

JOEL SWEENEY'S ROLE IN THE NORTHERN MIGRATION OF THE TRADITIONAL
SOUTHERN BLACK BANJO: AN HGIS APPROACH

A Thesis
by
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Department of Geography and Planning

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ABSTRACT

JOEL SWEENEY'S ROLE IN THE NORTHERN MIGRATION OF THE TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN BLACK BANJO: AN HGIS APPROACH. (August 2010)

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The early decades of 19th century America witnessed many social modifications over its vast geographic space. These social assimilations were heavily influenced by contemporary political, economic and social currents. In 1840, these tangible and intangible forces' accumulation produce the extant effects of modernity—the concepts and processes manifesting improvements for transportation of ideas and objects across time and space. Due to modernity's irregular presence across geography, certain areas of America in 1840 embodied modernity's consciousness more than others. Within modernity's patchwork, people pursued ancient cultural rituals; one of those was music. Beginning in the early 1840s, the banjo, a symbol of African-American culture, was ubiquitously adopted by blackface minstrelsy in America and carried over the world. Joel Sweeney, a white Virginian, performed a pivotal role in presenting the black banjo to popular white culture through their favorite entertainment medium: blackface minstrelsy and then the creolization the black banjo.

Chapter I sets the scene in which banjos became significant in popular American culture and how GIS techniques can help map its emergence into this culture. Chapter II builds an understanding about why the black banjo became such a nationwide fad. Using ideas about cultural formation, lifeworld experiences, centers of modernity and Joel

Sweeney's role within these processes, the historic social and racial context of the 1840s emerges that enveloped the northern movement of the southern black banjo. Chapter III discusses the application and display of these ideas and concepts through Historical Geographic Information Systems (HGIS). HGIS offer a unique chance to retrace the echoes of Joel Sweeney's modernized banjo and recreate the social environments in which he performed. Using historical census data from the University of Minnesota's Population Center, Joel Sweeney's performance tour from 1836 to 1842 is plotted against demographics depicting racial, age, gender and employment populations, as well as contemporary access and presence of communication and transportation networks. Together, these demographics insinuate the breadth of particular lifeworlds. Chapter IV examines the results these series of maps based upon economic, transportation and communication, racial, age and gender demographics from 1840. Chapter V offers conclusions derived from this project and further research options.

This is an interdisciplinary project utilizing Appalachian Studies, historical geography and HGIS. It looks at differences in historical life experiences between the northern and southern United States in 1840 based upon modernity's power centers within these regions, and the affects these power centers exerted upon the mass adoption of the banjo into blackface minstrelsy. This project illustrates the southern black banjo's northward migration into the white dominated North through Joel Sweeney's 1836-1842 performance tours.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sitting comfortably, legs crossed, an old man strums on a homemade instrument, its strings held taut against an animal's hide that covered the instrument's body. Other party members kick and stomp their feet rhythmically, letting the music overcome them; some in wild gesture, others in relaxed motions. This group is entertaining themselves with music and dance, just as people do the world over. Used for entertainment and expression of the soul, music is common throughout all cultures. However, does this description spawn a particular image within the mind of where these people lived? Where is it?

Was it an image of slaves playing and dancing somewhere in the Caribbean? Were there palm trees in your vision? Or perhaps, you conjured a scene in French Suriname, on the coast of South America, where slaves gathered and made music? Was the old man, playing this instrument somewhere in Virginia's Piedmont region at a secret meeting place for slaves, stolen away at night after work? Of course, this event may have happened on boats navigating the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, stopping at river landings after unloading cargo. Maybe this actually happened on the streets of New York City and the party was of mixed race. Or was this a portrait of life in the Southern Appalachians, the old man a white farmer and the other party members his kin? In any case, all of these interpretations would be correct given the above description. The banjo was at all of these places at varying times.

The point of this cultural descriptor was to illustrate the banjo's evolving social and geographic context. The banjo's history is inextricably wedded to the colonization of the New World. Over this historical process, the banjo and its players have changed over time and space. Minstrel shows, Civil War camps, parlors of the elite and college glee clubs adopted

the banjo as well. How did the banjo, once solely enjoyed by slaves, make it into parlors of elite women and theater stages? In addition, did these drastically different situations utilize the same type of banjo? This research paints a spatial and temporal picture from a six year span in the banjo's evolution and the man who executed it.

Beginning his career in the South, Joel Sweeney first wielded his skills on the banjo to southern audiences. Although people had not yet likely seen his particular five-string incarnation, they were well aware of its origin. African-Americans had been playing this type of plucked lute in the South, and throughout North America, since the 1740s and even earlier in the North (Conway 1995; Zenger 1736). So, this five-string version was not so startling. In fact, to white southerners, this version may have been more appealing due to its more symmetrical construction by a man with wheelwright skills, rather than its normal gourd construction by African-Americans (Schreyer 2007). Performing to white audiences through blackface acts, white minstrels had previously commodified African-American culture for the stage. The banjo, already well known to be African-American, fit naturally with and centered representations on enslaved southern life. The banjo would become another popular commodification of African-American culture. With Sweeney's modification and presentation of this African-American instrument, the banjo suddenly assumed a new aura among whites throughout Antebellum America. Joel Sweeney's performances thrust the banjo into the popular white culture of Antebellum America.

Although the banjo was known among most Americans in the North and South because of their spatial and social proximity with blacks, it remained primarily a black instrument in the 1830s (Winans 1976). However, once Sweeney became a popular minstrel, many white minstrels added the banjo to their blackface acts. This addition into blackface minstrelsy influenced the subsequent social and geographic scope of the banjo. Working class white males' desire to find an acceptable public outlet for their fears and their insecurities within a growing industrial economy fueled blackface minstrelsy (Cockrell 1997;

Lott 1995). Affirmation of class and race through blackface minstrelsy became the vehicle used by lower class white males to deal with these psychological and emotional hardships. This project aims to establish the North as an epicenter of blackface minstrelsy aimed at modern white populations that lured Joel Sweeney out of the South. It will demonstrate spatial distributions of particular social and economic demographics of 1840 that will help build traditional and modern lifeworld zones in the North and South. Over top of these demographics, Joel Sweeney's performance tour from 1836 to 1842 will test who were his audience (Carlin 2007).

This period is significant because it contains Sweeney and the banjo's rise within Antebellum American popular culture. By identifying how his tour dates and locations align with these demographics from 1840, I can infer whether his performances "sought out" northern lower class white males within a modern white lifeworld. Since northern industry and modernization dwarfed that of the South and also bolstered an environment ripe for the banjo's commodification, Sweeney traveled to the North, where a larger population demanded more blackface minstrelsy acts. So, this Historical Geographic Information Systems (HGIS) project attempts to discover correlations between Sweeney's 1836-1842 tour and lower class white male populations, working modern industrial and manufacturing jobs; subsequently, it chronicles the banjo's movement into modern northern white lifeworlds. A review of historic social conditions in the North and South are pertinent to understand why Joel Sweeney adopted his particular tour route and HGIS helps understand the spatial dimensions of these social conditions.

The field of HGIS is relatively new in the study of geography since it grows with our technological developments. Building an understanding about our past geographies is beneficial because we can learn how geography influenced critical moments in our history. As we enter into an age where research into any field is encouraged and, at times, sought

out, HGIS becomes a worthwhile method to reconstruct and recreate historical events and processes.

Another aspect of this research is understanding minstrelsy's role in Antebellum America's social life. Dale Cockrell (1997) discussed blackface minstrelsy's beginnings and how these origins affected later incarnations of blackface. Particularly, his research is geared toward emphasizing class issues within blackface, stemming from earlier European mummery, a carnival-like tradition of blackening the face and reversing social roles. As my project also focuses on class, Cockrell's book is a solid beginning in uncovering class, as well as racial, issues of the 1830s and 40s. Eric Lott's (1995) publication offers a volume of historical evidence and data about class and racial issues intrinsic to minstrelsy. Although his deductions carry him far into supposition, his research and analysis is helpful in understanding certain aspects of 19th century minstrelsy. Contrasting these two scholars, music historian William Mahar (1999) brings a more balanced view to the study of minstrelsy. He illustrates minstrelsy's wonton need to burlesque and plagiarize anything of popularity through the guise of blackface, not just African Americans themselves. His research of playbills evinces the variety contained within a minstrel show, which includes the banjo's appearance.

An appraisal of northern lifeworlds is important for this study to clarify how blackface minstrel shows were related to modern northern life. Elizabeth Collins Cromley's (1999) work looks at worldviews in New York's early apartment and tenement buildings. These buildings are where many impoverished immigrants and "native" born Americans lived in New York and other northern urban areas, including lower class white males. Elizabeth Blackmar's (1989) work examines this same facet of northern life. Gunther Barth's (1980) publication peeks into the development of modern lifestyles and its underlying value system. David Roediger's (1999) book further helps to illustrate white working class males' experience in the Antebellum North. It underlines adaptations to life they enacted in order

to relate to their modernizing world, and the new modern values prescribed upon them. To disseminate modernity's effect, Nikolas Kompridis' (2005) article on cultural identity and non-identity will shed light on how people forge new cultural identities from old and new sources within modernity's enforcement of "the law of progress"; this law being that "everything now must be better than it was before" (337).

In tandem with these cultural ideas, Cole Harris' (1991) article discusses how modernity's power requires spatial networks of organization. Particular emphasis is given to the North's power networks of communication, transportation and economy to elucidate how modern white working class males and Joel Sweeney fit together. However, an understanding of southern life is also useful to contrast lower class whites' experiences in these regions. For this task, I rely in part on Mechal Sobel's (1987) work that discusses common life in the South, during the late 18th century and spilling into the early 19th century. In addition, Melvin Patrick Ely's (2004) arduous task of compiling court records, newspapers and other primary documents, accounts for much understanding of free blacks encounters and treatment in the Antebellum South.

Two separate, yet complementary, research methods focus this project. One method is the conceptual and analytical HGIS of Sweeney's tour; the other quickly describes the banjo's evolution in America, and the social implications behind these evolutions. Maps will reinforce this adoption through visual means. Data illustrating social characteristics of the American North and South come from the National Historic GIS website, maintained by the Minnesota Population Center at the University of Minnesota (2004). This website will also provide shape files of Antebellum America. A detailed chronology of Joel Sweeney's tour is located in the back of Carlin's (2007) publication and was used to plot most of Sweeney's performances.

This study attempts to re-evaluate the way we look at historic diffusions from a geographic perspective, such spatial diffusions have been categorized by several geographers

including Knox and Marston (2010) and Johnston et al. (1994). History is dynamic because it is understood within the present interpretation and context. Through the traveling performances of Joel Sweeney, this project infers a geographic route by which banjos diffused throughout the North by a white minstrel. This is a specific study of one man's contribution to, not only blackface minstrelsy, but also possibly all popular forms of banjo incarnations because this is a documented instance in print when then banjo moved from traditional black lifeworlds to modern white lifeworlds. To delve into the banjo's geographic and social scope, we first need an understanding about the lifeworlds and systems of thought that contained these geographic and social aspects.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lifeworlds emerge through aspects present upon the landscape such as social and economic demographics. These demographics are clues to certain landscapes and therefore lifeworlds. For example, industrial manufacturing requires a large labor force living nearby and this population alters the previous landscape with their presence. In agricultural production, commodity crops exact large tracts of relatively flat arable land. Thus, these economic factors are clues to altered landscapes and the ensuing lifeworld. Most of these demographic clues do not magically appear on the environment; people build, construct and, most importantly, imagine landscapes first. Indeed, as much as landscapes first require contemplation for their construction, so too do our actions within them. How people decide to alter their natural landscape depends largely upon particular cultures, lifeworlds and systems of thought. Although the concepts, “lifeworld” and “system of thought,” may sound vague and obtuse, they hint at human regions formed among populations, their ideas, their cultures and their geographies. Paramount to this study is specifying how I employ the ideas “system of thought” and “lifeworld.”

2.1 Thought Systems

I encountered these ideas through Cole Harris' (1991) article, “Power, Modernity and Historical Geography.” Through the theory of four researchers (Foucault, Habermas, Giddens and Mann), Harris examines the way in which individuals and societies are reshaped by their increasing ability to manipulate time and space using varying networks of communication and transportation systems. His discussion on thought systems arose from

Foucault's ideas about how the designs of truth and power manifest themselves across space. For Foucault, power emanates from particular discourses that organize knowledge and truth, and not necessarily the modes of economic production. Instead, these discourses are further divisions of larger thought systems and modes of production. So, as Harris (1991) summarizes, "the possibility of freedom is circumscribed, not so much by modes of production as by *systems of thought*" (emphasis added: 672). The argument here is not against modes of production, indeed, quite the opposite; thought systems support modes of economic production because they supply a tacit acceptance of ideals that organize spatial power structures that in turn shape modes of production. In Marx and Engels' ([1848] 1967) work, the term "historical materialism" described the fundamental differences behind modes of economic production and inequality among classes.

Marx and Engels' ([1848] 1967) historical materialism contains two active parts: a physical production and a social relations production. Thought system is another name for their idea of the social relations that precede and nurture economic modes of production. Throughout their life, they struggled to assign dominance to one of these active parts. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels named physical production the key role as sculpting modern landscapes and social relations as a product of environment. Later scrutiny of this idea assumes and claims it erroneous. Human thought precedes action: "an idea comes first; the influence of its objectification comes later" (Baum 1988: 77).

Thought systems corral similar styles of thinking and beliefs together into recognizable amalgamations that take form over space and are aggregations of like cultural ideals. A quick example of an idea executing itself across space comes from religion. Christian churches are physical representations of a particular thought system that exists in a particular space; however, church styles vary from place to place according to culture. While these cultures are different, they all have churches devoted to the idea of Christian worship. Thought systems represent the larger grouping of like-minded cultures that believe

in church, but implement its manifestation in ways according to local culture. Thought systems are simply one of the largest recognizable units of ideas over space we can identify. Joel Sweeney built his new banjo within a traditional lifeworld based upon a thought system asserting modernity. He then carried his banjo into areas more developed by this thought system.

European colonists ascribed their modern thought system into the core of America. This inherited thought system expresses itself throughout differentiating lifeworlds. However, as explained above, its expression across space is different, just as its influence across space is uneven. Berman (1988) describes this contradiction:

Modern environments and experience cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity. (15)

Joel Sweeney grew up within this overarching thought system, but just as the same religion has different styles of the same idea, thought systems can produce different types of lifeworlds. Harris (1991) ties Foucault's thought system concept into Habermas' lifeworld concept and its division into traditional and modern lifeworlds.

2.2 Lifeworlds

Habermas distinguishes between traditional and modern lifeworlds. Traditional lifeworlds are those that provide security and stability through providing previously established custom and ritual for many aspects of an individual and society's daily life. As Harris (1991) remarks, lifeworlds are "the 'preunderstood context' of action, the background against which... communication takes place and action unfolds" (673). This "context" is essentially one of the building blocks for how we understand and live within any given environment. Whether it is traditional or modern, lifeworlds are the sum of every aspect of life. Johnston et al. (1994) use Buttmer's definition of lifeworld as "the culturally defined spatio-temporal setting or horizon of everyday life" (331). Therefore, the bounds, or

horizons, of places within everyday life serve to formulate the physical and social aspects of lifeworlds.

This accumulation of daily life has perceivable bounds. To explain this, Habermas (1987) adopts Husserl's concept of "horizons." Horizons are equal to the scope of influence a particular ideal or action exerts. Indeed, as the prominent human geographer Meinig (1979) aptly quips, "we are always environed, always enveloped by an outer world" (3). Traditional lifeworlds' horizons are immediate. They are nearby, spanning from village to community to town and possibly to the regional scale. Their power and preunderstood context diminishes more quickly over time and space than modern lifeworlds because they cannot establish communication and transportation as efficient as modern horizons and lifeworlds. Modernity's horizons are an unseen, obscure force that influences lives far from it through political, economic and social networks of thought and power. Newspapers of 1840 evince this indirect force. A Virginian farmer can read news about who and what arrived on ships in New York, and only a page away from global trade updates from Europe or Asia. Conversely, information important to the Virginian farmer is insignificant to most New Yorkers. Indeed, while traditional lifeworlds trickle into modern ones, modern lifeworlds assail traditional ones due to the efficiency and scope of their differing horizons.

Traditional lifeworlds represent ideas and actions geared toward maintaining local relationships between the land and its people. Indeed, they exist within local relationships while modern lifeworlds can exist among more distant and impersonal means. Modernity exerts daily pressure upon the traditional lifeworlds' communication relationships. This threat originates through modernity's encroaching communication and transportation networks that extend lifeworld horizons and therefore this enveloping outer world (Harris 1991). For example, although we may not have been to Japan, we know it is there. We know about their language, their customs, even their history; even more impressive, we could buy

a plane ticket and be there within the day. Traditional lifeworlds lack these effective means of broad communication and transportation, and thus have smaller lifeworld horizons.

2.3 Modernity as Part of Thought Systems and Lifeworlds

Modernity also alters our ability to access and transfer information across time and space. Through economics, modernity supplies larger markets and new technologies to increase profit—giving due cause to implement modernity into businesses. So, modernity emerges as a network of systems to increase communications that expand the “close, personal [communications]” of smaller thought systems in order to reach people outside of the village, town or regional sphere (Harris 1991:673). This ability to communicate over increasing distances had an immense impact on economic means. Increased distances of communication allowed people to rely on others much farther from home for their survival needs. As a result, Marx and Engels observed people’s economic means become specialized more and more within modernizing areas (Baum 1988).

In his lecture series entitled “Mythology and the Individual,” Joseph Campbell (1996) looks at when humans began this work specialization and its effects upon human consciousnesses. To be sure, human specialization arose with our attainment of food surplus through cultivation and subsequent social reorganization. This first shift in our means of economic production came through agriculture practices and cattle domestication around 6000 B.C. in the Near East. This new reliable means of attaining food led to food surpluses and sedentary lifestyles. These stable aspects of life gave rise to reliable reproduction rates and the establishment of larger communities by 3500 B.C.

Campbell (1996) distinguishes non-specialists from specialists as people who control their “entire cultural inheritance” or as a “community of equivalent adults.” Non-specialists are differentiated usually only in age or sex, not by job or occupation as in larger societies with castes, government positions or hierarchies. Specialization means each individual

controls only their portion of their culture. As Campbell says, these specialists are a “part-man.” They no longer wholly possess the “entire cultural inheritance.” He says mythological symbolism expressing this consciousness shift deals with becoming a “part-man.” Art displays this yearning for wholeness when geometric fields forming a whole appear on pottery designs. The psychological move toward many fields becoming one large unit. Interestingly, the causes behind human specialization—an agent of modernity—have been present for much of recorded civilization’s existence.

French anthropologist Roger Bastide confers and develops Campbell’s (1996) “part-man” concept with his insight into specialized individual communication: “there are never... cultures in contact but rather individuals, carriers of different cultures. However, these individuals are not independent creatures but are interrelated by complex webs of communication, of domination-subordination, or of egalitarian exchange” (reported in Hay 2001: 13). These complex webs reflect a modern thought system and lifeworld. Due to the different scales of specialization between North and South, we begin to see how Sweeney’s travels into the North transported the banjo from traditional to modern lifeworlds.

While Campbell’s (1996) distinctions are largely between hunting and gathering communities versus early agriculturalists, the consciousness shift he describes is meaningful when understanding the gradation between traditional and modern lifeworlds of 1840 America. Although traditional and modern lifeworlds of this period were involved in the same system of thought, the communication and transportation reach of modern lifeworlds exceeded traditional lifeworlds. When coupled with traditional lifeworlds’ smaller populations, these communication and transportation networks foster less specialization among the population, therefore, people within traditional lifeworlds are less likely to be Campbell’s “part-man.” The access to larger communication and transportation networks affects economic specialization and the elaboration of modern lifeworlds.

Harris (1991) defends Habermas' idea that modernity has the ability to weaken "the 'unquestionable givenness' of the traditional lifeworld" (673). Every aspect of life is now open to specialized analysis from the individual within an even larger society and with this analysis, modernity extends a pretense of freedom, a freedom of thought: "as modernity breaks further and further into the traditional lifeworld, it substitutes individual, rational analysis for custom" (673). The ability to interpret one's self as part of larger societies requires first to realize one's self as an individual within that culture. This realization is one way modernity undermines traditional lifeworld roles. Modernity allows the individual to assert himself outside of the immediate community through its communication and transportation networks.

So, what represents some of these rationalities of the modern lifeworld? I use a description of Berman's (1988) to delineate what are some of the more important fragmenting aspects of modernity's landscape:

steam engines, automatic factories, railroads, vast new industrial zones; of teeming cities that have grown overnight, often with dreadful human consequences; of daily newspapers, telegraphs, telephones and other mass media, communicating on an ever wider scale; of increasingly strong nation states and multinational aggregations of capital; of mass social movements fighting these modernizations from above with their own modes of modernization from below; of an ever-expanding world market embracing all, capable of the most spectacular growth, capable of appalling waste and devastation, capable of everything except solidity and stability. (18-19)

Within this quote, there lie many descriptions of how the modern lifeworld is manifest. However, modern lifeworlds and the systems of thought that construct them are described by these descriptors: stronger, bigger and faster. Although these words are truly empty descriptors, these words summarize aspirations within modern lifeworlds; they express the wish to change and "improve" upon the status quo whereas traditional lifeworlds aim to maintain the status quo. Due to this modifying characteristic, even traditional lifeworlds contain some measure of modernity. However, due to traditional lifeworld's smaller horizons, this "improvement" takes longer and makes it easier to maintain the status quo. Nevertheless, in Berman's statement above, every one of these listed descriptors is implied.

While it is simply too much to blanket the South of 1840 in a traditional lifeworld since many rural parts have always included aspects of modernity, this type of lifeworld was more prevalent throughout the South than the North as evinced by each regions' dominant economic demographic. Conversely, modern lifeworlds were more common in the North than the South. Considering the previous arguments, the easiest way to visualize this division between North and South is predominantly through their economic production. While other differences certainly existed, this project emphasizes their distinct economies as an indicator of lifeworld type; the North's manufacturing and commerce centers and the South's vast expanse of agricultural commodities.

Differences in spatial distribution of population demographics encouraged modern networks' permeation of the North to a larger extent than in the South. These demographics portray the North as more racially homogenous while more economically diverse than the South. This more homogenous culture emanated largely from whites of European descent living in much less direct contact with blacks than southerners. For clarification, northern whites certainly had contact with blacks; but due to economic niches, racial attitudes, social groupings and concentrations of racial population densities, northern whites and blacks were able to ignore each other more easily. In addition, whites vastly outnumbered blacks in the North compared to the South.

For example, in 1840, Virginia had approximately 1.25 million people living within it while New York had approximately 2.4 million people. Of these 1.25 million in Virginia, blacks numbered 500,000 with 450,000 being enslaved and whites filling the other 750,000 persons. Over the entire South, slaves numbered 2.4 million, freedmen numbered 200,000 and whites had 4,250,000 people—a grand total of 6.9 million. While enslaved people made a little more than one third of the population, blacks altogether constituted about 40% of the South's entire population. In New York, there were around 50,000 blacks, 5 of them slaves. Whites represented the other 2.35 million persons. Out of the North's 10.2 million people,

freedmen made 1.5% of the population, slaves made almost half a percent of the entire North's population, while whites made the other 98% (NHGIS 2004). This unbalanced distribution of racial population fueled many of the differences between North and South.

While the banjo has existed in modern *black* lifeworlds, what this entire map collection, documented in Chapter IV (Figures 4.1-4.25), best describes is the banjo's entrance into modern *white* lifeworlds of the North. Admittedly, there is not enough data to map the banjo's entrance into southern modern white lifeworlds through Joel Sweeney sufficiently, or any other performer. Nevertheless, this map collection portrays the banjo's arrival in the North, in white hands, to overwhelming white audiences: predominantly young lower class white males who supplied labor for the North's manufacturing and resource extraction facilities. Furthermore, the contrast with the southern maps reveals the relevance of traditional lifestyles in the South and modernity in the North.

2.4 Newspapers

Newspapers are important because they transport ideas and information across space quickly. They represent thought systems, influence lifeworlds and require a supporting system of production. In 1840, newspapers delivered the news and commercial advertisements that influenced many opinions and ideals of daily life. As Lippmann (2007) explains, a delicate system between advertisers and the buying public support newspapers. While merchants and manufacturers support newspapers most immediately through advertisements, the buying public and loyal readers are most important: "a newspaper that can really depend upon the loyalty of its readers is as independent as a newspaper can be, given the economics of modern journalism" (102). So, newspapers usually cater their news content toward this public. However, loyal readers do not sustain newspapers; selling advertisements does.

