

# Chapter I

## Cotton and other Commodities from the Antebellum South

*Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacturer no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionised industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry; the place of the industrial middle class by industrial millionaires, the leaders of the whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois. (Marx & Engels, 1848)*

When Marx was demonizing capitalism, Britain's chimneys belched black smoke, smog blanketed her gas-lit cities, and the Poor Law Amendment had forced paupers along with their children into the workhouses. With no restraints on pollution and minimal protection for laborers, factories attained exponential productivity. In *The Unbound Prometheus* (1969), the Brit David Landes summarized the "Industrial Revolution" by which he meant the substitution of machines for muscles and brains to better use raw materials. "[This] initiated a cumulative, self-sustaining advance in technology whose repercussions would be felt in all aspects of economic life." The pace of the Industrial Revolution was set by Britain's textile industry and cotton fiber became one of the matrices from which the capitalist mode of production was to materialize. Soon, cotton replaced wool even before steam replaced water-power and the cottage weavers were left behind in the soot. Having replaced sugar as the world's principal import, cotton remained the foremost raw material until coal and iron began to supplant it after 1857.

The early 18th century was a transitional period as the putting-out system of producing cloth was still more prevalent than the mills of the machine-made. The British then produced fustians, mixing linen with cotton or wool, but not pure cotton textiles. Cotton mills were built in Manchester and Glasgow, close to the centers of linen production. Mills also appeared in the East Midlands where lacemaking was prominent. The mills initially spread as manufacturers sought water-power on unclaimed river sites, but by 1800 this diffusion halted as steam-power caused

mill construction to become concentrated in the county of Lancashire, primarily in the parishes of Manchester, Oldham and Bolton (Rose, 2000).

In 1757, the East India Company captured control of Bengal, India's center of textile manufacturing. Until then, tariffs and the outright banning of India's superior cotton products had reasonably protected Britain's wool, silk, and linen industries. Indian predominance in the market for finished cotton textiles abated thereafter as the weavers of Gujarat, Madras, Bengal, and the Punjab could not long compete after tariffs on imported British cloth were discontinued and the markets became flooded with the products of their occupiers (Keynes, 2010).

In 1760, while the Brits were still mainly using wool, the textile manufacturers of England imported about 8,000 bales of raw cotton, mostly from the Ottoman port of Smyrna. The price of cotton imports rose during the 1770s and 1780s and it was only after the slave-based plantations of Dixie began to export in the late 1790s that prices fell. Coincidentally, the production of cloth accelerated after steam engines began to appear in Lancashire's cotton mills in the early 1790's.

Before the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, merchants in Liverpool had established more intimate commercial relations with the American and West Indian colonies than their competitors in Bristol and London. Trading tobacco and sugar in exchange for slaves taken from Guinea, Liverpool would overtake those rivals for maritime command of the Atlantic slave trade by 1744. The first shipments of cotton to Liverpool issued from Jamaica and Barbados in the 1750's.

Liverpool led London and Bristol in shipbuilding and the port was well positioned to become foremost for cotton in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Imports of it surged there by 320% between 1781 and 1791. Thus, after 1795, Liverpool became the central importer for raw cotton, the trade shifting abruptly away from London, Bristol, and Lancaster. That this year also marked the first significant surge in supply from the U.S. was no coincidence (Dumbell, 1923). Bolstering

Liverpool's prominence in the market were their progressively designed wet docks, wharves and warehouses that gave mariners and merchants much quicker turn-around times for unloading and reloading. Another advantage was that Liverpool's ships weren't as harried by French privateers as other British ships on more southerly routes. This favored port capitalized on its close commercial relations abroad with planters and their agents while its proximity to the mills of Lancashire—the nearest only seven miles away—was its most obvious asset (Rawley, 1981).

