

Introduction to the South, Culture & Southern Culture

► Where Is The South?

When speaking about the region of the "South," one is generally referring to the states that extend northward from the Gulf of Mexico up to the Potomac and Ohio Rivers (which are right around the Washington, D.C., area-just above Virginia) and that stretch westward from the Atlantic Ocean to eastern side of Texas. This region generally includes the following states: Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Florida, and it sometimes includes Texas, Missouri, and West Virginia.

There is some debate over the true "Southern-ness" of Florida, Kentucky, West Virginia, Missouri, Texas, and New Orleans, Louisiana. Maryland is not generally considered a Southern state (which personally makes sense to me since I have never been able to find a restaurant in that state that serves sweet tea). These "border states," as they are called, are included in the study of the South when applicable (for example, when these states share a strong commonality with the more "traditional" Southern states), but when the situation is not applicable, they are not included. So while some debate does exist over the precise boundaries of the South, by the end of this course, you should be able to identify certain characteristics of the South that define as a distinct region of the United States.

The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture is a mammoth (when I say "mammoth" I mean it-my copy weighs about 7 pounds!) book devoted documenting just about every aspect of the region's culture, and in determining where the South is, it focuses on the 11 states of former confederacy: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Just because these 11 states made up the Confederate nation does not make them the only states in favor of slavery; Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri were slave states at the beginning of the Civil War though these states are not always considered to be a part of the South.

And just because some states did NOT favor slavery does not mean that they are not sometimes considered to be Southern. For example, when the national census is taken, the census bureau considers the South to include Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Washington, D.C. Additionally, the Gallup poll we hear so much about in the news defines the South as the 11 Confederate states plus Oklahoma and Kentucky.

Below is more information about some of the more important definitions or alternative names for the South.

Mason-Dixon Line

This border line is sometimes called "the boundary of an empire" and has traditionally been connected with the separation of free and slave states although states on both sides of the

line practiced slavery when the line was drawn. In fact, I bet that more people have a vague idea that Mason-Dixon has something to do with the South and maybe even slavery than have an idea as to where that line is actually located. Just to dispel any confusion, the line essentially divides the states of Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Although this line represents the political and social division between north and south, it is interesting to bear in mind (as mentioned in the above information) that Maryland is not usually considered the South even though it did have slaves. Generally Maryland is only included as the South by those people who do define the South by that region that rests "below the Mason-Dixon line."

While I am uncertain if the markers still exist, this line was not originally an imaginary one. It was a real line staked out between the property owned by the Calvert family (the Maryland side) and the Penn family (the Pennsylvania side, naturally). The families chose two men, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon (thus the line's name), to settle a boundary dispute that arose because of unclear terms given in colonial land charters.

The task took Mason and Dixon 4 years of work, from 1763-1767. Every 5 miles they marked the line with stones-one side bore the Calvert crest and the other side the Penn arms. The technical dimension for this line was 39° 43' 17.6" north latitude. In 1820, the Missouri Compromise attempted to balance the number of slave and free states that entered the Union, stretching the line over to the 36th parallel; this compromise established that all states above the line would be free states and that all the states below the line would be slave states.

Black Belt

This area spans about 300 miles, basically following the Mississippi up from Alabama and Mississippi to Tennessee. Sometimes, though, the Black Belt can include parts of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and western Missouri.

The region is characterized by flat land that is about 20-25 miles wide and contains dark, fertile soil that is perfect for growing cotton. In spite of the success with the cotton crop, when the boll weevil struck in 1900s, the economy of the areas was forced into diversification of agriculture and economy.

The name "Black Belt" comes from the darkness of the soil but can also refer to the high percentage of the Black population in the area. Historically this area was home to tenant farmers, and traditionally this area suffers from a poor economy.

Every August Eutaw, Alabama, hosts a Black Belt folk roots festival to celebrate the rich cultures, black and white, this region has produced.

Mississippi Delta

Known as "the South's South" and the "most Southern place on earth," the Delta is a stretch of land 160 miles long and 50 miles wide (at widest point). Ten whole counties and parts of eight other counties in Mississippi make up this region.

The Mississippi Delta is the most fertile region in the South, and, like the Black Belt, has flat land perfect for growing cotton, which led directly to the plantation economy of this region. The fruitfulness of the land was a draw for all people in the South, especially since farming cotton could be a way to get rich relatively quickly. Whites came to the Delta for farming; Blacks came to the Delta to farm and to explore a free life.

Not only fertile in soil, this region is fertile in creative talent. The area has especially contributed much in the way of music. Jazz was born here during the 1920s, shortly after World War II (this subject is mentioned more in Unit 3). During this same time, many Blacks began leaving the area and moving north during what was known as the Great Migration.

Little Dixie (Missouri)

Sometime between the 1870s and the 1880s, this area, which is comprised of 8 counties in Missouri and includes the city of Hannibal (appropriately enough, the birthplace of Mark Twain), came to be thought of as a little Dixie. Little Dixie is actually not located in the Ozarks but is between the Ozark Mountains and the Corn Belt.

This Missouri region was originally settled by people from the Tidewater and Piedmont regions to the east—places like Maryland, Tennessee, South Carolina, and North Carolina but especially Virginia and Kentucky. These settlers were mainly of British lineage and Protestant background. They brought with them crops like hemp and tobacco as well as traditions like fiddle-playing, social dance, basket-making, meat preserves, dialect, attitudes, and social organization. Southern influences can most be seen in architecture and political behavior.

Other similar but smaller "dixies" are found in Utah, Wyoming, Oklahoma, and the southern parts of Illinois and Indiana. Like the Little Dixie in Missouri, these areas were primarily settled by people from the Tidewater/Piedmont regions who brought their culture with them.

Piedmont

North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama basically make up this region of rolling hills. North Carolina's larger cities within this region include Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and Charlotte. This area is traditionally an agricultural region even though it is not very fertile.

Within the past century, the Piedmont has come to be known for its production of textiles and furniture, which helped to boost the area's population and urban development.

The first industry to develop was that of textiles. The region has several small streams that were good for power spinning, a type of power built on waterwheels. This technology was available as early as 1790 in South Carolina, but the first actual mill was built in North Carolina in 1813. The textile industry experienced another boost after the Civil War when there was plenty of cheap labor to be found to work in the mills.

In addition to textiles, tobacco production is concentrated in this area. The most significant production comes from North Carolina, with noteworthy production in Tennessee, Virginia, and Kentucky. In the 1880s, James Duke (for whom the University was later renamed) was

the first to use a cigarette rolling machine, and this technological advance shot the region into prominence—even dominance at one point in time.

