

Sectionalism 1820-1850

Definition: Sectionalism is having loyalty to a particular region

During this period the United States had two political parties
In the North – Federalists: In the South – Democratic-Republicans

The North

This area covered New England and the Middle Atlantic States and also included the Old Northwest, an area from Ohio to Minnesota

This was the most populated area due to a high birthrate and increased immigration

U.S. Manufacturing by Region, according to the 1860 census.

Area of the United States	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees	Value of Products made/produced
North Atlantic States	69,831	900,107	\$ 1,213,897,518
Old North West States	33,335	188,651	\$ 346,675,290
Southern States	27,779	166,803	\$ 248,090,580
Western States	8,777	50,204	\$ 71,229,989

Labor: There were many problems of low pay, long hours, poor working conditions etc. This resulted in the first Labor Party being formed in Philadelphia in 1828. With the emergence of unions by the 1830's strikes were seen. In 1842 the Massachusetts Supreme Court in *Commonwealth v. Hunt*, ruled that "peaceful" unions had the right to negotiate contracts. However, by the 1850's any laws that the North had passed for labor improvement had been offset by:-

1. periodic economic depressions
2. employers and courts became hostile to unions
3. an abundant supply of cheap immigrant labor.

Urban Life: In 1800 5% of the population lived in urban areas. By 1850 this was 15%, mostly along the Boston to Baltimore corridor.

Most of these cities were ridden by slums, disease and crime.

By 1860 there were 250,000 African Americans in the North but they were still only 1% of the population. As Free Citizens they were 50% of the national total but still they had no voting rights, no titles to owning land, no skilled jobs and they were not allowed to join any unions.

The Agricultural Northwest

This region consisted of six (6) states: Ohio (1803), Indiana (1816), Illinois (1818), Michigan (1837), Wisconsin (1848) and Minnesota (1853). These lands were all drawn by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

The growth of this region was tied to the North by two major factors:-

1. Military campaigns by federal troops drove away the Native Americans
2. Canals and railroads linked the Great Lakes regions with the East Coast

After 1820 the following cities became major transportation links for agricultural produce to the east and central distribution points for manufactured goods from the east: Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago – on the Great Lakes
Cincinnati and St. Louis on the major rivers.

Immigration Patterns between 1820-1850

In 1820 only 4,000 immigrants arrived from Europe. Between 1830 and 1850 over 4 million people arrived from Northern Europe, the highest being in 1854 when 428,000 people arrived at America's shores.

This growth was assisted by:-

1. Cheaper ocean transportation
2. Famines and revolutions within Europe
3. The reputation of America being a land of opportunity.

These immigrants strengthened the national economy as they provide a source of cheap labor and a demand for mass-produced goods.

Irish: during this period over 2 million arrived. They were mostly poor tenant farmers who fled due to the potato famine. They took away the unskilled jobs from the African American populations and subsequently created anti-Catholic discrimination. Many lived in Boston, Philadelphia and New York. Most became involved with the Democratic Party, still having anti-British feelings. By the 1880's the Irish had full control of the famous Tammany Hall.

Germans: Over 1 million arrived during the 1840's and 1850's. They left their homeland due to economic hardships and the political revolution of 1848. They were skilled farmers and artisans, many of whom began a westward movement to create homesteads in the Old Northwest.

A large number of native-born Americans (**Nativists**) feared the rise of immigrants would take away their jobs and weaken the culture of the Anglo majority in America. These people began sporadic riots in the cities and even organized a secret antiforeign society – the Supreme Order of the Star-Spangled Banner. In the 1850's this party entered politics and formed the American party, also known as the Know-Nothing Party. The party would fade in importance prior to the Civil War but would always return when there was a sharp rise in immigration.

The South

Economically, politically and socially this area covered a distinct region that permitted slavery. It also included certain states that did not join the Confederacy in 1861 – Delaware, Maryland and Kentucky.

Agriculture was the foundation of the areas economy even though the region produced about 15% of the nation's manufactured goods. Cash Crops grown were tobacco, rice and sugar cane but the chief economic activity still revolved around Cotton.

The Industrial Revolution in England with the mechanized textile plants and the Cotton Gin of Eli Whitney made an alliance between the South and England. Originally South Carolina and Georgia were the main suppliers but as demand and profits increased planters moved westward into Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. New land was constantly needed as high cotton yields were needed for profitability. However the growing techniques were bad and cotton crops quickly depleted the soil.

By the 1850's Cotton provided two-thirds of America's exports and tied the South directly to Great Britain.

Slavery – the “*Peculiar Institution*”

Wealth in the South was measured in land and the number of slaves owned. Some Southern Whites were sensitive to the fact that they were human beings but in the 19th century, apologists for slavery used historical and religious arguments to support their claim that it was good for both slave and master.

The cotton boom was largely responsible for a fourfold increase in the number of slaves into this region.

In 1800 there were about 1 million slaves

In 1860 there were nearly 4 million slaves in total.

Most of this increase came from natural reproduction but thousands were smuggled into the country regardless of federal regulations prohibiting their entry.

United States Labor Force 1800-1860 (in thousands)

Year	Free	Slaves	Total
1800	1,330	530	1,860
1810	1,590	740	2,330
1820	2,185	950	3,135
1830	3,020	1,180	4,200
1840	4,180	1,480	5,660
1850	6,280	1,970	8,250
1860	8,770	2,340	11,110

In many parts of the Deep South slaves made up as much as 75% of the total population forcing southern legislatures to increase restrictions on their movements and education.

