



**THE COTTON KINGDOM:  
THE EXPANSION OF SLAVERY AND  
THE INTENSIFICATION OF SOUTHERN  
CULTURAL IDENTITY**

HISTORY 1100.3,  
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# I. COTTON, WESTWARD EXPANSION, & THE REINVIGORATION OF SLAVERY

- ◆ A. Southern slavery in the Early Republic
  - 1. Plantation economy was in decline in older eastern areas: land played out, markets for traditional crops like tobacco glutted, slaves too numerous to be profitably employed.
  - 2. Many Virginia planters like Washington & Jefferson thought slavery & plantation system were doomed, flirted with abolition, and looked to diversify into growing food crops (wheat) or creating light industries (TJ's nailery).
  - 3. Cotton gin, allowing profitable growth of "short-staple" cotton on the US main land, was invented in 1793.
  - 4. Indians, foreign empires still controlled too much land for cotton to have much economic effect.
- ◆ B. Impact of the War of 1812
  - 1. Humiliating stalemate in the North and East, including two failed invasions of Canada and the burning of Washington, D.C. in 1814.
  - 2. Smashing successful war of conquest in the Northwest and Southwest, against Indians and British, led by future presidents Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison.
  - 3. Origins of the Westward Movement: The Great Migration of 1815-1819
    - New states carved from Jackson and Harrison's Indian conquests: LA (1812), IN (1816), MS (1817), IL (1818), AL (1819).
    - Spurred westward movement of regional cultures, economic boom in sales of land & equipment to emigrants, expansion of banking to finance it all.
  - 4. Rescued slavery economically, put country on path to sectional crisis
    - Contrary to Jefferson's intentions, way was paved for a massive economic reinvigoration and expansion of plantation slavery and cotton growing. 1812, not cotton gin, was the catalyst.
    - Also expanded internal slave trade and launched new "middle passage" in which 100,000s of slaves were sent west ("sold down the river"). VA & other older states became slave exporters as prices rose.
- ◆ C. The Cotton Boom
  - 1. Dimensions: half of exports were cotton; U.S. richest counties were in cotton south
  - 2. Reorganization of the national economy around cotton: Hemp in the upper south and textiles in New England.

## **VIDEO: "AFRICANS IN AMERICA"**

- ◆ **Terms/concepts/names to watch for:**
  - **abolition of international slave trade (1808)**
  - **growth of domestic slave trade**
  - **American Colonization Society**
  - **Denmark Vesey**
  - **slave religion/Black church**
  - **Missouri Compromise**
  - **Scientific racism**
  - **"whitening" of citizenship in North**
  - **Free black communities in cities**
  - **proslavery argument ("happy slave," slavery as a "positive good")**
  - **Nat Turner**
  - **Virginia slavery debate**
  - **Harriet Jacobs**
  - **Abolitionism, varieties of and changes in: gradual, immediatism**
  - **David Walker and his *Appeal***
  - **William Lloyd Garrison**
  - ***The Liberator***
  - **"moral suasion"**
  - **anti-abolitionist riots**
  - **Elijah P. Lovejoy**

## II. RESURGENT SLAVERY AND SOUTHERN CULTURAL IDENTITY

- ◆ **A. Slavery, the peculiarly paranoid institution: Fear of rebellious slaves as the main underlying factor in history of Old South.** ([Click for black-white population chart.](#))
  - 1. Planters could not forget that slaves did not want to be slaves and would escape or resist if they could.
    - The "wolf by the ears": The racist, fear-based abolitionism of Thomas Jefferson.
  - 2. Necessity of violence and coercion (whipping, slave patrols) to keep slaves in bondage, contradicted many other southern political & social values.
  - 3. Acute consciousness of the fragility of the slave system: might be disturbed by a petition to Congress, a piece of mail, Boston newspaper, foreign rebellion, Indians.
- ◆ **B. Slavery's Impact on Southern Culture**
  - 1. Slavery had always made South distinct from other regions, but there had been hope that differences might fade. Cotton intensified the differences instead.
  - 2. Impact of slavery on southern whites: Slavery turned many slaveholders into depraved tyrants and taught their children to be same.
    - Slave master personality embodied all the negative traits of the patriarchal/monarchical authority that Americans had rejected.
    - Slavery destroyed work ethic by stigmatizing manual labor.
  - 3. Result: A violent, patriarchal culture, where white men lived by the code of "honor" & physically punished rivals, critics, challengers to their power.
    - In an "honor" culture, male behavior is driven by external factors such as social custom and reputation, as opposed to internal factors such as principle and conscience. Insults must be avenged. Dueling between equals, beatings for inferiors.
    - "Honor" puts honorable men above the law or any other institutions.
    - Eye-gouging, "abelarding" and gunfighting: the poor(er) white version of dueling.