Another interesting thing to note about this area is that it has produced some important southern writers. The most well-known include WJ Cash, Reynolds Price, and Thomas Wolfe.

Tidewater

While the term "Tidewater" can generally refer to the coastline running from Delaware to Florida, the term most often applies especially to coastal Virginia, with extensions into the southern coast of Maryland and the Northern coast of North Carolina. This region is home to historic towns like Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown and to the nation's largest naval base, Norfolk—all located in Virginia. The land of this region is low, flat, sandy, and swampy, gets plenty of rain, and has a long, warm growing season.

► Cultural Landscape

Culture is a tough thing to define. *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* describes "cultural areas" as "core zones, where distinctive traits are most concentrated, and margins, where the boundaries of the culture overlap with other cultural areas." In the 19th century "culture was the best of civilization's achievements." To further show the difficulty of assigning a precise meaning to the term, in the 1950s anthropologists identified "164 different definitions of culture."

Yet another definition says culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits" acquired by members of a society." Later anthropologists emphasized the study of pattern, form, structure, and organization, such as could be associated with food, labor, and manners as well as more complex social, political, and economic systems—taking the focus off of the mere listing of observations. Writer T. S. Eliot explains culture as "all the characteristic activities and interests of a people" and his belief is that "culture is not merely the sum of several activities, but a way of life."

In trying to classify what constitutes **Southern** culture, the *Encyclopedia* authors determine that "the distinctiveness of Southern culture does not lie in any one trait but rather in the peculiar combination of regional cultural characteristics." The combination of certain characteristics that are generally considered to make up a cultural landscape are vernacular house form, religion, individualistic attitudes, diet, and music. Each of these areas of the Southern cultural landscape will be looked at more closely in later units, but general information is given below.

House Form

House form is one of the more clear-cut ways to determine the extent and sub-regionalization of a culture. The term "vernacular house form" refers to the layout, size, and function of the typical structure's rooms as well as its exterior features.

The typical Southern house was raised from the ground at least 18 inches. The house usually did not have a basement but did have outside end chimneys and probably a porch

that extended across the front and maybe the sides of the house. A normal house used frame construction covered with clapboard. Stones were not usually used in construction, but brick houses were common in Kentucky and Virginia, although porches were not found in that region.

More information about architecture will be given in Unit 4.

Religion

The largest single denomination in the South is Southern Baptist, and the Methodist denomination is second. Overall, Southerners are more involved in church activities than non-Southerners.

More information about religion will be given in Unit 2.

Attitude

In general, Southerners have a strong belief in individual rights and localized political power. This belief shows up in the division and distribution of authority on the local level.

In the South, counties within the states are smaller and have more administrative duties than counties in non-Southern states. This fact could also help explain why school district consolidation is slow and why state police have less authority. Individualistic attitudes may contribute to the region's high crime rate since Southerners typically take it upon themselves to resolve conflict personally.

More information about regional attitudes will be given in Unit 1.

Diet

Southerners consume more quick breads like muffins and biscuits; corn products; sweet tea; and grits. They also depend more on pork and chicken and consume more soft drinks (particularly colas) than the national average. Local preferences include fried food and overcooking vegetables.

More information about food will be given in Unit 4.

Music

Country music has traditionally been associated with the South, but recently that music has lost some of its regional distinctiveness. Almost every other type of American music has its roots in the South, including gospel, jazz, and rock.

More information about music will be given in Unit 4.

Other Regional Distinctions

The South is the least urbanized culture in the United States, and small towns are more common than in any other part of the country, with it being rare to have cities with populations over a million people. Historically, the county seat was the most important feature of city planning, was typically named for an important state or political figure, was located on highest vantage point, and was surrounded by city buildings. The county courthouse was the focal point of the city square, where the cluster of businesses formed the heart of the town.

► **The Beginnings of a Southern Culture**

The South did not begin as an area that was aware of itself as a distinctive region. In fact, the South essentially began as series of isolated settlements along Atlantic coast. Most, but not all, of these settlements were British, and in that way Britain has influenced most of cultural landscape of the South. The Spanish and French, however, have heavily influenced areas in Florida, Texas, and southern Louisiana.

Most early settlements began with the intention of farmers in America growing crops to feed their family and to make money by selling some of the crop to British consumers. This way of life became more and more attractive to English people, especially men, who viewed the agrarian lifestyle of life in America as more promising than life in England, which was experiencing high population and low job availability.

As more and more people settled in the southern region of New World, people continued moving west in search of more and better farmland. This move was relatively easy considering that most of the South is basically a wide plain, encouraging unchallenged agricultural expansion. The Blue Ridge Mountains, for the most part, served as a westward border of expansion.

Agricultural expansion in the South continued into the 1820s, with people moving both westward and southward in pursuit of farmland on which cash crops, especially cotton, could be grown. This expansion brought to the forefront the issue of slavery because when these territories wanted to apply for statehood, they wanted to continue the practice of slavery since farmers in these territories depended on slaves to help with their farms.

Around the 1820s, however, the overseas demand for cotton was not as high as it had been in the past, and the price of cotton fell, resulting in economic disaster for many Southerners, who depended on selling cotton to bring in all the money they would need for the next year. When this cotton crash occurred, the South was forced to see itself in a new way-as a region with interests, attitudes, livelihoods, and an economy that differed from those of their neighbors to the North.

This economic depression scared Northern bankers (especially those associated with the Bank of the United States) who panicked and hastily called in the loans they had extended to local banks, which in turn were forced to call in the loans they had extended to individuals, which largely included Southern farmers who could not afford to repay their loans as quickly as was demanded. As a result, some Southerners even blamed the Bank of the United States for their hard economic conditions.

About this same time, the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice John Marshall, had made some decisions that many Southerners interpreted as limiting individual and state rights. In light of those court decisions, Southerners feared that slavery would be the next issue to be

restricted, an action that they saw as another way a Northerner was trying to undo the way of life that the South had established as its social and economic foundation. The anxiety Southerners had about slavery being revoked was heightened by the debate concerning the Missouri Compromise, an act that determined states entering the Union below the Mason-Dixon Line would be slave states and those entering the Union above the Mason-Dixon Line would be free states. The Missouri Compromise temporarily quieted the debate, but slavery was an issue that would not go away and that would ultimately help to bring about the Civil War. (But we will discuss these things in more detail later in the semester.)

The cotton crash, the Supreme Court decisions, and the slavery debate of the 1820s revealed to the South that it was indeed different in nature from the North. The South, however, was not the region that had undergone a radical change, as may be the perception of many people today. Originally, the North and South had more similar views since the economy and society of both regions were both primarily based on agriculture. However, when the North began to move toward industrialization and the promotion of urban development, the South remained a strong agricultural region, suspicious of industry and slow to forsake its rural roots and its agrarian ideals. So the interests, attitudes, and economy of the two regions grew further apart until a conflict between them became apparent.

