized women as spiritual leaders. Clarinda, a self-appointed preacher in Beaufort, South Carolina, attracted unrelenting hostility from white and black church leaders but also welcomed a steady stream of followers to attend weekly meetings in her home.

Relying on African American forms of evangelical Protestantism, slaves and free blacks were able to formulate their own standards of proper behavior. They used these to judge their treatment by whites and to clarify mutual rights and obligations among themselves. For instance, the all-black Gillfield Baptist Church in Petersburg, Virginia, expelled a man named David for adultery and for slandering "every Sister in the Church." Through such

means, southern blacks strengthened their sense of group identity and their ties to one another. At the same time, they asserted an increased (if still very restricted) degree of self-regulation and self-rule.

A Battle of Wills: Daily Resistance and Open Rebellion Although some African Americans accommodated themselves to their owners' wishes in order to avoid sale, brutal beatings, or other forms of punishment, others demonstrated their opposition to bondage through everyday acts of resistance. Using whites' own prejudices about the laziness and irresponsibility of black labor, slaves broke tools, worked at a slow pace, damaged property, feigned illness or pregnancy, and engaged in other forms of sabotage. Slave cooks might spoil meals or spit in the soup before serving it. A few even poisoned their owners. Suspicious fires were also common on plantations. Slaves might use them to distract masters from other crimes, such as the theft of meat or other goods. Many enslaved men and women also ran away, hiding out for days or weeks at a time. Some of them, mostly men, found their way to freedom in the North.

Discipline

During the Civil War, Wilson Chinn, a former Louisiana slave, exhibited instruments of punishment devised by masters. Difficult to discern here, as well as in the original photograph, the initials of Chinn's master were branded on his forehead. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Despite nearly impossible odds, a small number of slaves chose open revolt over daily resistance. These revolts revealed the deep feelings and aspirations that slaves normally had to conceal from their masters. Although such open rebellions were rare, they were greatly feared by white southerners of all classes, and their outbreak often resonated across the region no matter how limited the actual event was.

In these direct challenges to planter authority, enslaved African Americans often wielded the values, language, and symbols of evangelical Protestantism that were regularly invoked by the whites who held them captive. Free African Americans who supported such rebellions made use of the nation's revolutionary and republican heritage to express their views. Certainly, the events

in Sainte-Domingue and the slave Gabriel's planned revolt in Richmond (see Chapter 5) worried southern planters. Most slaveholders were unaware of day-to-day resistance on their own plantations, both because it was concealed by the slaves' skilled performance and because their own social blindness led them to regard their slaves as docile, shiftless, or clumsy. Nonetheless, the image of the contented slave never fully managed to calm the slaveholders' deep-seated fear that, given the right circumstances, their slaves might rise up and cut their masters' throats. As Virginia Congressman John Randolph reported, "the night bell never tolls for fire in Richmond, that the [white] mother does not hug the infant more closely to her bosom."

In 1822, Denmark Vesey, a free black carpenter living in Charlesfon, South Carolina, was charged with organizing one of the broadest and best-planned insurrectionary conspiracies in southern history. Vesey, a merchant seaman, traveled widely, read antislavery literature, and quoted antislavery speeches and the Bible to convince other blacks of the possibility of emancipation. The white authorities believed that he had organized an insurrection that might involve as many as 9,000 slaves. Despite questionable evidence of an actual conspiracy, white authorities quickly arrested 131 Charleston blacks. Whatever the actual extent of Vesey's activities, he had managed to terrify local whites. In the summer of 1822, as a brutal warning to other would-be rebels, Vesey and thirty-six others were hanged.

Open rebellion against white domination did not end in 1822, however. Free blacks and skilled slaves, inspired by evangelical religion and whites' own debates over the place of slavery in the nation, would continue to play central roles in slave rebellions until the Civil War. Yet by 1830, it was clear that armed resistance was unlikely to overcome white hunger for bound labor, just as American Indian resistance was unable to thwart white hunger for land. With the power of government regulation and military force behind them, southern whites seemed destined to defeat all who stood in their way.