Advertisements in newspapers come from those who have products or services for sale. Without these economic stimuli, newspapers would have a much tougher time. In this quote, Lippmann (2007) describes the relationship between readers and publishers:

every day and twice a day [newspapers] will present us with a true picture of all the outer world in which we are interested... [the reader] expects the fountains of truth to bubble, but he enters into no contract, legal or moral, involving any risk, cost or trouble to himself... this casual and one-sided relationship between readers and press is an anomaly of our civilization... the citizen will pay for his telephone, his railroad rides, his motorcar, his entertainment. But he does not pay openly for his news. (101)

From this argument, advertisements appear as the only way for a daily newspaper to stave off bankruptcy. Part of this service springs from the newspapers' job of reporting pertinent events from an expanding and modernizing world, while still involving and reporting the local news. After exceeding their horizons, gathering news of more remote towns, cities and regions is difficult for traditional lifeworlds; its focus often remains upon the immediate and the local. Modern lifeworlds depend on connecting modernity centers with other distant modernity centers. This desire to inform the public about an unseen and usually un-lived experience is the task of modern newspapers and information sources.

Newspapers relying solely upon the buying public for its financial support might find the venture less than sufficient to stay in business. Advertisements for products and services foot the rest of the production bill:

Roughly speaking, the economic support for general news-gathering is in the price paid for advertised goods by the fairly prosperous sections of cities with more than one hundred thousand inhabitants. These buying publics are composed of the members of families, who depend for their income chiefly on trade, merchandising, the direction of manufacture and finance. (Lippmann 2007: 102)

Because these newspapers receive substantial financial support from these advertisements, they tailor their content toward audiences making advertisements and to those who most pursue advertised goods. Certainly, commercialism and materialism affected newspaper content. Moreover, it is most important to see that these activities are part of modern lifeworlds largely located in the North. This series of maps clearly illustrates this point. While the South certainly possessed areas of extensive modernity, modernity's power centers in the North dwarf these areas in the South.

For example, in the production of newspapers, modern technology allows for the creation of stronger and faster printing presses. Printing presses were stronger and required less maintenance because its parts were made from steel. Modern printing presses allow for more ideas and conversations to travel along transportation networks that move these quantities farther and faster than traditional networks; thereby, they reach a larger volume of readers more quickly. As Berman (1988) paints a picture of modern lifeworlds, Alexander Saxton (2003) looks at modernity's ability to carry more information across time and space faster than traditional modes of communication:

Doubtless diffusion of ideas and attitudes occurred in such traditional ways as by word of mouth and written correspondence; but it occurred also through steam-powered presses and popular entertainment that brought mass audiences into the tents, town halls and theaters of new population centers. (180)

Certainly, while traditional lifeworld networks pass knowledge, information and sales pitches through person-to-person gossip and letters to friends, modern lifeworld networks scatter and disseminate larger quantities of knowledge and information to even more people than traditional thought systems. Indeed, newspapers were the fastest way to reach a large audience in 1840.

Advertisements are part of this unseen world. They help maintain newspapers and spread information about themselves for the cheap cost of daily print. Lippmann (2007) discusses why advertising works well to not only distribute information, but also to experience other parts of the world through a printed description:

[The reader] will pay directly to advertise. And he will pay indirectly for the advertisements of other people, because that payment, being concealed in the price of commodities is part of an invisible environment that he does not effectively comprehend. (101)

Indeed, newspapers provided a means to access the other parts of modern lifeworlds that are unconnected physically. Nevertheless, these advertisements also influence the content of papers as well as who will purchase and read certain papers.

2.5 The North and Minstrelsy

The North has an overwhelming affiliation with minstrels because many of the early minstrels were from the North. From his research, Saxton (2003) unveils an undeniable connection between minstrelsy and the North:

A sample of forty-three men born before 1838 who achieved prominence as blackface performers in large northern cities or San Francisco yields the following information: five were born south of the Mason-Dixon Line (including Baltimore); most of the rest (thirty-one) were born in the North, but of these only five were New Englanders. With respect to urban background, New York, Brooklyn, Rochester, Utica, Troy, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Providence, New Haven and Salem (Mass.) accounted for twenty-four of the forty-three (with London and Paris probably claiming three or four more). Regionally, upstate New York matched New York City and Brooklyn with nine each; Philadelphia came next with six. (168)

When this data is considered, the North appears as not only the focal point of blackface performance, but also the breeding grounds for new blackface performers. In addition, when Sweeney's tour route is correlated with northern cities, nearly all received visits once if not more frequently. Why did these areas attract circuses and minstrelsy more than others did in the South and North?

The connections between the modernizing urban North and minstrelsy are evident, but still not clear. The North and its modern lifeworld were dominated by lifestyles geared toward city living and new technologies. Entertainers who grew up within these modern northern lifeworlds shared these sentiments: "for the minstrels, as for the new mass audience upon which they depended, the city was the focal experience of life. The city offered (or seemed to offer) new sorts of work, money, movement, excitement. It offered access to liquor and sex, to education, culture, progress" (Saxton 2003: 169). Minstrelsy aired topics related to the daily experiences of urban people, not rural people. The audience's mood and reactions to songs and jokes tailored minstrels' material and performance. Minstrelsy used rural symbols to create an escape from certain aspects of city life. Saxton further links the minstrel show with males and their location: "Shows were generally performed by males before largely male audiences. Both in the East and West, the male population was concentrated in factories, boardinghouses, and in construction and mining camps" (Saxton 2003: 171). In a modernizing industrial society, one that was also assimilating conquered

and unconquered territory, young lower class males were some of the first pioneers to tread these areas; whether urban or rural, blackface minstrelsy followed them.

2.6 Social Aspects of the North and the Banjo

The North increasingly accepted immigrants during this period and these immigrants, largely European, had usually never lived in a modern urban setting. The shock of moving from a rural area to an urban area was very real and frightening. Many researchers, Toll (1974), Lott (1995) and Cockrell (1997) among them, have noted the adoption of the banjo may represent these rural peoples' adaptation of an agrarian instrument in dealing with an unfamiliar and harsh urban environment. As many of these people were immigrants from many countries, cultural differences abounded. During this period, democracy slowly absorbed republicanism in popular American social thought. However, because so few Americans could actually achieve independence through republicanism in an increasingly modernizing age, a new realizable individual and class goal needed to be set (Roediger 1999). Part of this adjustment involved creating an identity to relate these feelings and experiences. These feelings and experiences come to identify the emerging white working class during this period.

Barth's (1980) study of 19th century American cities sheds light onto the typical lifeworld experience of these early urban inhabitants:

In an atmosphere of expanding personal freedom and individual opportunity, 19th century cities severed the old ties of men and women with the countryside, setting them adrift in a maelstrom of people radically different than themselves. The widening gap between past and present heightened the residents' anxiety about the meaning of an existence framed by tenement and factory. In this novel environment, amid the tumultuous encounter of everybody with everyone, people sought new ways of life to strengthen their commitment to a common humanity. (3)

As Barth evinces, the characteristics of this newly forming urban lifeworld created a discordant experience for its occupant—an experience devoid of their recent traditional rural lifeworld. These city dwellers lashed out against this new living arrangement through an entertainment emphasizing the Other, which manifested, and later transformed, itself

through the old European tradition of mummery, or blackface performance (Cockrell 1997). This disconnect with traditional rural life focused it as their Other, and the more traditional and rural South became the antithesis to their daily urban lifeworld.

Everyday, the inescapable presence of capitalism and modernity in the North made this yearning to reconnect with traditional rural lifestyles very real. Modernity's horizons allowed for a larger diversity of ideas to gather in certain locales: modernity power centers. These power centers are the nexus from which modernity's paradoxical unity emanates. Being a nation forged from colonialism and capitalism, the marketplace was a physical and social manifestation of modernity's communication and transportation networks' power: "at certain times the ambivalence associated with the space of the market is made apparent: the mingling of the near and far, town and country, locals and strangers and centrality and marginality" (Hetherington 1997: 30). Here, we understand the connective power modernity exerts over commercial pursuits and the different peoples pulled into contact through these pursuits.

While modern lifeworlds of the North seemingly severed its urban and rural populations from their traditional agrarian roots, minstrelsy provided a way for these populations to simultaneously live within modernity but also reconnect with nature. Performers always must give their audiences what they want and they did so through images of the South and slaves:

When wandering minstrels carried their fragments of African-American music back to northern and western cities, they took them encased in a mythology of the South as a region fascinatingly different, closely wedded to nature, and above all, timeless. The South became symbolically their old home. (Saxton 2003: 173)

The image of enslaved black southerners satisfied two main themes within this paper's argument. First, southern slaves represented a quintessential Otherness to white northerners. Northern whites were already becoming different people from their southern white counterparts, differences that later result in the Civil War. Moreover, during this period, most slaves were now black. The decline of indentured servitude concentrated

Africans and African-Americans as the race of slavery to come. Second, the South, as a whole, was associated with traditional rural values, which was encouraged in no small way by its vast agricultural commodity production fueled by slave labor. Aside from Native Americans and women, which were also the butts of many minstrels' gags, what other figure could represent the Other more succinctly than the southern slave? Moreover, what instrument was unequivocally married to slaves? Kompridis' (2005) analysis of cultural identity formation from essential and non-essential identities helps us understand northern whites' adoption of the African-American banjo as part of their popular entertainment.

2.7 Essential and Non-essential Cultural Identities

Kompridis (2005) examines the way in which we incorporate essential and anti-essential identities to build cultural identities and modernity's affect upon this cultural identity formation process—a process also known as creolization or syncretization. He explains a culture cannot identify solely with its traditional identity because it loses its ability to adapt to external change, especially in the face of modernity. To illustrate this point, Kompridis' uses an example from post-WWII Germany. Should Germans have abandoned all that meant to be German after learning of their atrocities at the close of WWII? Or should they have simply abandoned those erroneous and detrimental ideals that were non-essential German identities? Conversely, a culture that is solely non-identical with itself loses its roots—its past—and therefore, eliminates itself; this possibility was very real in Jacksonian America. Immigrants, nearly all fresh to the New World, were thrown together with Americans and had to establish an underlying identity signifying unequivocal “Americanness.” The research of Bela Bartok, one of the earliest ethnomusicologists and himself a composer, provides a more pertinent example to this study of essential and non-essential identities creating a unified cultural identity within modernity.

Bartok (1881-1945) lived during a time of ardent world modernization and nationalism. In the early 20th century, Bartok traveled to the Hungarian countryside to collect recordings of Hungarian folk music. While he searched for examples of Hungarian folk music, he discovered many classic examples of Hungarian music actually drew themes from Persian, Middle Eastern and other Slavic music. So, for Bartok, Hungarian folk music was revealed as “both very un-Hungarian *and* very Hungarian” (Kompridis 2005: 339). Similarly, modernizing white northerners appropriated a traditional black instrument to aid in the solidification of the American lower class. At a time of increasing immigration, many people’s identities came from Europe, not America. To become “American,” they all must share an identity. The enslaved black southerner fulfilled this “Other” identity.

If we take Bartok and Kompridis’ research and apply it to early transmissions of banjos to modernizing white Americans, what comparisons and differences do we find in their broad cultural identity formation? Most prominently, current banjo historians and researchers consciously emphasize the banjo’s African-Americanness. This emphasis attempts to correct current and historic stereotypes that the banjo originates from European roots, as well as battle the deliberate racism minstrelsy assumed. In actuality, the roots of the American banjo originated within dispossessed African cultures enslaved by Europeans and others. Africans of many nationalities and cultures mingled on Caribbean and mainland North and South American plantations. Some of these African peoples, most notably those of West Africa and the nearby Maghreb, possessed a strong plucked lute heritage—an estimated 60 traditions exist within these African regions today (Adams and Pestcoe 2010). Within this New World macrocosm, a single instrument—the gourd banjo—emerged as a symbol of African and enslaved cultures.

Karen Linn (1994) uses the concepts ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’; official meaning the accepted modern lifeworld and unofficial meaning the romanticized and sentimentalized traditional lifeworld. This sentimentality for traditional lifeworlds had a direct connection

for the North attraction to the black banjo. Through his research of English plays, Nathan (1962) discusses the historic stereotypes English held toward Africans and remarks that Africans always assumed the role of innocent childlike beings acting for the pursuit of the present who possessed an innate expertise in music. Being of African-American origin, the banjo immediately struck northerners as primitive and romantic, or as unofficial culture. Because there were fewer blacks in the rural North, northerners' perceptions of Africans came mostly to them through modern impersonal systems of thought, while southerners' traditional and more personal systems provided them with their own ideas about African-Americans.

Through blackface minstrelsy, Sweeney brought his modernized version of the black banjo into modern northern white consciousness. Banjos became an acceptable non-essential identity to supply a nostalgic and sentimental opposite to the harsh reality of modern life. I find it helpful to compare Linn's (1994) sentimental and official symbol categories with Kompridis' (2005) essential and non-essential identities (respectively). Linn's sentimental category depicts symbols of romantic nostalgia, passionate emotions, primitivism and nature. The banjo became a sentimental link for urban immigrants and Americans to their rural pasts; this symbolization was a non-essential identity. These symbols sat in contrast to the official category of symbols linking immigrants and Americans to the new ideals produced by their modernizing world, outlined by Republicanism and democracy. These official ideals depicted sophistication, discipline, ration, science and emphasized the city. Traditional and modern lifeworlds transmit values and attitudes that create essential and non-essential identities.

Saxton (2003) mimics Linn's (1994) assertion that blacks were associated with Americans' unofficial or sentimental symbols of nature and Otherness. Here, Saxton describes the lure of black music in minstrelsy's construction of a non-essential identity for whites, while denying a true connection to blacks:

They ascribed the impact of slave music to its being close to nature. It ‘floated wildly’ or ‘hummed... in the breezes’, to repeat a metaphor of E.P. Christy’s preface, and its wildness could be taken simply as a part of the general crudity of frontier style. The dual task of exploiting and suppressing African elements thus began from the first moments of minstrelsy. (168)

While blackface performances and minstrelsy morphed into a different representation of life in later years, at its inception, they carefully imitated blacks but soon they appropriated black culture for its Otherness and unofficial symbols to make money and thereby built a non-essential identity for lower class whites to reconnect themselves symbolically to their past rural identities.

The banjo rallied immigrants and Americans—an instrument most knew was African-American. Newspapers and reviews before this era established this fact. Epstein (1977) brings us strong evidence that by the 1810s, the banjo lacked mention presumably because it was so common and inextricably linked to African-Americans. This link supplied people of modern northern lifeworlds with a non-essential or unofficial identity to become something other than what they were. This missing identity somehow symbolically fashioned the specialized “part-man” into a “whole-man” (Campbell 1996).

2.8 Banjo Evolution

To produce this cultural symbol, many compromises of identity and non-identity occurred between these dispossessed African-American cultures. Considering some of the 60 living West African traditions, the banjo likely evolved from numerous African identities as opposed to simply one African ancestor; but, it is possible one or two African cultures influenced the banjo’s physical and musical development more than others did. For these influences, the Jola and Mandinka from Senegal and Mali, respectively, stand out as two identities contributing to what became the black gourd banjo. The Jola people, some of whom currently reside in Gambia, farmed the floodplains of Senegal’s Casamance River. The Mandinka people reside within the broader Maghreb region containing parts of many West African countries. It is the plucked lute traditions from these regions that give the strongest

connection to early American black banjos throughout the Americas (Adams and Pestcoe 2010; *Banjo Roots* 2010).

Aside from Sweeney's wooden rimmed banjos that spurred the later development of minstrels' banjos, there were several other types of banjos made within various folk life. In North America, these are generally the mountain banjo and cheese box banjos. The mountain banjo side steps the more difficult wood shaping process of a formed circular rim by cutting out the body from wood blanks and stacking them to create the cavity for the banjo's sound chamber. This construction style is common to many Southeastern Appalachian areas, including Western North Carolina. For folk life however, cheese boxes imitated wooden rims very well. However, when commercial production of cheese boxes began in 1851, they comprised the sound chambers for some banjos (Conway 1995). However, Sweeney's trade skills would have helped him construct a banjo sound chamber resembling a drum.

There are few examples of West African lutes with open backs; therefore, there are just as few examples of open backed instruments in America, black or white—even the mountain banjo has a closed back. Bollman and Gura (1999) assert the continued use of gourds as sound chambers into the 1830s from places as far apart as Jamaica and Philadelphia. Indeed, until Sweeney's innovation, blacks exclusively played banjos, commonly made from gourds. Sweeney's circular wooden rim construction, coupled with a metal tension ring upon the head, created a more reliable, durable and overall uniform banjo across different climates and distances. As Schreyer (2007) observes, wooden rims negate growing gourds, which means less waiting. What else would be more modern for banjo construction than to make your own sound chamber rather than wait for it to grow?

In a video made by Theo Lissenberg from the 1992 Tennessee Banjo Institute, Scott Didlake (1992) emphasizes the spiritual connection to gourd banjos versus modern banjos. He explains banjo players knew exactly what type of gourd they needed to produce the best

sounding banjos. In addition, while today these seed strains are lost unto hybridity, at the height of their popularity, banjo construction demanded specially selected gourds and these gourds gained new cultural values. From planting to playing, the grower waited for the gourd to die from the vine, cleaned and hollowed it, then sacrificed an animal's hide for its head. By 1846, newspapers advertised manufactured banjos. Modernity's disconnect is quite clear in this example. And as Didlake expresses, the modern banjo sound like the metallic chime of a xylophone. However, Sweeney's wooden shell banjo did afford advantages over the gourd banjo and provided a crucial step toward modern metal banjos.

In Sweeney's construction type, the tension applied onto the banjo's head increases volume and projection. These two modifications—tensioned heads and open backs, derived from modern materials—brought the banjo further into a modern lifeworld. Sweeney recognized a problem with traditional gourd banjos and applied modern technologies to remedy it. Sweeney played his modern banjo for larger audiences in circus tents and theater halls for overwhelming young white male immigrants and native generations, caught in the whirlwind of a quickly modernizing society.

2.9 Early White Banjo Players

Many early white reports come from the early minstrels themselves. In 1897, Ben Cotton, a famous blackface minstrel, recalled working on Mississippi riverboats as a youth and said “he used to visit with slaves ‘in front of their cabins’ in order to hear them ‘start the banjo twanging’, their voices ringing out ‘in the quiet night air in their weird melodies’” (reported in Bollman and Gura 1999: 25). As the preface of the 1855 banjo tutor bearing his name relates, Tom Briggs learned banjo tunes in much the same manner (*Briggs' Banjo Instructor* 1855). Billy Whitlock, another early minstrel banjo player and original Virginia Minstrels member, learned banjo directly from Sweeney when touring nearby Lynchburg, VA around 1837. In fact, “Sweeney had one made for [Whitlock] and taught him a tune” on it

(reported in Bollman and Gura 1999: 26). Later in England, Sweeney became more secretive of his banjo and withheld its construction from other performers. From Lowell Schreyer's (2007) research, we now can say Archibald Ferguson (simply known as Ferguson for some time) was another white who most likely learned to lay the banjo from blacks and is reputed to have taught Dan Emmett his banjo skills. Schreyer's information comes from C.J. Rogers' write up in an 1874 edition of the *New York Clipper* of his time as the manager for the Cincinnati Circus, the company in which Emmett and Ferguson toured the Ohio Valley. Regardless, it is generally agreed Joel Sweeney was most instrumental in popularizing the banjo among minstrels and northern whites.

2.10 Joel Sweeney

Bob Carlin's (2007) publication, "The Birth of the Banjo: Joel Walker Sweeney and Early Minstrelsy," as well as Lowell Schreyer's (2007) book, "The Banjo Entertainers: Roots to Ragtime, A Banjo History," provide essential information about Sweeney's life and performance chronology. In particular, Carlin (2007) built much of Sweeney's chronology from Glenroy's (1885) book, chronicling his travels with the circus. At certain times throughout Glenroy's travels, Sweeney performed with the same circus and so their tour was identical. These two publications offer much documentation and support to the mapping of Joel Sweeney's tour throughout America from 1836 to 1842.

Growing up in the Upland South during slavery, Joel Sweeney, like all other southerners, came into daily contact with blacks. This contact shaped Sweeney's life just as it shaped every other white southerner. In order to appreciate Sweeney's formidable years, it is important to build an understanding about the lifeworld in which Joel Sweeney was born because certain aspects of his lifeworld allowed him higher potential to cultivate banjo-playing skills than other lifeworlds. In his book, Mechal Sobel (1987) discusses the almost constant contact between whites and blacks of all ages due to geography and economic

lifestyles. Geographically, the South's sparse population density and rural distribution meant blacks were nearly impossible to avoid because they formed nearly half the population of the entire South. In fact, in some southern states and counties, blacks outnumbered whites.

In Buckingham County, VA, where Sweeney grew up, there were 10,000 blacks to 7,400 whites (Carlin 2007). As slavery was integral to a southern economy controlled by whites, black and white interaction was daily. This racial economic tie becomes stronger when considered some slaves were in higher demand because they were skilled laborers; subsequently, they frequently worked with white counterparts (Morgan 1998; Sobel 1987). In addition, while parents worked, children played. There are many accounts relaying parents' apprehensions of their white children playing with black children. Indeed, there were plenty of opportunities for cultural exchanges in southern life between black and white people.

Sweeney grew up outside of Lynchburg, VA in a community called Clover Hill (Schreyer 2007). Near this community lived Dr. Flood, who had a sizeable plantation and a number of slaves. In a letter to the editor of the *Richmond Dispatch* in 1895, it is reported Joel Sweeney often visited this doctor's slaves and learned the banjo from them: "I have often heard it said that... he was taught to play by a negro... this negro belonged to Dr. Joel Flood" (reported in Schreyer 2007: 5). Presumably, this author is Joel W. Flood, a descendent of Dr. Flood and owner of the Flood estate at the time the 1895 letter appeared in the *Richmond Dispatch*. Using R.B. Pore's, a lawyer in the Appomattox area and family friend of the Sweeneys, and others' letters, as well as Sweeney's death certificate assigning him an 1810 birth date, Schreyer deduced Sweeney was born around 1810 or 1813. There is controversy over what year is most exact. However, this birth date range would mean Sweeney built his first banjo between 1828 and 1831 and began performing with his banjo between 1831 and 1834 (Schreyer 2007).

Schreyer (2007) reprints another story from G.W. Inge's research, relayed in a letter to J.E. Henning in 1890, referring to Sweeney's childhood and his relationship with nearby slaves:

Several old and reliable farmers in Appomattox related to me how the negro slaves used to take large gourds and put on four strings made of horse hair, using a crooked handle gourd and putting a stick for a staff and how Joe Sweeney, then a lad, would hang around with the negroes at all times learning some of their rude songs and playing an accompaniment on a gourd banjo. (6)

The fact that slaves were musical is well-known and social contact between black and white is even better known. Joel Sweeney's story is that of a musical youth raised in an environment conditioned perfectly for his opportunity to learn and build banjos. This story is hard to assign a concrete date because "lad" ambiguously describes age. However, assuming the age of a lad is essentially young adulthood and that being anywhere from eight to fifteen years old, this report describes anywhere between 1818 and 1828 (adjusted for the three year discrepancy in his birth date and year when he began performing). As if there were doubt about Sweeney's relation to neighboring slaves, several other reports place Sweeney, as a younger man, in direct contact with musical slaves.

This recollection comes from another 1890 letter from R.B. Pore to J.E. Henning:

His Father, Jno. Sweeney, was a wheelwright and raised him to the same occupation. At a very early age he displayed a great love of music and when but 12 years old he became quite proficient at the violin and the four-string gourd. As he grew older, being proficient in the use of tools, he undertook to make his own instruments, and at the age of 18 years added the fifth or thumb string to the four-string gourd, the present Banjo. (reported in Schreyer 2007: 6)

What are helpful about this account are the ages given to Sweeney's development on the banjo. At the age of twelve, the year would have been between 1822 and 1825. At the age of eighteen, the years would have fallen between 1828 and 1831. These later years are the time Sweeney began honing his banjo playing and building skills.

Schreyer places an emphasis upon Sweeney's skills as a wheelwright and the natural application of these woodworking skills toward making a wooden rim banjo. Given the similarities between a wheel and a circular rim for a banjo, this deduction is appropriate, especially in tandem with the recorded fact that many early commercial banjo makers were

actually some type of artisans working in wood (Bollman and Gura 1999). In this more traditional lifeworld, fathers presumably still passed down the family trade to sons. Sweeney would have received these wood working skills from his father and be proficient enough at them by eighteen to build a wooden rimmed banjo.

Unfortunately, there are inconsistencies within this report requiring attention. Joel Sweeney did not invent or add the thumb string to any banjo. The thumb string or short string is common between many West African and American plucked lutes. The most compelling evidence from America disproving this claim is the Stedman 18th century gourd banjo. This banjo had four tuning pegs: three long strings and what appears to be the remnant peg for a short string (Schreyer 2007). In addition, *The Old Plantation*, a painting from the early 1800s, depicts a slave playing what appears as a gourd banjo with a short string. Also, the date in which Pore wrote these claims should be considered. Pore's letter correspondence was in 1890—some 60 years after Joel Sweeney would have undergone any of these experiences and well after the banjo inundated popular American blackface minstrelsy. Nevertheless, his account adds detail to Sweeney's past.