► Mythic South

Over time the South has inspired many myths about itself, some favorable and some not-so-favorable. The idea of the "the South of the Mind" refers to the age-old debate as to whether or not the South is an actual place that can be pinpointed on a map (as addressed previously in this reading) or if the South is simply a place that exists just because people think it exists.

A quote by Jonathan Daniels for consideration: We Southerners are a mythological people, created half out of dream and half out of slander, who live in a still legendary land. Below are some of the half-dream, half-slander myths about the South. These myths refer to historical eras of the region and are discussed in chronological order.

HISTORICAL MYTHS

The garden myth is perhaps the oldest myth about the South. In this myth, the South is viewed as a land of fertile paradise, something similar to the Biblical Garden of Eden. This perception of the South drew many settlers from overseas and from the northern region of the country. This myth heavily influenced the idea of the **agrarian democratic South**, a region of egalitarian farmers that is best depicted in the writings of Thomas Jefferson (and something discussed at length in Chapter 1 of your textbook).

The **Old South** is one of the most popular and pervasive myths of the South. This myth came about around the 1830s and brings to mind "images of kindly old marster with his mint julep, happy darkies singing in the fields, coquettish belles wooed by slender gallants" (Tindall 1097).

The myth of the Old South is similar to the **Plantation Myth**, which depicts the South as feudal society. According to this myth, relationships are ordered along hierarchical lines, and the patriarchal family is the central defining device and metaphor. The wellborn

father/plantation master and his sons dominate the structure; beneath them are their women, wives and daughters, then children, and finally white dependents and black slaves. The slave order is similarly hierarchical and familial, if with some skewing in the gender roles: house servants rate higher than field-workers, craftsmen higher than unskilled workers, and the fair higher than the dark (Pyron 116).

The plantation myth grew from 4 primary sources. The first was the tendency of Southerners to set themselves apart from non-Southerners and especially from Northerners, who, studies have shown, also recognize a difference in Southern mentality. The second origin is rooted in the Civil War and is connected to the Lost Cause myth (discussed below); this source lies in the "southern need to romanticize its past as a means of comprehending its defeat and its radically altered situation" after the defeat of the Civil War. Thirdly, Northerners had a tendency to romanticize the South as an alternative universe, a place entirely removed from the commercial and material world of the North. Last, the plantation myth comes from the factual evidence that shows that there may be some truth to this mythic belief about the South.

Where the myth of the Old South focused on the pre-Civil War South (also known as the antebellum era), the myth of the **Lost Cause** concentrates more on the Civil War South. This myth views the antebellum South as too noble, good, and bright to have survived the onslaughts of industrial, middle-class capitalism from the North. In this way, the war itself developed as the capstone of the plantation legend. It became the ultimate knightly adventure: the Lost Cause, all the more precious because it was foredoomed to failure (Pyron 1117).

The label of "the Lost Cause" is a very telling one. Not only does it admit the South's defeat, but it also reveals that many Southerners felt they were fighting more for ideals, beliefs, principles, and a way of life than for political freedom. This title, however, may also have led to the Southern tendency to celebrate the memory of the Civil War.

The Reconstruction Era immediately followed the Civil War, and the **Reconstruction myth** followed the Lost Cause myth. The Reconstruction era is generally considered to be the years from 1865 to 1877, when the Republican party was the national party in charge of restoring order to the South and restoring the South to the Union. (In a later unit we will look more specifically at the 3 phases of Reconstruction.) During the Reconstruction, Southerners were trying to find ways to come to terms with the radical change in the region's social and economic circumstances. This strategy often included various ways to subjugate Blacks.

The characters usually associated with the Reconstruction myth include the "carpetbaggers," whom southern whites portrayed as greedy interlopers exploiting the South; the "scalawags," who were traitorous native southern whites collaborating with the Yankees; the freedmen, who were sometimes seen as violent and depraved in the myth but mostly seemed ignorant and lost; and the former Confederates, who were the heroes of the story, all honorable, decent people with the South's best interests in mind. (McCrary 1120)

After the Reconstruction myth came the **New South** myth, a myth that was primarily promoted by newspapermen who wrote about a South they imagined would be a place that had been "absorbed into the national abundance of progress and equality" (Tindall 1098). One of the primary spokesmen of the New South was Henry Grady, who delivered the "New South" address in which the terms of this ideal were outlined. Namely, this New South relied on industry to jumpstart the Southern economy and promised to create a society that

treated Blacks fairly. In reality, this ideal was never realized. Industry did come to the South, but it was not widespread enough to radically boost the region's economy, and although free and equal in theory, in actuality Blacks were not treated much better than they had been in previous years.

Next came the myth of **Populism**. This myth promoted small farmers as heroic Southerners, and populist political leaders appealed to poor farmers by running on platforms based on the notion that the politician would undo the exploitation and hardships caused by the invasion of industry. (Populism as a political movement will be discussed more in a later unit.)

In the 1920s the region gained the reputation as the **benighted South**, which means that it became known as a region of violence and savagery that was associated with ignorance and racial intolerance. Events of the decade that contributed to this perception included the Scopes monkey trial of Tennessee, violent mill strikes throughout the region, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, and increased incidents of racial injustice such as lynchings.

(As a point of reference: The Scopes monkey trial occurred in Dayton, Tennessee, in July 1925 and was the trial of man accused of teaching evolution in the classroom. Local townspeople were outraged by this action and brought charges against the teacher. Non-southern reporters flocked to the area to cover the story, and many of their articles ended up being a social commentary on the region, ridiculing the South for being backward, slow, and ignorant.) The notion of the Benighted South did not begin to dissipate until the end of the Civil Rights movement around the 1970s.

The **Agrarian South** was an ideal supported by 12 poets associated with Vanderbilt University. This group wrote a manifesto entitled *I'll Take My Stand* in which the group defended what it considered to be the virtues of the South. The Agrarians primarily supported the notion that an agricultural life was the best lifestyle and was in direct opposition to the ideals of commercialism and industrialism championed by the North.

The Great Depression era inspired the idea of the **Problem South**. In fact, in 1938 President Franklin D. Roosevelt called the South "the nation's number one economic problem"-a pretty big claim considering the entire nation was experiencing one of the worst economic slumps in history.

In the 1970s and 1980s the idea of the South as the Sunbelt was circulated though it never really took root. This myth considered the South an area that stretched from "coast to coast, its economy battening on agribusiness, defense, technology, oil, real estate, tourism, and leisure (Tindall 1098).

