

“By all accounts, it was the finest quality of cotton ever grown – anywhere or at anytime.”

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## Superior Cotton from the Sea Islands

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“Abraham Lincoln’s earnest wish that slavery would ‘asphyxiate’ itself and thus end without a ‘disruption of the union’ drowned under a wave of cotton.”



# Sea Island Cotton Lifecycle



# Some Interesting Questions



WHY DID WE HAVE  
PLANTATIONS?



WHY DID GROWING  
COTTON REQUIRE SO MUCH  
LABOR?



WHY WAS SEA ISLAND  
COTTON SO VALUABLE?



WHY DID THE BEST COTTON  
IN THE WORLD GROW ON  
THE SEA ISLANDS OF SC?

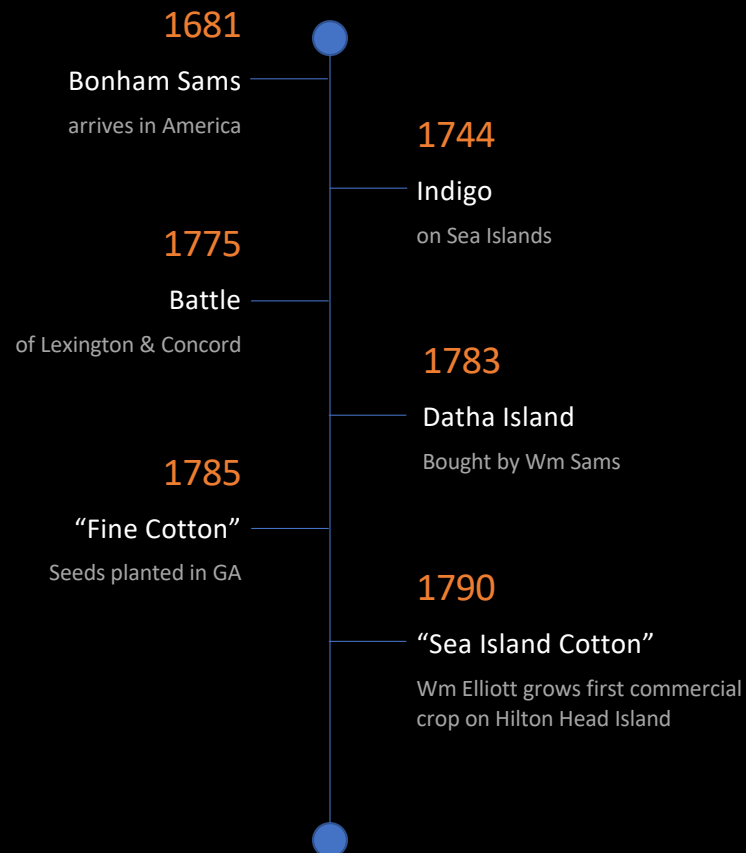


WHY DID PEOPLE IN THE  
SOUTH BELIEVE 'COTTON IS  
KING'?



WHY DID SEA ISLAND  
COTTON DISAPPEAR?

# Timeline for Sea Island Cotton - Birth



# Carolina under British Rule

- 1629 - Province of Carolina – King Charles I
- 1663 – Colony of Carolina - King Charles II – Lord Proprietors & ‘headrights’
- 1719 – Royal Colony of Carolina – King George I

# Crops on the Sea Islands of South Carolina

- Began with cattle grazing & lumber
- 1740s – Indigo
- 1775-1783 – American Revolution

# Beaufort District in 1783

- Plantations destroyed
- Thousands of slaves gone
- Robberies and murders

# William Sams Indigo Connections

- Father Robert Sams (~1706-1760)
- Uncle Nathaniel Barnwell (1705-1775)
- Cousin Lewis Reeve (1739 – 1774)
- French markets



# 'Fine Cotton' Journey

- Pre-Columbian – grew wild on west side of Andes Mountains in Peru & Ecuador
- 1785 – seeds from Bahamas planted on St. Simons Island, GA
- 1790 – William Elliott of Hilton Head Island grew first commercial crop in SC
- 1808 – James, Johns, Wadmalaw, Edisto, St. Helena, Lady's, Port Royal
- Kinsey Burden (1775-1859) seed selection process

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# Sea Island Cotton – Unique in Many Ways

