

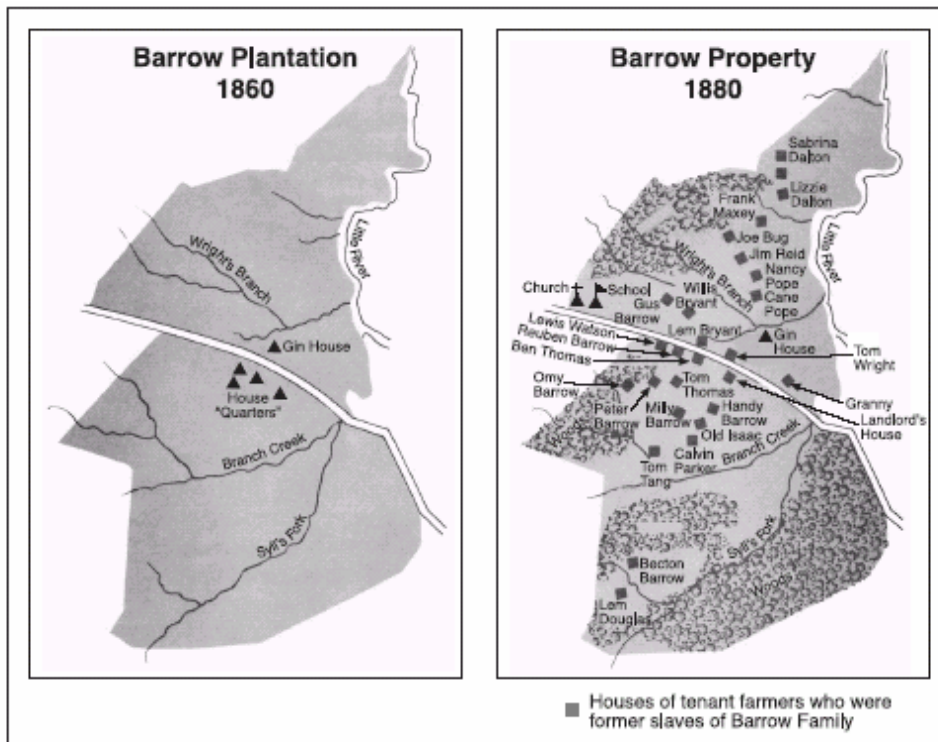
Station #4: Economic Change during Reconstruction

*The Civil War caused tremendous damage to the South. During Reconstruction, the federal government, and private northern investors (sometimes known derogatively by southerners as “**carpetbaggers**”) pumped a large amount of capital into the southern economy. This money was used to begin to develop a more diversified economic base. By the 1870s, many in the North began to talk about the “**New South**,” which referred to the development of some manufacturing and even heavy industry in the South. Despite these dramatic changes, much of the southern economy remained agrarian. During the Civil War, rumors circulated saying that the federal government would be granting freed slaves “**forty acres and a mule**,” upon emancipation. While some Radical Republicans did, indeed, discuss land redistribution, this did not become a reality. Slaves were generally freed with only the clothes on their backs. The war created a peculiar set of circumstances, as former slave-holders were left with land, but, without enough money to hire laborers to work it. At the same time, freedmen could provide labor, but had no land, tools, seeds, or other supplies. Consequently, it was common for former slaves and poor whites to work out **sharecropping** or **tenant farming** agreements with landowners (and sometimes even their former masters). According to these agreements, a farmer would work the land for the year, and the landowner would advance him supplies. At the end of the year, the farmer would have to give the owner a portion of the crop he had raised (usually 2/3). In practice, these new arrangements often led sharecroppers deeper and deeper into debt. In cases they tied freedmen to the land nearly as effectively as slavery had.*

Document A: Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881)