Emancipation by Any Means In the aftermath of the American Revolution, many white southerners, particularly in the Upper South, had imagined that slavery would one day end. After all, George Washington had left instructions in his will to free his slaves on his widow's death, and Thomas Jefferson had worried about sustaining the institution of bondage in a republic. In this context, ideas circulated regarding systems of gradual emancipation in which planters would be repaid for their investment in human flesh. Some, such as the wealthy white southerners who helped to found the American Colonization Society in 1816, planned for that day by raising funds to ship African Americans back to their "homeland." The organization received funds from private donors in the North and the South, evangelical churches, the U.S. Congress, and the Virginia and Maryland state

legislatures and did manage to send several boatloads of African Americans out of the country. In 1830, the Society established the nation of Liberia on the west coast of Africa to receive those it bought out of bondage.

Southern antislavery societies, usually dominated by Quakers, Methodists, or Baptists, also continued to exist during the first third of the nineteenth century, especially in the Upper South. Some white craft workers and farmers may have supported them. There were certainly instances in which white workers and tenant farmers encouraged and even helped individual slaves to escape from their masters.

Yet during the early 1800s, the total number of slaves who were freed by colonization or antislavery societies was tiny in comparison to the rapid growth in the slave population. With the profits promised by cotton, sugar, and rice, the entrenchment of slavery was assured. More and more opponents of human bondage, South and North, abandoned hopes for the peaceful and gradual disappearance of slavery, which was increasingly considered a "peculiar institution" within American society.

By the mid-1820s, some northern states had abolished slavery, and others had passed laws to ensure its eventual demise. New York was the last northern state to end slavery. In 1810, more than 60 percent of white households in Flatbush, on western Long Island (in what is today Brooklyn), con-

"Let No Man of Us Budge One Step": David Walker Demands Freedom

In a work that soon came to be known as David Walker's Appeal, *David Walker in 1829 demanded the complete and immediate emancipation of slaves in the United States, challenging the prevailing beliefs among most white critics of slavery that emancipation should come gradually and that free blacks should be sent abroad to distant colonies.*

Will any of us leave our homes and go to Africa? I hope not. Let them commence their attack upon us as they did on our brethren in Ohio, driving and beating us from our country, and my soul for theirs, they will have enough of it. Let no man of us budge one step, and let slaveholders come to beat us from our country. America is more our country, than it is the whites'—we have enriched it with our blood and tears. The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears:—and will they drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our blood?

. . . Throw away your fears and prejudices then, and enlighten us and treat us like men, and we will like you more than we do now hate you; and tell us now no more about colonization, for America is as much our country, as it is yours.—Treat us like men, and there is no danger but we will all live in peace and happiness together. For we are not like you, hardhearted, unmerciful, and unforgiving. What a happy country this will be, if the whites will listen.

David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal: To the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829).

Turner Rebellion

This woodcut was published in an 1831 account of the slave uprising. Samuel Warner, *Authentic and impartial narrative of the tragical scene which was witnessed in Southampton County (Virginia)* . . . (New York, 1831) — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

tained slaves. Owners of vast estates in New York's Hudson River Valley also held large numbers of slaves. Under New York's 1817 abolition act, children who were born into slavery before July 4, 1827, would have to serve as indentured servants until the age of twenty-eight if male and twenty-five if female. Most blacks throughout the North and Midwest were still denied voting rights, the right to testify in court, equal access to public accommodations and public schools, and entrance into an array of occupations. They were confined to menial and low-paying jobs and were subject to racist abuse and physical attacks. Still, more and more were technically free, and they founded an array of churches, schools, and mutual aid and literary societies to improve the quality of their lives.

Northern free blacks expressed their horror of slavery in a variety of ways. In 1826, members of the Massachusetts General Colored Association advocated both abolition and the advancement of free blacks. One especially compelling spokesperson was David Walker, the free-born son of a slave father. Walker had left his native North Carolina for Boston as a youth and there earned a living by selling clothing. He soon became a leading figure in the city's growing free black community and an agent and writer for the New York–based *Freedom's Journal*, the nation's first newspaper published by African Americans.

