The United States is a prideful nation. The nation was founded on beliefs that enabled its citizens to believe not only in their country but also themselves. This is seen more so in one particular region than in any other region in the United States, the South. The South has always separated itself from the rest of the country one way or another. Since colonial times leading the Revolution, creating the government of the United States, creating an economic stronghold, or succeeding from the United States the South has separated itself from the nation. Many citizens of the United States refer to themselves as “Americans,” however; in the South this is different. Citizens in the South refer to themselves as “Southerners” first then “Americans.” Why is this? Do Southerners view themselves as better than other United States citizens? Are Southerners arrogant? The answers to these questions are easily answered as “no,” but it is the explanation to these questions that brings interest from not only fellow Americans, but other nations’ interest as well. The South earned its pride and beliefs along with the rest of the country. During the period of 1800-1860, the nation as a whole could be summed up characteristically in three words: nature, providence, and will. These are the beliefs of the whole nation during this period, but especially the South. “From time to time they (Southerners) have insisted that they, and not the Northerners, were the standard, genuine Americans.”

The only difference between the South and the rest of the nation currently is that the South never left this mindset; nature, providence, and will are still embedded in the hearts of every Southerner today. “The South as many northerners saw it-aristocratic, traditional, feudal-did not alter after 1850…” The South gained its pride over the years by continuing to push these characteristics, and it is the period of 1800-1860, that provided the mindset of Southerners today.

Nature, providence, and will are the key characteristics of the South. Each must be examined and discussed, because if one can understand these three characteristics individually then they can understand the South’s mindset. Nature is a way of life in the South. Southerner’s pride themselves on their land and ownership of that land. “For the Cavalier-era Southern mind, ideas of control, purity, and dominion over nature (both within and without) were essential; in both literature and in the real world…” In the antebellum South, the economy depended on agricultural and the use of the land. Southerners worked in the soil with their hands plowing and tending to the fields. Nature, in this sense, is not limited only to the physical aspect of nature. In addition to the physical aspect, nature speaks to the ways in which citizens interact with one another. In the South, the common aristocrat, for the majority, did not view himself as a better person. For example, Thomas Jefferson, a Southern aristocrat and President of the

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United States showed no sign of holding himself above his fellow citizens. He presented his inaugural address on the steps of the White House and then walked down the streets of Washington D.C. back to his room with no pomp and circumstance. Southerners use nature not only for their business ventures, such as farming, but also use nature for pleasure and entertainment. Entertainment is found in nature in the South as well. Many Southerners today continue to hunt the lands that those before them hunted in the antebellum South. Whether physical or social aspects of nature, the South appreciated nature in the antebellum South and continues to appreciate this fine characteristic today.

Providence is another key characteristic of the South in the antebellum period. This characteristic plays on the concept that the citizens had a divine right to their ways. Southerner’s explained many actions and activities in their world as been performed with reason by God. Providence is the characteristic of the Old South that goes hand and hand with what many historians refer to as the Romantic period.

It (Romanticism) made men touchy of their honor and impelled them to do things that were the negation of economic realism. It lay behind the demand of the South that its citizens should have the right to carry their slaves into western territory, a land economically unsuited for this form of labor. It nourished the illusion at the time of the Civil War that the Southern spirit could prevail against tremendous economic odds. It infused Southern religion with a mystic quality that enabled weak human beings to triumph over the Devil, the flesh, and the world.

This statement sums up romanticism’s impact in the South, which went along with providence. Again, Thomas Jefferson provides an example of providence in the South. Jefferson displayed providence with his foresight in leading the country. He held the office of President while negotiating the Louisiana Purchase, which increased the size of the United States greatly. Southerners turned to their churches as well. The South has also been titled the “Bible Belt,” which speaks to the characteristic of providence in the South. The churches represented romanticism and providence in the South. The South continues to press upon the concept of providence in America today. Southerners today support the “little” man, such as the local general store owner. They believe in the idea that is America, which is the ability for an individual to succeed. This success is deemed possible by the belief in divine right in American and particular the South. Will drives both nature and providence in the South.

