

# North and South: Different Societies, Same Country

The Civil War that raged across the nation from 1861 to 1865 was the violent conclusion to decades of diverse ideas and culture. Following the American Revolution the North and South followed different paths, gradually developing into two distinct and very different regions.

## **NORTH**

The northern soil and cooler climate favored smaller farmsteads rather than large plantations. Industry was the main economy and large cities were established for living and working (New York was the largest city with more than 800,000 inhabitants). By 1860, one quarter of all Northerners lived in urban areas. Between 1800 and 1860, the percentage of laborers working in agricultural pursuits dropped drastically from 70% to only 40%.

Slave labor had become less useful, replaced in the cities and factories by immigrant labor from Europe. In fact an overwhelming majority of immigrants, seven out of every eight, settled in the North rather than the South. Transportation was easier in the North, which boasted more than two-thirds of the railroad tracks in the country and the economy was on an upswing.

Politically more Northerners than Southerners belonged to the Whig/Republican political party, which believed that slavery should not extend into the new territory of the United States.

Northerners were more likely to have careers in business, medicine, or education than their Southern counterparts. Northern children more commonly attended school than Southern children.

## **SOUTH**

The fertile soil and warm climate of the South made it ideal for large-scale farms and crops like tobacco and cotton. Agriculture was so profitable few Southerners saw a need for industrial development and eighty percent of the labor force worked on the farm.

Although two-thirds of Southerners owned no slaves at all, by 1860 the South's institution of slave labor was inextricably tied to the region's economy and culture. The Southern economy relied on slave labor, which maintained the plantations and harvested the crops. Slavery was also culturally important, slaves were considered to be at the lowest level of society; therefore, a white southerner would always be above the black slave socially. In the South there were almost as many blacks - both slaves and free - in the South as there were whites (4 million blacks and 5.5 million whites).

In the South there were no large cities aside from New Orleans, and most of the small cities that did exist were located on rivers and coasts as shipping ports to send agricultural produce to European or Northern destinations.

Only one-tenth of Southerners lived in urban areas and transportation between cities was difficult, except by water. Only 35% of the nation's train tracks were located in the South. In 1860, the South's agricultural economy was beginning to stall while the Northern manufacturers were experiencing a boom.

A slightly smaller percentage of white Southerners were literate compared to their Northern counterparts, and Southern children tended to spend less time in school. As adults, Southern men tended to belong to the Democratic political party and gravitated toward military careers as well as agriculture. Many southerners favored a limited Federal government believing that each state had the right to declare a Federal law illegal, calling it *States Rights*.

## **Conclusion**

While the North and South shared the same country, federal government, history and were located beside each other they had some major differences. With growth of the nation in the first half of the nineteenth century, diverging cultural beliefs, and different economies; tensions were on the rise.

The balance of power in congress became increasingly important with the growing population and expansion of the borders to the west. More representatives and senators from free or slave states would affect the law making process. Northerners and Southerners alike began to fear a loss of the balance of power between free and slaveholding states.