In 1829, Walker published *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, a pamphlet that caused a sensation. Its militant tone and call to action by the slaves marked a fundamental breach with earlier antislavery arguments. "Brethren," Walker urged, "arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour." When he did address white readers, Walker quoted their own revolutionary principles: "ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Walker claimed for slaves the rights proclaimed "in this Republican Land of Liberty."

On an oppressively hot August night in 1831, Walker's demands were written in blood in an uprising in Southampton County, Virginia. Nat Turner, a religious leader and self-styled Baptist minister, was also a skilled slave who had been forced into field work and then sold away from his wife. Turner had received a vision while working in the fields, and he believed

that God had assigned him a mission. Although he was polite and respectful when in the company of whites, he plotted with a close circle of friends and family to overthrow their masters. On the night of August 21, 1831, Turner and a group of supporters killed all the members of the Travis family, his owners, beginning a bloody insurrection and a desperate, ultimately unsuccessful, bid for freedom that would end in the deaths of some 60 white men, women, and children.

Turner and all his coconspirators were captured and tried, but Turner refused to acknowledge that he had done anything wrong. In prison, the rebellious prophet continued to draw strength from his Christian faith. "Was not Christ crucified?" he proclaimed. Although Turner and sixteen of his compatriots were executed, the uprising continued to haunt southern whites. A letter published in the *Richmond Whig* a month after Turner's capture placed responsibility for his religious zealotry squarely in the hands of white evangelical preachers and their "canting about equality." It was they, or perhaps the master's son who had taught Turner to read, who had infected "an imagination like Nat's" with "the possibility of freeing himself and his race from bondage."

Slaves paid dearly in the aftermath of the rebellion. Many were randomly killed all over Southampton County; some were beheaded and their heads posted along roads to serve as a warning to others. In nearby Richmond, the Virginia legislature defeated the proposal that would have instituted gradual emancipation and colonization. Instead, southern planters now tightened their grip on blacks, free and enslaved, and on anyone else who challenged their right to hold humans in bondage.

These hard-nosed planter tactics allowed northern abolitionists to gain a more sympathetic audience for their cause. Labor leader George Henry Evans openly defended Turner's insurrection in his New York City abolitionist paper, the *Daily Sentinel.* Regretting the bloodshed, Evans noted that the rebels

> no doubt thought that their only hope . . . was to put to death, indiscriminately the whole race of those who held them in bondage. If such were their impressions, were they not justifiable in doing so? Undoubtedly they were, if freedom is the birthright of man, as the declaration of independence tells us. . . . Those who kept them in slavery and ignorance alone are answerable for their conduct.

In the year of Turner's uprising, important new voices arose in the slaves' defense. William Lloyd Garrison, a white journalist and reformer living in Boston, invoked evangelical and republican principles to demand the "immediate abolition" of slavery. Noting that the U.S. Constitution failed to abolish the institution of slavery, he called it "a covenant with

death, an agreement with Hell." He insisted that slave owners should receive no compensation for slaves who were liberated through abolition, since the owners had already received the profits of the slaves' labor. Such demands, however, only hardened resistance to the antislavery message among the planter class.

The Planter Class Consolidates Power

Faced with resistance by slaves and a small but growing critique of human bondage by whites, southern planters worked to shore up the institution of slavery. They did so by further limiting the rights of slaves and free blacks in the South and by reinforcing their economic supremacy through political dominance. They depended as well on the support of northern whites, whose financial success was tied to the spread of plantation agriculture, especially cotton. Still, fearing that these efforts were not sufficient to protect the system of slavery, southern Congressman tried to silence discussions of abolition in Congress. They also argued with growing vehemence that the rights of states to determine their own economic and social policies had to be defended against unconstitutional assertions of federal authority.

Planters Tighten Their Grip Only a small minority of northerners ever signed an antislavery petition or subscribed to abolitionist newspapers, yet those who did represented a serious threat to white southerners. Legislators in Virginia and North Carolina, fearing the influence of antislavery literature, made it illegal to teach slaves to read. Other states outlawed black-controlled worship services. James Henry Hammond, a South Carolina planter, informed his journal in 1831, "Intend to break up negro preaching and negro churches. . . . [And] ordered night [prayer] meetings on the plantation to be discontinued."

