

RS#07.1

Teacher Guide to the Resources

Document F: Percentage Change in Slave Population in Five Southern States

Background Information:

- There were, in effect, two Marylands by 1850: one founded upon slavery and the other upon free labor. Northern Maryland (Alleghany, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, and Washington counties) was an overwhelmingly white and free labor society. It was the only region of the state in which industrial activity had grown significantly. Southern Maryland (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, Montgomery, and St. Mary's counties) was a backward agricultural region devoted to tobacco, though wheat production made inroads during the 1850s in areas of large and concentrated landholdings. The Eastern Shore (Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, and Worcester counties) was in the middle. Like the southern counties, the Eastern Shore devoted itself to agriculture to the virtual exclusion of industry. Like the northern counties, it produced mainly cereals. It was neither as slave and black as Southern Maryland nor as free and white as Northern Maryland.
- Even though Maryland officially became a free state in November 1864, the transition to free labor had been under way for decades. Slaves accounted for nearly one-third of Maryland's population in 1790 and by 1850 their proportion had fallen to less than one-sixth. In 1790 Maryland already had the second largest free black population in the country and by 1810 was first. Between 1790 and 1810, while Maryland's slave population increased less than one-tenth, its free black population more than quadrupled. By the Civil War, free black people were nearly as numerous as slaves in the state.
- Revolutionary ideology, revivalism, evangelical religion, and relative location to the North were all factors to the decline of slavery in Maryland. Yet, the main cause to the decline was the decision to switch from tobacco to wheat cultivation. Tobacco was 90% of Maryland's aggregate agricultural production in 1747 and only 14% by 1859. By the late 1850s tobacco became virtually confined to the southern counties of the western shore. Tobacco is land and labor intensive while the production of wheat is not. Wheat required a maximum work force only at harvest time so the need for a fixed labor force diminished. As well, the settlers (mostly German and other migrants from Pennsylvania) who moved into Maryland's wheat-producing western interior had little or no slaveholding tradition.

Guided Questions/Teaching Suggestions:

Ask students:

- What is the time frame of the data?
- What is the data measuring?
- Based on the data, what happened in that 60 year period?
- What could be possible reasons for this trend?
- According to the data, is Maryland more Northern, more Southern, or represents the middle ground?

Before analyzing the data, the students should have an understanding of the process, purpose, and importance of the census. The United States has taken a census of its population every ten years since 1790. The most recent census available is the 1930 census, due to a 72-year privacy restriction. While the questions in U.S. census records varied from year to year and in state

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censuses, from state to state, you can find information like names of other household members, ages, birthplaces, residence, occupation, immigration and citizenship details, marriage information, military service and more. More information can be obtained at [<http://www.census.gov/>].