## Environment

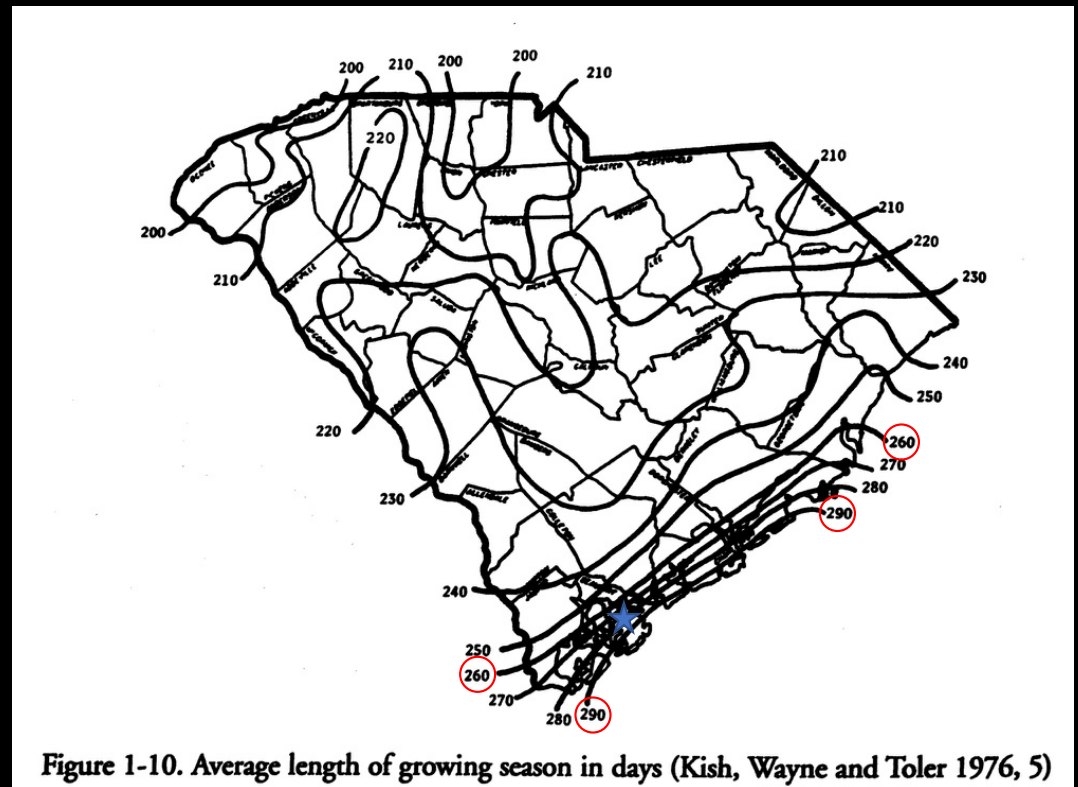
- Soil
- Climate
- Isolation

## Result

- Long, strong, fine lint
- Considered world-wide as the finest cotton fiber ever produced