From 1797 to 1819, British textile manufacturers were still competing against cheap calicoes from India. Parliament legislated protectionist tariffs for domestic production and by 1813 the import duty on Indian cotton goods stood at 85% (Moe, 2007). Advantageous as that should have seemed, that year saw a great many of Britain's 200,000 hand-loom weavers transform into mobs of Luddites attempting to sabotage many of the 5,000,000 machine spindles that threatened their livelihood (Peacock, 2007). By the 1820's, about half of Britain's exports were cotton textiles. Their cloth prices fell thereafter by 85% until 1850 (Ellison, 1886).

In 1800, steam-powered spinning frames became more profuse throughout the moors and floodplains of Lancashire, beginning to usurp the water-powered ones. Nearly 242,000 laborers worked in the mills at this time, operating both types of frames, though most still spun on hand looms. British ingenuity had brought a concatenation of inventions together to produce cloth. Kay's flying shuttle enabled it to be woven faster. Harvgreave's spinning jenny sped up yarn-making by replicating the single action performed by the thumb and finger onto eight spindles. Through improved design they soon incorporated 120 spindles per wheel. Soon afterwards, Arkwright's water-powered spinning frames astronomically improved yarn production both in output of cloth and conservation of raw material. It created a cotton yarn strong enough to supersede the use of linen for the warp thread. Cotton alone provided all of the

thread to weave cloth. All of these concatenated inventions were systematically improved thereafter even as other machines evolved such as the power loom, and the spinning mule.

In pairs, mules worked by having traversing frames set with spindles of one mule facing parallel to the spindles of the next. Crompton's Mule, invented in 1779 but not widespread until the 1820's, was first known as the 'muslin wheel' for its ability to produce the first fine-woven British cloth similar to Indian muslin. Incorporating the working principles of the jenny and the water-frame, mule spinners shared space in factories with power looms driven by line-shafts by the 1830's. Before mid-century, cloth output soared as never before, but this surge necessitated breaking the bottleneck in supply. The one major obstacle to cotton production had been the inability to quickly and cheaply remove seeds from their sticky bolls. Whitney's gin provided the crucial missing link.

For over two centuries, from its first inception by Floridian Spaniards in 1556 and later British experimentation at Jamestown in 1607, raw cotton exports from the North American colonies were almost nil. Cotton was never a monoculture in those days, planters experimented with it sparingly and found that separating the seeds from the sticky boll fibers proved too laborious and costly. Cotton would not become a cash crop in the U.S. until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the meantime, tobacco was king, especially in Maryland and Virginia. Georgia and the Carolinas specialized in rice and indigo. Except for the prized Sea-Island cotton with its fine extra-long staple fibers, introduced to the Carolinas and Georgia in the 1780's from Barbados, the piddling few bales of cotton exported from the U.S. to London and Liverpool before 1793 was comparatively of negligible quality. Before the introduction of Sea Island in the late 1780's, most of the cotton in U.S. bales came from Green and Creole seeds, which produced mediocre fiber on par with that from India. Cultivating Sea Island necessitated technical skill few planters

possessed and geographical limitations of this staple compounded its inabilities in meeting the demand for raw cotton.

The potential for cotton was so little understood that the 1794 draft of Jay's Treaty stipulated that none would be exported from our ports so as to guarantee the British monopoly of the trade:

Provided always, that the said American vessels do carry and land their cargoes in the United States only, it being expressly agreed and declared that, during the continuance of this article, the United States will prohibit and restrain the carrying any molasses, sugar, coffee, cocoa or cotton in American vessels, either from His Majesty's islands or from the United States to any part of the world except the United States...