Again I turn to the claim Joel Sweeney invented the fifth string. Of most importance from this claim is the concurrent detail that Sweeney added the fifth string after he learned to use the tools of his and his father's trade, those of a wheelwright. It is likely Pore simply confused which string Sweeney added. As most banjo historians acknowledge, if any string, Sweeney likely added the bass string, presumably for the extension of melodic lines. However, more importantly, as Pore's account relates, Sweeney began making his own instruments. The Sweeney family's skills as wheelwrights likely provided him the tools and knowledge necessary to produce a drum-like wooden rim body for his modern banjo. As Pore mentioned Sweeney's adeptness on banjo, surely we would have to assume Pore meant Sweeney was building these instruments. It is important to know Sweeney's banjo construction because it became the popular five-string banjo.

With this five-string incarnation of the black banjo, Sweeney played wherever there was a crowd nearby his home. Again, from his 1890 letter, Pore remembers:

when 21 years of age, [Joel Sweeney] commenced the work of his life by attending the County Courts of the adjoining Counties and giving concerts at night in such vacant rooms as he could secure. When I was but a child I saw much of Old Band Joe, as I lived but a mile from his home and had to pass his home going to and from the P.O. (reported in Schreyer 2007: 6-7)

While providing key information, these stories are from a child's memory and recalled almost 60 years after the event. Regardless, this reminiscence places Sweeney's entry into professional banjo playing at age twenty-one, sometime between 1831 and 1833, and supports Carlin's (2007) assertion of the date Sweeney began his career.

Pore is quoted again in another 1898 correspondence letter to Henning, reprinted in the *Cadenza*, reaffirming his claim Sweeney began playing at court sessions across Virginia:

[Joel Sweeney] began by wandering through Central Virginia, playing and singing for crowds during county court sessions. He was a one man show, singing the doggerel [sic] he had learned from Negroes or had improvised from their tunes, dancing, reciting, and crowing, braying and roaring in imitation of animals. He had not only played the banjo; he was equally accomplished on the violin. During this period he began blacking his face for these performances. (reported in Carlin 2007: 20)

This recollection paints a vivid picture of Sweeney's early performances. It is very likely this story describes Sweeney when he was around 21 years of age due to its correlation with his travels to county courts. Aside from these informal remembrances, some many years after the fact, *The Richmond Dispatch* offers the first concrete written evidence of Sweeney's first advertised performance.

Carlin (2007) and Schreyer (2007) confirm Sweeney's first performance documented by print at Richmond's Terpsichore Hall on Monday, December 5, 1836. Judging from the write-up in the local paper of the event, Sweeney was an old familiar, suggesting he had played there plenty times before. On this rationale, Carlin (2007) recommends Sweeney had already been "performing professionally at least for a year or two" (20). Pore's letter supports this claim. Due to his time with Barnum's circus in the South for some months in 1839 before heading North for the first time to New York City later that same year, Sweeney in all likelihood built a name for himself in the South first.

A contemporary of the time, P.C. Sutphin, relates that banjos were often among black boatmen of the nearby James River:

before this, the banjo had been quite common with negro boatmen of James River, whom I have often heard playing it while their bateaux were lying at the landing on the river at Lynchburg, ready to discharge or receive their cargoes or goods. (reported in Schreyer 2007: 6)

Sutphin also attested Sweeney's superb skill as a violinist and that he played at least one party for elites around Lynchburg. These musical skills and approximation to black musical culture cultivated a perfect environment for a curious musician to learn the black gourd banjo.

Schreyer (2007) states the importance Joel Sweeney and his southern banjo exacted on the American entertainment scene:

Before Sweeney's arrival on the banjo scene, the hide-covered instrument was usually described as having a gourd body. Once Sweeney became prominent, the gourd was generally replaced, except in some southeastern mountain areas, by a wooden shell for the banjo's sounding chamber. He obviously used the wood shaping skills learned from his wheel-making father, John Sweeney, in constructing these non-gourd bodies for his banjos. The wooden rim body had the advantages of durability, uniformity and availability without having to wait out a gourd-growing season. (7)

Indeed, before Sweeney innovated the banjo's sound chamber by installing a wooden rim, gourds were the standard material for sound chambers. Sweeney introduced a shaped wooden body into the banjo's construction; a trait still maintained in contemporary minstrel reproduction banjos among others. Later, this construction became the standard as drum maker William Boucher began producing minstrel banjos by at least 1846. Nevertheless, this style of banjo construction was not the only kind implemented; naturally, Sweeney's banjo was not the only innovation on the black gourd banjo.

2.11 HGIS & Banjos

HGIS maps the variables that indicate traditional and modern lifeworlds. By noting these variables' presence or absence, HGIS portrays and clarifies areas where traditional and modern lifeworlds existed in 1840. Joel Sweeney's five-string banjo performances appear within these lifeworld regions, built by 1840 demographic data. Together, these maps,

detailed in Chapter IV (Figures 4.1-4.25), portray the entrance of Joel Sweeney's five-string banjo, based upon southern black four-string gourd banjos, into the more pervasive modern lifeworlds of the North. With this transfer from traditional to modern lifeworld regions, the five-string banjo entered modern white popular culture. Essentially, these maps represent one of the primary paths the banjo took during its shift from a popular black instrument to a popular white one.

Since there were other white banjo players around this time (mostly taught by Sweeney), these maps do not represent the *only* entrance of the banjo into white popular culture; mapping Joel Sweeney's travels does not attempt to describe all historic processes within the banjo's development. While Joel Sweeney's route does not represent the only path the modernizing five-string banjo took on its journey to nationwide popularity, what it does show is the route of an established southern banjo player on tour, playing an instrument few, if any, people had seen whites play before, and playing tunes that they had more chance of recognizing.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The field of Historical GIS is relatively new in the world of geography. As we enter into an age where research into any field is encouraged and, at times, sought out, HGIS becomes a useful tool to reconstruct and recreate historical events and processes. For example, Anne Knowles is one of the leading HGIS scholars. She has recreated viewsheds of generals at the Battle of Gettysburg (2008), retraced the paths of Welsh immigrants in Ohio along rural and industrial routes (1995) and, with the assistance of Richard Healy, modeled resource availability and its effects on local and regional economies of Pennsylvanian iron furnaces in the mid-1800s (2006). When reproducing historic viewsheds, Knowles glimpsed exactly where certain generals were able to see during particular points in battle. Considering what they could and could not see, she deduced how the generals' respective positions influenced their decisions on the battlefield. With Welsh immigrants, she was able to detect their "invisible" paths. Welsh immigrants were adept at blending into other cultures and sacrificing their own; this trait created problems tracking them throughout history. HGIS aided Knowles in establishing and examining the adoption of mineral fuels, transportation costs over space and time, and the political environment that affected Pennsylvanian iron furnaces in the mid-1800s.

Her work specifying the spatio-temporal dimensions of these peoples and resources and their relationships helps understand how to map Sweeney's travels within the social context of the 1840s. Knowles research required the marriage of historical research with mapping skills, as does this project. In addition, Knowles work allowed corrections to tacit beliefs about past events and why they occurred. While sometimes history can misconstrue

events, statistical data, especially that of meticulous businessmen generating profit, offers a clearer image of past events. This research uses 1840 census data compiled by the Minnesota Population Center at the University of Minnesota for its statistical data to recreate Joel Sweeney's movement within that era's lifeworlds.

3.1 Previous Work in HGIS

Aside from recreating these events and processes, GIS technology allows for the construction of large quantifiable databases. Once established and georeferenced, these databases can be queried by attribute and then displayed spatially to demonstrate their relationships. The ability to select particular attributes for display is imperative in thematic maps. Thematic maps assume the role of portraying quantitative data to highlight a particular spatial characteristic. These maps utilize more qualitative techniques due to unique uncertainties inherent to GIS and the characteristic qualities of the subject in question (Slocum et. al. 2005). Uncertainties are constants within GIScience, and especially within HGIS. Researchers must identify these uncertainties, attempt to work around them and report all uncertainties so others understand what their work accomplished. Therefore, future research can identify these uncertainties and possibly work toward overcoming them with new technologies or knowledge. The many uncertainties about banjo beginnings are reason to investigate the spatial relationships of its progenitors.

This project may help clarify required criteria for banjo development in America. It may also lack the breadth needed to consider and map all possible factors. True enough, spatially referenced data such as religion, cultural boundaries, and most importantly, the cultural milieu of any given area throughout time are simply not available. Even when supplied this data, people are mobile, and ideas change, so that definite boundaries are inadequate. Nevertheless, ideas and values have spatial manifestations that indicate their presence. However, because banjo development both occurred in the past and deals with

people, these extrapolation methods are far from being empirical. Indeed, GIS excels at exploratory and confirmatory analysis (Mark 1999). This project experiments with confirming whether the correct populations were in the correct place at the correct time.

Speculation and debate shroud the spatial diffusion of the banjo throughout America. However, scholars are certain on several issues. First, it is widely accepted that the essence of banjos arrived with enslaved Africans, relocated through the Atlantic slave trade. Indeed, Africans are the primary developers of American banjos simply because this instrument evolved from West African stringed instruments. Some of the instruments influencing banjos are the *ngoni* of Mali and the *akonting* of Senegambia (Hale 1998). Although there is a conceptual link between Africa and America, the question remains whether it was physical. How did these instruments reach America? As Africans traveled to the New World, they embarked upon a treacherous journey against their will. Slave ships were crowded places of little light and poor sanitation. Occasionally, instruments were permitted on board, possibly the *ngoni* or the *akonting*. Slave traders found music tended to extend their slaves' lifespan along this trip to the Caribbean. These Caribbean locations acted as a place to acclimatize enslaved Africans to the New World and to life on European plantations. After living in the Caribbean, owners moved many enslaved people onto mid-Atlantic and southern American soils for agricultural production aimed toward an expanding global market system that praised any growth of capital. This project analyzes this historical cultural mixing in a world market system. The added element of analysis involves areas where Joel Sweeney introduced his version of the well-known African-American banjo.

This project plots Joel Sweeney's performances from 1836 to 1842. Each performance represents a place where people encountered Sweeney's changing version of the southern banjo. These six years occurred during the complex period of American development involving its democratic grappling with a privatized world market system that required vast numbers of people to support it. Although Sweeney had made numerous

performances in the South by 1839, he had yet to reach any status nearing national fame (Carlin 2007; Schreyer 2007). Part of this study attempts to assert the necessity for Sweeney to access the North's means of modernity to achieve wider fame within popular American entertainment. Indeed, Sweeney needed to access the modern communication, transportation and economic systems of the North in order to reach the entire nation.

3.2 Data Qualifications and Capture

In order to display these aspects of modernity, I utilized secondary capture methods to obtain data indicating these modern landscape characteristics. I used GIS data for the United States at the county scale for 1840. The University of Minnesota's Population Center has compiled an excellent HGIS website of census data for America from 1790 to the present decade. Although data varies decade to decade, this website provided essential data for this project, which would have suffered severely without it. Here, at the National HGIS (NHGIS) website, I obtained shapefiles for 1840 U.S. census data at the county scale as well as demographic data at the county scale. Fortunately, for this project, the NHGIS demographic data reaches a satisfying level of completeness at 1840 that early decades do not possess.

From the data finder on the NHGIS website, I downloaded and viewed over 120 demographic layers compiled from the 1840 census. These layers provided demographic information that best represented modernity centers and traditional lifeworlds. The following demographics best represent lifeworlds: number of people employed in agriculture (specifying tobacco, cotton and sugar cane production), commerce, mining, manufacturing (specifying machine operated manufacturing) and professionals; populations of whites, non-white slaves, non-white freed peoples, males 10 to 14 and males 15 to 19; railroads, canals, navigable waterways and carriage and wagon makers; printing and binding facilities, and finally, daily and weekly newspapers. These demographics layers provide the foundation of this project built upon occupation, population, race, age, gender, and the means of

transportation and communication. These layers equal 18 maps and are at the core of depicting the social milieu of America in 1840.

3.3 Applying HGIS Techniques to Joel Sweeney's Tour

Aside from this demographic data, Joel Sweeney's performance route was also mapped with GIS. I used secondary capture methods to compile the path of Joel Sweeney between 1836 and 1842. Bob Carlin's book (2007) provided invaluable data for Joel Sweeney's performances in America and England from 1836 to 1859. Since Sweeney toured with John Glenroy in several circuses, Carlin's chronology emanated largely from Glenroy's (1885) spatio-temporal account. As my project focuses before the brushfire-like spread of banjos enacted by the Virginia Minstrels in early 1843, Carlin's performance chronology was instrumental. His research cannot be underestimated when considering the story of early American banjo development.

Carlin's (2007) and Schreyer's (2007) performance records were used to plot Sweeney's performances. I entered all known performances between 1836 and 1842 into a Microsoft Excel format. I recorded latitude, longitude, city name, year, month, date, the venue's name (if given), the company he performed with (if given), whether he performed or not and lastly, whether the report was reliable or not. These last two variables need some additional explanation for their existence. First, in Carlin's book, many performance reports cited a city, but listed "or thereabouts" afterward. These mostly correlate with Sweeney's travels with circus troupes who did not necessarily need a town to make a stop. Circus mobility allowed access to smaller rural densities away from cities and towns. Mostly, this deals with performances on the outskirts of cities and towns nearby quarries and other natural resource extraction locations in New York. However, to keep my data as accurate as possible, this uncertainty had to be recorded with each report that was "or thereabouts." Second, this Sweeney data log has the ability to relay duration of Sweeney's movements. In

other words, while there may have been a December 1840 performance in New York and the next city he played was Baltimore in January 1841, what actually might have happened was that Sweeney played New York for several weeks in a row before going to Baltimore to perform. Vice versa, maybe Sweeney played only a day in New York, hung around for a week, moved himself down to Baltimore, where he stayed for another week or two before actually performing in Baltimore.

This example was hypothetical and merely used to relate the fact that although Sweeney may have been in town, he might not have performed, and therefore, people may not have had contact with his banjo. This cataloging gives performance duration extra emphasis because I can select for only performance days, only days where he did not perform or every day I have plotted where Joel Sweeney was known to be. This database could have further reaching affects than this thesis is prepared to deal with; however, part of this project is to begin this database construction. Joel Sweeney is an important figure in the history and development of the early and modern American banjo. This database may also help illuminate early and modern banjos in other unforeseen ways.

To further illustrate the importance of place, I wanted to find averages of performances in relation to certain demographic factors and their corresponding values. In finding these numbers, I could then show the demographic layers that possess the most correlation with Joel Sweeney's performances. After finding these percentages, what demographic group best corresponds with Sweeney's performances? Where did these performances take place? These sorts of questions are exactly what these maps are able to answer. However, in order to have accurate data, I needed to exclude the duration aspect of my performance data. In other words, the duration format skews the averages of how often Sweeney frequented an area. Instead, it would favor areas where Sweeney spent more time instead of how many times he was there. Sweeney visited bigger cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and Washington D.C. more than twice while visiting

smaller cities such as Albany and Ithaca, New York at least twice. Being able to distinguish between averages of duration and frequency is important and requires another Excel format. Therefore, I made another excel file where each entry represented each new visit to a city, instead of duration within a city. With this Excel file, I can easily display Sweeney's frequency averages by county against certain demographic data. Nonetheless, there were other problems creating this file.

3.4 Uncertainties

While Carlin's (2007) book provided the majority of Joel Sweeney's performances, I could not locate some places he recorded. To find each location and its coordinates, I simply entered the town and state into Google Maps. Google maps usually plots downtown as any location's point. However, Google Maps could not find every location. Standard Google internet web searches also failed to produce many of these places' locations, although some surfaced this way. Using Google map's topographic feature, some places emerged by finding performances before and after those I could locate, and then looking at topographic maps, which gives many municipalities and townships' names, to see what place names there were between these two known places. For example, Ballston Springs, NY appeared near the northern end of Long Island. Performance points before and after this point are in Saratoga Springs and Schenectady; Ballston Spa sits between them both. A careful perusal through Carlin (2007) and Glenroy's (1885) books helps and muddles these discrepancies. First, Carlin's chronology is based largely, if not, solely upon Glenroy's chronology in his book. This creates problems because Glenroy's chronology is taken completely from memory. Stephen S. Sanford, Glenroy's ghostwriter, admits to this limitation within the text (Glenroy 1885). However, Sanford relates in Glenroy's (1885) foreword that some playbills came from a Mr. Howard, a correspondent from the *Boston Herald*. While his recall is amazing, Glenroy does not get everything correct. Secondly, spellings are not always correct. Between

what I assume was Glenroy's oratory pronunciation and Sanford's aural translation, I feel further distortion occurred through transmission of how Sanford heard it, into how he spelled it when typing these places.

An easy example of these mistranslations or simple name changes is Harpersville, NY. There is none, until locating Bainbridge and Binghamton, NY on a map. Harpursville, NY is located directly between these two cities. Also, Binghamton—as spelled in Glenroy's (1885) book—is actually spelled Binghamton. There were even some spelling errors between Carlin (2007) and Glenroy's books. Carlin lists Oswego, NY as visited by Sweeney in September 1840, located on the southern edge of Lake Ontario in the northern part of the state, while the circus toured in the southern region. When Glenroy's book is referenced, Owego appears during this period. It is located just down the Susquehanna River from Bainbridge and Binghamton, NY. HGIS helps to expose these inconsistencies and locate what possible substitutes provide a better alternative.

There are several cities that do not exist, but similar sounding cities are nearby previous tour stops. For example, Glenroy (1885) says the circus visited Sing Sing, NY in October 1840. This place does not exist today outside of the prison bearing its name. However, as the tour was headed toward New York City southward along the Hudson River valley, I located a similar place just north of New York City in this same river valley; it is Ossining, NY. In the late 1890s, the village of Sing Sing had changed its name to distinguish its goods from those of the prison. Another example of poor recollection unrelated to this study involves my hometown. Glenroy says the circus visited Hagerstown and Booneville, MD as part of their summer tour. I grew up near this area for 20 some years; there is no Booneville, MD, but there is a Boonsboro, MD, just south of Hagerstown, MD, some ten miles along the main thoroughfare between the two. While these discrepancies are easily verified through historical research and personal experience, it raises question about other cities that have not been examined in this way.

Unfortunately, these discrepancies also bring Glenroy's (1885) dates into scrutiny, confirmed through HGIS. One instance is Sand Hilly, NY, visited in July 1840—supposedly. Firstly, when plugged into Google Earth, Sandy Hill, NY appears on an island off the coast of Connecticut. I found Sand Hill, NY, outside of Buffalo and felt this to be better suited. However, while this place does exist, it lies 210 miles away from the closest July 1840 performance. The company performed in Sand Lake already, and Glenroy outlines a grim story whereby their band-wagon driver drowned in the lake while trying to water the horses. There is a Snake Hill, NY, nestled on the base of a large outcropping bordering the eastern edge of Saratoga Lake. However, it is more of a campground than even a village. Whereas I might expect Glenroy to remember playing Sand Lake, NY, since they had already visited it, Snake Hill seems a possible, but far-fetched, alternative. What gives it credence is that fact it is located between Saratoga Springs, Cambridge, Ballston Spa, Schuylerville, Mechanicville and Schenectady, NY. Because this performance became so dubious in where it occurred, I omitted it from my chronology.

Another example of confused dates might be the example of Berlin and New Berlin, NY. While Glenroy (1885) listed these towns in a way to suggest they are nearby each other spatially, they are not. Berlin is located on the eastern edge of New York State, four miles from the Massachusetts border while New Berlin is located twenty miles on the other side of the Susquehanna River, one hundred miles to the west of Berlin. Although Glenroy listed these performances right beside each other in the same month, the transportation technologies available then would not allow this sort of touring. To keep these two performances, I merged the New Berlin performance in with the month of August, when the circus moves through this area on its way to Buffalo. Without HGIS and georeferenced internet searches, figuring these inconsistencies out would prove much more difficult.

These two data types, mainly Sweeney's performances and 1840 demographic data, by far supply the bulk of my quantitative data for this project. Books, articles and historic

newspapers supplement qualitative data. This project benefits from both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as their corresponding approaches of analysis; each supports the other. HGIS is a way of retelling history through maps, but maps cannot tell everything about a particular time in history; this is where the real stories enter. Newspaper advertisements and reviews give contextualization to Sweeney's performance points. Whereas one map simply displays a performance in 1836 Richmond, it is an even more powerful map when combined with historic newspaper evidence revealing that by this time, Joel Sweeney was popular with the Richmond audiences (Schreyer 2007). Without this qualitative data supporting the quantitative, this 1836 point would not mean as much. The fact he played there then is static. The fact he played there then and we know he was previously known is dynamic; it implies his presence in that city before and a growing admiration in public opinion toward him. However, there are more steps involved in bringing this quantitative data alive than providing qualitative support from the period, it also takes many calculations through GIS software.

Many of these computations were simply converting features into rasters. GIS data from the NHGIS website came in excel format and was mapped as rasters. To do this, I first added the Excel files into my data frame as a table. I then added this table to the 1840 county shapefile by the "GISJOIN" field. Using the 'Convert' option in Spatial Analyst, the 1840 county demographic data became raster data. Since my scale is the broader Eastern American Seaboard and some of its inland river systems, my rasters did not require fine resolution. Therefore, I allowed ArcGIS to default my cell sizes. Additionally, since my maps are mainly for visual purposes, fine resolution is unnecessary.

After their creation, these rasters needed a new symbology to display accurate densities of their variables. Choosing symbology to represent your data is pivotal in any map-making project. I want the data compiled by the Minnesota Population Center to speak for itself and see how this data aligns with historic interpretations; many times, the

quantitative and qualitative data do not correlate and it is necessary to explore data display options to accurately represent history—no small task indeed. For my project, I chose natural breaks (jenks) versus manual, equal or quantile breaks symbology to represent the breaks between my value classes because natural breaks seeks natural divisions within data densities. As my maps are searching for these density clusters within occupation or population demographics, natural jenks provided the best technique to portray these groups' densities at each particular value class.

With 1840 demographic data providing a background for Sweeney's route, I needed to add the Excel table containing his performances. To do this, I had to assign the table a Geographic Coordinate System and selected "North American Datum 1983." After adding the table into ArcGIS, I opened the table's properties and selected "Display X & Y." This function created a vector file of Joel Sweeney's performances with attribute table accessible for SQL queries.

With these two file types—1840 demographic data in raster format and Sweeney's performance points in vector format—complete, I needed only to construct the best way to display these datasets together and best tell the story of Joel Sweeney's movements throughout America in the mid-1800s. For part of this display, the frequencies of Sweeney's performances appear in spatial context. To do this, the performance file was spatially joined with the boundary shapefile of U.S. counties. This spatial join attached Sweeney's performances with the counties of 1840 America by Sum and produced a "Count" field that indicated how times Sweeney visited any one county in America. This new field was sorted by descending order to allow a viewing of the counties that received the most visits from Sweeney.

Looking at the results, 50% of Sweeney's performances—out of his 173—were utilized; this meant I selected the counties containing the most of these 87 performances (while there are actually 181 visits to any one city, only 173 were plotted because some places

were never located). By doing this, counties receiving three or more visits were selected. While these performances are not sequential chronologically, they differ, at most, by three years. This decision may alienate some important technological and social developments within that three year span; however, without better quantitative data, this limitation cannot be helped. From here, the counties visited most frequently by Sweeney were selected through select by attribute in the UScounty1840 file's attribute table. These subsequent counties were dissolved into polygons for clarity where selected counties were adjacent.

The main question this research is asking and trying to identify is what influence, if any, the North exerted upon Sweeney's career and popularity. While in the South, his reputation was regional, not national. After his move into the northern entertainment region, he became a national and international star. What caused this change? Was it simply the passing of time and his already established professional career? Was it the extensive systems of communication and transportation of the North that allowed his name to spread quicker?

3.5 HGIS Implications

First, I feel there were two coinciding ideologies centered on traditional and modern lifeworlds as much of America's and other nations' histories involve the grappling of these two thought systems. A more traditional lifeworld pervaded the South while the North was enveloped by a more modern lifeworld. These map layers serve to establish the locations of some key identifiers of these two thought systems, as well as where they mix.

Second, while the banjo appeared all along the eastern United States seaboard, it was in Virginia where Joel Sweeney learned gourd banjo techniques directly from slaves, as some contemporary minstrels did as well. This cultural transmission may have been one in a long line of independent occurrences where whites learned to play the black gourd banjo, but Sweeney's transmission proved to be the one the nation would gather behind first. In other

words, while there were other minstrels playing the gourd banjo during this time, Sweeney, not them, was most popular throughout the country in reference with the banjo.

Third, what were the demographics of northerners where Sweeney played his banjo? How do these demographics align with those where he first established himself in the South? How do these demographics help establish zones or regions of traditional and modern lifeworlds? These zones and regions being areas where tradition or modern power centers exist based upon lifeworld characteristics. In addition, how easily, if at all, are these lifeworlds mapped? The next section discusses the results and data gained from these maps.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most of these maps organize themes that contributed toward establishing rough and succinct boundaries for traditional and modern lifeworlds, and therefore, modernity. Still other maps relate demographics of minstrelsy. The main themes differentiating traditional and modern lifeworlds from one another are five classes of economic production means as well as spatial locations of 1840 transportation and communication networks. Another crucial point these maps address are these layers' uneven geographic spread during 1840 and the spatial timeline describing Joel Sweeney's movement through these areas.