Will is the key characteristic of the three. This characteristic links nature and providence. Will is the concept of pushing oneself to succeed in life socially and economically. The will of Southerners in the Old South is unrelenting. Southerners use their will to push their views, politically and socially. Southerners traditionally have stood strong on their beliefs. Once again examining Thomas Jefferson, his will in

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providing a strict interpretation of the Constitution made sure the rights of the people were granted. The will of the Southerner is seen in his stance on slavery. Not every Southerner supported the institution of slavery, but every southerner believed in the right for every voice to be heard. “The Southerners, to be sure, were then far from unanimous on the subject of slavery.”

Southerners like John C. Calhoun demanded states rights and stood strong on this belief. The will of Southerners enabled them to continue their way of life even though the world around them was changing.

Nature, providence, and will are three characteristics that best summarize the antebellum South. However, these characteristics continue today. Though they might not be as strong as they once were, these characteristics are still embedded in the Southern culture in the “New” South. But what is this difference of “Old” and “New” South? Is there truly a difference between “Old” and “New” South? In regards to nature, providence, and will, the South has not changed drastically.

The Old South legend was the emotional and psychological cornerstone of the New South ideal, but where the antebellum Cavalier had been done in by forces beyond his control or even his comprehension, his New South descendants were firmly in command of their own destinies.

Though these concepts are not stressed as much as they once were, they are still influential and important. “…the very name ‘New’ South implies an ‘Old’ South, and this latter term now became attached to the period prior to that conflict which southern people, stubbornly and ungrammatically, insist on calling the War Between the States.”

Essentially, the Civil War is the main difference between the Old and New South. Though some technology has advanced and industry has become a key role in the economy of the South, the Southern mind is still in an antebellum state, which leads to a Southern pride. The South belongs to the past essentially. It engrosses itself in the concept of placing an old antebellum mind into a modern man’s world. Modern day Southerners long for the days of the antebellum South, to live in that romantic world; however, they face reality and know it is not possible, so they do the next best thing and set in their minds to attempt to act as closely as possible. Though written during the antebellum period, George Fitzhugh writes of Southern man’s beliefs stating, “Southern men, from their position, posses peculiar advantages when they undertake discussion. History, past and contemporaneous, informs them of all the phenomena of other forms of

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5 Current, 18.


8 Grant, 42.
society…” With this statement, the idea of the Southern man is described in his love of history and of the past. One must proceed with caution here so not to get confused. It is not that Southerner’s dwell on history, instead they thrive on it. This means that Southerners do not dwell on loosing the war, instead they thrive on what could have been. Southern pride today is gained from often times studying certain individuals throughout history, and more times than not the individual would hail from the period of 1800-1850.

The South is the home to some of the United States’ greatest leaders. In the Revolutionary period, many of the leaders came from the South. Two leaders include George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Southerners could far more easily align themselves with the revolutionary generation than northerners could. The South’s invocation of George Washington was a particularly powerful symbol. These two men exemplify Southerners. Thomas Jefferson, as mentioned earlier, epitomized the characteristics of nature, providence, and will. Washington represented the prestige of the South. He became America’s first President after serving greatly in the colonial army during the Revolutionary War. He gains fame by being a great leader in the army and then steps into the office of the President. It is here that he takes the job as a prestigious job and did every last thing correctly for precedence. He set precedence in taking only two terms as President and being referred to as Mr. President, ant not your holiness or anything of that nature. Washington brought his Southern lifestyle to the office of President and represented not only his nation well while serving this office but in particularly the South. However, no leader exemplified the South and everything the South stood for more than Andrew Jackson.

Andrew Jackson epitomizes the nature, providence, and will of the South in the antebellum period. Andrew Jackson was a frontier man from Tennessee; he was the first president elected west of the Appalachian Mountains. This aspect showed the nature of Jackson being a frontiersman who can make it on his own. Jackson exemplifies providence in his leadership in the army. He led the Battle of New Orleans, two weeks after the war ended in January 1815, against General Edward Pakenham of the British. Jackson’s great military leadership provided the providence to lead the nation forward. The greatest characteristic of Jackson was his will. He was an orphan child who led the dream of all Southerners. Jackson, though alone, grew up to become a successful general in the United States Army. From this Jackson became President of the United States. Growing from an orphan to President I indeed the hope of the South, to make something possible out of the impossible epitomizes the Southerner’s dream. The South thrives on seeing the common man succeed. “His (Jackson) inauguration symbolized the rise of the common man to power; and it was the votes of the South and West that won the victory.” Jackson gave hope to the farmer and other common men in the South. Along with political leaders, the South has received cultural leaders that push the concept of Southern pride.