Increasingly, the only preaching that planters allowed was that which bound slaves more tightly to their masters. Slaves were clear about the effects of this shift in attitudes. "Talk not about kind and Christian master," James W. C. Pennington, a Maryland-born slave, wrote after his escape. "They are not masters of the system. The system is master of them." One of the last hopes for racial cooperation in the South, the evangelical church with a mixed-race congregation, was lost.

By 1830, the growth of the free black population in the South had slowed considerably. Those who managed to avoid the chains of enslavement and to remain in the region lived predominantly in urban areas, such as Baltimore, the District of Columbia, Savannah, and New Orleans. They supported themselves as manual laborers, domestics, petty traders, artisans, or small shopkeepers. Within these free black communities, women generally outnumbered men, making it difficult to form and sustain intact free

"The Colored Man Has No Redress": Free African Americans Struggle in the South

Uneasy about the existence of a free black population in the South, lawmakers passed strict measures restricting the rights of nonslave African Americans in their states, as described by a black Kentuckian named Washington Spaulding.

Our Principal Difficulty here grows out of the police laws, which are very stringent. For instance, a police officer may go [to] a house at night, without any search warrant, and, if the door is not opened when he knocks, force it in, and ransack the house, and the colored man has no redress. At other times, they come and say they are hunting for stolen goods or runaway slaves, and, some of them being great scoundrels, if they see a piece of goods, which may have been purchased, they will take it and carry it off. If I go out of the state, I cannot come back to it again. The penalty is imprisonment in the penitentiary. . . . If a freeman comes here (perhaps he may have been born free), he cannot get free papers, and if the police find out that he has got no free papers, they snap him up, and put him in jail. Sometimes they remain in jail three, four, and five months before they are brought to trial. My children are just tied down here. If they go to Louisiana, there is no chance for them, unless I can get some white man to go to New Orleans and swear they belong to him, and claim them as his slaves. . . . There are many cases of assault and battery in which we can have no redress. I have known a case here where a man bought himself three times. The last time, he was chained on board a boat, to be sent South, when a gentleman who now lives in New York saw him, and bought him, and gave him his free papers.

American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission Interviews, Samuel G. Howe, in John W. Blassingame, *Slave Testimony* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1977), 385–386.

black families. The children of free mothers, especially when a father was not present, were subject to apprenticeship laws that placed them in virtual bondage to white employers. To survive in this setting, free blacks in the South formed support networks among themselves, founded their own churches and clubs, and demonstrated, at least in public, deference to the whites who paid their wages, bought their goods and services, and tolerated their presence.

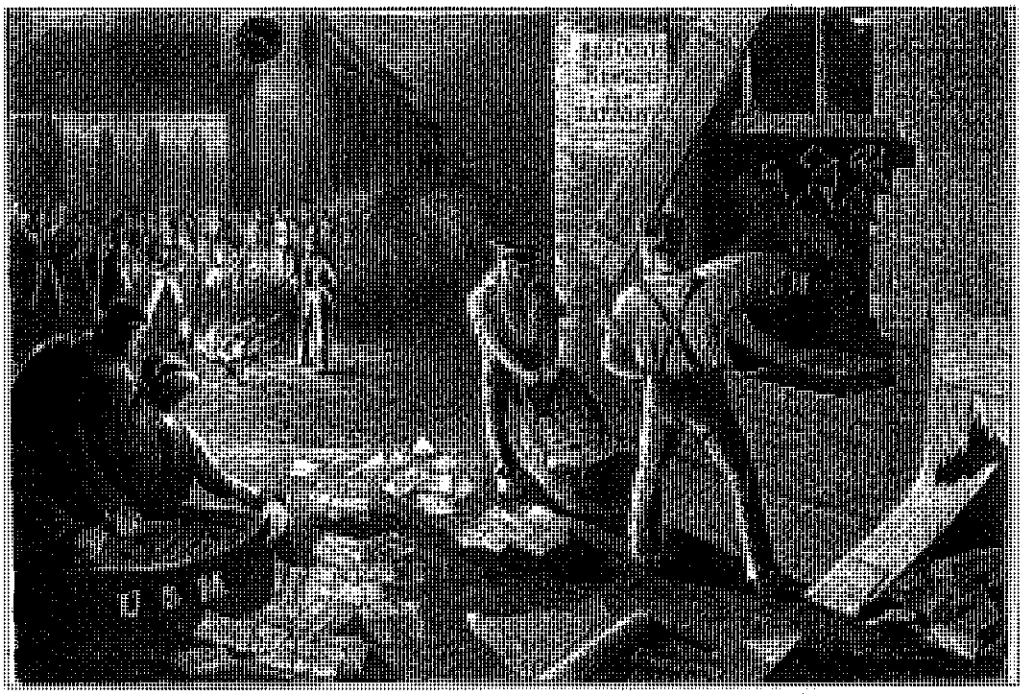
Yet in the aftermath of Nat Turner's rebellion, whites assumed that the freedom of any blacks could stimulate dangerous notions among slaves. An 1831 petition to Virginia's legislature explained whites' fears. Once "indulged with the hope of freedom," otherwise "submissive and easily controlled" slaves "reject restraint and become almost wholly unmanageable." The Virginia legislature immediately passed new restrictions on the activities of free blacks, denying them the right to own firearms, be ordained as ministers,