The five classes of economic production are agriculture, commerce, manufacturing, professionals and mining. Higher or lower population concentrations employed in these particular economic classifications represent modernity's presence or absence. With the exception of agriculture, these classes generally illustrate where modern lifeworlds existed because modern forces create them. Production of tobacco and cotton, as well as manufacturing jobs focusing on operating machinery, are singled out due to their innate connection with either traditional or modern lifeworlds. Railroads, canals and navigable rivers constitute popular transportation network systems. Daily and weekly newspapers, as well as printing and binding factories comprise communication networks. Occupation, age, race and sex are the main themes delineating the demographics of minstrelsy's audiences.

Before going through each series of maps, it will be beneficial to view a map highlighting the number of performances a given county received by Joel Sweeney (see Figure 4.1). By referencing this map, the other map series come into clearer focus according to the time Sweeney spent in them.

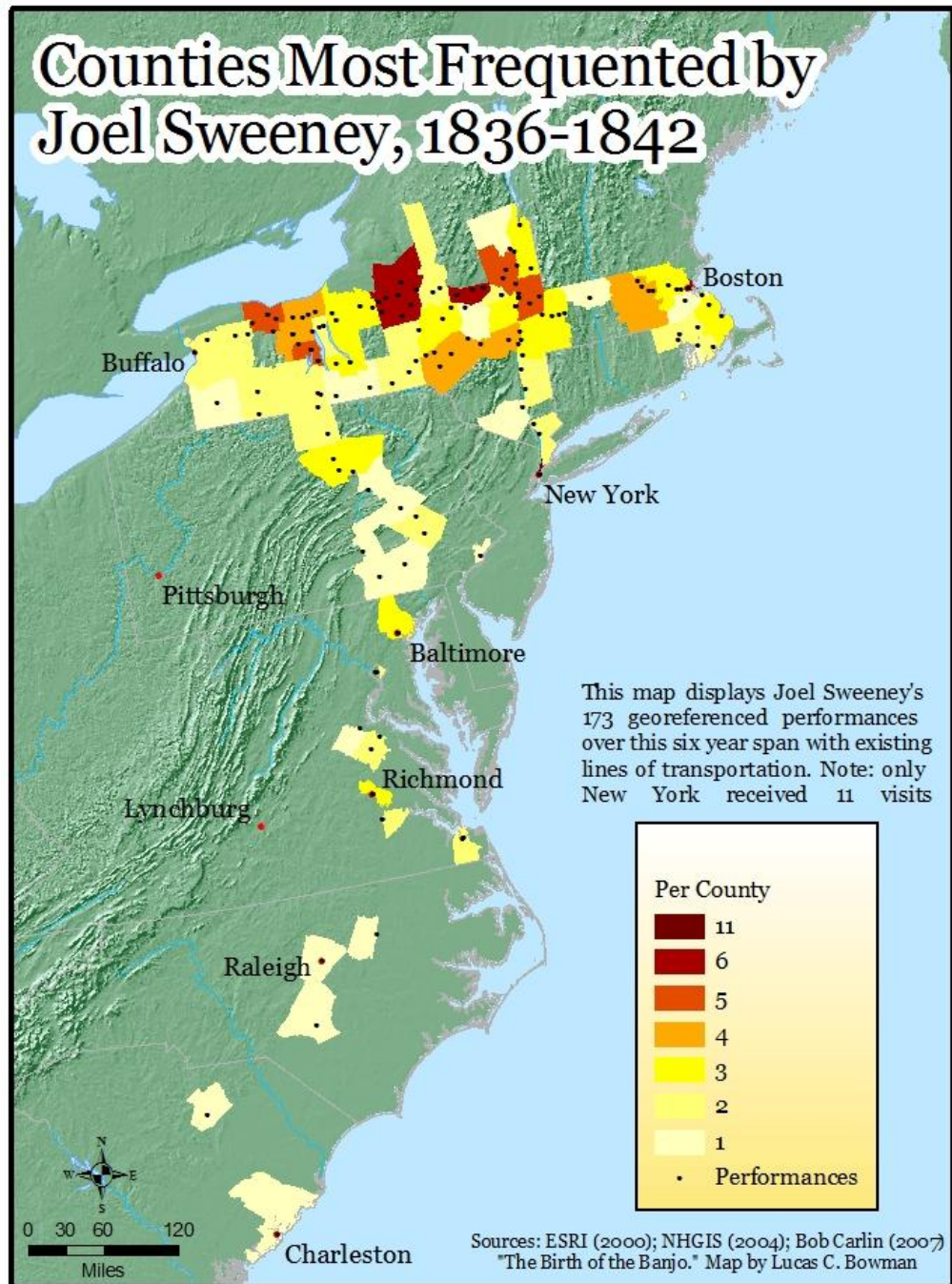


Figure 4.1 Counties Joel Sweeney visited with his modernized banjo.

4.1 Economic Production Classes

These economic layers insinuate a particular lifestyle for the people working within them. Manufacturing jobs require a slightly different set of skills than commerce employment. Likewise, professionals demand talents different from agricultural work. Employment in these fields implies the attainment or possession of a required set of skills and experience necessary to complete the work. Logically, each person attained or possessed these talents differently, but more generally by people within the same economic type. For example, most professionals possessed knowledge of intricate engineering systems while agricultural employees contained crop growing cycles and the care needed for each crop they tend. Although both skills required learning, the duration, type and cost of this training differs. This differentiation supplies a needed catalyst to spur different lifeworlds, as well as the environments hosting these jobs. Therefore, the concentration of any particular economic layer suggests a particular type of experience or overarching lifeworld in 1840.

When talking about the results from these demographic layers, it is easiest to discuss them by their values. These values are percentages or total numbers of the whole and five classes organize these values, ranked from highest to lowest. The darkest or highest value class represents the densest areas of any particular demographic layer, while the lowest value class depicts the sparsest areas. First, we will look at the population dispersal of people employed in commerce (see Figure 4.2).

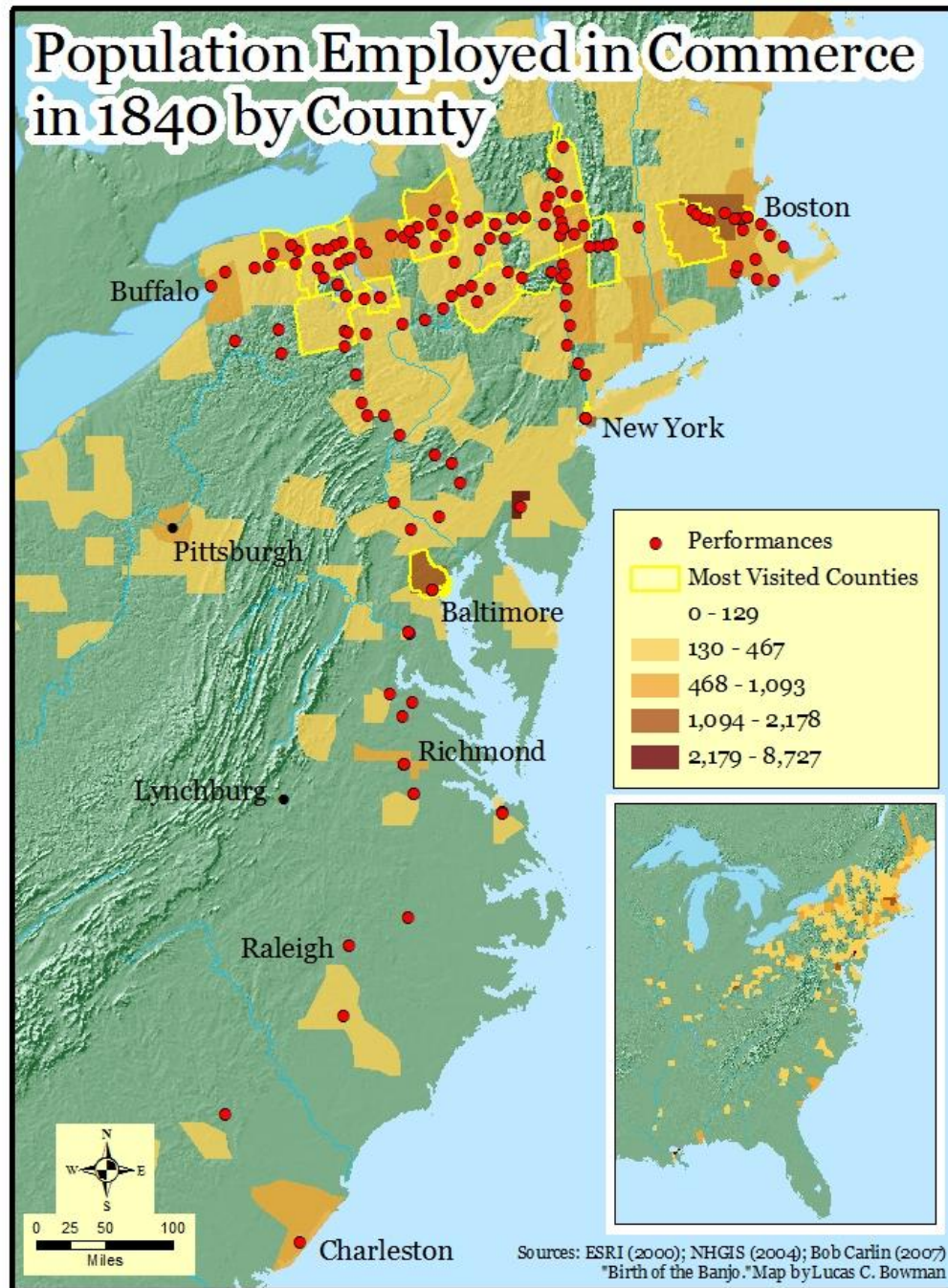


Figure 4.2 Persons per county employed in commercial business.

This map clearly illustrates commerce's overwhelming presence in the North, although some southern and western cities command large employment populations as well; New Orleans is in the fifth or largest value class with Philadelphia (2,179-8,727 employees). Cincinnati is grouped in the fourth or second largest category with Baltimore, Boston and New York (1,094-2,178 employees). However, what is more important than these centers of commerce is the concentration of the second and third value classes (468-1,093 employees) across the rest of the North. Of the eighteen counties most frequented by Joel Sweeney, only three counties lack the four highest commerce values. In addition, most commerce, even that of the South and the West, align very closely with contemporary transportation routes. Clearly, this layer represents modern attributes and thus modern lifeworlds because commerce also depends upon capitalism, job specialization, buying and selling of goods and services, advertisements for those goods and services, as well as transportation and communication networks. From the map, it is clear commerce's concentration is in the North, along with most of Joel Sweeney's performances. Sweeney moved the banjo into a world of more commercial jobs, an agent of specialization and modernity. Whites populated most of these jobs because they were the available work force here, as later maps will show.

Manufacturing is the next economic production layer and it closely parallels commerce's aspects (see Figure 4.3). Again, this layer's concentration is obviously in the North; however, as with commerce employment, there are large manufacturing employee population concentrations in some southern and western cities. These cities are again New Orleans and Cincinnati with densities between 7,757 and 29,223 employees (highest value), while Richmond and areas just east of Lynchburg contain densities between 3,792 and 7,756 employees (second highest value).

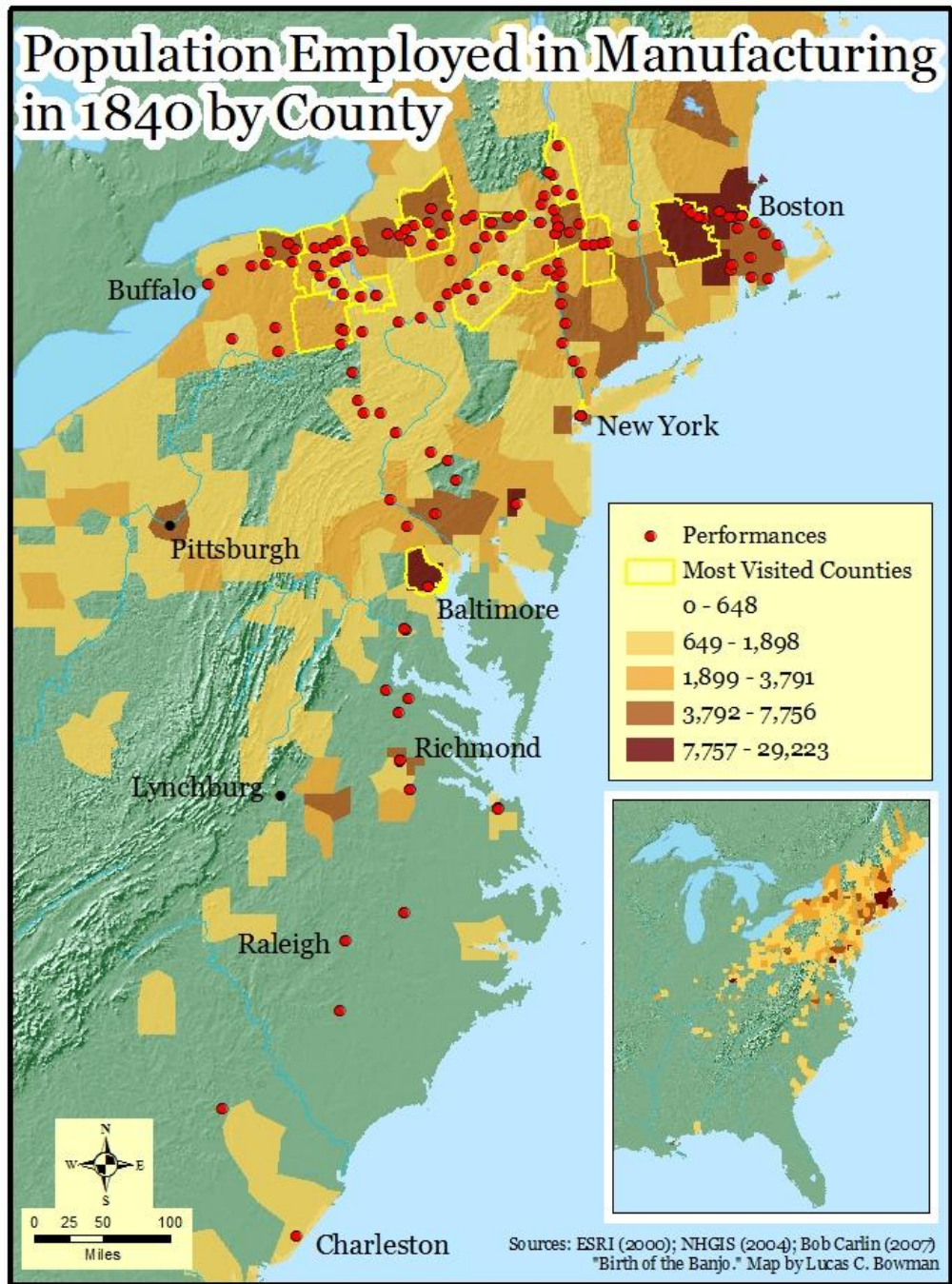


Figure 4.3 Persons per county employed in product manufacturing.

However, these are the only high-density clusters of manufacturing employees in the South. Nonetheless, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Boston also possess the highest value class, while New York, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, most of the Erie Canal corridor and a large part of Connecticut create a web of areas with 3,792 to 7,756 employees. In addition, the second and third value classes cover most of the North, giving it a large number of manufacturing employees. Moreover, this layer fills all eighteen counties Joel Sweeney most frequented.

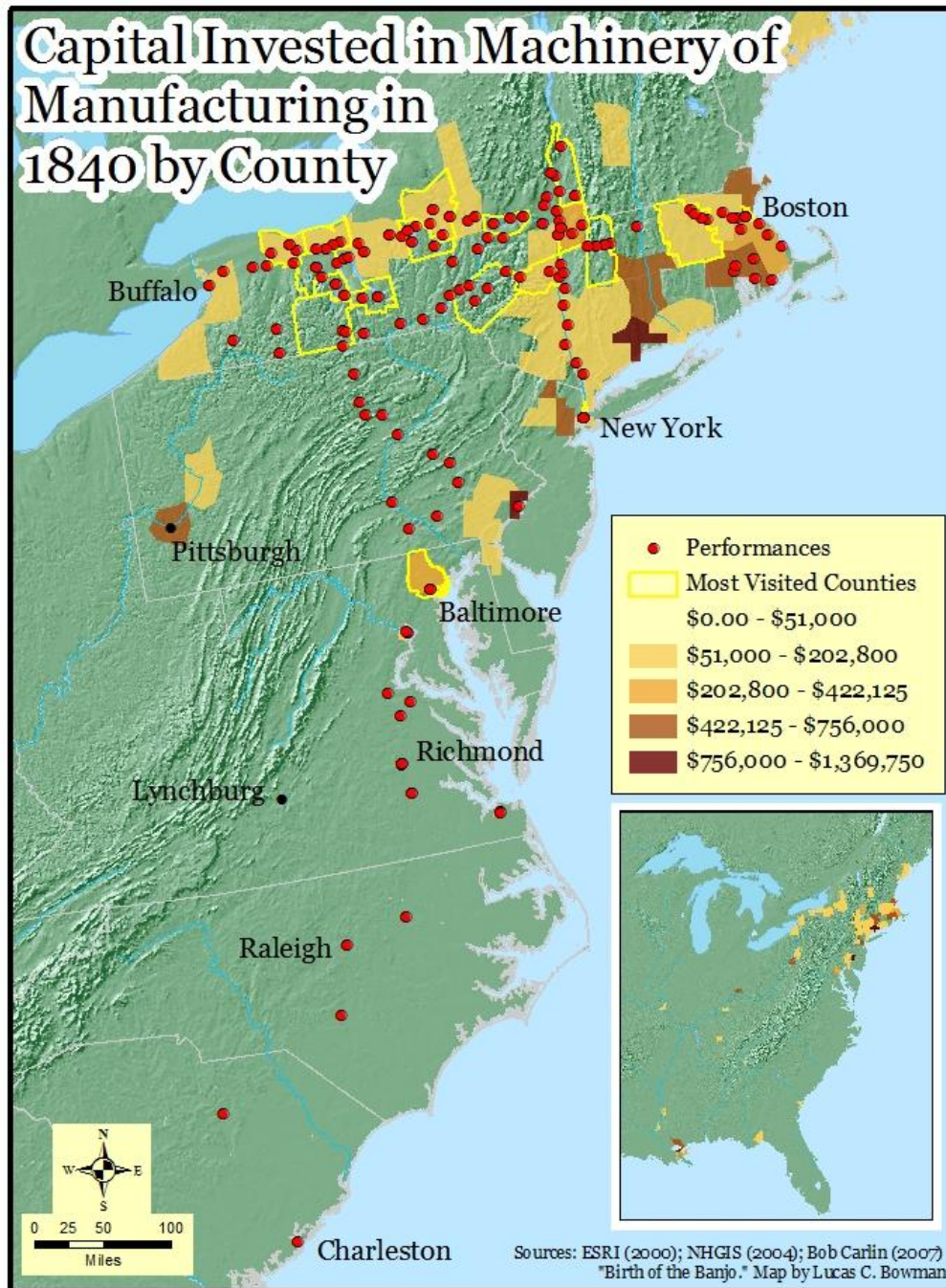


Figure 4.4 Capital--in dollars--per county invested in machines used by manufacturing employees to make products.

Manufacturing is a key indicator of modernity because, while it is also highly specialized, it demands steel and iron (as the layer of capital investment in machinery of manufacturing displays, see Figure 4.4). These highly specialized and goods producing factories are located nearby larger population densities because they require a labor force to operate them. Again, the larger population in the North supplies a labor force for these manufacturing productions. Since capitalists operate these facilities to produce profits, this labor force received the lowest possible salary—a factor that fostered the working class' poverty. These manufacturing areas also require access to transportation routes such as the Erie Canal corridor. Clearly, the majority of Sweeney's performances are located within this heavily concentrated area.

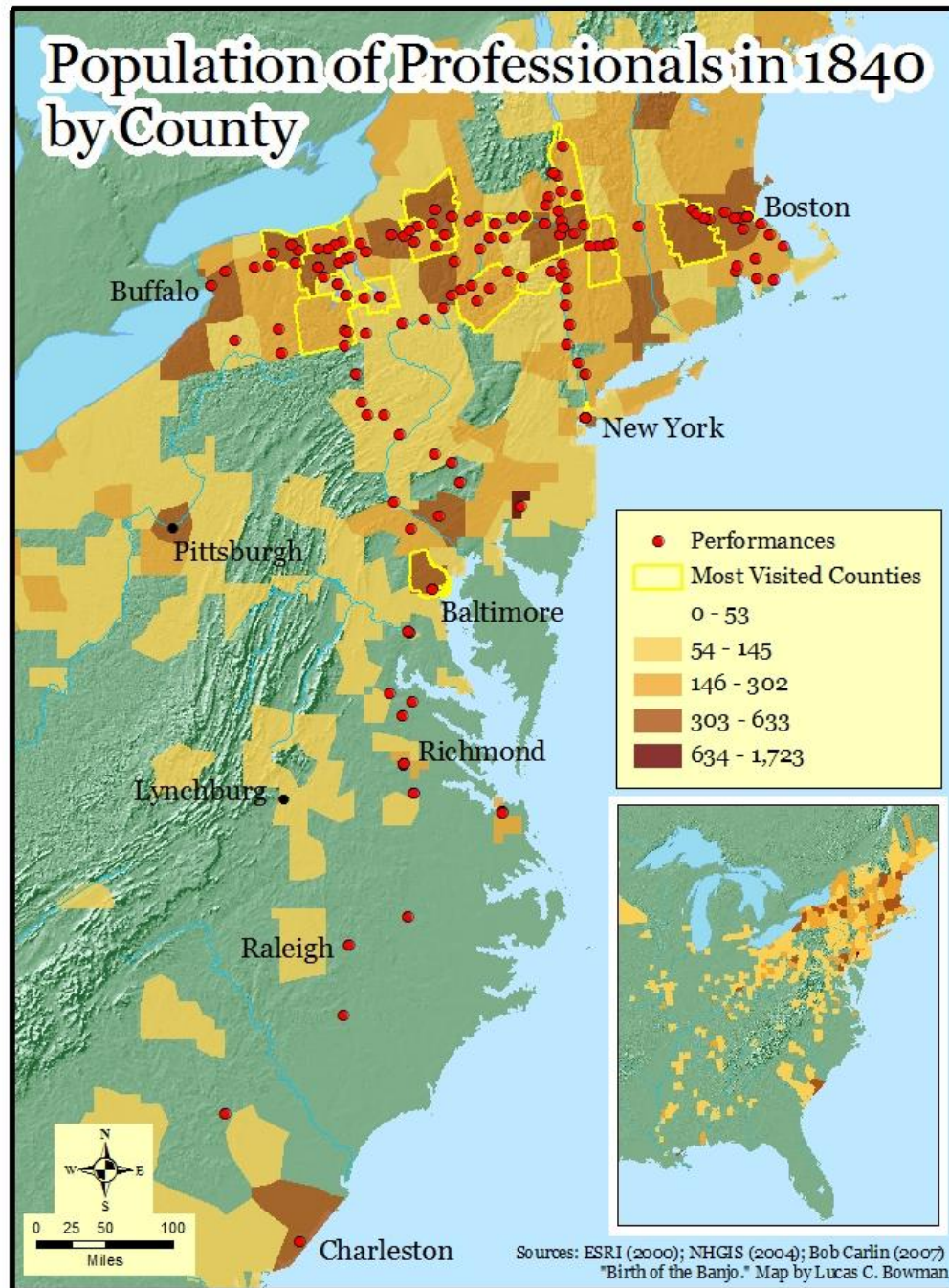


Figure 4.5 Persons per county employed as professionals.

The presence of professionals depicts a higher level of specialization, not only in these professionals' work, but also for everyone's daily life nearby. Fittingly, the professional demographic layer mirrors previous economic layers' concentration in the North (see Figure 4.5). While Philadelphia asserts a dominant presence of the highest value class with 634 to 1723 professionals, many counties in the North possess the fourth and third value class. Aside from scattered counties across the South, the only southern cities possessing the fourth value class (303-633 employees) are Charleston and New Orleans with Cincinnati representing this class in the west. Again, of the eighteen counties most frequented by Joel Sweeney, all of them contain at least the third value class of professionals (146-302 employees). Conversely, this layer's population maximum remains relatively low, considering other layers. For example, while professionals highest population figure is 1,723 people, manufacturing reaches 29,233 people. As the maps illustrate, Sweeney's travels correlate closely with these northern densities.