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10 Grant, 162.

The South has had many writers who speak of the pride of the old South and how Southerners were. These writings persuade and demand those living in the South today, to strive towards these old ways. William Faulkner is one writer in particular that contributed to Southern literature and identity. “After Faulkner, Wolfe, Warren, and Welty no literate Southerner could remain unaware of his heritage or doubt its enduring value,” Faulkner provided readers with a view of Southern life by a Southerner. This enabled the audience to appreciate the writing and what the writing was conveying. Faulkner was a patriot of the heritage of the South. Faulkner has one particular quote that sums up the link between past and present Southern culture from his book *Intruder in the Dust* (1948).

For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it’s still not yet two o’clock on that July afternoon in 1863…and it’s all in the balance, it hasn’t happened yet, it hasn’t even begun yet…and that moment doesn’t need even a fourteen year old boy to think This time. Maybe this time with all this much to lose and all this much to gain. What this quote does is that it sets in the anticipation and thrill of the South. Faulkner was the link to the South that some had forgotten or never fully understood. He was not alone either. Other writers helped in this Southern movement in writing. These writers saw the romanticism that was the antebellum South and they fed off of it. These writers included Thomas Wolfe, Eudora Welty, and Robert Penn Warren. They all helped in creating the pride that still is intact today.

In terms of leaders, the South went through three main stages. The states include the Revolutionary period, late eighteenth early nineteenth century, and the mid nineteenth century. In these periods, several leaders emerged. George Washington led the way in the Revolutionary period. He led the way militarily and politically. Being from Virginia, he represented his state and the South in a dignified manner. Thomas Jefferson led during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century period. Another Virginian, he stood firm on his political beliefs and the rights of the people. The mid nineteenth century was dominated, in terms of leaders, by Andrew Jackson. He was the Southern man. He epitomized the role of the common man creating success for himself. All these leaders brought the South into a romantic era. This era was romantic because the Southerners needed to escape some setbacks. “For Southern history, unlike American, includes large components of frustration, failure, and defeat. It includes not only an overwhelming military defeat but long decades of defeat in the provinces of economic, social, and political life” In this romantic era, they (Southerners) were proud of who

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13 Gray, 95.

14 Woodward, 19.
they were and what they did. They viewed themselves essentially as a separate nation from the North. “For many nineteenth-century northerners, the South seemed very much like a foreign country that few had any direct experience of. Northerners were forced to rely on reports sent back to periodicals and newspapers from correspondents in the South.”15 With these leaders and movements being from the South, their stories needed to be told. Writers like William Faulkner connected the past to the present in literature. This was key because differences were strong between North and South and it was key for the Northerners to get a view of the South from a Southerner.16 He, along with other writers, wrote of the Old South and brought it to those who never knew or had forgotten the Old South. There is still, yet, another area that many southerners find themselves the most proud of which deals with the concept of chivalry.

Southerners pride themselves on nature, providence, and will; however, above all they pride themselves on being hospitable and chivalric. Whether friend or foe, a Southerner treats his guest with the utmost respect and dignity. The host provides any services needed for the guest and will go out of his way to make him feel at home. This is the biggest part of any Southerner’s pride. Southerners display their affection for hospitality for the sake of caring, Christian act, and it shows that not only can a Southerner provide and take care of himself but guests as well.