Most slaves worked the field but some were also experts in skilled crafts. Many worked as house servants or factory workers or even in construction gangs. Because of the greater profits on the new cotton plantations in the West many slaves were sold between these areas and by 1860 the value of a field slave was almost \$2,000. One result of this high price was that the South had less capital available to undertake industrialization as was seen in the North.

A slaves' living conditions varied from one plantation to another. Some were treated humanely, others always beaten and deprived of any freedom. Families could be sold and separated and women were vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Despite all this the slaves still managed to keep their sense of family and religious faith.

In protest some slaves had work slowdowns, sabotage, revolts and many escaped. Uprisings were rare (Denmark Vesey-1822 and Nat Turner-1831). They were quickly and violently suppressed but they had a lasting impact as they gave hope to the many but also enforced stricter slave codes, and demonstrated to those in the North the evils of slavery.

By the 1860's there were as many as 250,000 African Americans in the south that were not slaves, they were free people even though racial prejudice restricted their liberties. They became free as a result of:-

- Emancipation during the American Revolution
- Mulatto children liberated by their white fathers
- Self-purchase, from wages such as craftsmen

Most of the free southern blacks lived in cities – where they could own property. They could not vote and were barred from entering certain occupations. They lived in fear of kidnapping by slave traders. Still, they remained in the south, mostly due to family ties, family members still in bondage and a belief that the North offered no greater opportunity.

White Society still contained a rigid hierarchy.

Aristocracy: to be a member of this elite class one had to own at least 100 slaves and farm at least 1,000 acres of land. This group dominated the state legislatures of the South and enacted laws that favored large landholders' economic interests.

Farmers: they were the vast majority of slave owners, each having fewer than 20 slaves and owned only several hundred acres of land. They produced the bulk of the South's cotton while working in the fields with their slaves and lived as modest life, similar to that of a farmer in the North.

Poor Whites: they consisted of three-quarters of the South's white population. They did not own any slaves and could not afford any of the rich farmland. They mostly lived in the hills as subsistence farmers and were labeled as "hillbillies" or "poor white trash." They defended slavery as they dreamed that someday they too could own blacks and believed that they were superior on the social scale to someone, namely slaves.

Mountain people lived on the frontiers on the slopes and valleys of the Appalachian and Ozark mountains. They were isolated from the rest of the South and disliked the planters and their slaves. During the civil War many (including future president Andrew Johnson of Tennessee) would remain loyal to the Union.

Urbanization: Because of the dominance of agriculture there was only a limited need for cities in the South. Only New Orleans could be counted in the nation's top 15 in 1860. Cities such as Atlanta, Charleston, Chattanooga and Richmond were important trading centers but much smaller than those in the North.

Culture: The South developed a unique way of life. Slavery was the focus of political thought. The South became isolated and defensive about slavery, especially when the North opposed it and England, France and other European nations outlawed it altogether.

There existed a **Code of Chivalry** in the South. Still a feudal society the Southern gentlemen had a strong sense of personal honor, defending womanhood and carried a paternalistic treatment of all who were deemed inferior, especially slaves. The upper class valued a college education for their children but they were limited to farming, law, the ministry and the military.

Education: For the lower classes education beyond elementary grades was not available. To reduce riots and revolts slaves were prohibited from learning how to read and write.

Religion: Slavery affected church memberships. The Methodist and Baptist churches preached biblical support for slavery, so their numbers grew. The Unitarians, who challenged slavery, faced membership declines in the South. Catholics and Episcopalians (Church of England Protestants) took a neutral stance on slavery and subsequently their numbers declined.

The West

In the 1600's the West was the lands not along the Atlantic Coast.

In the 1700's the West was the lands on the other side of the Appalachian Mountains

In the mid-1800's the West lay beyond the Mississippi River and reached as far as California and the Oregon Territory on the Pacific Coast

Native Americans:

The original settlers of North America did not move west voluntarily. They were constantly tricked or pushed westwards. By 1850 the vast majority lived west of the Mississippi River. Those in the east had been killed off or forced westward by military action. The only safe area, though only temporary, was the Great Plains. Here some lived in small villages, grew crops and thanks to the horse, (from the Spanish in the 1500's), some such as the Cheyenne and Sioux were nomadic hunters of buffalo. These tribes could easily move away from the encroaching settlers.

The western frontier was constantly shifting from generation to generation. The West still beckoned as a place of greater freedom for all ethnic groups (Native Americans, African Americans, European Americans and Asian Americans).

The earliest whites in this area followed the trails of Lewis and Clark. They lived as hunters and trappers. These **Mountain Men**, as they became to be known, would serve as guides and pathfinders for future settlers crossing the mountains into California and Oregon in the 1840's. Daily life was similar to the early colonialists; they worked from sunrise to dusk. They lived in log cabins and died at an early age from either disease, starvation or Indian raids.

The role of **women** in this region was that of doctor, teacher, seamstress, cook, chief assistant to the fields and anything else required day-to-day. Isolation, endless work, hardships with childbirth meant a limited lifespan along the frontier.

European Americans had little understanding for the **environment**. As the settlers moved in they cleared away extensive woodland areas and exhausted the soil with their poor farming methods. At the same time trappers and hunters killed so many beavers and buffalo that they were close to extinction.