North and South: Different Cultures, Same Country

Throughout the beginning of the nineteenth century, the North and South followed different paths, developing into two distinct and very different regions.

NORTH

The northern soil and climate favored smaller farmsteads rather than large plantations. Industry flourished, fueled by more abundant natural resources than in the South, and many large cities were established (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%. Slavery had died out, 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.

Far more Northerners than Southerners belonged to the Whig/Republican political party and they were far more likely to have careers in business, medicine, or education. In fact, an engineer was six times as likely to be from the North as from the South. Northern children were slightly more prone to attend school than Southern children.
The fertile soil and warm climate of the South made it ideal for large-scale farms and crops like tobacco and cotton. Because agriculture was so profitable few Southerners saw a need for industrial development. 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 "peculiar institution" was inextricably tied to the region's economy and culture. In fact, there were almost as many blacks - but slaves and free - in the South as there were whites (4 million blacks and 5.5 million whites). There were no large cities aside from New Orleans, and most of the ones 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. Also, 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 than 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.