# Climate of the Sea Islands

- Growing season
- Rainfall
- Temperatures



# Cultivation of Sea Island Cotton

*Gossypium barbadense*

## Shrub

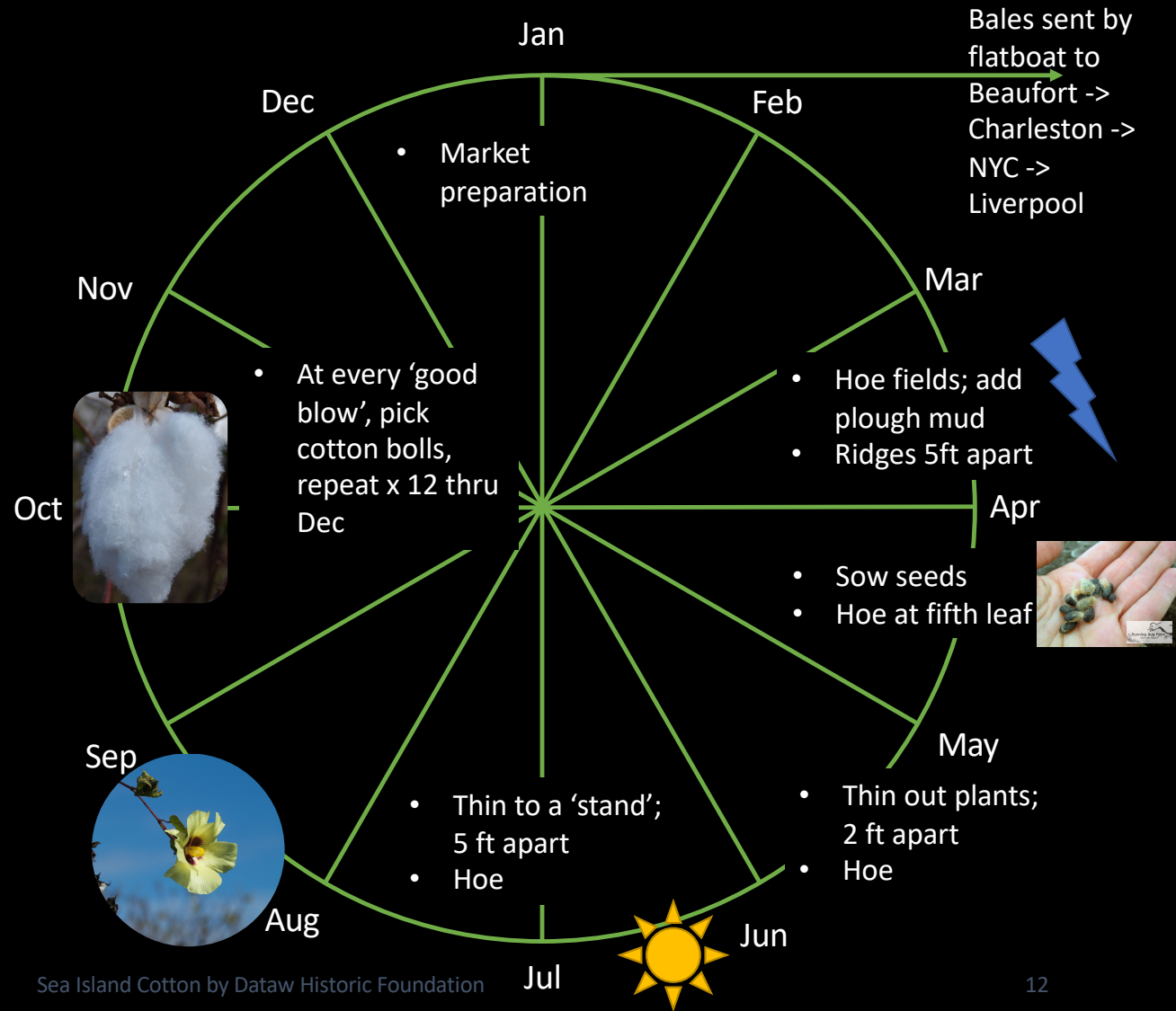
- Perennial by nature but cultivated as an annual
- About 1,700 plants per acre

## Enemies

- Weeds
- Summer rain

## Process

- Never pick cotton when wet
- Single slave generally picks 70 – 80 pounds / day



# Market Preparation: From Boll to Bale

(50-60 days)



# McCarthy Gin



# Textile Industry: From Bale to Cloth

## Ship

- To Charleston -> NYC -> Liverpool, England

## Spin

- Cotton lint spun into strong, fine yarn

## Weave

- Cotton replaced linen as the warp for fine cloth (Britain 1770)

# “Cotton Triangle”

New York City (Port & Finances)

Shipping &  
Finance

Liverpool, Boston (Ports)