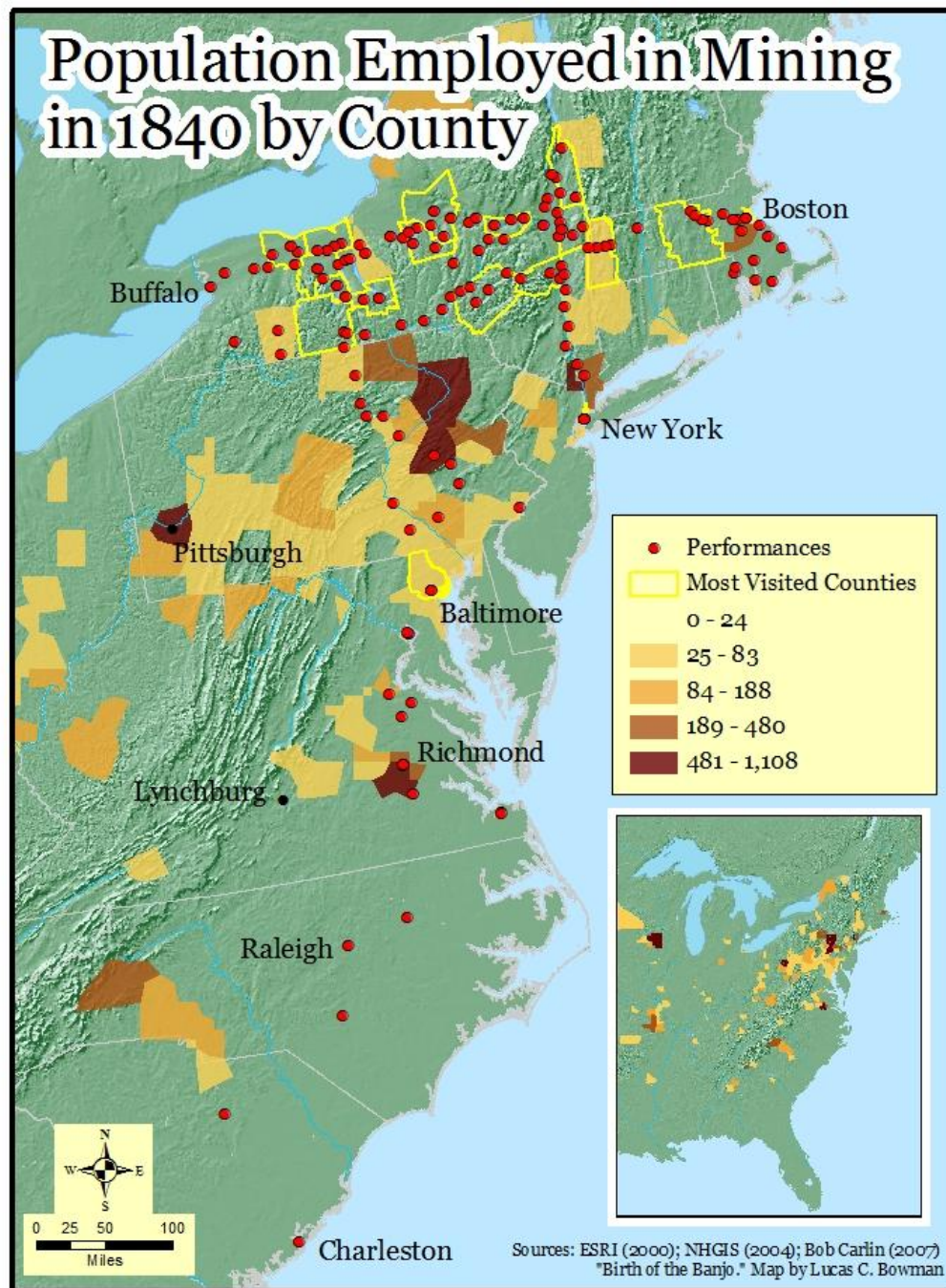


Figure 4.6 Persons per county employed in mining.

Mining was and still is a key element to modern industries and energy production; however, due to geographic reasons, it breaks the expectation that it would be married to other characteristics of modernity (see Figure 4.6). Precious ore forms where geologic and climatic factors favor their particular development, not human will. Therefore, this layer resembles more of a geological map displaying ore deposits. Nevertheless, people still must mine these minerals and so live nearby them. Due to these geographic factors as well as historical settlement processes, areas containing these precious materials exhibit the highest densities of those people employed to remove it. With an added consideration—that of settlement patterns—coupled with the availability of capital to extract resources, the North still has the highest concentration of people employed in mining. Of Sweeney’s most visited counties, only two counties had mining value classes, and these were of the second value class (25-83 employees), but he played for many other counties with the highest value class (481-1,108 employees). These latter areas are located nearby Danville and Pottsville, Pennsylvania as well as Pittsburgh, New York and Richmond. This map relates less correlation between Sweeney’s travels and mining than other demographic layers.

Agriculture’s employment population is a misleading, but telling layer (see Figure 4.7). Since my project depends upon revealing more agrarian lifeworlds as traditional, I expected there to be more agricultural jobs in the South than the North; this was not the case. Even while employment in agriculture was the most spatially distributed demographic of all, the North had just as many or more people working in agriculture than the South. However, considering basic survival needs, an understanding of this even distribution emerges.

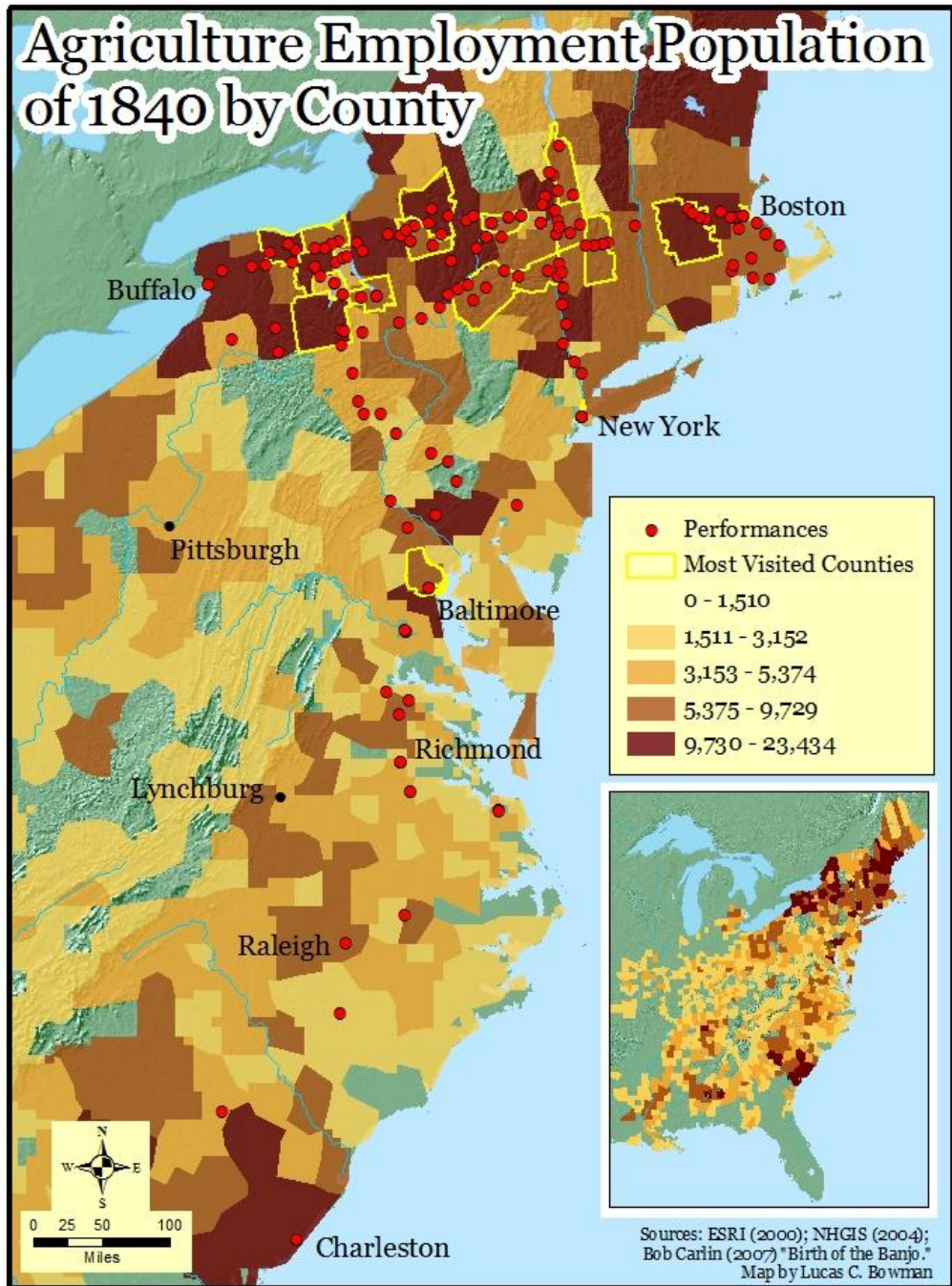


Figure 4.7 Persons per county employed in agricultural production.

To live, we must eat and to eat, we must grow food. Growing food requires fertile land and daily attention. The larger the population, the more land needed to supply for this population. Consequently, larger populations demand more food, land and people working agricultural jobs than smaller populations. For example, in 1840, the North (10.2 mil) required more food to support its population than the South did (6.9 mil). Therefore, the North must grow more food, in less space, to feed its population than the South. However, due to the South's reliance on commodity crops such as tobacco, cotton, sugar cane and rice for its economic exports, these crops' cultivation allocated more land in the South than in the North. Therefore, while agricultural jobs were spatially distributed more evenly, agricultural jobs in the South were most likely producing commodity crops while northern jobs produced foodstuffs. Furthermore, enslaved people performed agricultural jobs in the South while whites of European descent and immigrants worked those in the North.

Considering this deduction, it would seem the North possessed just as much, or more, traditional lifeworlds than the South. Certainly, traditional lifeworlds existed in the North, but there are more factors creating traditional lifeworlds than simply numbers of agricultural jobs, since food is a necessity for life. Modernity cuts across these traditional lifeworlds. If we visualize traditional lifeworlds as a blanket laid on top the landscape and imagine modernity as a spider web stretching across that blanket with each strand of web expanding throughout time, we begin to see the spatial interaction between modern and traditional lifeworlds. Each intersection of modernity's web is a center of its power and each strand of web is an expansion of modernity's power, meaning even strands influence the traditional lifeworlds it touches. Once modernity establishes a new strand (these being understood roughly as transportation and communication networks), it expands its reach and permeation into the pre-existing traditional lifeworld. Although the North possessed more agricultural jobs, suggesting more traditional lifeworlds, it also held a larger

population in a smaller space, which fostered a more concentrated web of modern power centers than the South in 1840 (see Figure 4.10).

Acknowledging the North's larger population, smaller area and denser web of modernity, modernity riddled the North's physical landscape more than the South's landscape. This riddled landscape exuded the consciousness of modernity more than a landscape less broken by modernity power centers or its networks. To give a quantifiable example to landscapes riddled by modernity, let us examine the distances between major northern and southern cities. Of major southern cities, it is 350 miles from Charleston, SC to Norfolk, VA. However, it is only 80 miles from Norfolk, VA to Richmond, VA, insinuating a denser area of modernity. From Norfolk, VA, it is another 150 miles to Raleigh, NC, but it is 220 miles from Raleigh to Charleston, SC. From here to New Orleans, measured in a straight line, it is 630 miles.

Of cities in the North, Boston and New York City are nearly 200 miles apart. From New York City to Philadelphia, it is another 80 miles. From New York City to Buffalo, NY, it is 280 miles. From Buffalo, NY to Pittsburgh, it is 190 miles. While all of these distances are relatively equal, except for the trip to New Orleans, we must scrutinize the shape these cities create in space and the networks connecting them. Looking at the North, mainly Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and the rest of New England, this area is skinnier than the South and bordered by water on both sides. Additionally, the Erie Canal corridor bisects this smaller areal shape, allowing easier movement between its most extreme borders. Conversely, the South has a larger and broader shape, although it also has water bordering its western and eastern flanks. However, the Appalachian Mountains create an transportation obstacle directly in its heart, constricting movement between these aquatic borders. Furthermore, looking at Figure 4.10, we can see that along the eastern coast there are few, if any, direct transportation connections between southern cities.

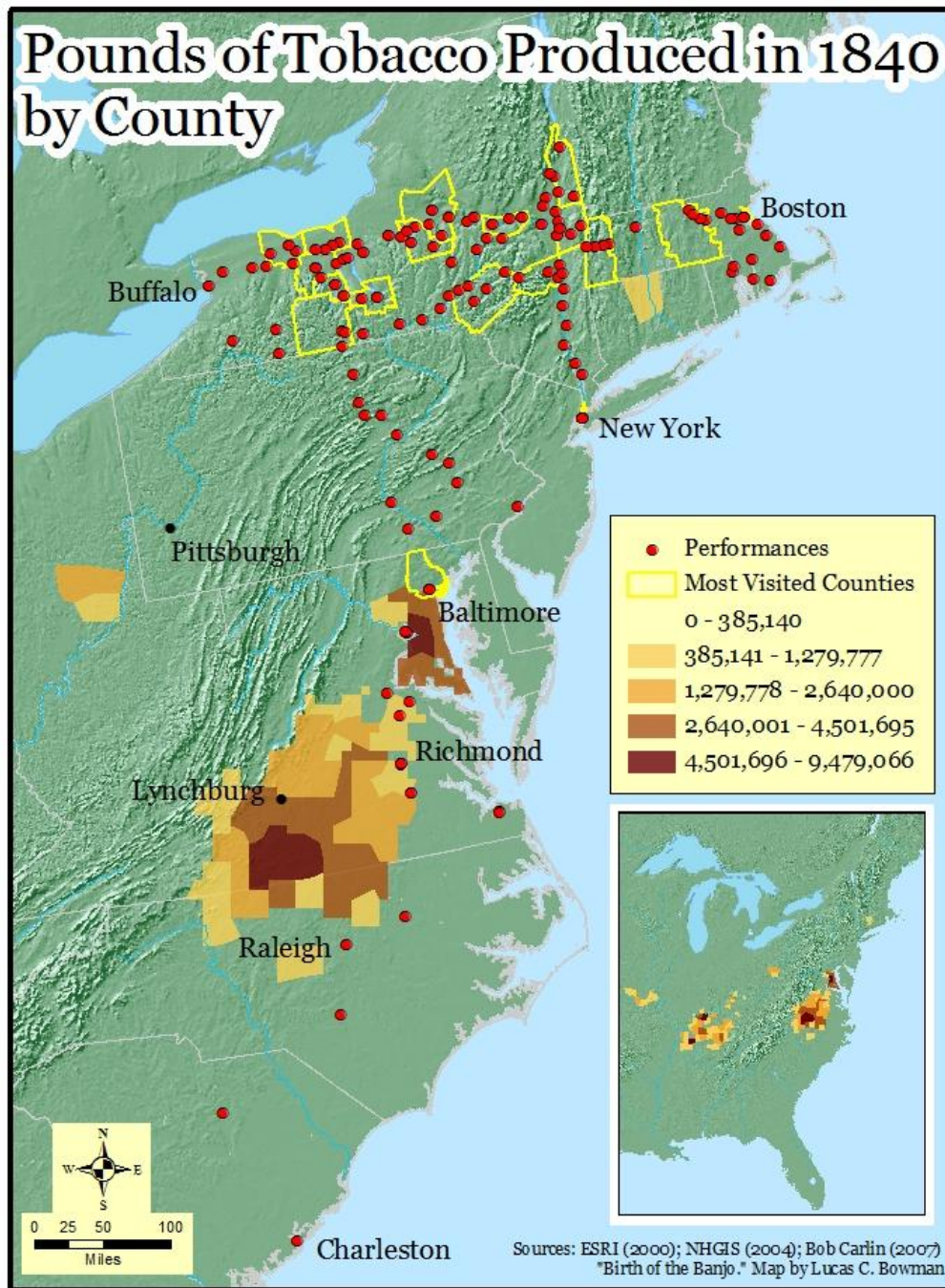


Figure 4.8 Pounds of tobacco produced per county.

While the spatial distribution of agricultural jobs surprised me at first, in the end, their dispersal reinforced the North's population density and consequently, its ability to convey modern lifeworlds. The largest concentration of agricultural jobs falls largely around New York's Erie Canal corridor, a major transportation route connecting Buffalo on the coast of Lake Erie with the Hudson River, and hence, New York City. Not to undermine the existence of traditional lifeworlds in this area, but could these agricultural jobs have supported the people maintaining modern lifeworlds along this heavily used transportation system? Regardless, this map displaying agricultural jobs does not evince traditional lifeworlds by itself. Indeed, when we consider manufacturing employment along with agricultural jobs, another picture emerges.

Manufacturing is highly concentrated in northern cities and not in southern cities. When taken together, it means where the percentages of northerners not employed in agriculture exist, they are more likely to work manufacturing jobs. In the South, these populations are more likely to be employed in agricultural production and not manufacturing, thus more likely to be enveloped by traditional lifeworlds. When coupled with the fact that enslaved African-Americans constitute a larger portion of the South's population, agricultural jobs are more likely shared racially, further wedding southern black and white lifeworlds. For example, the South produced particular commodities such as tobacco (see Figure 4.8) and cotton (see Figure 4.9) that both blacks and whites grew—among other crops. These cash crops fueled much of the elite southern lifestyle and economy and did not require the degree of specialization needed in commerce and manufacturing.

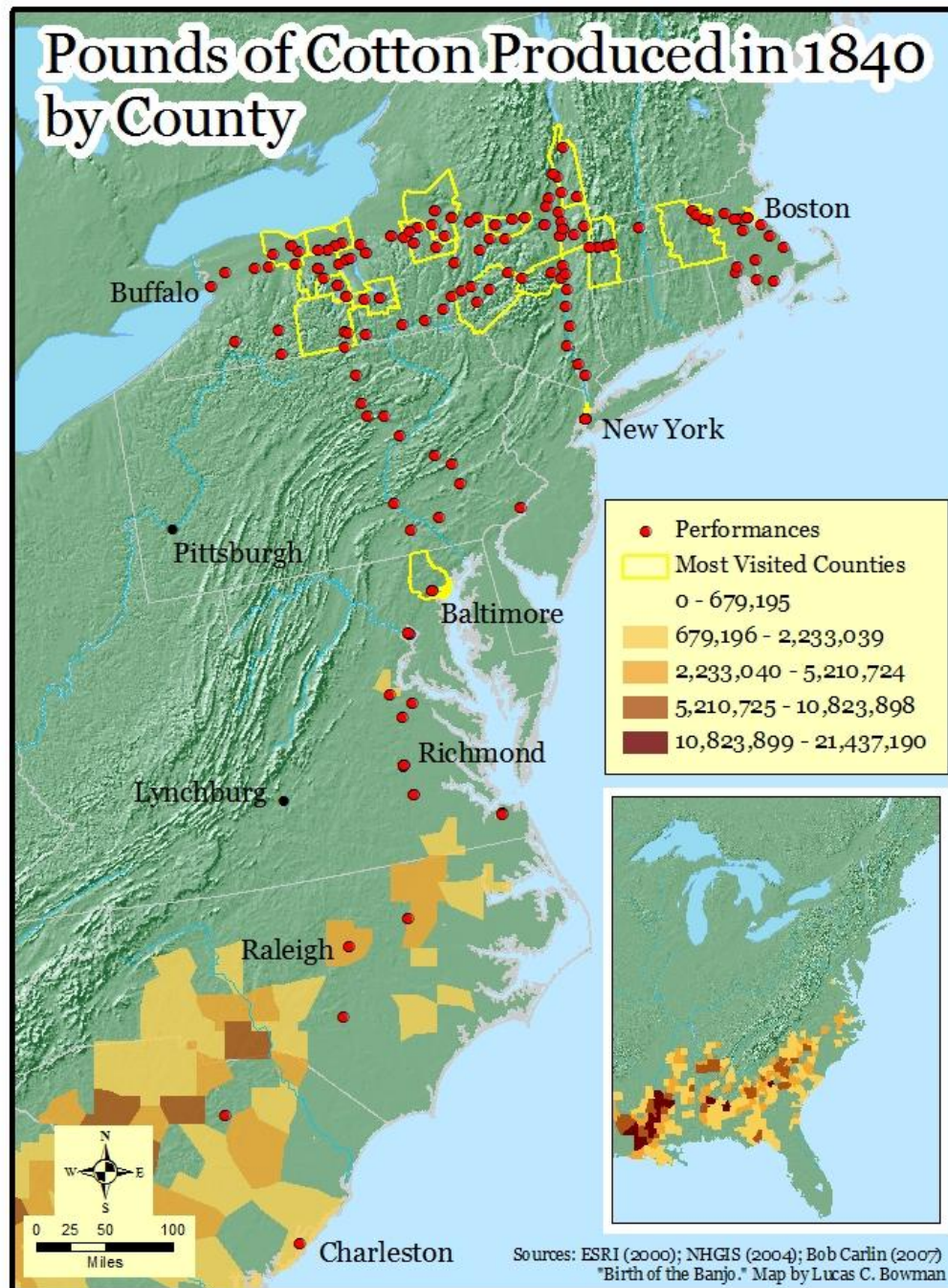


Figure 4.9 Pounds of cotton produced per county.

4.2 Transportation and Communication Networks

This next series of maps displays modernity's presence through manipulation of time and space through more advanced and concentrated transportation and communication systems than traditional lifeworlds. Part of this map series shows exactly where certain transportation routes existed in 1840 such as railroads, canals and navigable waterways, as well as the counties producing the most carriages and wagons using these thoroughfares. They also insinuate where the most interconnected webs of communication networks existed such as counties with daily and weekly newspapers as well as counties with printing and binding facilities.

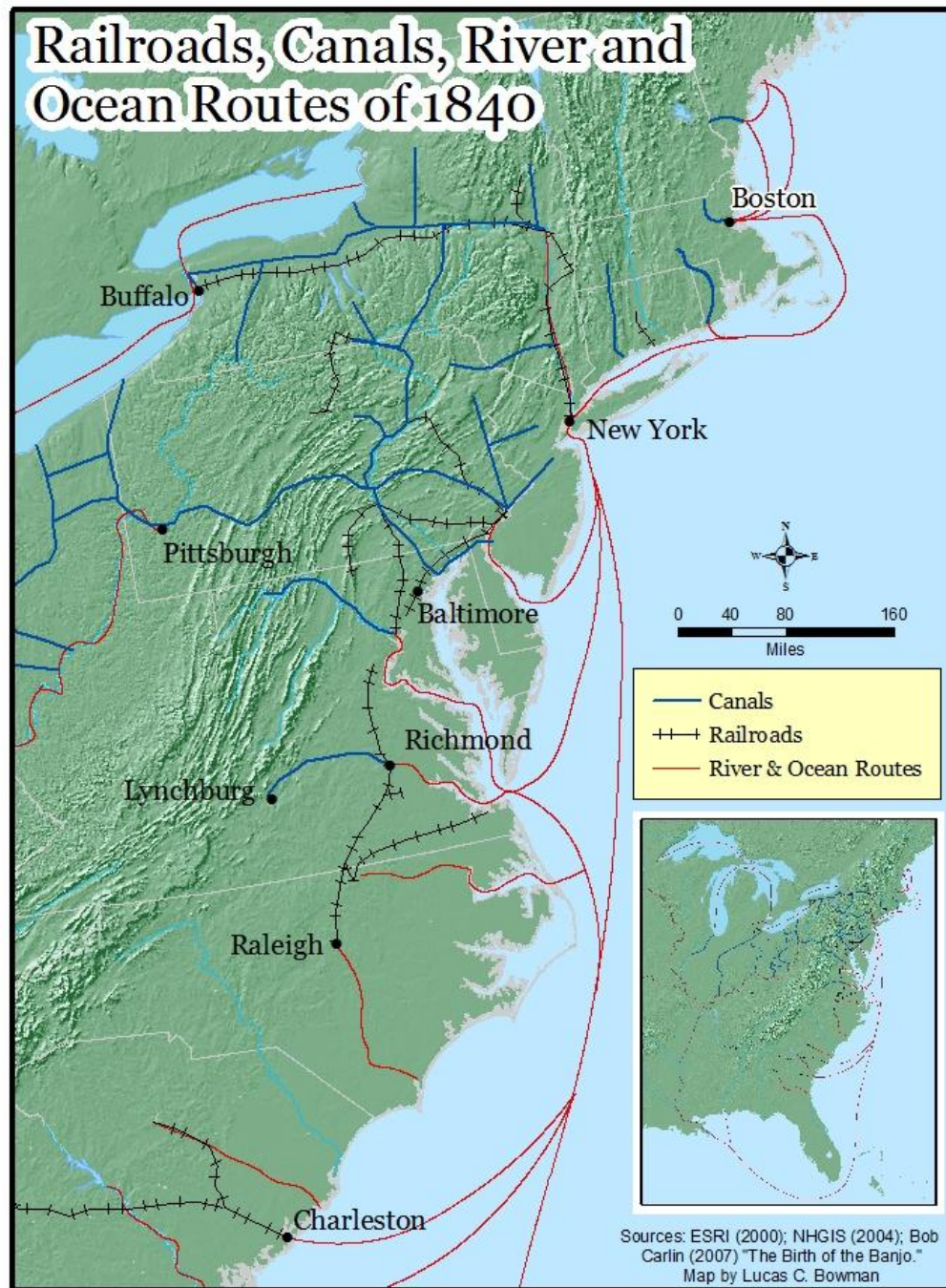


Figure 4.10 Popular land and water routes by 1840.