or meet for worship without the permission of local white officials. By the 1830s, free blacks in every southern state found their rights limited, their movements restricted, and their very presence assailed and sometimes banned. The mere presence of free blacks in a society built on racial slavery marked a powerful contradiction, one that white elites worked hard to contain.

Having further restricted the rights and movements of slaves and free blacks, state and local governments in the South also suppressed nearly all opposition to, and even doubts about, chattel slavery. They banned antislavery messages in books, newspapers, schools, politics, or any other public forum. And they fought back directly against northern abolitionists. Georgia offered a $5,000 reward for the trial and conviction "under the laws of this state" of abolitionist editor William Lloyd Garrison. A reward of $1,000 was offered for the delivery of David Walker's corpse and $10,000 if he was captured and returned to the South alive.

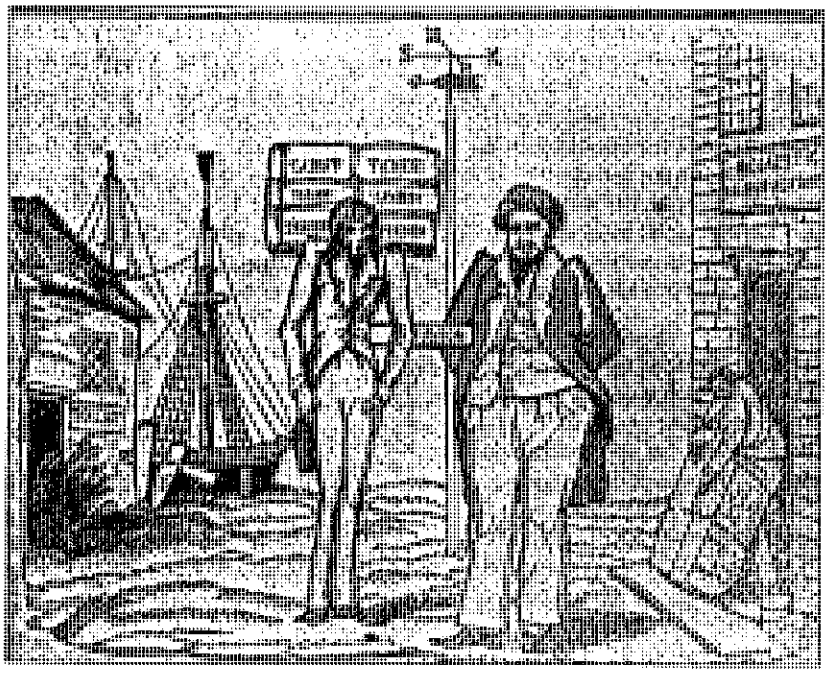
The Political Dimensions of Planter Control Southern planters were relieved that as the battles over slavery escalated, they could count on the support of the nation's highest authority, the president of the United States. Andrew Jackson, a Tennessee slave owner, Indian fighter, and celebrated military leader, had captured the White House in 1828 with widespread support from southern and western voters (see Chapter 7).