Cotton  
Production

Charleston, Mobile, New Orleans

Textile  
Industries

Lancashire, England &  
New England, USA





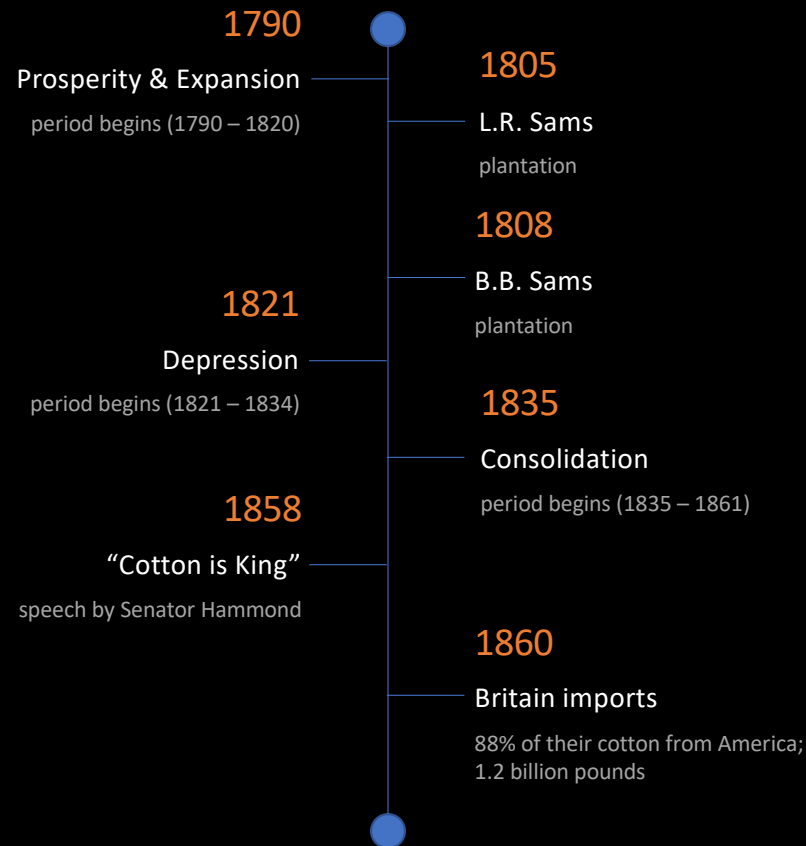
## Power looms in Lancashire, England - 1800s

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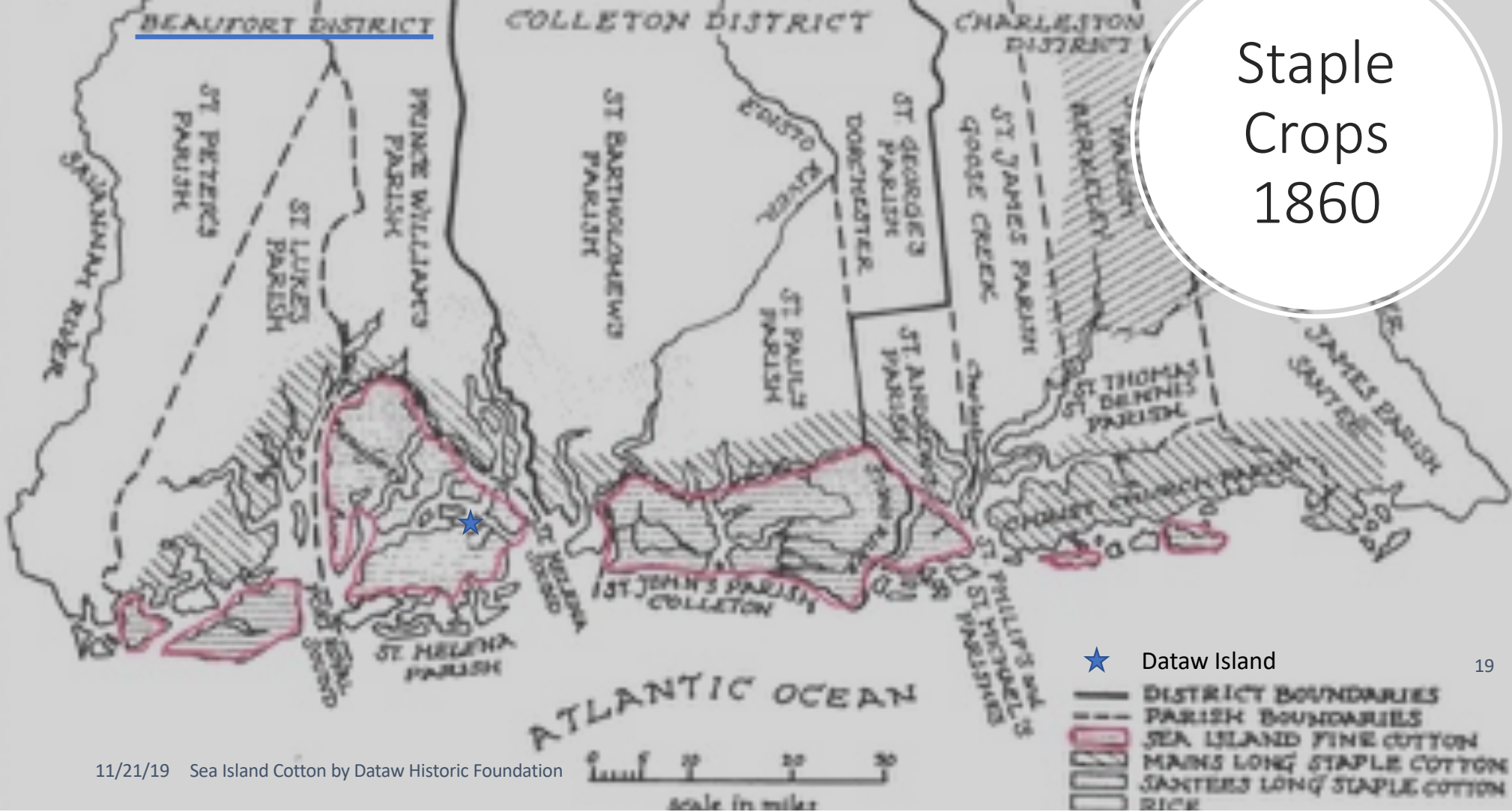
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# Timeline for Sea Island Cotton - Life