The first set of these maps displays the actual transportation networks during 1840 (see Figure 4.10). Clearly, from this map, it is easy to visualize the availability to transportation networks in the North versus the South. The North's dominance in these networks stem from geographic, political, economic, social and technological factors accumulating upon each other to reinforce transportation development in the North more than in the South. These factors working with and against each other forged the North into a denser population region, allowing more specialization, which demanded more transportation options. In addition, immigrant labor constructed many of these networks in the North, while slave labor in the South fulfilled this labor force; therefore, more immigrants found work in the North. These factors created clusters of smaller and more populated areas replete with their own specialization groups. These clusters focused upon an increasingly global and capitalistic market. On the other hand, most of the South evolved its specialization needs according to its more thinly distributed population focused on mostly providing agricultural staples and commodities. The South did have its transportation hubs, though mostly focused along the Mississippi River. In other words, the centers of modernity were closer together in the North than in the South, encouraging the North to connect these centers quicker than the South connected their centers of modernity. When distances between northern modernity centers juxtapose distances between southern modernity centers, it is understood why the North developed its transportation networks more completely than the South developed its own.

As Sweeney started out traveling with the circus, they moved along roads and waterways most easily (Glenroy 1885). These roads form the backbone of American travel and connect waterways and railroads. Carriages and wagons transported the bulk of freight on these early roads. The amount of capital invested in carriage and wagon construction suggests if not where most carriages and wagons existed then at least from where they shipped (see Figure 4.11). Moreover, implementing current planning theory to this situation,

demand, improvements, and intensification are involved in a feedback loop that attracts users to improved areas. Therefore, these improved areas receive extra use and therefore require sooner improvements, which in turn attracts more users (Crepeau 2008).

Augmenting these transportation networks, communication networks move information. Most of the time, communication networks utilized transportation networks, until Morse's telegraph line connected Baltimore and Washington by 1844. Even still, print could reach a wider audience quicker and required distribution among transportation networks. The only communication technique that could break away from transportation routes was word-of-mouth. Nevertheless, the centers of modernity created larger amounts of information for dispersal. Daily and weekly newspapers as well as the facilities that print and bind books, among other literature, represent the availability and access to information. These communication and transportation networks established horizons for the spatial diffusion of information.

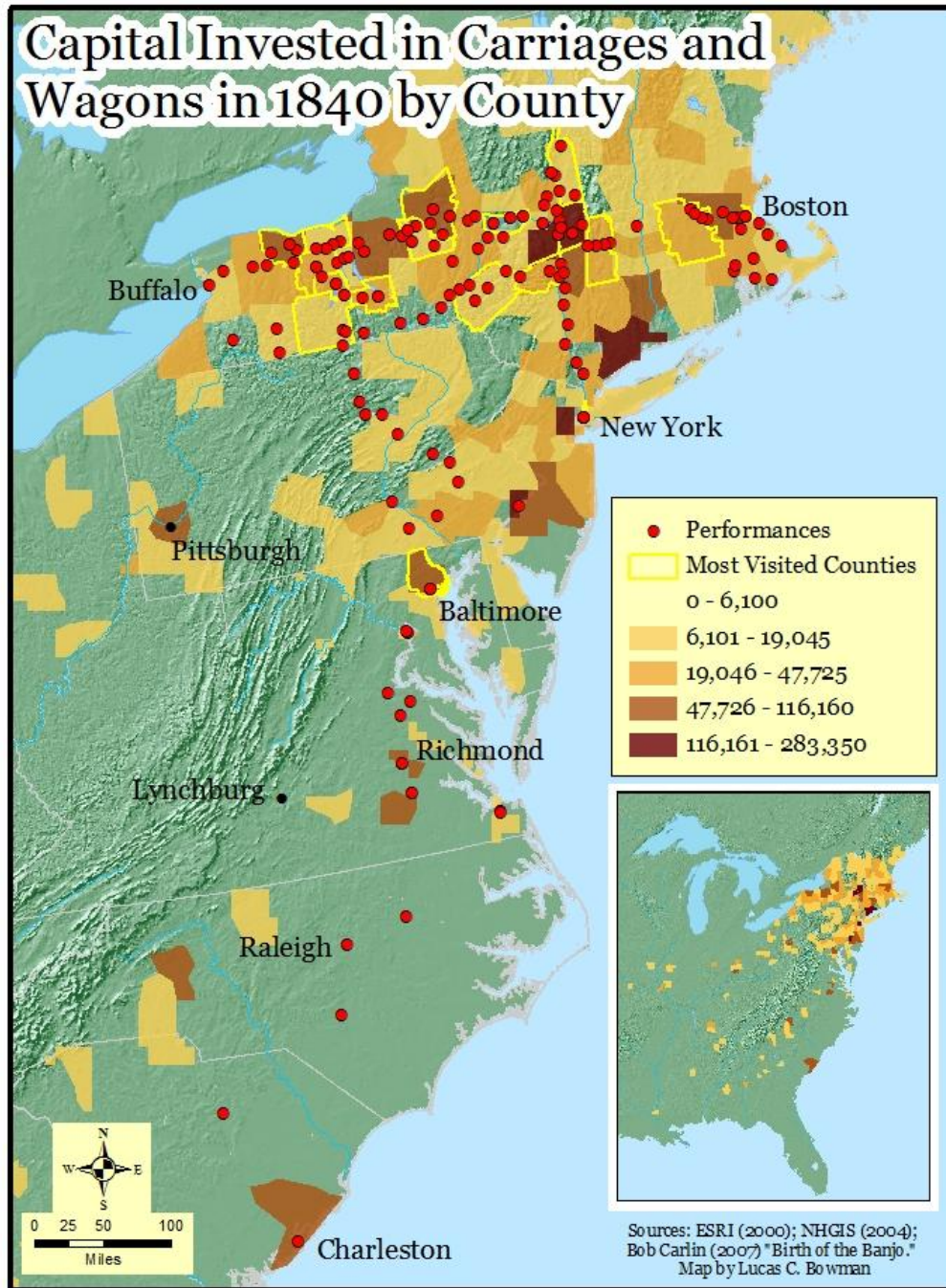


Figure 4.11 Capital--in dollars--invested per county in building carriages and wagons.

In 1840, newspapers were the most up-to-date source for news. Newspapers contained advertisements, editorials, global and local news. This map relates which counties supported daily newspapers (see Figure 4.12). Again, New Orleans emerges as the only southern city to print the highest value class of daily newspapers (8-9). In the west, St. Louis and Cincinnati follow with the fourth largest value class while Baltimore fills this role in the South (6-7). In the North, Philadelphia stands alone as the only city to offer the highest value class of daily newspapers while Boston represents the fourth highest value class. The weekly newspaper map presents a slightly different picture, but reasserts the North's dominance in newspaper production (see Figure 4.13). While more areas in the South produced weekly papers, more areas in the North, including those already producing more daily newspapers, also produced weekly papers. The volume of information present in the North is again the reflection of how many more people were available to read it. In addition, the type of available information reinforced modern lifeworlds. Advertisements for goods and services further inundated northerners so that when the circus came to town, everyone knew where it was and who was performing in it.

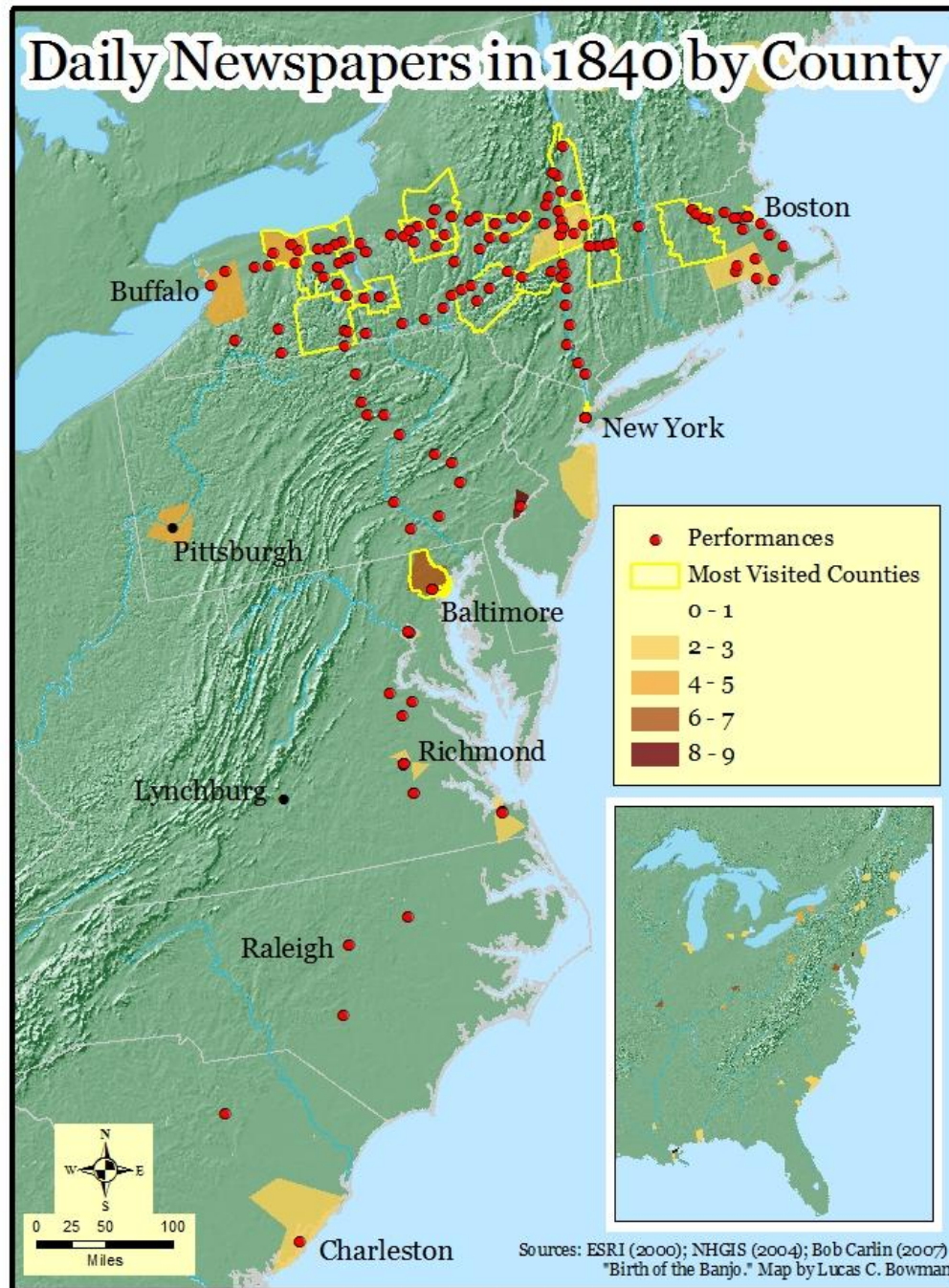


Figure 4.12 Number of daily papers printed per county.

Aside from newspapers, books and other often-read literature were also important in transferring ideas and information. From this next map in this series, it is again clear the North not only has more facilities, but they are located closer together. The approximation of these facilities nearby each other means reading material saturated this region. Some of this reading material became the banjo tutors of the mid and late 1850s. These tutors became a major way of copyrighting and allocating revenue from minstrel music. Furthermore, the more materials bearing minstrels name meant more advertising and name recognition.

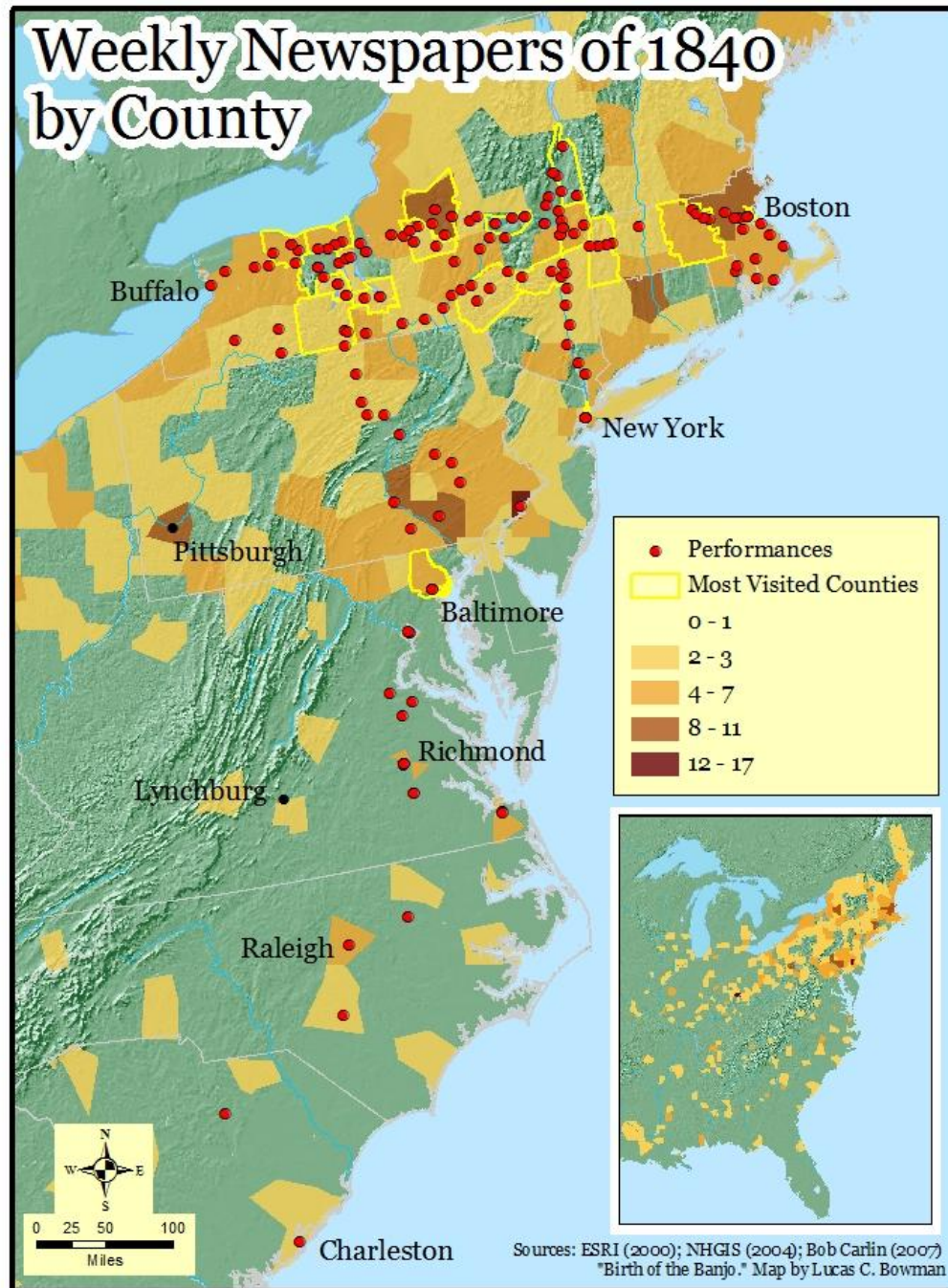


Figure 4.13 Number of weekly papers printed per county.

4.3 Demographics

This series of demographic maps probably presents the most telling information about into which type of lifeworld Joel Sweeney's banjo moved. These demographics are age, sex and, most importantly, race. As many researchers attest, minstrelsy targeted and attracted young white males in the North. While these maps seek out this particular demographic and its spatial correlation with Joel Sweeney's travels, they also build the overall demographic composition of America in 1840.

Race is a pivotal issue in this work because it supports the banjo's social entry into modern northern white lifeworlds. Looking at these demographic maps, the starkness between American racial densities of 1840 becomes evident, as does the banjo's place within them. As we can see from the map showing the free non-white populations (although we would expect this to be solely freedmen, it also contains small amounts of other ethnicities such as Native American), this population's largest cluster focuses on the Delmarva Peninsula and Baltimore County, Maryland (see Figure 4.14). Other densities center on other mid-Atlantic areas of coastal Virginia and North Carolina with sporadic populations in Louisiana, especially New Orleans, and sections of New England, most notably the cities of New York and Philadelphia, including the path of land between them. Nevertheless, the largest density class represents 16 to 29% of the total population, the second largest denoting 8 to 15%. In addition, these dense mid-Atlantic and North Carolinian clusters bookend the largest area of the enslaved black population in Virginia—an area populated by 60 to 90% slaves. Spanning south to North Carolina's border, this zone reaches Richmond to the east and north with Lynchburg as its western border. Neatly between these towns, but just east of Lynchburg, Sweeney's Appomattox home sat within this dense slave population. Indeed, whites constituted 39% of Buckingham County's population, while enslaved blacks made up 59%. Out of ten random encounters, Joel Sweeney was more likely to meet six blacks and four whites, not counting freedmen.

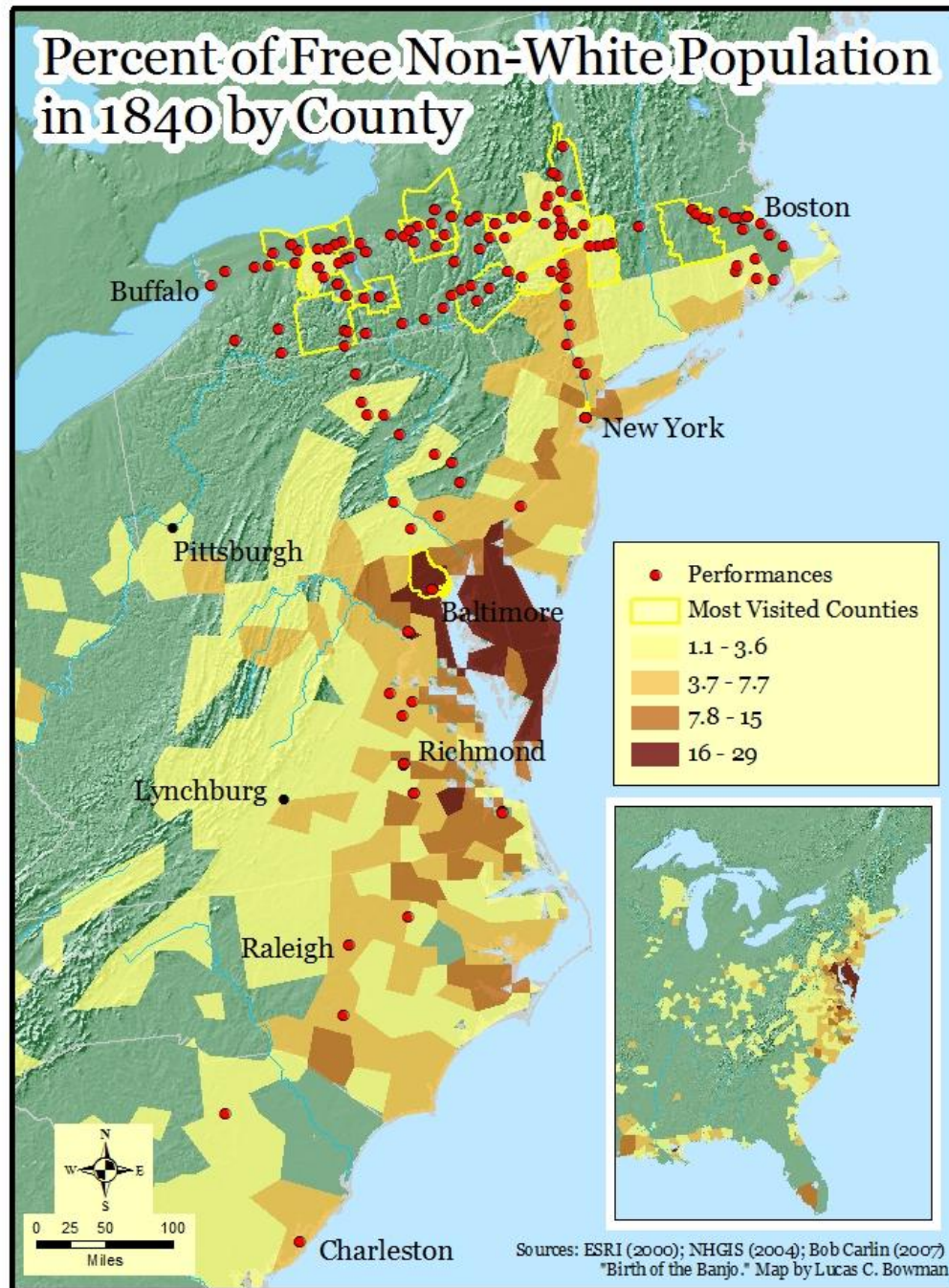


Figure 4.14 Percent of free non-white persons within each county.

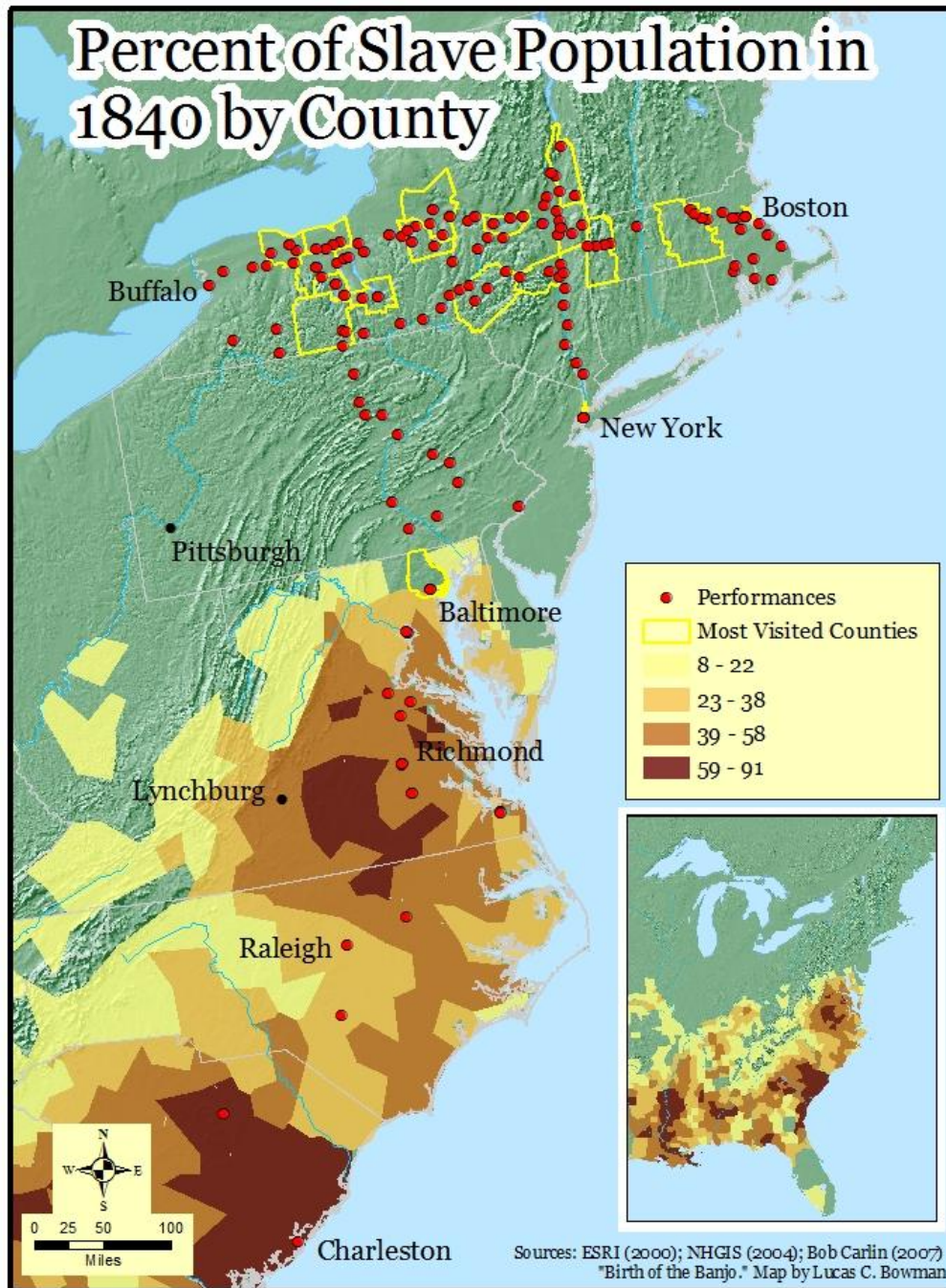


Figure 4.15 Percent of slaves within each county.