CULTURAL MYTHS

Not considered historical myths like the ones just discussed, here are a few cultural myths about the South.

Fighting South: It has long been thought that Southerners typically enjoy soldiering and are unusually prone to settling disputes violently. Other displays of this fighting attitude are the " antebellum southern enthusiasm for wars, the national military establishment, private military academies, filibustering, [and] dueling" (May 1108). Some research has been done, however, that shows that in spite of this perception, non-South regions also tend to uphold

military ideals and have problems with high crime rate. Southerners, though, are more likely to verbalize their pride in a military heritage.

Celtic South: This theory attributes the distinctiveness of Southern culture to its roots in Celtic traditions brought to the country by settlers from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Whereas the North was primarily populated by the English, the South was primarily populated by the Celts. In fact, the population of the Carolinas was over 50 percent Celtic, and at the beginning of the Civil War, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the South's population was of Celtic descent. More than a few of the Celtic tendencies that are also commonly seen in the attitude and behavior of traditional Southerners include a pastoral economy based upon open-range herding, a leisurely lifestyle and a distaste for hard work, rural values that stressed wasteful hospitality and outdoor sports, the reckless indulgence in food and drink, a touchy and romantic sense of honor, and a strong tendency toward lawlessness and the settlement of disagreements by violent means (McDonald and McWhiney).

Hospitality: While Southerners (like most people) traditionally enjoy spending time with family and friends, Southern hospitality may not have always been given as freely as one may think. While Southerners historically have opened their homes to relatives and acquaintances, some discretion was used when inviting guests into the home. For example, outlaws and disreputable strangers were not welcome into the home, and some travelers who requested lodging at a private home were expected to pay for their stay. Additionally, other strangers may not have been warmly embraced until they produced a note from or otherwise displayed intimate knowledge of the lodger's relatives or friends. Once invited into the home, however, the guest was treated with utmost courteousness. The tight economic times following the Civil War caused a strain on hospitality, particularly extended overnight stays, but day-long visits were still common. The invention of the car and the telephone also made visiting easier.

Moonlight and Magnolias: This term has two basic connotations, one derisive and one idealistic. The more negative connotation refers to the idea of the South as excessive and silly with sentiment; it focuses on the ridiculousness of the relationships and attitudes displayed in fiction novels that play out the plantation myth. The other more idealistic perspective views the South as a romantic golden age that was a "dream of chivalry; the Civil War became that period of heroism, when the Cause was lost but the South was not beaten on the battlefield, and Reconstruction was the vengeful rape by the vulgar North of the beautiful South" (Bargainnier 1137).

► **The Early South, Slavery & King Cotton**

This portion of the reading looks at the South during the period of time leading up to the Civil War. We will learn which nations played a large role in shaping the landscape, governments, and economies of the Early South; briefly discuss the origins of slavery in the South; and the impact of the dominant cotton crop in the pre-Civil-War economy.

The information and citations found in this reading portion come from volume 1 of John B. Boles' third edition of *The South Through Time: A History of an American Region* published by Pearson Prentice Hall in Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, in 2004; and from Charles C. Mann's May 2007 article in *National Geographic*.

THE EARLY SOUTH

The ethnic cultures that helped shaped the South from its earliest days were the American Indians and the Europeans, particularly the Spanish, French, and especially the British.

AMERICAN-INDIAN CULTURE

There are four different American Indian historical traditions, the Paleo-Indian, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian traditions. The two latter traditions, the Woodland and *Mississippian*, are the two that have the most bearing on the shaping of the South, so those are the two we will focus on in this reading.

Woodland tradition: The first appearance of this tradition was about 1000 B.C. Hunting and gathering were the primary methods of getting food, with the gathering of seeds, especially nuts and acorns, indicating the first time agriculture debuted in the South. Some archeological proof exists that indicates these Indians had underground storage space for seeds and nuts. While this may not sound like a major breakthrough, gathering and storing seeds (instead of just the leaves or fruit of plants) allowed the Indians to plant food, which in turn led to the building of more permanent homes and the first semi-permanent settlements. Because this innovation in food production and collection allowed Indians to remain in one location for some length of time, the Indian populations grew and became more concentrated as they developed semi-permanent villages, leading to the flourishing of the Woodland traditions.

In spite of the fact that Indians began planting crops for a sustainable food supply, strangely, no native Southern plants could be used to produce a mass amount of food for human consumption; the usable plants had to be brought in from Mexico, South America, Eurasia, or Africa. Two of the more important first plants, both which originated in Mexico, were squash (used for eating) and the gourd (used for storage). This importation of food, along with other historical evidence, points to the fact that these Indians might have traded with cultures elsewhere in the continent.

Some cultural trappings associated with the Indians of the Woodland tradition include pottery, which was made of clay first mixed with vegetable fibers then with crushed rock. There is evidence that this population believed in a religious conception of afterlife because things like body décor, pottery pieces, smoking pipes, and sacrificed dogs have been found buried with the dead. Chiefs and their spouses sometimes had the bodies of their close servants buried with them. Woodland Indian graves were often covered with mounds, though the use and symbolism of mounds remains unknown (Boles 5-6).

Mississippian tradition: The "most culturally and socially advanced Indian civilization in North America" was the Mississippian tradition, which was at its peak when Europeans initially contacted the New World (Boles 7). This tradition was based on an agricultural innovation that promoted substantial population growth, in turn requiring political organization to control the labor, defend the limited amount of arable riverine soils, and promote the elaboration of cultural and religious forms.

Between AD 800 and 1000, maize (or corn) and the pole bean were introduced together. This was key. This new type of corn (destined to remain an important Southern cereal crop for the next 1000 years) was especially suited for growing in the soil found in the South, and the pole bean grew with it, right among the corn stalks. Not only was this combination advantageous nutritionally, but it was helpful agriculturally as well. When corn is grown by itself, it depletes the soil. But when the beans are grown along with the corn, the beans

supply nitrogen to the land, thereby neutralizing the negative effect of the corn crop. Also, when eaten alone, corn cannot be properly digested, and this digestion problem can lead to a protein deficiency disease called pellagra. However, eating the beans with the corn counteracts the negative nutritional value of corn. A common Indian dish called succotash is a mixture of corn and beans.

This agricultural success led to the development of several Indian towns-and even cities, allowing a kind of agricultural-urban society to develop in the South more than 200 years before Columbus even crossed the Atlantic Ocean and enabling the Southeastern Indians of the Mississippian tradition to become the largest and most settled population in North America. The stretch of land where the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers crossed boasted a city of almost 40,000 people, a population larger than any American city at the time of the American Revolution (Boles 8).