# Staple Crops of the Lowcountry Parishes, 1860

Staple Crops 1860



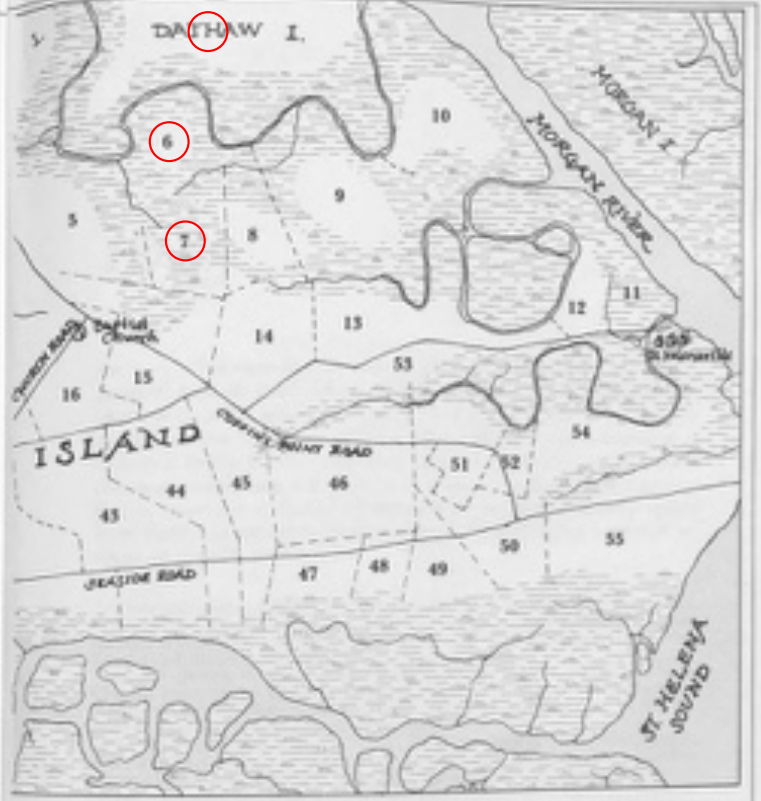
Plantations of St Helena Island circa 1860



Plantations of St. Helena Island (circa 1860)



- 1. Littlewood Point—William A. Chisden (254<sup>o</sup>) 2. Edward M. (Nod) Capers (266) 3. Gabriel Capers (267) 4. The Oaks—J. J. T. Pope (506) 5. Robert Fuller (500) 6. Palawan—Dr. Lewis Reeves Sans (390) 7. Childers—Dr. Lewis Reeves Sans (121) 8. Randall Covert (150) 9. Jenkins Neck (147) 10. Eddings Point—Joseph D. Eddings (604) 11. St. Helensville Pine Lands—Joseph D. Eddings (90) 12. Village Farm—Capt. John Frapp (200) 13. Marion T. Chaplin (315) 14. Feliciana—Daniel Pope (448) 15. Indian Hills—Dr. William Jenkins (600) 16. Corner Farm—Capt. John Frapp (500) 17. The Parsonage—Dr. Lewis Reeves Sans (121) 18. The Ferris Place—W.G.F. Frapp (80) 19. The Wallace Place—Robert G. Norson (873) 20. The Perry Place—Joseph Perry (299) 21. Orange Grove—Edgar W. Frapp (225) 22. The