In most cases, Jackson rewarded his southern constituency by supporting their goals, particularly when it came to slavery. In his annual message to Congress in 1835, the president called for legislation to prohibit, "under



New Method of Assorting the Mail, as Practised by Southern Slave-Holders

This print depicted a July 1835 nighttime raid on the Charleston, South Carolina, Post Office. An antiabolitionist crowd broke into the building, removed antislavery mail, and burned it in the street. Library Company of Philadelphia.



Nullification

An anonymous contemporary cartoon provided a simple diagram of the tariff issue from the southern perspective. Northern industry is represented by the corpulent figure on the right, thriving thanks to the tariff's protection from foreign competition. Meanwhile, his conjoined twin, a skeletal South, staggers beneath his economic burden in front of a foreclosed farmhouse and an idle ship. General Collections, Library of Congress.

severe penalties, the circulation in the Southern States, through the mail, of incendiary publications intended to instigate the slaves to insurrection." Recognizing their support in the White House, in May 1836, southern congressmen succeeded in instituting a gag rule in the House of Representatives so that all antislavery petitions were rejected without consideration.

However, aware of the dangers posed by antislavery advocates, by the North's greater representation in the U.S. Congress, and by the nation's commercial and industrial development, southern planters could not depend on federal power alone, even with a sympathetic president in the White House. They needed as well to reassert the power of the states to control their own destinies. Therefore, they argued with renewed force that the U.S. Constitution had given only certain powers to the federal government; the rest were reserved for the states. This reassertion of states' rights drove a wedge between President Jackson and southern political leaders.

Determined to assert the primacy of states' rights, South Carolina seized the political initiative in the early 1830s. The tariff of 1832 provided the pretext. In 1828, Congress had increased tariffs on a range of manufactured goods, passing a bill known to southern critics as the "tariff of abominations." Before the northern and southern economies had begun to diverge sharply, slave owners such as South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun had supported protectionism. As cotton prices plunged from 1819 on, however, high tariffs on manufactured goods created a crisis. Although the Tariff of 1832, signed into law by President Jackson, moderated some high rates, it did not lower rates on cloth or iron products. Moreover, southern politicians

had now come to despise tariffs on imported, manufactured goods as an arbitrary tax levied by the industrializing North on the agricultural South. Because of their emphasis on growing cotton and other crops for export, Southern planters wanted to lower the price of manufactured goods, most of which they had to purchase at tariff-inflated prices. This way, they could keep their profits from flowing into the pockets of northern merchants. In November 1832, South Carolina's leadership met in special convention and declared the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 "null, void, no law, nor binding upon this state, its officers or citizens." Sounding surprisingly like the Cherokee Nation in declaring its sovereignty, South Carolina forbade the collection of the tariff by federal agents and refused to enforce it within state boundaries.

This stance was backed by stronger sentiments and deeper calculations than those connected simply with the tariff. By nullifying this federal law, South Carolina meant to serve notice that it would not allow the federal government to impose any laws harmful to planter interests. Thus, even as government agents and troops were welcomed in Georgia and the Carolinas to help in the removal of Indians, planters were asserting their freedom from unwanted federal interference. As Robert Turnbull, a South Carolina planter, explained of his opposition to the tariffs: "[G]reat as is this evil, it is perhaps the least of the evils which attend an abandonment of one iota of the principle of controversy. Our dispute involves questions of the most fearful import to the institutions and tranquility of South Carolina."

Although sympathetic toward his fellow planters, President Jackson considered Carolinians' fears exaggerated and responded angrily to their attacks on the federal government, of which he was, after all, the chief executive. He promptly reinforced the federal fort in Charleston Harbor and obtained a "force bill" from Congress authorizing the use of the military to implement federal law. Henry Clay, his opponent in the presidential race, joined with other congressmen to fashion a compromise. Congress agreed to reduce tariffs over the next nine years, and in early 1833, South Carolina repealed its nullification act. But to demonstrate its continued belief in the right of states to veto federal law, South Carolina also nullified Jackson's force bill. The defiant gesture kept the states' rights claim alive, but it could not conceal the defeat of the nullification strategy at this stage.