With such a large and concentrated population, "organization was required to order the labor routines and the devise military plans and fortifications to protect the relatively limited supply of rich bottomland so important to food production. Warring tribes raided each other for food and land, often enslaving captured women and children. In response to military necessity, Indian confederacies were formed, headed by powerful chieftains" (Boles 8).

One lasting impression the Mississippian tradition left on the landscape of the South "may be the prominence of pine forests in the South" (Boles 10). Here's why: "Fires were used to drive game toward hunters and to keep underbrush cleared so the game could be more readily seen by hunters and would have good grazing. Game was primarily deer. Fires also may have been used to burn grassy areas near camps to kill pesky ticks and fleas...[the abundance of pine trees could be a lasting effect of this practice] " since pine trees are better able to withstand fires than other native Southern trees" (Boles 10).

Decline of Indian population: Indians were generally healthy individuals because the cold Artic barrier kept out Asian microorganisms that could carry foreign diseases and because Indians did not have domesticated herd animals (like cows), which usually spread epidemics to humans.

Ironically, the accomplishments of the Mississippian Indians aided in their quick decline. In 1500 the Indian population was probably about 2 million (which was more than the population of the South in 1800), and most of this 2 million "lived in towns or were in regular contact with others through attendance at ceremonies or games or through overland traders" (Boles 10).

Then the Europeans came to settle the continent. Europeans had had contact with Asians for hundreds of years so had already "encountered, suffered from, and gradually domesticated a number of diseases" (10). So when the Europeans came to the New World, they "brought with them a series of plagues" that spread rapidly through the Indian population. Because the Indian population was concentrated in villages, the epidemics spread faster and wiped out more people more quickly than it might have otherwise.

Disease, then, halved the Indian population (to 1 million) by 1607, the year that Jamestown was settled. Though the Indian population survived, it continued to dwindle, falling to 200,000 by 1685 and then to 60,000 in 1790, which is only about 3 percent of the Indian population before Columbus (Boles 10). With only the tiniest fraction of the Indian population still remaining throughout the entire region, the European settlers (and perhaps

consequently Americans today) had no conception of the breadth and advancements made by Indians of the Mississippian tradition.

EUROPEAN CULTURE

Although the main characters in the story of American settlement are primarily Europeans, it took Europeans about 100 years before the exploration and settlement of America could be considered a success. For example, Columbus never even reached the mainland, only the West Indies islands, and it was almost a decade later when Europeans learned that the Florida peninsula even existed- and even then they did not originally think it was connected to an entire continent. Finally, in 1513 Juan Ponce de Leon sailed the eastern coastline and understood the magnitude of this American continent. But even still, the European priority was on discovering riches in Mexico and on finding a waterway that went from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. In fact, settling the American mainland was an afterthought and only became a concern when the French and English started to explore the southeastern coast, thereby providing a potential threat to the Spanish trade going on in the Gulf Coast since the Spanish ships usually sailed around Florida (Boles 11).

Spanish Influence: For about 100 years Spain was mostly preoccupied with ravaging Mexico and South America for riches and treasures, especially mining for gold, and the Spanish settlements that sprung up in the Caribbean were mostly there just as loading ports for the cargo ships to carry the wealth back to Spain. The Spanish attempted two early settlements (one in Florida and one in South Carolina), but both were driven away by Indians who were afraid the Spanish would take them as slaves.

On May 25, 1539, Hernando de Soto and 600 soldiers, over 100 black slaves, 200 horses, 300 pigs, and many chickens landed south of Tampa Bay, Florida, and began a 4-year, several-thousand-mile exploratory and plundering escapade stretching from Florida to South Carolina then west to Alabama then to the Mississippi River, which they discovered and crossed, then trekked north to Arkansas and then south to Louisiana and then finally to Texas. The stretch that runs from the mouth of the Mississippi River in Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee, is referred to as the Natchez Trace (and is now a tourist parkway). De Soto was a greedy, brutal man, and the Choctaw Indians attacked his camp in October of 1541, which pretty much ended the expedition. De Soto died from a fever in 1542 and was buried in the Mississippi River. His successor led the survivors and the Indian captives into Mexico, and after that, the Spanish pretty much wrote off exploration in the New World for a while.

Important to the future of the South, the de Soto camp left behind its pigs (which likely became wild razorback hogs) and chickens, which multiplied in the region and became staples in the Indian diet (and later in the diet of most Southerners). Both animals probably carried strains of diseases foreign to the animals and humans of America and probably passed the diseases onto other animals, like deer and turkey, which the Indians hunted and ate, thereby causing the Indians to become sick with European diseases even though many of them probably never came into direct contact with the Europeans themselves. So de Soto's animals may have contributed to the decimation of the Indian population.

The Spanish, however, did have a successful venture in San Agustin. San Agustin was the first successful continuous settlement by Europeans in North America. The original motive of setting up this settlement was for the Spanish to have a base of operations from which to remove the French presence not too far away at Fort Caroline, which was accomplished a

month later. Some years later, the settlement turned into more of a missionary outpost, with settlers seeking to convert the Indians to Christianity.

Because San Agustin was successful and other European settlements were not, Spain bragged that she owned and controlled the entire region. By 1586, England had had enough of the Spanish boasting, and Sir Francis Drake destroyed San Agustin, sparing only the items he thought would be useful for the English settlement at Roanoke. But by the time he got back to North Carolina, he found that the Roanoke settlement itself had failed and he and the survivors sailed back to England.

After the destruction of San Agustin, the Spanish did not bother with doing anything about the threatening English presence north of Florida and Georgia, so the focus of history shifted to the English presence in the upper South.

French Influence: In the 1560s the French had a couple of unsuccessful attempts at settlement on the Florida coast, with starvation being the primary cause of ultimate failure. The colonists at the first settlement even turned to cannibalism before being rescued and returned to France by an English explorer.

In spite of the utter failure of the French to establish successful colonies, Jean Ribault, a French explorer, wanted more money and provisions to try again at settling in the New World, so he wrote a deceptively positive report of his excursion for the French officials. This report was translated into English and gave English Queen Elizabeth her first romanticized picture of the American Southeast.

ENGLISH INFLUENCE

Lost Colony at Roanoke, North Carolina: Sir Walter Raleigh got permission from Queen Elizabeth to explore American land north of the areas of central Spanish control. Since the latitude of this region of the South is the same as that of the Mediterranean, Raleigh expected the climate and crops to be similar to the Mediterranean as well, and he anticipated finding a region ripe for the production of wine, olive oil, sugar, spices, oranges, and other Mediterranean-type goods.