## II. RESURGENT SLAVERY AND SOUTHERN CULTURAL IDENTITY (CONT.)

### ◆ C. Cotton and the Intensification of Southern Cultural Differences

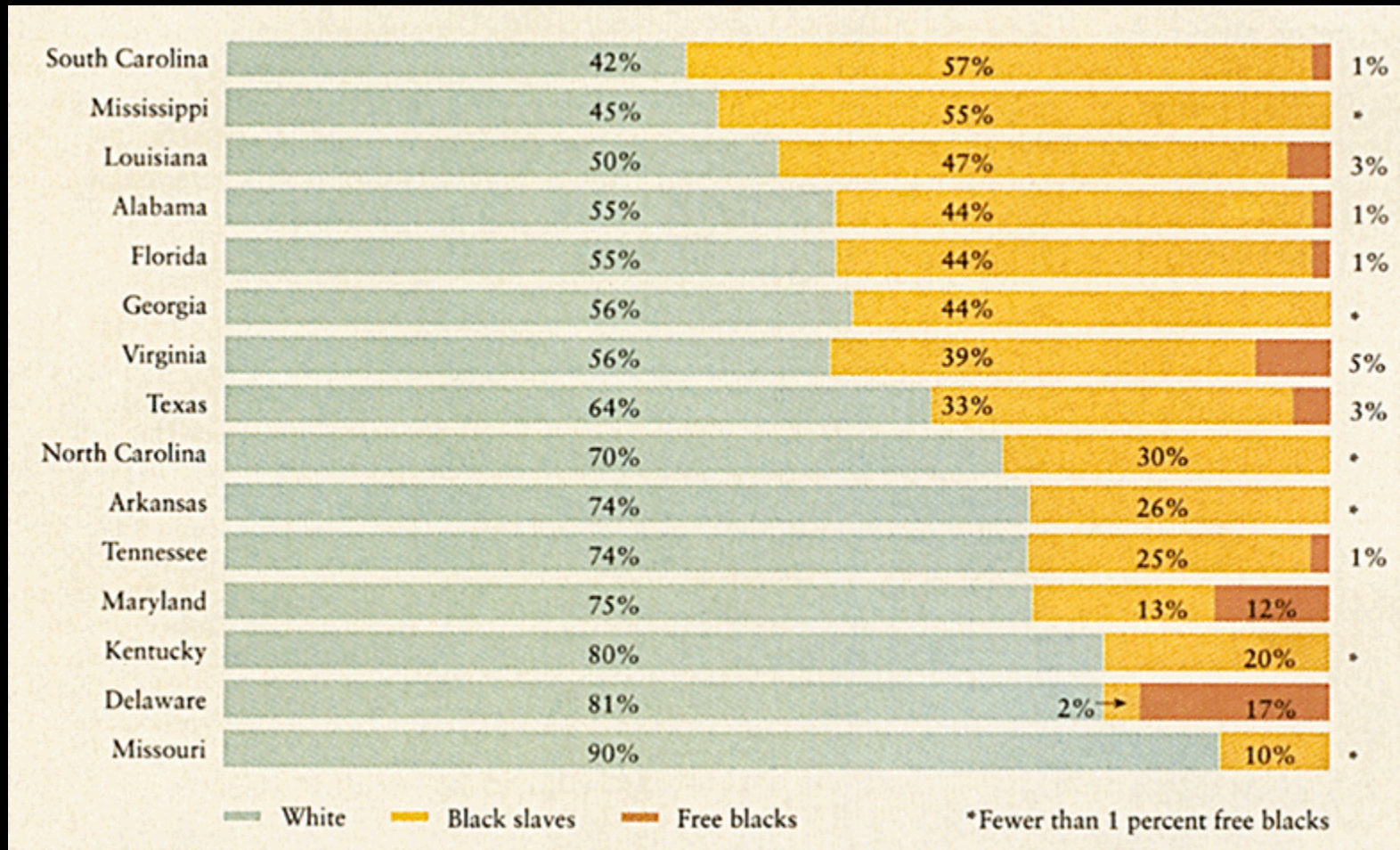
- 1. Problem: Need to find some justification for expanding slavery in face of egalitarian American values and outside criticism.
- 2. Growth of planters' self-image as feudal lords or British-style aristocrats:
  - Even more lavish estates and lifestyles, fueled by cotton money
  - The “Cavalier” myth
  - Interest in Middle Ages, novels of Sir Walter Scott & ideas of “chivalry”
  - Southernization of duelling after 1804 Burr-Hamilton duel
- 3. Rise of the proslavery argument, or “slavery as a positive good”
  - Planter paternalism: Plantation slavery seen as a *better* system than northern individualism & capitalism. Chattel slavery as more humane than “wage slavery.”
  - Scientific racism: claim that, as inferior beings, Africans did not qualify for human rights and actually benefited from slavery because of the chance to learn civilized values & knowledge from whites
- 4. Increasing intolerance of dissent against slavery in South *or* North, especially after the Virginia slavery debate of 1832-33.
- 5. Efforts to suppress opposition & even debate on slavery in North and South
  - Attack on Charleston post office in response to abolitionist mailings and successful pressure to have them banned, 1835-36.
  - “Gag rule” in Congress against anti-slavery petitions, 1837-44.

### ◆ D. South as the last refuge of petty patriarchy, men ruling extended households and local communities, offering enormous psychological power to white men of all classes.

- -- Racism & slavery allowed even poor white men to think of themselves as patriarchs and honorable colleagues of the planter elites, despite vast differences in power and wealth among whites (larger than in North).



# Black & White Populations of Slave States



# U.S. CONQUEST OF THE TRANS-APPALACHIAN INDIANS





# NEW WESTERN STATES AND THE WESTWARD MOVEMENT OF REGIONAL CULTURES