- Prichard Place—Oliver J. Prichard (732) 23. J.E.L. Frapp (221) 24. W.G.F. Frapp (232) 25. The Scott Place—Dr. William Jenkins (570) 26. Isaac Frapp (300) 27. Limestone Hill—John E. Frapp (150) 28. Bermuda—Edwin Chaplin (n.a.) 29. Riverside—Daniel P. Jenkins (528) 30. The Baker Place (Riverside)—Isabella Baker (328) 31. Ben Chaplin (365) 32. Lapid End (834) 33. Tomber—Thomas B. Coffin (378) 34. Carlew Hill—Paul Chaplin (n.a.) 35. Paul Chaplin (600) 36. Dr. William Jenkins (615) 37. Jane Prichard (340) 38. The Sandford Place—Dr. William Jenkins (600) 39. Frank Prichard (230) 40. Henry McTavous Coffin (1,060) 41. Ann Frapp (260) 42. Seaside—Edgar W. Frapp (940) 43. Frogmore—Thomas A. Frapp (500) 44. Woodstock—Thomas G. White (610) 45. Hope—Alvina Frapp (572) 46. John Frapp's Big House—Capt. John Frapp (990) 47. Mulberry Hill—Capt. John Frapp (500) 48. Cherry Hill—Thomas A. Coffin (300) 49. McTavous Land—Thomas A. Coffin (531) 50. Pine Grove—William Frapp, Sr. (750) 51. Cedar Grove—Thomas B. Frapp (205) 52. Hamilton Frapp (200) 53. Thomas James Frapp (610) 54. Frapp's Point—William Frapp, Sr. (750) 55. Coffin's Point—Thomas A. Coffin (1,438)

\*Acreage in parentheses.  
 Topographical features based on a map of Beaufort District by Robert With, 1825, and U.S. Coast Survey, "Sketch of Sea Coast of North Carolina and Georgia," 1865. Plantation placements based on U.S. Census Tax Commission plans, township maps, and surveyors' notes, 1845-65, and drawings in the papers of Mrs. Robert F. Sans, n.d.