Raleigh's expedition of two ships set out in April 1584 and arrived at Roanoke Island on July 13, 1584. After looking around, taking notes, and drawing pictures, he convinced two Indians (Manteo and Wanchese) to go with him to England by telling them the trip would help the Indians learn English. Raleigh's prime motivation, though, was to use the two Indians to help him gain support for future explorations to the New World.

When Raleigh returned to England, the Queen was not excited about a second expedition, and he had to work hard to gain her favor. He even named the region after her: Virginia, in honor of the Virgin Queen.

His efforts paid off and the second expedition landed at Roanoke in late summer of 1585 with the expectation of a shipment of reinforcements of food, men, and supplies the following year. But soon food shortages and discontent soon overtook the colony, and they did not want to wait for the shipment of reinforcements, so when Sir Francis Drake returned to the colony in June 1586 from destroying San Agustin the colonists boarded his ship and

sailed back to England. Just a few weeks later, though, Lord Grenville arrived at the abandoned colony site with reinforcements.

Even though the attempts at establishing Roanoke as a viable colony had not been very successful, a few of the key leaders of the previous expeditions were determined to go back to the New World, partially citing tobacco cultivation and export as a reason England should be interested in colonizing. So in 1587 a third expedition set out for the New World, planning to stop by Roanoke, pick up the remaining colonists, and then find a better location somewhere else in the Chesapeake. However, once the expedition made landfall, the pilot of the ship refused to go anywhere but Roanoke, so John White, the leader, and the other settlers began to restore the houses left by the previous colonists and try again to make a success of Roanoke.

On August 24, 1587, John White's daughter Eleanor Dare gave birth to a daughter, who was named Virginia Dare in honor of the New World. This was the first English child born in the New World. Three months later John White had to leave his family and the colony to return to England to set up for more colonists and provisions.

However, while he was in England, England went to war with Spain, and no English ships could be spared for exploration. Three years passed before John White could return to the New World. When he did, he found that the colony had vanished. The fort was deserted, and the houses burned. The only piece of evidence left was the word CROATOAN carved on a tree trunk. Since the distress symbol was nowhere to be found, it is assumed that the settlers probably moved south to Croatoan Island (now Ocrocoke Island). Since White did not return for several years, it is speculated that the colonists then may have moved north toward the Chesapeake, where there is some evidence that the colonists may have lived among the Chesapeake Indians near the James River and intermarried until they died in the 1606 massacre by the Powhatan Indians. Another theory is that the Lost Colony intermarried with Indians in North Carolina to become the Lumbee tribe.

Although Roanoke was not successful, it did inspire the English to again pursue the colonization of the New World. This time England established two companies to simultaneously set out for the New World: the Plymouth Company, which was to settle in the northern region of the continent, and the London (or Virginia) Company, which was to settle in the southern region of the continent.

Jamestown, Virginia: The settlers landed in Jamestown on May 13, 1607, after spending two weeks sailing around looking for a location somewhat hidden from the Spanish. This area was in a central part of a "rapidly expanding Indian empire called Tsenacomoco," which was headed by Powhatan, its primary chief, who basically ruled over the lower half of the Chesapeake Bay inland (Mann 37).

The Indians of this area lived in villages that were bordered by long expanses of land that had been cleared by the means of intentional burning, probably for alternate farming use. No fences or other barriers were erected in these fields after the land had been burned and cleared because, up to this point in history, the Indians had no reason for doing so: there were no native large domesticated animals (like cows, horses, goats, sheep, etc.) to corral, so the Indians did not need to worry about blocking off the field from the potentially destructive meddlings of "barnyard" animals. And since the Indians generally farmed communally, there was no need for individuals to stake of personal claims to various tracts of land. In the seasons when the fields were not farmed, the Indians used the land for hunting and gathering.

It is likely that the site of Jamestown was an example of land that the Indians had cleared for farming years before the colonists arrived but, at the time of the colony's establishment, were not actively using. Therefore, to the colonists, the land looked "unused" (Mann 45). Eventually, the colonists more or less took over this land, using it to plant tobacco until the soil was no longer good for farming. At that point, rather than leaving the fields alone for recovery time, the colonists turned the land over to the livestock for grazing. The fact that the colonists' kept "prime farm and forage" land in "continuous agricultural use" prevented the Indian societies from retaining use of this area, thereby forcing the Indians to move further and further inland.

Since the Indians were settled in good land further up the river, the colonists set up camp where they could, in Jamestown, "a site about 35 miles from the mouth of the James [River]" (Mann 38). Jamestown, as it turned out, was not the best site to maintain a healthy colony. The James River rises and falls with the ocean tide, which means that the water often contains too much salt content, causing sickness when consumed. This salty water often got into the wells the colonists had dug and also made the land less suitable for growing crops. Another problem with the river is that the space where the current changed between the fresh and salt water was often a place where waste and fecal matter were trapped, thereby spreading diseases like typhoid and dysentery among the colonists. In fact, it is possible that the colonists were drinking "some of the dirtiest water in the James--'full of slime and filth'" (qtd. in Mann 39).

John Smith took charge of the colony in 1608. While he was not well-liked by everyone, he was a capable leader and forced the colonists to work to build houses and to plant corn, convinced the Indians to give the colony more corn, and moved some settlers to a healthier location. He helped the colonists' relations with the Indians because he knew the Indians and had learned the Indian language when he was captured by Indians in 1607. (After he was captured, he was brought to the chief, who liked him and let him return to Jamestown.)

Even though the James River was an excellent place to catch big, meaty fish, especially in the summer, by 1610 starvation was a deadly threat to the colony, and the colonists were reduced to eating "dogs, cats, rats, and mice" (Mann 39). Some desperate colonists even resorted to digging corpses out of graves and then eating the dead bodies, and there is one deplorable account of a man killing his pregnant wife then salting her for food (Mann 39).

The roughly 60 colonists that remained at Jamestown were growing discontent and opted to return to England after a small supply of reinforcements landed. John Rolfe was one of the passengers on these ships, which had started for Jamestown almost a year earlier but were then set back by a hurricane and had to stop over on one of the unpopulated Bermuda islands for nine months to regroup and repair the damages to the ships. Once arriving at the colony, Rolfe and those with him decided the colony should be abandoned. On June 7, all the colonists were packed and boarded, but the next day they met up with three ships of supplies headed their way so they turned around and again took up residence in Jamestown.