The largest slave densities are located within the South: this aforementioned Virginia region, much of South Carolina's coastal and piedmont regions, all of coastal Georgia as well as a corridor between Augusta and Atlanta, central Alabama, a section around Tallahassee, Florida and most of where the Mississippi River courses through Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana. These are zones comprised of 60 to 90% slaves. This map shows the South's large population of slaves and the geographic distribution of its racial mixture (see Figure 4.15).

White populations in 1840 America dominate most of the northern states (Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Vermont, New Hampshire, New Jersey), most of the southern Appalachian Mountains, and large tracts of Missouri and Florida. In each of these areas, whites made 90 to 100% of each county's population. Of important note, however, counties immediately surrounding New York are in the second largest population density class (70-89%). This map demonstrates the North's nearly complete racial homogeneity and the areas Sweeney frequented most with his banjo (see Figure 4.16). America's white population far exceeds any other population; and it should, especially in the North. When Europeans colonized America by the 15th and 16th century European powers, Britain and France were the major players in Northeastern North America. These predominantly white nations conquered Native American tribes in this area and spread westward. While white colonization of this continent began in 1519 at Jamestown, 20 slaves first arrived there in 1607 (Morgan 1998). Therefore, whites had 100 years to colonize and populate, while slaves did not. Political power played a large role in this social development because Europeans descendants considered slaves as equivalent to chattel. This association curtailed their freedom of movement and therefore their economic opportunities. These factors helped create a northern region heavily populated by whites of European descent.

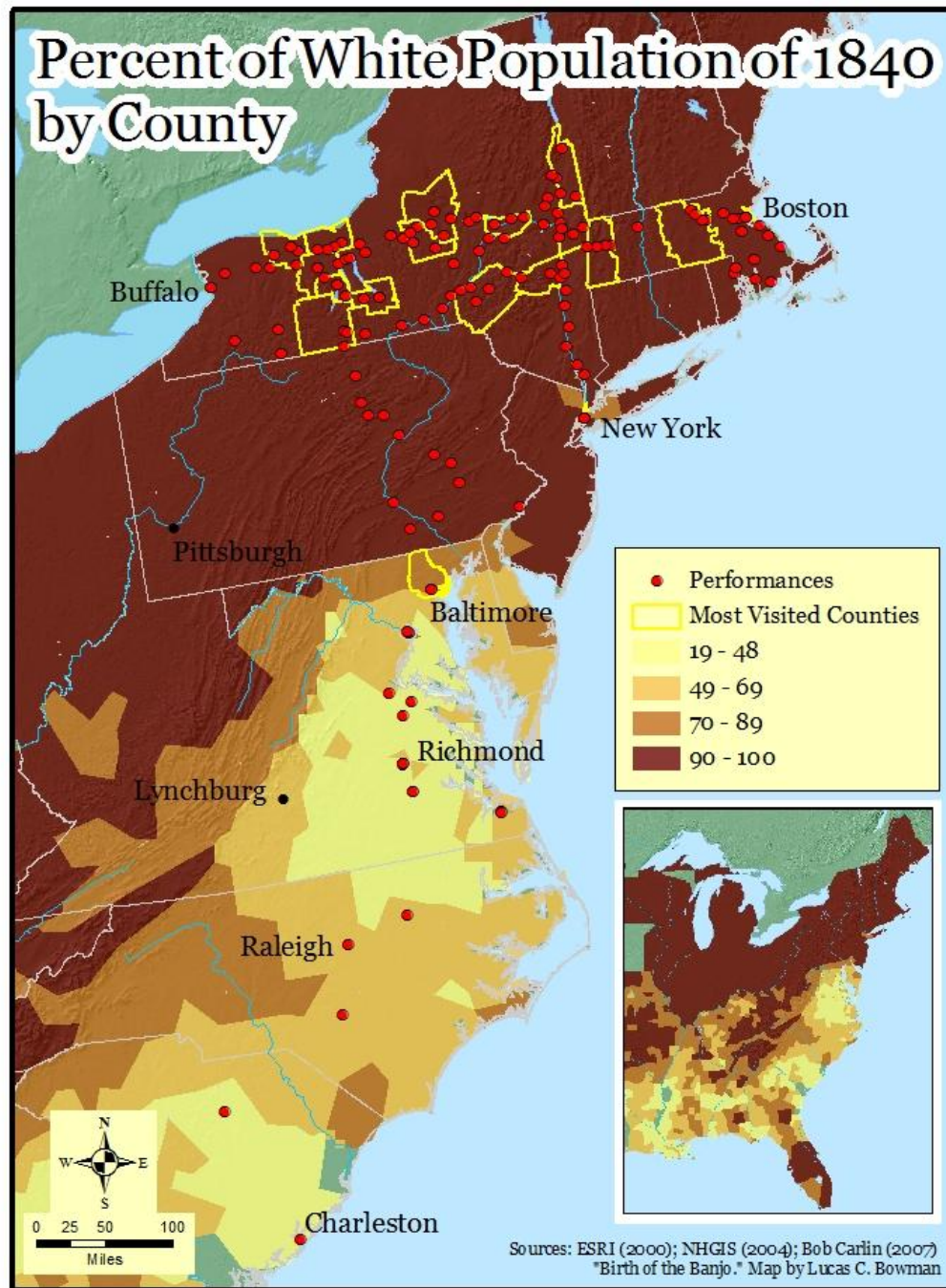


Figure 4.16 Percent of whites within each county.

Taken together, these maps—displaying racial populations—evinced the racial, cultural, social, political and economic separation between the North and South. These maps may do more to illustrate lifeworld differences between these regions than any other map simply because these races connote varying cultural, social, political and economic characteristics—even when you look within a particular region. Slaves are connected, either direct or indirect, with African, Caribbean and South American traditions and lifeworlds. Freedmen somewhat represent the black transition into the modernizing lifeworld of Europeans—whom are by far largely white. Whites represent European traditions, either indirectly from other colonies or straight from the mother country—whichever it may be. Each racial group breaks into separate cultures possessing subtleties distinguishing them within their larger racial cast. These maps do best to amalgamate and contrast these cultural subtleties by race. While race is by no means a definite indicator of cultural practice, it adds much support behind the general lifeworld experience to be expected.

Of most interest from these maps is the location of Joel Sweeney's home. Joel Sweeney's home was situated within the Piedmont corridor of central Virginia, immersed in a large population of slaves, yet relatively close to the North's growing white population and, therefore, its influence. If any location might produce a person, steeped in traditional slave culture, yet affected enough by modern lifeworlds, to transform a traditional black instrument of the South into the new fad of modern northern whites' entertainment through the conduit of blackface, it seems to have been this one. While it may appear I have claimed this is the only location for this to happen, chance played an enormously large part in everyday lives, just as it does today. Therefore, these maps observe what conditions were apparent to influence Joel Sweeney upon his trek into the North with the black banjo.

Another aspect of this work was to investigate the gender distribution of Sweeney's audiences. Previous research of primary documents reveals this answer to be young white males in the lower class. While the economic indicators attempt to illustrate possible class,

demographic data can do better to display age and gender. This next series of maps scrutinizes this claim. White males 10 to 14 years old represent 8 to 10% of the white population in most areas except the coastal mid-Atlantic and New England, where in both regions they form 6 to 7% of the white population (see Figure 4.17). This absence of young white males in the areas Sweeney most frequented is interesting because it seems to refute previous claims that young white males most viewed minstrelsy shows. One explanation for their absence in the North may be that farming families of the South had more children because rural life needed and supported more children. In the modernizing North, perhaps families began reducing their reproduction rates due to economic stress. Nevertheless, just because a population is not dominant in an area, does not negate their habits or desires; young whites were still present and attended minstrelsy performances.

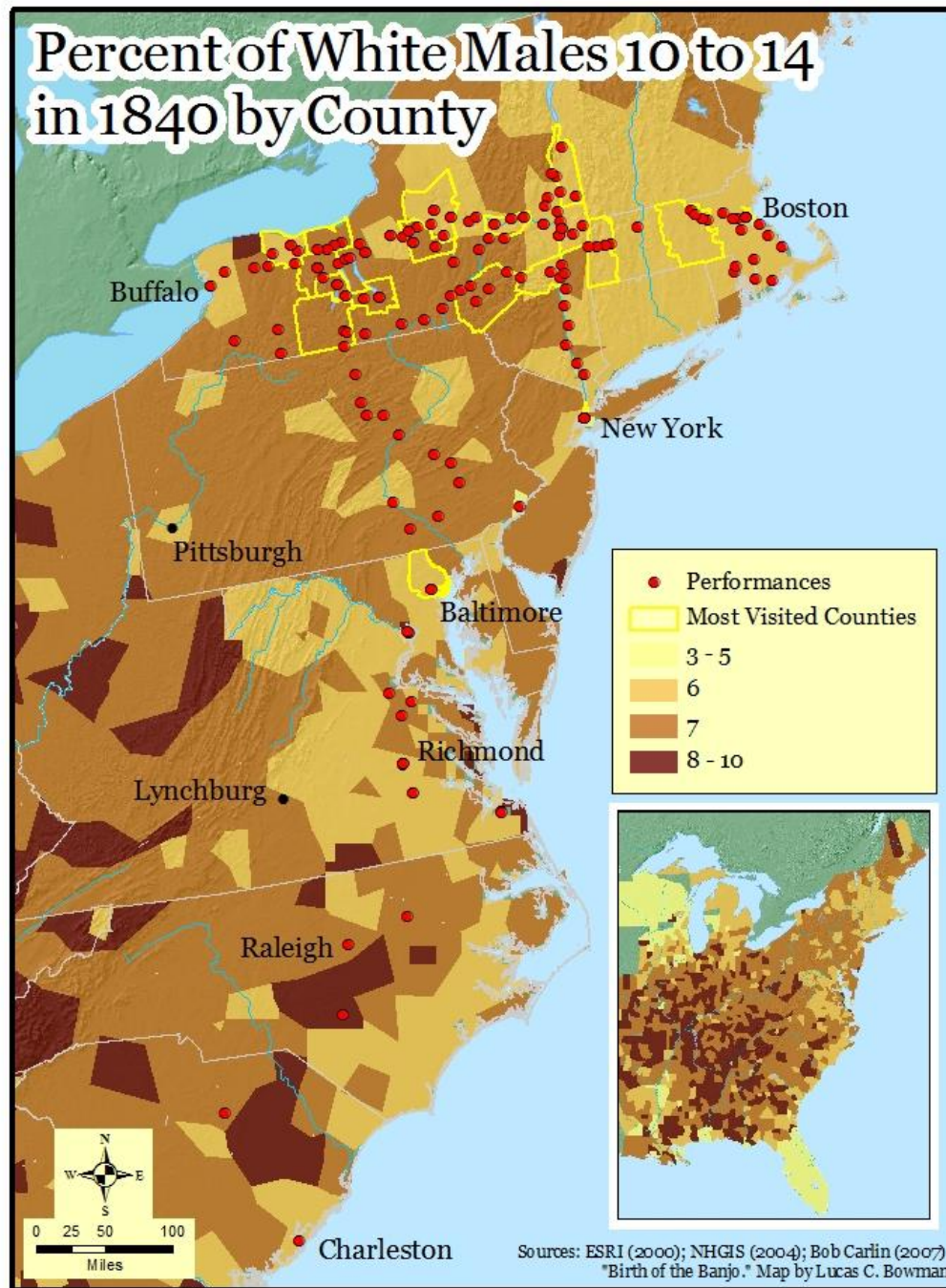


Figure 4.17 Percent of white males aged 10 to 14 within each county.

White males 15 to 19 comprise about 6 to 12% of the white population across most New England and across most of the rest of the North, although they have their largest concentrations in the frontiers of Florida and Wisconsin at 12 to 58% (see Figure 4.18). White males 20 to 29 (map not shown) are heavily concentrated in these same Florida, Wisconsin, Minnesota as well as Michigan frontiers at 28 to 63% of the white population. This data supports Saxton's (2003) and others claim that resource extraction camps on the frontier utilized this age group, but while they are supposed to have attracted blackface minstrelsy, they did not attract Joel Sweeney. Nevertheless, this age group makes 1 to 12% of most of the eastern section of the North, including New England and the mid-Atlantic.

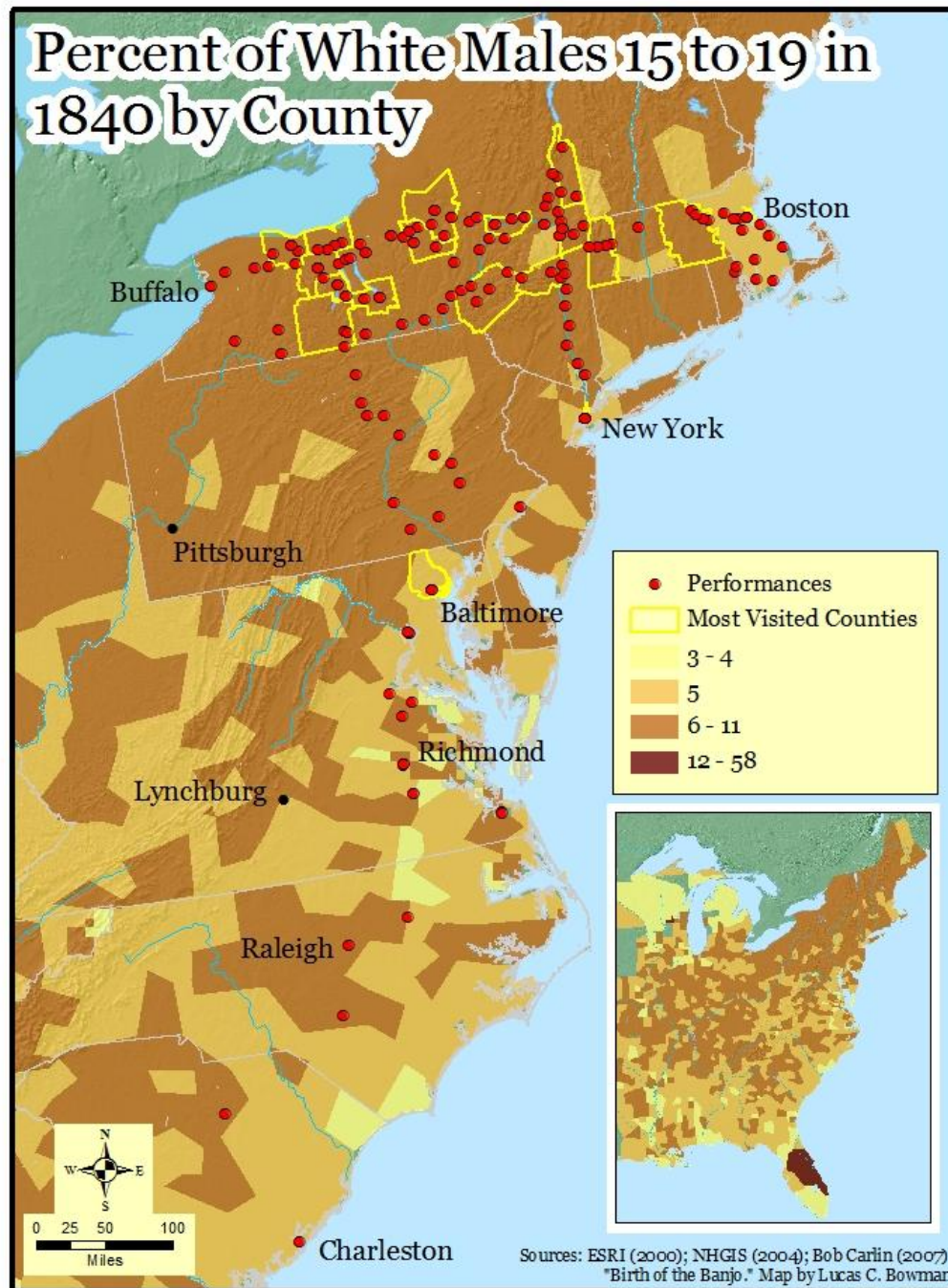


Figure 4.18 Percent of white males aged 15 to 19 within each county.

Again taken together, these young male age groups in and around New York, where the majority of Sweeney's performances occurred, consist of possibly 14% to 30% of the white population. When placed within female/male population context, this group makes up 30 to 60% of the male population in the North. While this last series of maps was weak and too inconclusive to lend absolute support to the claim young white males comprised the bulk of blackface minstrelsy's audiences, the amount of eyewitness and primary reports outweigh its uncertainty. Since there is no data detailing every young male's entertainment habits, there is no way to truly say that even the males placed within Sweeney's travel route went to see him perform. Certainly, on this logic, all young females could have been the sole audience members. However, primary evidence closes this debate and these maps do give support that at least these populations were present in the areas Joel Sweeney traveled to in the North.

4.4 Spatial Timeline

To further chronicle Joel Sweeney's banjo movement, a spatial timeline is helpful to place him more intimately within these demographics. The first map in this series begins with Joel Sweeney "breaking out" of his seasoned southern venues in 1836 and joining the circus by 1839 to travel to New York City (see Figure 4.19). Although his first documented performance is December 2, 1836 at Richmond's Terpsichore Hall, Carlin (2007) assumed he previously played with the touring blackface singer James Sanford at locations farther east at Rocky Mount, Raleigh and Fayetteville in North Carolina during 1836. Sweeney's performances fall silent aside from supposed local engagements at balls and racetracks during 1837 and 1838. It is not until February 12, 1839 when Sweeney joined the Circus and Menagerie United in Charleston, South Carolina we develop a consecutive spatial timeline for him. Shortly thereafter, likely the time it took to travel, Sweeney and the Circus appear in New York City.

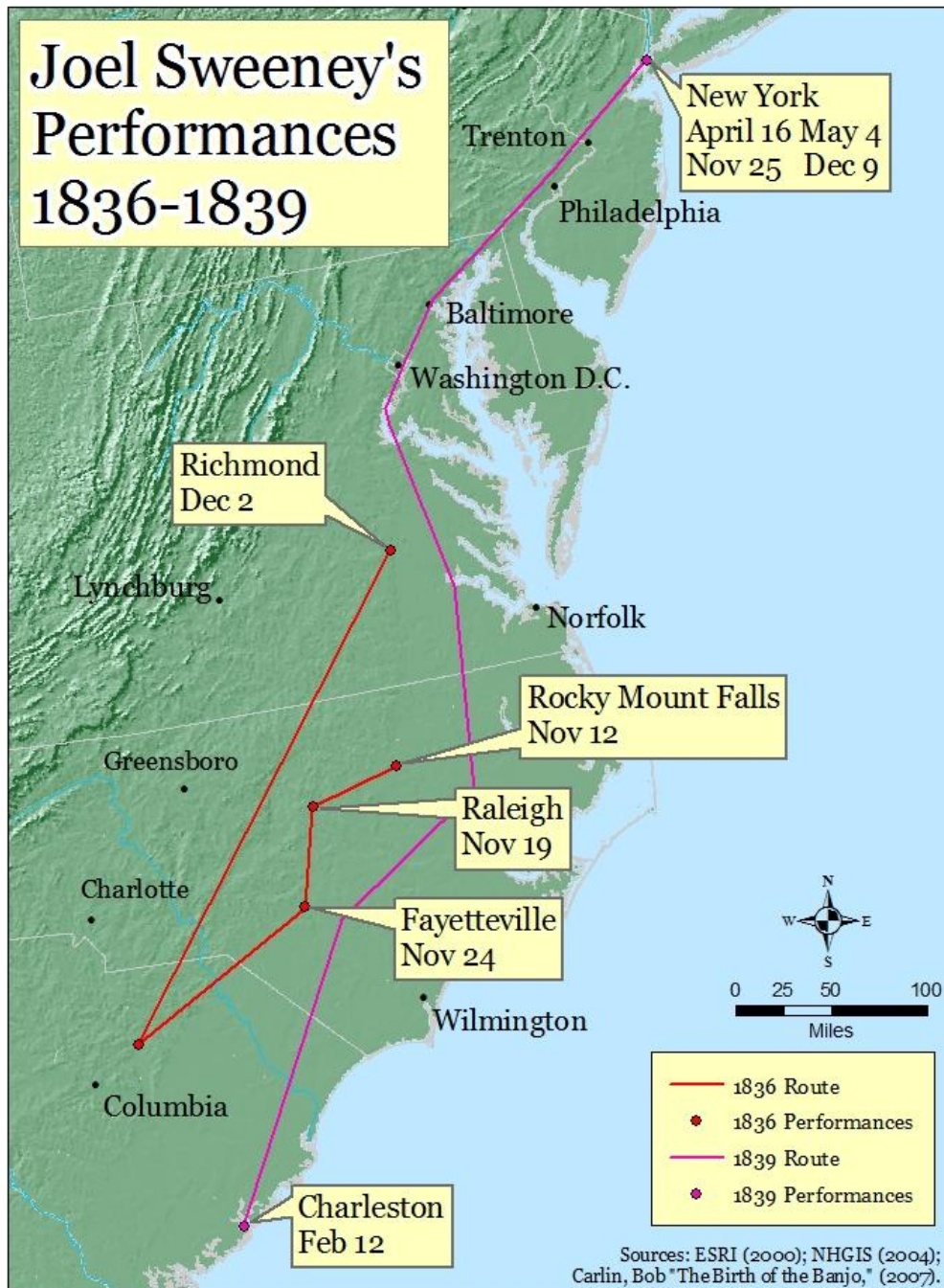


Figure 4.19 Joel Sweeney's Performances, 1836-1839.

His appearance in New York marked the beginning of his national and international fame, as well as his modernized version of the banjo. Sweeney would remain in New York City for another year, playing accompaniment for various blackface singers and dancers in many theaters within the city before disembarking again with Welch & Bartlett's circus. Once leaving, the circus set out for cities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts for the months of April, May and June 1840 (see Figure 4.20). These areas were those most saturated in manufacturing, commerce and professional economic production, as well newspapers read by a largely white population. A new world opened for Joel Sweeney in these early spring months of 1840.

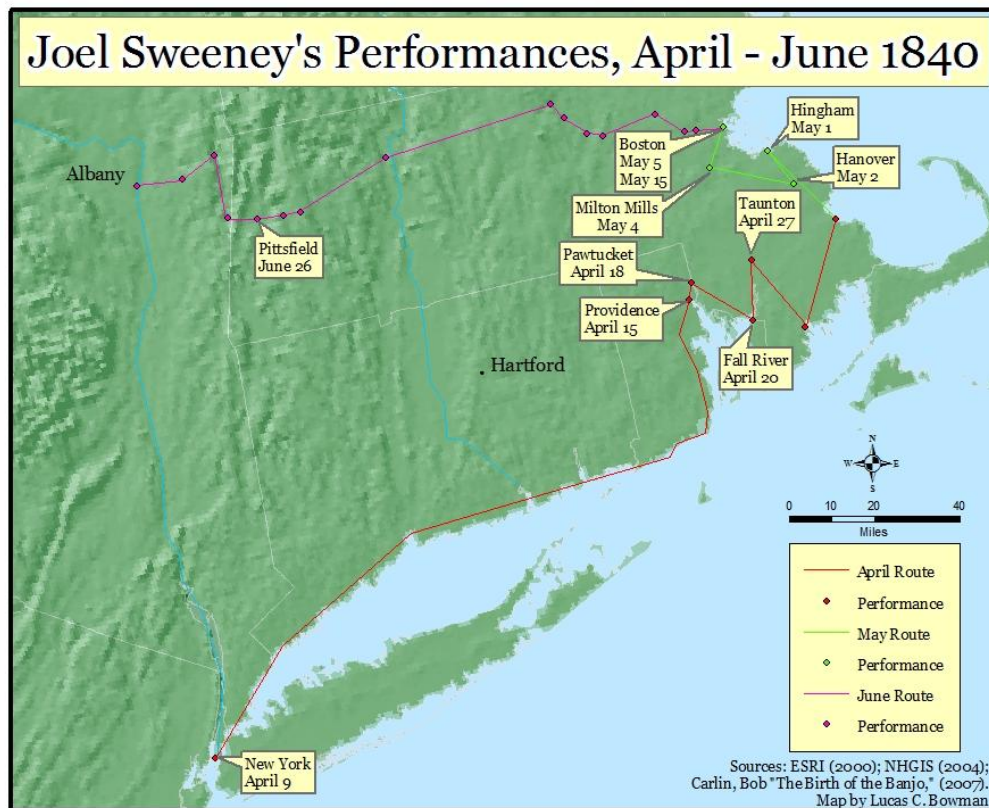


Figure 4.20 Joel Sweeney's Performances, April-June 1840.