# Datha Island Plantations



## Sams of Beaufort

### Mid 1800's

- 99% of slaveholders owned fewer than 100 slaves

### Sams of Beaufort

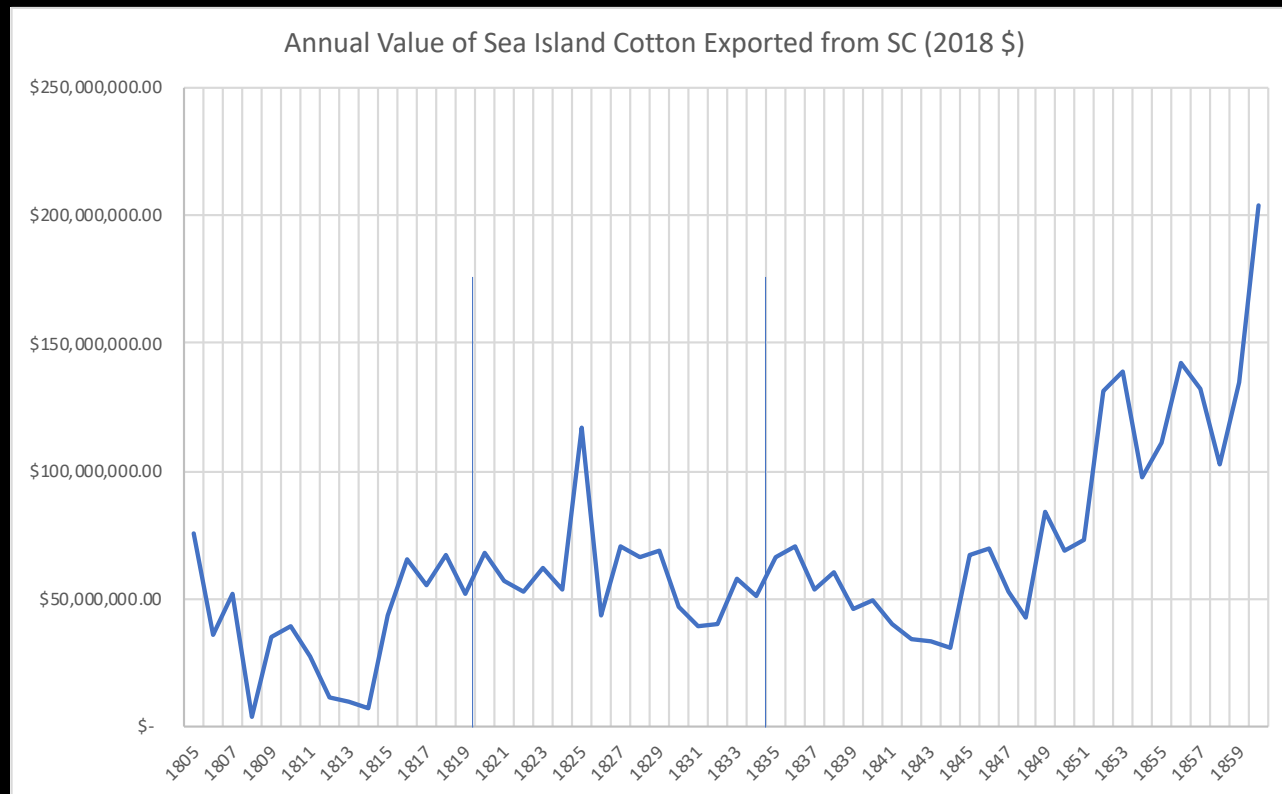
- Top 1%

# Cost Fluctuations of Sea Island Cotton





# Wealth Derived from Sea Island Cotton



# Cotton's Economic Dominance in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

- Late 18<sup>th</sup> century 0%
- By 1860 88%

	British Cotton Imports (lbs)	American Cotton Exports to Britain (lbs)	% of total British Imports
1800	56,010,000	16,180,000	28%
1830	263,961,000	201,947,000	77%
1840	592,488,000	477,521,000	81%
1850	663,577,000	474,705,000	72%
1860	1,390,939,000	1,230,607,000	88%

# Cotton Dominates

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1830 – 1860 saw a huge rise in U.S. cotton  
production

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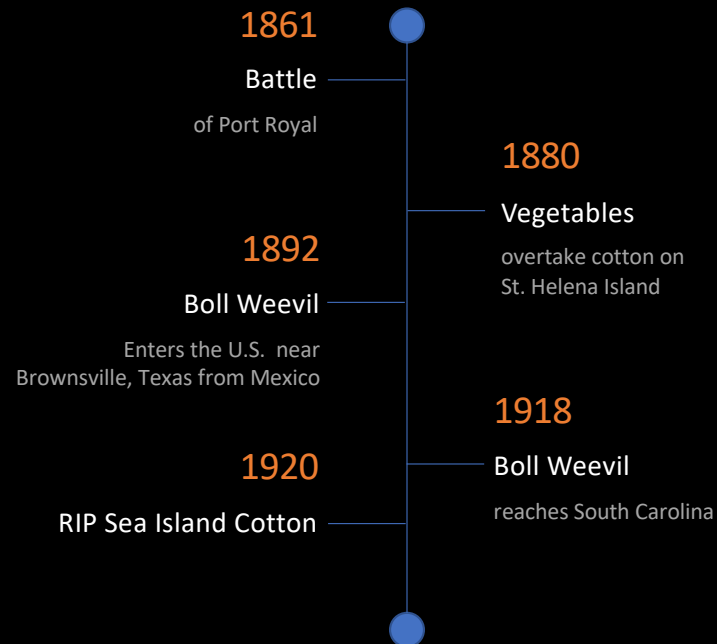
“Cotton is King”



1858 - South Carolina Senator James Henry Hammond (1807–64) taunted northern sympathizers on the US Senate floor saying,

**"You dare not make war on cotton—no power on earth dares make war upon it. Cotton is king."**

# Timeline for Sea Island Cotton - Death



# War Years and Beyond

- 1861
  - Sea island cotton crop confiscated
  - St Helena Island
- 1863
  - Emancipation
- 1880
  - Vegetables
- 1893
  - Sea Islands Hurricane