Conclusion: The Challenges of a Slave Society

Despite southern planters' attempts to isolate themselves from northern antislavery advocates and unpopular federal mandates, the expansion of agricultural production continued to link them with merchants, manufacturers, cotton factors (entrepreneurs involved in the cotton trade), and industrial and maritime workers in the North and in England. Although

other goods were important in the South's economy, cotton was the one that formed the strongest ties to those outside the region. It also served as the main thread that connected poor whites, small farmers, and slaves with plantation owners. Within the web of southern labor and economic relations, growing distinctions appeared between blacks and whites, between free people and slaves, and between wealthy planters and yeoman farmers. By the mid-1830s, as the plantation system expanded and consolidated, differences among these diverse groups crystallized, and social movement became more and more difficult. Yet one consequence of the growing differentiation among southerners was the increasing dependence of slaves, free blacks, and yeomen on the resources and largesse of large planters. Plantation owners considered the growing classes of dependents as evidence of their success. Those lower down the ladder chafed at the restrictions placed on them, but few could seriously contest the new order.

At the same time, planters themselves were caught up in a larger web of regional, national, and global connections in which they found themselves dependent on others for their own success. In fact, protecting the plantation system depended in part on the planters' ability to ensure that the strength of a cotton economy would bind together whites of all classes across the South as well as affluent whites across the nation and across the sea who served as the planters' trading partners.

Moreover, even as northern states gradually abolished slavery within their own borders, residents of those areas continued to rely on the products and profits of slave labor to support the industry and commerce that fueled their economic growth. Manufacturers who supplied the South with textiles, shoes, plows, and other finished products were deeply committed to the cotton economy. Such economic ties ensured that, even as those in the free states saw themselves as increasingly distinct from their southern neighbors, they were still intimately connected to the success of slavery. In this sense, King Cotton spun a web that encompassed the entire nation.

The Years in Review

1793

- Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin, a machine that removes seed from cotton bolls, significantly reducing the labor required to harvest large amounts of cotton.
- Congress passes the Fugitive Slave Act, making it a federal crime to assist an escaping slave, even in "free" states.

1800

- A Virginia slave and blacksmith named Gabriel organizes an insurrection aimed at seizing Richmond; white authorities discover the widespread conspiracy, and Gabriel and thirty-five others are hanged.

1803

- The French government sells the Louisiana Territory to the United States; Meriwether Lewis and William Clark set out to map it the next year.

1804

- Thomas Jefferson is reelected president of the United States over Federalist Charles C. Pinckney.
- After a decade of violent struggle against Spanish and French colonial rulers, Haiti declares itself an independent republic; these developments inspire free African Americans and slaves and alarm southern slave owners.

1807

- To protest British and French interference with U.S. shipping during the Napoleonic wars, Congress passes the Embargo Act, which forbids U.S. ships to sail for any foreign ports.

1808

- Congress enacts the ban on slave importation recommended in the U.S. Constitution, leading to growth in the internal slave trade.
- Republican James Madison defeats Federalist Charles C. Pinckney for the presidency; Madison is reelected four years later.

1812

- The United States declares war on Great Britain.

1814

- The Battle of Horseshoe Bend ends more than a year of violent resistance by young Creek warriors (known as Red Sticks), who were defeated by white southern militiamen and their Indian allies; the Treaty of Fort Jackson transfers fourteen million acres of Creek territory to U.S. control.

1816

- James Monroe is elected president in a landslide; four years later, he is reelected without organized opposition.

1817

- The American Colonization Society is founded with the goal of eventually freeing slaves and resettling all African Americans in Africa.
- New York is the last northern state to abolish slavery, enacting a gradual abolition act that phases out slavery over more than two decades.
- President Monroe vetoes the "Bonus Bill," which would have established a national fund for constructing roads and other internal improvements, thus leaving such efforts to the states.