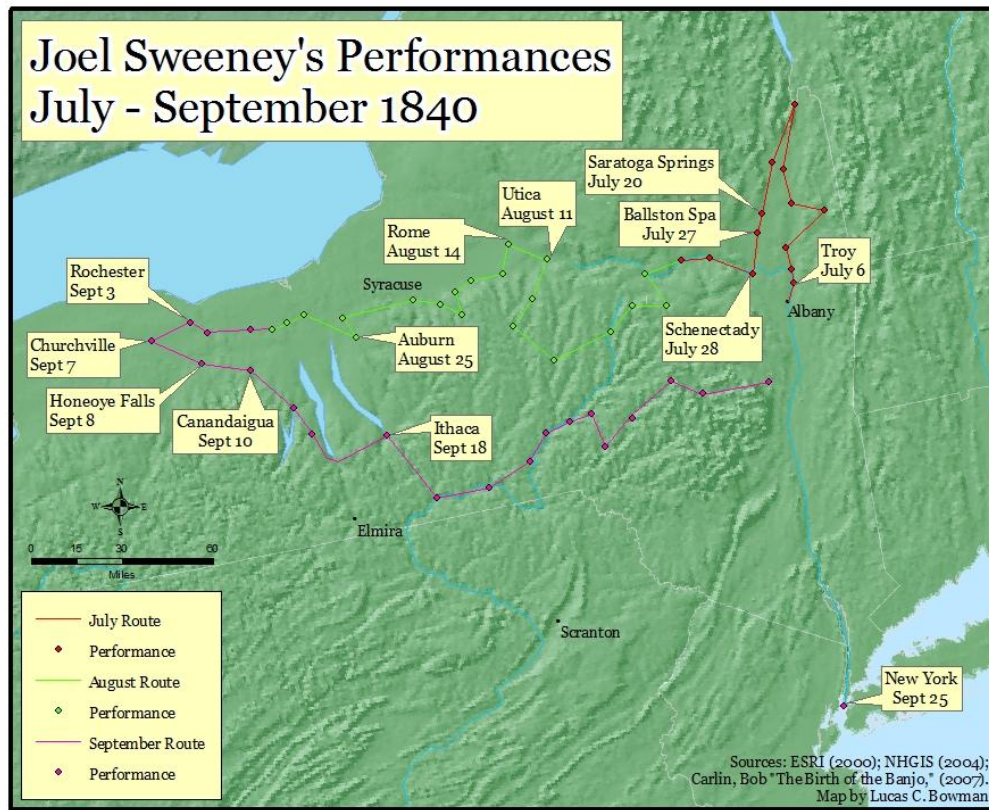


Figure 4.21 Joel Sweeney's Performances, July-September 1840.

Working their way westward across Massachusetts, the circus entered New York state in July and played in Albany and locations nearby before heading further westward along the Erie Canal corridor in August (see Figure 4.21). Many people within this heavily populated transportation corridor experienced much the same lifeworld as people encountered throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island. They worked many of the same types of jobs and read many of the same newspapers. Once getting as far west as Churchville, NY, the circus trended southeastward through the Finger Lakes and Ithaca, finally entering the Hudson River Valley south of Albany at Cairo, NY in late September.

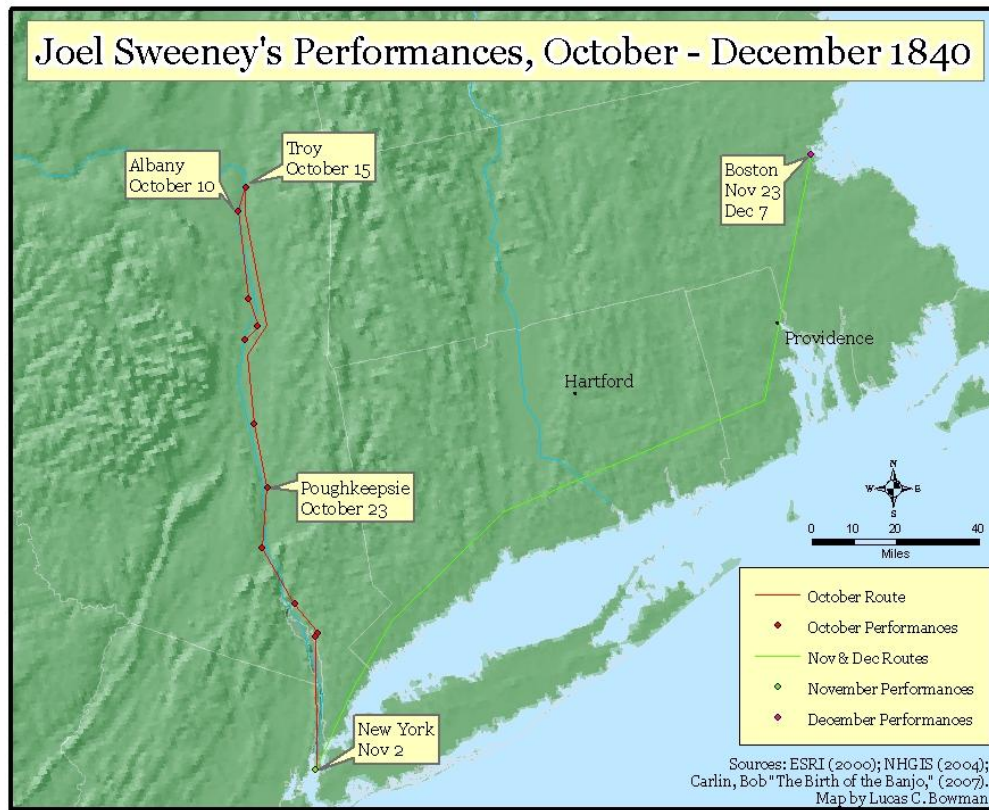


Figure 4.22 Joel Sweeney's Performances, October-December 1840.

At this point, Sweeney's exact movements are muddled. While Carlin describes Sweeney's movement with the circus up to Albany and Troy for performances on October 10, he cites a performance in New York City on September 25 (see Figures 4.21 & 4.22). My maps reflect this performance and trace his path accordingly from his entrance into the Hudson Valley at Cairo, some 110 miles from New York City. This performance is important mostly because it has an actual date assigned to it. However, Carlin does not mention it in his book, only in the chronology. Based upon previous tour dates and locations and Carlin's omission of it in his text, I excluded this September 25 from Sweeney's path performance. Looking at the date last given for Sweeney (September 18 in Ithaca) and considering the circus stopped 11 times over 142 miles *before* playing at Catskill in October, it seems

impossible to travel to this September 25 performance. However, due to Sweeney's popularity, he may have utilized the North's railroads to travel and perform a separate performance without the circus and later rejoin it traveling in the Hudson River valley. Regardless, this performance is mapped with its date.

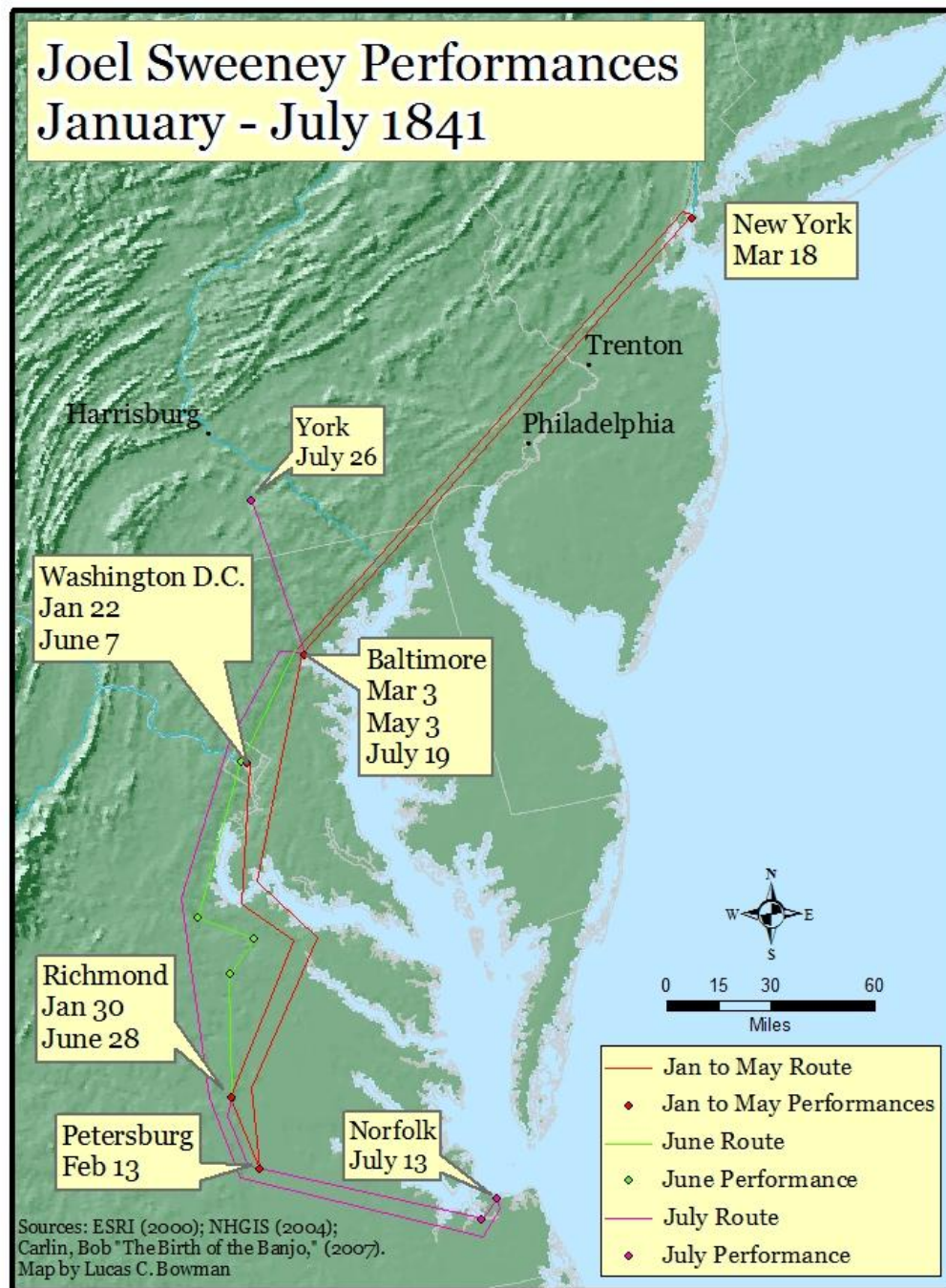


Figure 4.23 Joel Sweeney's Performances, January-July 1841.

In October, the circus started from Catskill and headed north to Albany (October 10) and Troy (October 15) before turning southward down the Hudson River Valley toward New York City for a November 2 engagement (see Figure 4.22). Here, Sweeney broke from the circus however and played at the Chatham Theater with William Chestnut in support of Julius Booth, a great tragedian of the era. Here Sweeney played with his pupil, Billy Whitlock, whom he had many run-ins with since meeting in Lynchburg back in 1837 and would have more as well. After playing at the Chatham, Sweeney left for Boston's Tremont Theater with his counterpart.

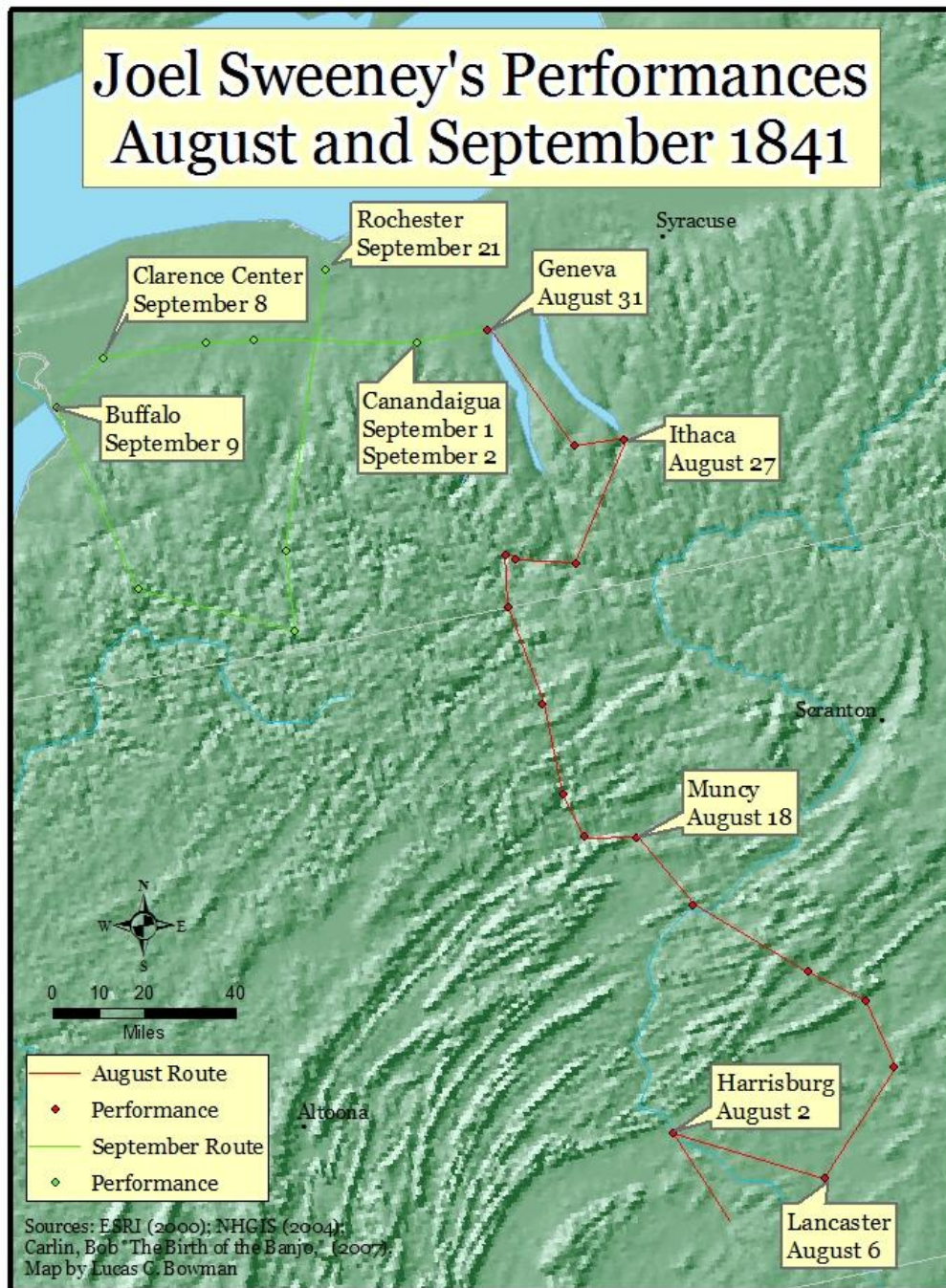


Figure 4.24 Joel Sweeney's Performances, August & September 1841.

From here, Sweeney made his own tour engagements and began the 1841 season with a performance on January 22 in Washington D.C., as a stopover heading southward (see Figure 4.23). On January 30, he reached Richmond and went as far south as Petersburg on February 13 before headed back northward to Baltimore (March 3) and the New York City (March 18). In early May, Sweeney rejoined Bartlett in Bartlett & Delavan's New York Circus in Baltimore on its way southward as well. He played Richmond again on June 28 before getting as far south as Norfolk on July 13. Here, he traveled back northward to Baltimore and then onto York, Pennsylvania on July 26.

The circus then traveled into Harrisburg (August 2) and Lancaster (August 6) to begin a tour through the heart of Pennsylvania (see Figure 4.24). They made their way straight toward New York's Finger Lake region and played Ithaca on August 27, where they trended westward toward a Buffalo performance on September 9. From here, they went southward for several performances before playing Rochester on September 21st. Continuing their westward path, the circus traveled along the Erie Canal corridor until they reach Albany in late October (see Figure 4.25). Repeating last year's trek, Sweeney and Chestnut left Albany and entered Massachusetts en route to Boston for a month long stay during the winter months. Sweeney moved to New York and performed with several other entertainers before landing in Philadelphia with John Van Brammer, a dancer. Sweeney's last performance was back in New York City and thereafter he left for England with Richard Sands' American Circus to tour the British Isles. A trip he would not return from for another three years.

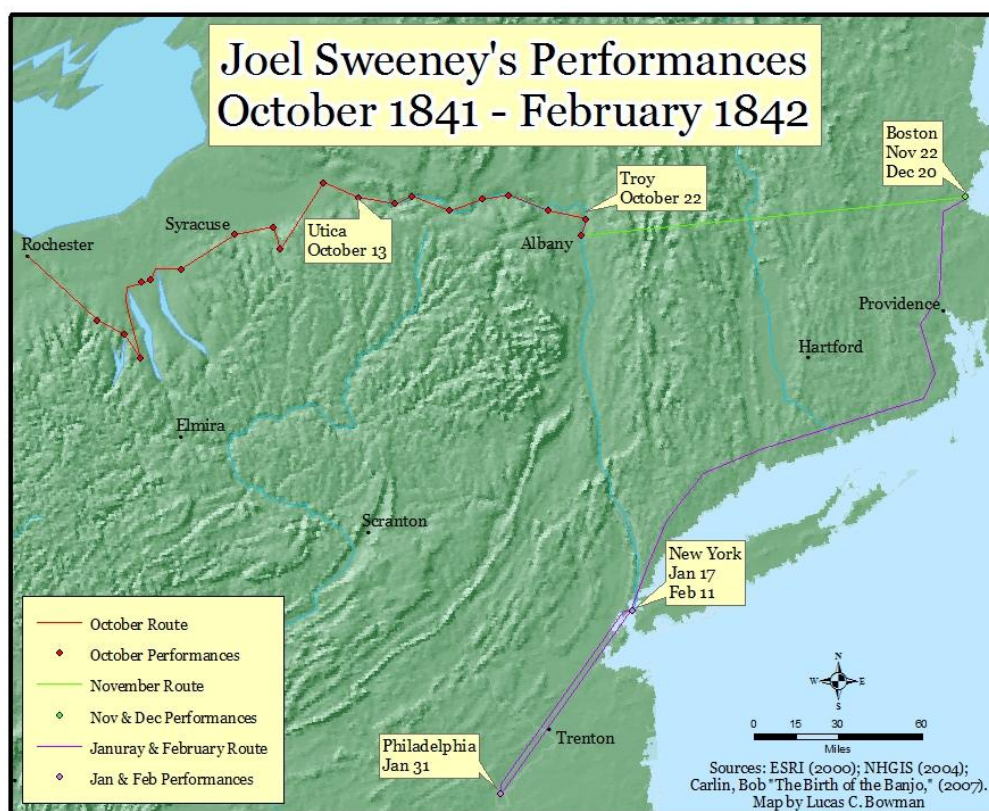


Figure 4.25 Joel Sweeney's Performances, October 1841 - February 1842.

As this tour log evinces, most of Sweeney's performances were in the North, where people lusted after blackface entertainment between Shakespearian farces and other plays that mocked higher social status. However, Sweeney did return to the South twice during these performances, but did not stay long; there was more money in the North. With more people crammed into a smaller region, the North offered a new audience at almost regular 10-mile intervals. In the South, this spatial economy was not as parsimonious. Towns were farther apart and the population was sparser. Of the southern towns where Sweeney returned, all were located in Virginia's coastal and Piedmont region; areas also touched by modernity's reach.

Sweeney began his banjo-playing career in the South nearby his hometown of Appomattox. After initially making his way into the North by April 1840, Sweeney toured the

North extensively, by himself and with the circus. He returned to the South after almost a year of absence. During this January to July 1841 period, the southern cities Sweeney visited are farther apart than those in the North. Consequently, when compared to his northern tour, Sweeney visited more northern cities within three months of 1840 (July to September) than he did in six months in the South (January to July 1841). His path and performance frequency across the North shows his ability to give more performances across a shorter space there than the South. It also illustrates his return into the South after increasing his popularity in the North. Indeed, Sweeney's spatial timeline establishes the North's denser population and transportation and communication networks.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

What do all these maps really mean when we think about Joel Sweeney, modernity and banjos? First, through an explanation of lifeworlds (how they are constructed with varying degrees of modernity across different scales of time and space), I attempt to describe the environments and social issues that weaned not only Sweeney but also all his contemporaries of the 1840s. These broader environments would later spur the Civil War with blackface minstrelsy doing its part to instigate and to quell its coming. Earlier historical processes involving many factors inoculated these environments and social issues. This work looks at the result of those factors mingling in 1840 and how their interactions had shaped and been shaped by the people living with them.

One of these main factors is slavery. Slavery's role within an expanding, seemingly insatiable, global market that prided itself upon specialization was essential for a rural Virginian to learn to play an instrument that evolved through centuries of cultural exchanges between blacks and whites across thousands of miles of space. Indeed, it was these forces, outside of Sweeney's own doing, that brought him into contact with the black gourd banjo by the 1830s. Sweeney's own ambition to perform within the emerging world of minstrelsy led him onto the southern circus circuit, a circuit largely accessing traditional lifeworlds. The North's vast commercial opportunities lured both the circus and Sweeney into its modern lifeworlds, saturated by young working class whites.

With this northward movement, Sweeney abandoned a more traditional and biracial world for one founded more upon modernity and whiteness. Due to the North's near total alienation from blacks, Sweeney's banjo became yet another window into an Other—a

symbol of what they were not and could not be. Northern dislocated working class whites needed their entertainment to transport them into an-*Other* place and time. As the South became timeless through its traditions while asserting independence from Europe, it became a natural focal point. And just as blackface festivals and plays originated largely from a European background, entertainers performing in blackface easily adopted slave life into their shows (Mahar 1999; Cockrell 1997).

So, these maps give an insight into where certain traits of our past dwell and the experiences created by these characteristics. Through economic means of production, modernity divided and specialized Americans and arriving immigrants in the 1840s. This separation from rural traditions and immersion into city life, where inhabitants rely completely upon their opposing specialists, caused shock and fear to modernizing Americans. Aspects of blackface minstrelsy and the modern banjo were a product of coping with this transition. Even today, we use theater to deal with traumatic experiences. Aimed at soldiers with “shell-shock” from wartime experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Theater of War* allows soldiers to identify with themselves through an *Other* (PBS 3 Feb 2010). In *Theater of War*, this *Other* is an actor performing Greek tragedies about war—warriors who experienced the same pain centuries ago just as soldiers do today. Blackface minstrelsy became the North’s way of dealing with its submersion into modernity.

These maps tell the story of modernity, regionalism, slavery, historic landscapes and people’s actions in dealing with these realities of 1840. But, ultimately, they tell the story of where and when the black banjo, modernized by Virginian Joel Sweeney, crashed into the northern white world—a world steeped in machines and progress, not nature and tradition.

5.1 Recommendations for Future Research

While I attempted to make the most intuitive decisions throughout this project, I am sure not all decisions were intuitive or correct. Follow up research is important to not only

check and recheck facts, but also unearth new ones. Within this project, the case of the September 25, 1840 performance in New York is worth investigating. Where did Carlin get his report for this show and why does it conflict with Glenroy's account? Moreover, did Sweeney break off from the circus at this point and return to it further into the circus' tour?

This work is simply the start of larger work. For example, maps could be made of Sweeney's travels into England and then back to America. While Sweeney was not the first American blackface performer to introduce the banjo to England, he was among the most popular and so the places he visited are important—just as in America. HGIS can trace the paths of other blackface performers who adopted the banjo in America. The banjo had traveled across America by the mid-1840s, due almost solely to Sweeney's formal introduction of it to audiences through blackface. How might these other banjo-playing performers' routes align with Sweeney's path and timeline?

An even more tantalizing and painstaking adventure would be to identify from which culture the slaves Sweeney grew up near originated. Using the Trans-Atlantic Slave Database (2009), along with Hall's (2005) "Slavery and African Ethnicities in America," the path of particular groups of slaves can be mapped. Identifying where these groups may have originated in Africa could lead us to identify musical traditions there and further develop not only Joel Sweeney learning the black banjo from slaves but the banjo's development in America overall.

Another possible research avenue is mapping each individual banjo reference along with physical descriptions of the instrument, who played it, what they played, the name of it and any other cultural and social indicator applicable. This map then transforms into an online banjo database accessible to all interested in tracking the banjo along its pan-American development.

5.2 Research Contribution

In today's academic discourse, the importance upon interdisciplinary studies is becoming more apparent and useful. Academic strategies analyzing phenomenon from only one viewpoint are more and more scrutinized for their lack of breadth and ability to truly connect their studied phenomenon to the interconnected world we live in. While our ideas of what is and is not science are constantly shaping and reshaping how we interpret our world, an overarching theme is emerging placing special emphasis on those works that can integrate as many disciplines to understand phenomenon. This research utilizes American Studies, Historical Geography and HGIS, as well as other techniques from Ethnomusicology and its subfield of Organology, to situate the mass adoption of the banjo into American popular culture and the historic lifeworlds and experiences of those in the 1840s. Certainly, GIS is increasingly contributing its techniques to understand social movements and spatial dimensions, and HGIS is a growing subfield of geography fleshing out the spatio-temporal phenomenon of social issues in the past. Indeed, this work picks up the torch from where others left it and carries it further into not only interdisciplinary studies, but of researching how the present draws its roots from these interconnected lifeworlds of the past.

CHAPTER VI

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