	1860	1870
Individual farming units	359	2,261
1,000 acres or more	23%	2%
Less than 100 acres	5%	90%

# Cotton Cultivation 19<sup>th</sup> Century



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# Boll Weevil

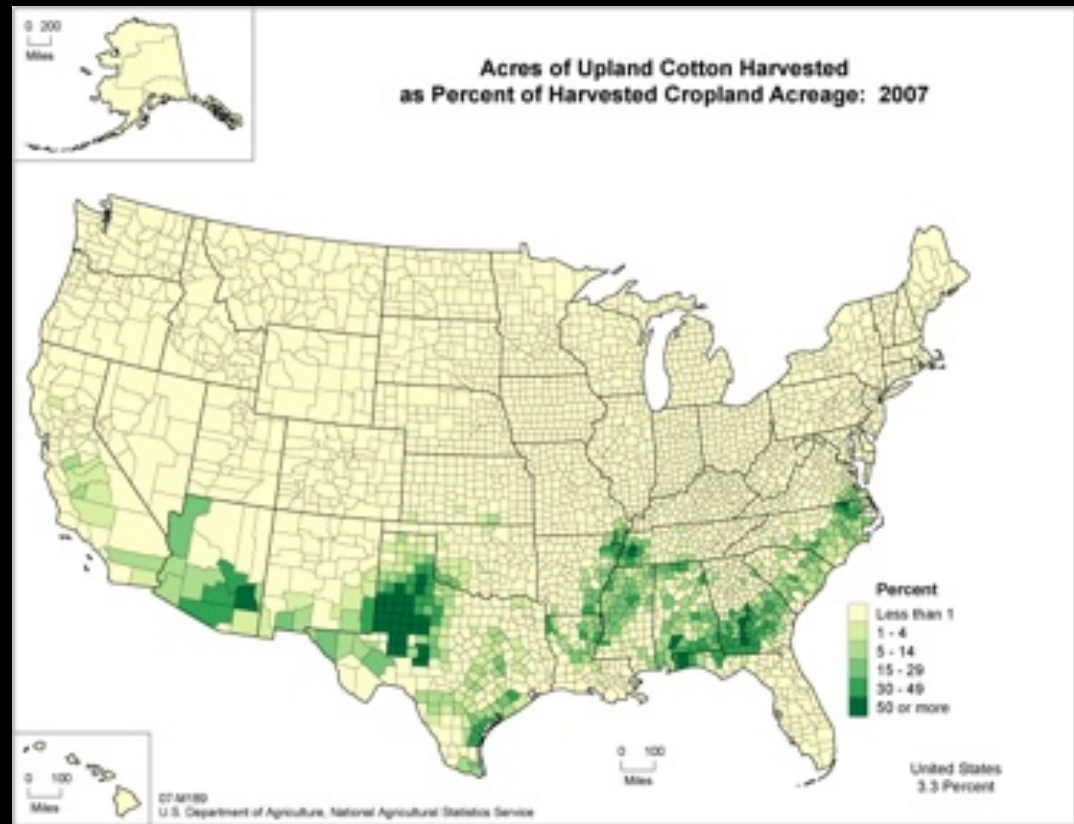
1918 - Arrives in SC

1920 - Last Sea Island cotton crop planted; dies





# Cotton Today



# Summary

Why did we have plantations?

- Headright system + agricultural exports + slave labor

Why did growing cotton require so much labor?

- Large scale farming + preparing product for market

Why was Sea Island cotton so valuable?

- Longest, strongest, finest fiber
- Industrial Revolution in England
- French Revolution

Why did the best cotton in the world grow on the Sea Islands of SC?

- Environment + annual seed selection

Why did people in the South believe 'Cotton is King'?

- The South supplied 88% of England's raw cotton

Why did Sea Island Cotton disappear?

- Civil War + Emancipation + boll weevil

# Sea Island Cotton

“The combination of

- England’s industrial revolution,
- France's artistry,
- the desire for all-cotton cloth,
- and the availability of sea island cotton

formed the triumphant success that fueled the rise of the plantation system of the Carolina sea islands, and clothed the European upper class in finery.”





*The End*