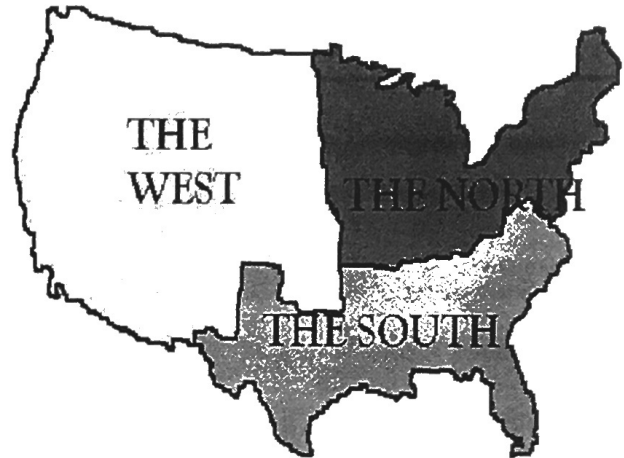


The Roots of American Sectionalism

Just after the War of 1812, nationalism grew stronger in the United States. Americans put aside many sectional differences. Sectionalism is the favoring of the interests of one section (usually your own) over those of the nation as a whole. The three main sections in the US were the North, South, and the West. However, during this time of nationalism the US experienced a period of growth and these three sections of the United States grew differently.



The North:

This section included New England and such middle states as Pennsylvania and New York. Most people who lived in this section were farmers. However, the national centers of commerce (trade) and industry were also in the North. The area was developing industry (manufacturing) and transportation (canals and eventually railroads). The number of factories grew tremendously in the North. Immigrants from Europe soon began to come to this section to work in these factories.

The South:

This section had almost no industry. The South depended upon Cash Crops such as cotton, tobacco, and sugar cane. These products were sent to the northern and European factories to be produced into manufactured goods. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 led to greater cotton production. This, in turn, led to a great demand for slave labor. Most white southerners did not own slaves, but much of the South's cotton came from slave labor on large plantations. The plantation owners (who were very rich) controlled the economy and politics of the South ("cottonocracy").

The West:

This was a less united section than the other two. The old West had been the area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. In 1800, there were only two states in the area. By 1821, seven more states had joined the Union. The northwestern areas were settled by northerners and European immigrants. They usually had small farms. Grains and other food products were their major crops. Southwestern areas had been settled in large slave plantations by southerners who needed fresh soil for cotton. Thus, the West could actually be divided into southwestern and northwestern sections. Generally, however, it was agricultural. The people were concerned with developing its new settlements and linking them to the old areas.

Issues dividing the Nation

You can think of **sectionalism as one big neighborhood dispute**, and the neighborhood was the United States in the mid-1800s. The nation was divided by its interests, attitudes, and overall lifestyles. This was due to the differences in geography in each of the sections of the US; leading to **different ways of life**. Below is a list of issues and how each section felt about each.

Protective Tariffs:

The North favored high tariffs (tax on imports/exports). **Tariffs made foreign products more expensive for Americans to buy** so more Americans purchased goods made here in America. **The South opposed tariffs** since they were dependent upon buying manufactured goods from the North and Europe. **The West was divided on the issue.**

Internal Improvements:

The West wanted internal improvements since it needed the most improvement. They needed roads and canals built since they were new to the Union. **The North had mixed feelings** about the issue. **The South was against this issue** since it did not want to pay more taxes to fund such improvements.

Immigration:

The North and West favored immigration. Both sections needed immigrants. The North wanted immigrants to work in their factories and the West wanted immigrants to settle in the frontier. **The South saw no need** for more immigrants to come into America.

Expansion of the Frontier:

The South and West wanted to expand west. They wanted more land for plantations and settlements. **The North feared this** could take away its labor supply if immigrants chose to move west instead of working in northern factories.

Slavery:

The South wanted slavery and wanted to extend it into the new western states. They felt their economy depended upon it and that it was their right to own slaves. **The North opposed extended slavery** into the Western territories and even began wanting it banned altogether. **The West was divided upon issue.** The southwest wanted slavery and the northwest did not.