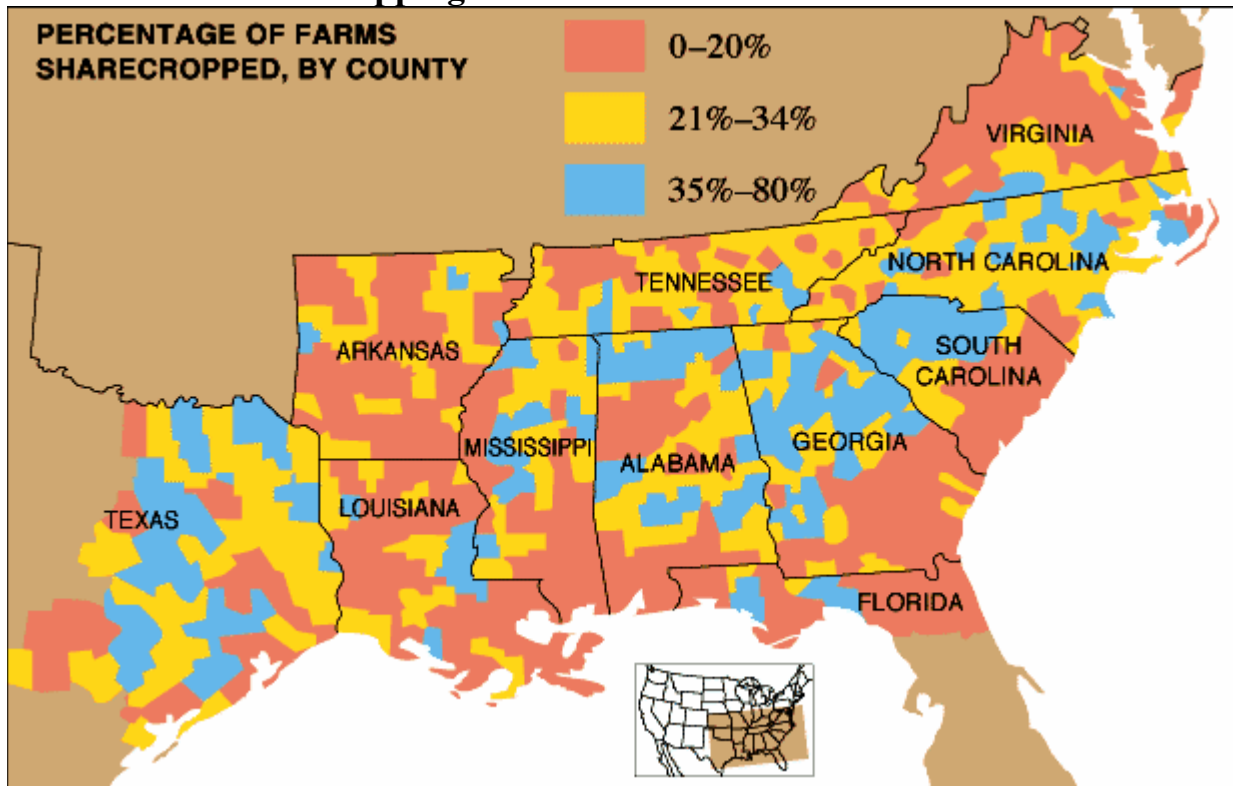
...History does not furnish an example of emancipation under conditions less friendly to the emancipated class than this American example. Liberty came to the freedmen of the United States not in mercy, but in wrath, not by moral choice but by military necessity, not by the generous action of the people among whom they were to live, and whose good-will was essential to the success of the measure, but by strangers, foreigners, invaders, trespassers, aliens, and enemies. The very manner of their emancipation invited to the heads of the freedmen the bitterest hostility of race and class. They were hated because they had been slaves, hated because they were now free, and hated because of those who had freed them. Nothing was to have been expected other than what has happened, and he is a poor student of the human heart who does not see that the old master class would naturally employ every power and means in their reach to make the great measure of emancipation unsuccessful and utterly odious. It was born in the tempest and whirlwind of war, and has lived in a storm of violence and blood. [...] [When they were emancipated, American slaves] were sent away empty-handed, without money, without friends, and without a foot of land to stand upon. Old and young, sick and well, were turned loose to the fields that had yielded them corn and were now denied them. The old master class, in its wrath, said, “Clear out! The Yankees have freed you, now let them feed and shelter you!..”

Document B: “A Georgia Plantation,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, April 1881



Sources: *Scribner’s Monthly*, “A Georgia Plantation,” April 1881 and Graebner and Richards, *The American Record*, McGraw Hill, 2001 (adapted)

Document C: Sharecropping in the South



Document D: A Sharecropper's Cabin, Farm Security Administration, 1930s



Document E: Freed people Picking Cotton



Document F: Charles Dudley Warner, “The South Revisited,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (March 1887)

... When we come to the New Industrial South the change is marvelous, and so vast and various that I scarcely know where to begin in a short paper that cannot go much into details. Instead of a South devoted to agriculture and politics, we find a South wide-awake to business, excited and even astonished at the development of its own immense resources in metals, marbles, coal, timber, fertilizers, eagerly laying lines of communication, rapidly opening mines, building furnaces, foundries, and all sorts of shops for utilizing native riches. It is like the discovery of a new world. When the Northerner finds great foundries in Virginia using only (with slight exceptions) the products of Virginia iron and coal mines; when he finds Alabama and Tennessee making iron so good and so cheap that it finds ready market in Pennsylvania; and foundries multiplying near the great furnaces for supplying Northern markets; when he finds cotton-mills running to full capacity on grades of cheap cottons universally in demand throughout the South and Southwest; when he finds small industries, such as paper-box factories and wooden bucket and tub factories, sending all they can make into the North and widely over the West; when he sees the loads of most beautiful marbles shipped North; when he learns that some of the largest and most important engines and mill machinery were made in Southern shops... he begins to open his eyes. The South is manufacturing a great many things needed in the house, on the farm, and in the shops, for home consumption, and already sends North and West several manufactured products.