1819

- Secretary of State John Quincy Adams negotiates the Adams-Onís Treaty, whereby the United States purchases the territory of Florida from Spain for $5 million, Spain gives up all claims on the Oregon territory, and the United States gives up its claims to Texas.

1820

- Congress breaks a stalemate over admitting Missouri to the union as a slave state by devising the Missouri Compromise: Missouri is admitted with no restrictions on slavery, Maine is admitted as a free state, and the line of Missouri's southern border is extended westward with the provision that no territory north of that line will be admitted to the union as a slave state.

1822

- Free black carpenter Denmark Vesey allegedly organizes an insurrectionary conspiracy in Charleston, South Carolina; 131 free and enslaved African Americans are arrested, and 37 are hanged.
- The American Colonization Society establishes Liberia on the west coast of Africa to resettle African Americans.

1824

- No candidate receives the majority in the presidential election; the House of Representatives selects John Quincy Adams over Andrew Jackson, who had received the largest number of popular and electoral votes.

1827

- The Cherokees adopt a formal constitution modeled on that of the United States.

1828

- Congress passes a new tariff law imposing taxes on imported manufactured goods; southern critics label it the "Tariff of Abominations," and four years later, South Carolina declares it "null" and "void."
- Andrew Jackson is elected president over John Quincy Adams in a dirty campaign.

1829

- Mexico outlaws slavery in Texas, but southerners, led by Stephen Austin, continue to settle there in defiance of the terms of the Adams-Onís Treaty.
- David Walker publishes his *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, a seventy-six-page pamphlet that calls on slaves to "Strike for your lives and liberties."

1830

- President Andrew Jackson promotes and Congress passes the Indian Removal Act, which offers Indians land west of the Mississippi River in exchange for their current territorial holdings; under pressure and threats, many tribes sign away land; tens of thousands are pressured to move west.

1831

- In the case *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that Cherokees, who are trying to fight removal, do not have independent political authority.
- Religious leader Nat Turner leads a slave insurrection in Virginia; Turner and sixteen of his allies are caught, tried, and executed.

1832

- Andrew Jackson wins reelection to the presidency over Henry Clay.
- A state convention in South Carolina declares the federal tariff null and void and threatens to secede if the federal government tries to enforce its collection; a year later, South Carolina repeals this nullification act after Congress agrees to reduce tariffs over the next nine years.

1836

- The U.S. House of Representatives institutes a gag rule that automatically prevents debate on all future antislavery petitions.

1838

- Fifteen thousand Cherokees who had earlier refused the U.S. government's offer of land in the West are uprooted by federal troops and led across the 800-mile Trail of Tears to present-day Oklahoma; 4,000 die from starvation and exposure to the cold.

Additional Readings

For more on American Indians in the early nineteenth century, see: Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West Before Lewis and Clark* (2003); Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (2003); Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (1998); Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (1999); and Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (1983).

For more on the experiences of American slaves, see: Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1969); Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (1985); Charles Joyner, *Down By the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (1984); August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, 3rd ed. (1976); Gilbert Osofsky, ed., *Puttin' On Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northrup* (1969); Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (2003); Willie Lee Rose, ed., *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America* (1976); Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (2000); Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (1996); and Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (1985).

For more on planters and nonslaveholding whites, see: Charles Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeastern Mississippi* (1994); Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation, 1838–1839*, edited with an introduction by John A. Scott (1984); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeomen Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (1995); and James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (1982).

For more on free African Americans, see: Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (1974); Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in American Society, 1800–1850* (1981); Virginia Meacham Gould, ed., *Chained to the Rock of Adversity: To Be Free, Black and Female in the Old South* (1998); and Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (1969).

For more on religion and resistance among slaves, see: Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and the British Caribbean to 1830* (1998); Donald Matthews, *Religion in the Old South* (1977); Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (1972); Stephen B. Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion* (1975); and Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (1978).

For more on the economic effects of slavery, see: Stuart Bruchey, ed., *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy, 1790–1860* (1967); Eugene

D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (1965); Steven Hahn, and Jonathan Prude, eds., *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America* (1985); Allan Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (1992); Joseph P. Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton Plantation South* (1992); and Mark V. Tushnet, *The American Law of Slavery* (1981).