SUCCESS AT JAMESTOWN

Although not nearly as violent as they could have been, relations between the Indians and the colonists had been rocky for years. However, in 1614, Indian relations improved when John Rolfe married Pocahontas. The marriage appeared to both sides (colonists and Indians) to serve as a peace treaty of sorts. This same year, Rolfe also sent 4 barrels of tobacco

leaves to England, which turned out to be the real saving grace of the Virginia Company and its colony at colony.

Although the English preferred the tobacco of the West Indies and King James denounced tobacco altogether, American tobacco was still in high demand. By 1618, Jamestown colonists shipped out almost 50,000 pounds of tobacco, and by 1630, the colonists had shipped approximately 6 times more (Mann 34).

In 1617, to give colonists motivation to continue growing tobacco for the profit of England and for the people who invested in this New World expedition, the Virginia Company decided to actually grant land (100 acres apiece of Virginian land) to the colonists who had arrived before 1616. Some colonists were working in the New World in order to pay off their debt of passage, and the company decided that when these farmers had put in their time and paid off their debt, they would be granted land. In 1618 to further increase profits and incentive, the company decided to give experienced colonists more land and local political authority if they would develop large-scale plantations. (It is interesting to note here that the English apparently felt justified in doling out parcels of land in the New World even though they had simply just more or less assumed ownership and control of the land of Virginia and the New World, not considering that the Indians would have prior claim, possession, or rights to the land.)

While the success of tobacco farming was the single most important thing to the colony's survival (and later its economic prosperity), it was detrimental to the land itself. Tobacco can "ruin the land in a couple of years" in an area, like Jamestown, where the soil is "fragile"--in fact, "tobacco has an almost unique ability to suck the life out of soil" (qtd. in Mann 45). Since the colonists were both individually motivated and corporately funded by a desire to make money, they were more worried about growing and harvesting tobacco than about preserving the land that was making their livelihood possible. So once the colonists had worn out their current fields, they "cleared ever more forest, leaving behind sparse pastureland" (Mann 45).

In 1619, a Dutch ship arrived in the James River in need of supplies. The Dutch traded 20-some Blacks for food and water. These were the first Black slaves in the New World. Nothing is known about what happened to these Blacks once they were traded, but slavery did not really become full-blown for another 50 years.

After King Charles I became king in spring of 1625, England pretty much let Virginia do its own thing. So Virginia set up counties and its own legal system, which gradually led to a sense of community and loyalty to the Virginian government, not the English government.

► Colonies

This section of the reading looks briefly at the history behind the development of a few of the Southern states that were some of the earliest territories settled.

Carolina: In 1663 Charles II granted land to eight of his favorite officials, and in order for this colony to attract settlers, these proprietors promised virtually complete self-government, religious freedom, and practically free land (giving 150 acres to each man and for each dependent he brought with him). About 50 years later, in 1712, North and South Carolina officially divided.

South Carolina: The first successful settlement in this region was Charles Town, founded in 1680 and renamed Charleston in 1783. South Carolina basically began as a colony for England's colony of the Barbados Islands, so it was basically a colony of a colony. Serving in this capacity, South Carolina was a place for displaced Barbadians to live and a source of food and lumber. Food (like corn, peas, hogs, cattle) was grown and sold to Barbadians for big profit.

This colony was pretty much established as a slave society from the get-go since the wealthy planters who came to Carolina from Barbados accepted the idea of a slave-based economy since that is what they were used to in Barbados. However, Blacks and whites worked together and socialized together, not quite as equals, but with more harmony than they would 250 years later.

Indigo and rice were the big cash crops in South Carolina, due largely to the swampy environment, where the sluggish rivers act as the irrigation system. Ironically, the techniques used by the enslaved Africans perpetuated the slave system: African methods of cultivating rice made the production of rice crop possible where previous European efforts had failed.

North Carolina: Like South Carolina, North Carolina was basically started as a colony of a colony-but not Virginia, not the Barbados. Virginians moved south to look for more land on which to grow tobacco, and thus settled in North Carolina. While tobacco was grown in North Carolina at this time, it was not as dominant as it was in Virginia. North Carolina farmers practiced a more diverse economy, growing corn, peas, and beans and raising cattle, hogs, and fowl for their own food or for trade with Virginia, South Carolina, or the West Indies. The Carolina economy (North and South) was not as reliant on trade with England as the Virginia economy.

North Carolina was home to diverse settlers-like the Swiss, Germans, and French Huguenots-that gave the region a rich ethnic diversity and a devotion to a mixed economy that was not present in the colonies to the north or south.

North Carolina accepted the idea of slavery but was slow to acquire slaves, mostly because many colonists could not afford slaves. The North Carolina economy was mostly a yeoman economy.

[In an unrelated but interesting side note, North Carolina was the center of North American piracy during early 1700s.]

Louisiana: The French had an empire in Canada and were looking for a waterway that led south from Canada so they could expand their fur trapping business. Explorers followed the Mississippi river and tried to establish a few unsuccessful posts. French explorers (from France, not Canada) got permission to establish a town in Louisiana and sailed around the Gulf coast, looking for one of the mouths of the Mississippi River. On March 2, 1699, French explorer saw a red pole standing on the east bank of the river, thus naming the place Baton Rouge.

The first French colony, New Orleans, was founded in 1718. The original town is what is now called the French Quarter. It was a disease-ridden and flood-prone place (which Americans are now aware of, as a result of the devastation of recent hurricanes), but the French were

now finally established in America. The economy of this settlement depended largely on trading European goods and deerskins and not so much on agriculture.

France ceded Louisiana to Spain in 1762, and during the time that the Spanish controlled the area, two fires destroyed the original French buildings, which were rebuilt by the Spanish, explaining why much of the French Quarter architecture looks Spanish.

Georgia: Named for King George II, this territory began as moral experiment, a type of charitable colony—a place for the English poor to go as an alternative to a debtors' prison. In 1733 Englishman James Oglethorpe and his settlers arrived in present-day Georgia after docking at Charles Town. They first lived in 4 big tents, but in a week and a half Oglethorpe and another man had planned out the city of Savannah using a grid pattern with open public squares regularly spaced throughout.

Since this colony was a moral experiment, certain restrictions were put in place. For example, African slavery and the use of rum or other strong drinks were not allowed, and trade with the Indians was restricted. However, when the production of intended crops like wine and silk failed, the Georgians started to reject the moral ideals of the colony and wanted to cash in on the crops that were bringing such wealth to South Carolina farmers. So the plantation society emerged and slavery soon followed.

► Seeds of Slavery

Although one cannot talk about the history of the South without discussing its "peculiar institution" of slavery, slavery was not always present in the region. The following information briefly outlines the rise of this social system of subservience.

