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This lithograph, maintained by the Library of Congress (among other places), depicts an effort by anti-abolitionists to paint American slavery as a good way of life for African-Americans (particularly when contrasted to the life endured by British workers). It was published in this format, circa 1850, by J. Haven (in Boston).

Sectionalism means loyalty to a particular region, or section, instead of loyalty to the country as a whole. (Think of it in terms of different people liking different football or baseball teams.) Sectionalism developed after the ratification of the Constitution as the different economies, cultures and political interests of the North and South grew further apart in their viewpoints.

Sectional differences first developed as a result of the different geographic features of the New World:

- The North, primarily, became a trading region of small farms; and

- The South developed the Plantation system.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, both sides of the nation had slaves:

- The North, after the War, passed laws to gradually emancipate their slaves; while
- In the South, slavery became even more important with the invention of the cotton gin.

The need for slavery continued to grow in the South.

The North and the South had both approved of the ratification of America's Constitution, but the different interests of the regions helped to create the two-party system:

- Southerners tended to be Democratic-Republican because they followed Thomas Jefferson's ideals.
- New Englanders tended to be Federalists which later became known as the Whigs.

(These two political parties looked very different during the life of Lincoln. Jefferson's Republicans later became known as Jackson's Democrats while Lincoln's Republicans had begun in the Federalist movement.) These two political parties took very different positions on the issues.

In South Carolina, by the 1720s, the black population surpassed the white population and there was an African American majority in most Southern states. In 1808, the international slave trade was outlawed; however, the number of slaves continued to increase due to higher birth rates and smuggling.

This growing population of slaves caused a fear of slave revolts:

- The Denmark Vesey plot caused many slave owners in South Carolina to become even more fearful of their slaves.
- Slave codes, which had resulted from the Stono Rebellion, were strengthened to better protect the white population.
- The General Assembly passed more laws prohibiting slaves from learning to read and write, meeting together and regulating all aspects of a slave's life.
- The Nat Turner Rebellion further increased the tensions in the regions.

Southerners feared that if slavery could not expand into the new territories the national government would control all of America and—were that to happen—slavery would no longer be permitted (and the South would have a large population of former slaves which they could not control).

Tension was also high as a result of the growing abolitionist movement. The main goal of the movement was to outlaw slavery throughout the United States. The movement was quite strong in the North and, in South Carolina, it made slave owners more determined to hold onto the slavery movement in opposition to what was happening in the North.

Abolitionists were active in South Carolina, like Sarah and Angelina Grimke before the Denmark Vesey plot occurred. Once the Denmark Vesey plot occurred, the abolitionists were forced to either move to another state or to keep silent. The Grimke sisters moved to Philadelphia and became Quakers.

The abolitionist movement was not popular among most Northerners. The movement did gain support, however, and grew with the publication of antislavery newspapers such as "The Liberator" by William Lloyd Garrison. Postmasters, across South Carolina, would remove the anti-slavery newspapers from the mails because they considered them to be too inflammatory.

In the North, however, the anti-slavery newspapers were reaching a larger audience that continued to grow. Southerners responded to the abolitionist criticism by claiming that slavery was a "positive good" since slaves were cared for throughout their entire life (unlike northern laborers who were "wage slaves" only while they were able to work).

Abolitionists manned the Underground Railroad which had limited impact in South Carolina (since the state was located too far away from free states to make the escape route really effective). Abolitionists did play a major role, however, in fueling the rising tensions between the North and the South.

The North's economy, and the region's politics, furthered the continued growth of Sectionalism. Drawn by the North's major industries, many European immigrants were attracted to the North. As a result of more and more people moving North, the population there continued to grow (allowing the North to have a disproportionately larger representation in the U.S. House of Representatives).

This also led to the political party of "Whigs" whose members supported a strong national government. They

competed with the "Democrats" who had a large number of Southerners. These opposition parties competed for control of the Presidency and the Congress.

With their concern that the North would get too strong, many people in the South advocated for the admission of new states, joining the Union, to be slave states. More new slave states would balance the total number of slave and free states in the U.S. Senate (where each state is represented by two Senators, no matter how large or small the state).

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Civil-War-Stirrings-in-South-Carolina-South-Carolina-History>

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Media Stream



William Lloyd Garrison - Abolitionist

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Political Map of the United States

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