Northerners had been encouraged to believe that southern hospitality was “in the highest degree generous and elegant.” Southerners, they were advised, were willing to “devote themselves to you-take you about the city, show you the lions, are ready to go any where with you, send their friends to call on you to help occupy your time agreeably, and take you to their houses where they make you really welcome and at home.”17

Southerners essentially look at hosting as an opportunity to show off, not in the sense to rub it in the guests face, but to open the doors and allow anyone and everyone to come in and to be comfortable at a home away from home. Chivalry is a concept that is enriched in the Southerner’s life. Chivalry could be seen in the majority of men in the old South. Southern men, particularly the aristocracy, wanted to view themselves with similarities to the knights of old Europe. These knights were brave, fierce, heroic, and gracious to women.18 This was the romantic thought essentially. Though the concept of chivalry is not practiced to the fullest extent today, the idea is in the back of many citizens in the South.

15 Grant, 82.
16 Ibid.
17 Grant, 83.
18 Eaton *The Mind of the Old South*, 266.
The South has changed since the antebellum period. However, many of the old concepts and beliefs are still with those in the South today. The South essentially is a hopeless romantic, continuing to belief in the impossible. “The South has a tradition of attempting the impossible at great cost, proudly celebrating the failure, and gaining admiration for the performance”\textsuperscript{19} In general, people like to root for the underdog in most situations. Southerners obtain much of their pride from this thought. They view themselves as the underdog compared to the rest of the nation. Often times it is the South that is mocked by the rest of the country. The South is labeled as backwards and lacking in education. Northerners proposed the South to be lacking in intellectual areas and therefore were short of being considered living a civilized life.\textsuperscript{20} With this criticism the South receives, they take pride in themselves for their accomplishments, goals, and desires. Southerners root for themselves, essentially, because no one else really is rooting for them to succeed. Since Radical Reconstruction, the South has suffered the North’s mocking and drive to impose their beliefs on the South; however, the South has stood firm and taken to its roots. The South continues to rely on the characteristics of the antebellum South of nature, providence, and will. These characteristics can be seen through leaders such as Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, and Martin Luther King Jr. Bill Clinton, from Arkansas, represents nature in his ability to relate to the common person, even though he led the United States through the biggest financial boom the country has seen. Jimmy Carter, from Georgia, represents providence in his ability to relate to American’s spiritual side and brought morals back into the office of President after Richard Nixon’s scandal. Martin Luther King Jr. represents will in his motivation and courage to lead the civil rights movement against all the discrimination he faced.

Pride can either hurt or help an individual, and the same can be said for a country or region of a country. The South is a perfect example of pride either hurting or helping someone. In the case of the South, pride has done both. At times, pride has cost Southerners to “eat their own words” and at other times pride has pushed the South through difficult times. Some Americans have never accepted the South as a full part of the United States, while other Americans have realized the importance the South plays in the United States. Even though the South is a leader in economic, political, and social aspects throughout the country and the world, some Americans continue to view the South as inferior. Economically, the South is home to such enterprises as Coca-Cola, Home Depot, Disney, and many other businesses. Politically, the South is home to four of the last five presidents. Socially, the South is home to many of the largest sporting events, such as the Master’s golf tournament in August, Georgia, and the Daytona 500 in Daytona, Florida. Dating as far back as the colonial times, the South has been separated in one form or fashion from the rest of the country. The South differed from the North in regards to several Constitutional items in the Revolutionary period. In addition, the South differened on slavery and states rights. These differences provided the basis for a proud region that stood up for its beliefs. The South went as far in differences from the rest of the country that it succeeded from the country and formed their own calling it the Confederation States of America. This gave a completely separate identity for Southerners. In addition to differences with the rest of the country, the South has

\textsuperscript{19} Woodward, 264.
\textsuperscript{20} Grant, 101.
produced some of the best leaders in United States history. These great leaders in United States history from the South include but are not limited to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and John C. Calhoun. These early Southern and American leaders displayed the characteristics of nature, providence, and will. These characteristics defined the nation in the antebellum period, but no other region represented these characteristics as well as the South did. The writers of the early twentieth century, such as William Faulkner, linked the Old South with the New South. The Southern man has William Faulkner to thank for connecting the heritage of the South to great me such as Jefferson and Washington. With the connection to these leaders and the mindset of Southerners in the antebellum period of 1800-1860 it is obvious that the new South’s mindset and pride comes from this period of time and continues to focus on the same characteristics that defined the nation then: nature, providence, and will.

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