Supply and Demand: The Chesapeake territories of Virginia and Maryland were the primary locales for growing tobacco, which is a very labor-intensive crop. The biggest obstacle to growing large amounts of the crop was the lack of available hands to work in the fields.

The English were aware of slavery but associated it with the "backward" practices of Mediterranean and Catholic societies and did not want to succumb to such practices. In fact, they considered it to be "un-English." Instead, the English used a system of indentured servitude, which is basically an apprenticeship and debt repayment system in which the labor of one person is controlled by another person. In addition to considering the enslavement of Blacks as a backward practice, the English preferred white servants, possibly because they were more familiar but primarily because white servants were much cheaper than slaves (the initial cost of black slaves was significantly higher than the price of white indentured servants because the demand for black slaves in the West Indies for sugar cultivation was so high).

Over time the English preference for white indentured servants might not have changed, but the availability and cost of the servants certainly did. Fewer young English people wanted to come to America, making white help less available. At the same time, the Royal African Company began directly shipping slaves from Africa to North America, lowering the price of the slaves, due mostly to the large available supply.

About this same time, land was becoming more and more scarce as indentured servants who finished their terms of service were acquiring sizable chunks of the nearby land. Therefore, competition between colonial farmers was increasing—plantation owners and

former indentured servants were now all competing with each other to farm the most land and sell the most goods for the most profit. In the midst of this cycle, the advantage of a labor force that never became free was very clear: members of this type of a labor force would never turn into competition. Such a labor force could be found in the population of Blacks.

The English settlers figured that since they did not consider Blacks their equals (indeed, some people viewed Blacks to be barely human), they could control the Blacks with harshness considered inappropriate for fellow Englishmen, all the while realizing that the potential threat of a Black slave rebellion would give whites of every class a reason to unite to protect their common interests. In this way, highlighting racial differences created solidarity among whites.

Eventually, the English colonists rationalized slavery by saying that they were not the ones guilty of putting men and women in bondage but were merely changing the location of where the already enslaved men and women worked.

Legal rights: For the first 50 years of their presence in the Chesapeake region, Blacks enjoyed social freedoms that they were later denied, even after the Civil War: "Free black men...could own property, testify in court against whites, vote, serve on juries, pay taxes, borrow money, and extend credit to others, be fined, win court cases against whites, and even, for a while, own black and Indian slaves and the indentures of white servants" (Boles 37).

In mid-1660s, however, laws started to treat black slaves as categorically different from anyone else in society. The first of these laws made black women taxable, whereas white women indentured servants were considered dependents and not taxed. This was perhaps the first official case where race, not class, set the women apart.

In 1670 the Virginia legislature passed a law preventing blacks from controlling whites for the purposes of labor. Still, race or color was not the identifying marker it would yet become: "White servants were less expensive than slaves, so consequently whites were not spared the most difficult or dangerous tasks. They worked together on the same tasks, suffered the same discipline, ate the same food, slept in identical quarters, were subject to the same illnesses, played and caroused together, and ran away together" (Boles 38).

Population statistics: In 1670s, the number of white servants entering Carolina outnumbered the number of black slaves by more than 6 to 1. By 1725 in the Carolina low country, blacks outnumbered whites by margins as high as 20 to 1.

More slaves were imported between 1695 and 1700 than during the preceding twenty years, and more were imported between 1700 and 1705 than during the previous 81 years. Within a decade, the Chesapeake became a slave society. By 1700, other regions in the South were developing a similar labor system, though based on a different staple crop (for example, rice and indigo in South Carolina).

SLAVERY STATISTICS

The following list of states shows the primary crop whose cultivation led to a slave society in that state.

- **Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina:** tobacco, some cotton.
- **Kentucky:** hemp.
- **South Carolina, Georgia:** rice, indigo, cotton.
- **Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Tennessee:** cotton.

Some other stats:

- A minority of whites was slaveholders, and a minority of these slave owners owned the majority of slaves and produced the majority of cotton.
- Only about 1/3 of whites owned any slaves at all in 1830; by 1860 only 1/4 of whites owned any slaves at all.
- Of this quarter, only 12 % qualified as planters (owners of 20 or more slaves) and significantly less than 1 % qualified as the planter aristocracy (owners of 100 or more slaves).
- This type of planter aristocrat was less common in the antebellum South than a multimillionaire is today.
- More than 4/5 of all slaves were involved in the cultivation of cotton.

KING COTTON

Cotton was suited to the South because it needed a growing season of just over 200 frost-free days with sufficient but not heavy summer afternoon rain and dry, late falls. The Southern climate fit this description; in fact, cotton would not grow in states above the 36th parallel.

Farmers preferred growing cotton as a cash crop (as opposed to tobacco or rice or sugarcane) because cotton was easy to store and transport. Cotton was imperishable and, once ginned, could sit in a storehouse for months, so the cultivator didn't have to worry about the crop rotting in barns or on wagons. Cotton was also decently easy to farm, unlike tobacco, rice, and sugarcane, with no need for flood gates or canals or even perfect timing when it came to picking or stripping or curing. The cotton crop also fetched a higher price in trading because the demand was higher than it was for foodstuffs like corn.

However, the big profit from cotton would not last because...

- a. More and more farmers were planting and selling cotton so there was more supply to fill the demand, thereby reducing the selling price of cotton.
- b. Supply was decreasing because European countries were getting their fibers for clothing from their own colonies in other places in the world.

Before the Civil War, Southern cotton export was more than half of the total American trade and was a big reason that New York City grew and prospered as a port.

In 1859, the year of the largest cotton harvest in the South, more corn than cotton was grown.

Bibliography & Works Cited

- Bargainnier, Earl F. "Moonlight-and-Magnolias Myth." *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989. 1136-1137.
- Boles, John, ed. *The South Through Time: A History of an American Region*. 3rd ed. 1 vol. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.
- Hobson, Fred. "Benighted South." *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989. 1100-1101.
- Mann, Charles C. "America, Found & Lost." *National Geographic* May 2007: 32-53.
- McCrary, Peyton. "Reconstruction Myth." *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989.
- McDonald, Forrest, and Grady McWhiney. "Celtic South." *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989. 1131-1132.
- Mixon, Wayne. "New South Myth." *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989. 1113-1115.
- Pyron, Darden A. "Plantation Myth." *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989. 116-1117.
- Simpson, Lewis P. "Garden Myth." *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989. 1108-1109.

Taylor, Joe Gray. "Hospitality." *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989. 1133-1134.

Tindall, George. "Mythic South." *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Eds. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989. 1097-1099.

Wilson, Charles Reagan, and William Ferris. *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U of North Carolina P, 1989.