Former South Carolina governor John Rutledge stridently opposed this and other provisos and the language regarding cotton was stricken out of the text for final ratification (McCowan, 1961). Our young republic's wealthiest planters were inclined to agree, especially those who had eagerly anticipated Whitney's breakthrough. Secretary of State Jefferson wrote excitedly to the young Yale student boarding at the Georgia home of General Nathaniel Green's widow:

As the State of Virginia...carries on household manufactures of cotton to a great extent, as I also do myself, and one of our great embarrassments is the clearing the cotton of the seed, I feel a considerable interest in the success of your invention, for family use. Permit me, therefore, to ask information from you on these points. Has the machine been thoroughly tried in the ginning of cotton, or is it yet but a machine of theory? What quantity of cotton has it cleared on an average of several days, and worked by hand, and by how many hands? What will be the cost of one of them, made to be worked by hand? (Thomas Jefferson to Eli Whitney, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1793)

President George Washington, one of the largest planters in the country, signed Whitney's patent claim in March of 1794. An ingeniously simple invention, perhaps co-created with the lady Green, the gin used wire teeth on a lateral roller mechanism to separate the seeds from the gluey short-staple fibers. Operated by a single slave, the new machine produced what

fifty field hands could achieve in a day with just their fingers. The antebellum dilemma, a maelstrom of cotton, westward expansion, slavery, and abolitionism, was conceived with the gin.

Even before the Revolutionary War ended a decade earlier, many Northerners along with some Southerners came to perceive slavery as a counterproductive anachronism. Yet, the moral imperative to legislate an end to it wavered as Southerners, at the behest of South Carolina, forced their Northern peers to prolong the status quo with regard to chattel slavery. Ratifying the Constitution in 1789 hinged on a compromise that allowed slavery and the importation of slaves to continue for twenty more years. At that time, no one could have predicted the effect that Whitney's gin would have a mere four years later.

The U.S. exported less than a thousand bales to Liverpool in 1793, even as word of Whitney's gin radiated excitedly outward from Georgia. Soon after, Southern planters speculated frantically to grow more cotton. Keenly aware of the demands from Britain's rapidly mechanizing industry, the Sea Island plantations immediately began to produce more. However, bales of Sea Island never exceeded over 50,000 annually and production fell sharply after 1826 when Uplands cotton swiftly began to replace it.

Now patented and widely imitated, the gin enabled three times as many bales to be shipped. Disgruntled, Whitney complained in 1803:

The cotton machine is a thing of unusual value and by pushing hard I hope to realize something for it. The cotton cleaned annually with that machine sells for at least five Millions of Dollars and the annual worth of the invention is equal to at least one fifth of that sum; but so large a proportion of mankind are such Rascals that I shall never be able to realize but a trifling proportion of its value. (Whitney, 1897)

By 1804, the Louisiana Purchase established the Mississippi River as the central artery for American exports and the gin accelerated cotton cultivation in the Deep South well before

Louisiana achieved statehood in 1812. The Mississippi and Alabama territories were both partitioned and accepted into the Union as states by 1819. The annexation of the Florida territories occurred concurrently and by the 1820's Anglos were also moving into Spanish Texas. King Cotton was on the march.

Due to the swift profusion of cotton gins, the sudden boom in supply from Dixie took British merchants by surprise. This sudden and virtually unexpected supply caused a sharp rise in demand from Lancashire textile manufacturers who found new markets for their cheap cloth in other continents despite Napoleon's Continental System—even in India where exports of finished cloth were limited by tariffs.

The "one-field" system so ruinous to the soil was practiced almost without exception by cotton planters, just as their profit-hungry tobacco-growing predecessors had done in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Before the Civil War, a few reformist planters attempted to galvanize the South by sounding dire warnings about the perils of monoculture, scolding them for failing to manure their fields or raise cattle. Soils depleted of nitrogen and bone meal went fallow and forced planters to clear more land (Johnson, 2013). Adhering to outland cultivation using African slaves, few Southern planters were willing to sacrifice speedy profits for long-term agricultural stability.

Though the scientists and manufacturers of the Lunar Society based in Birmingham, England conceived technical improvements in Lancashire mills and increased the demand for cotton, antebellum planters never improved their techniques in producing the raw material. Mule-driven plows and hoes in the hands of slave gangs remained constant until after the Civil War when mechanical reapers for grains and Deere's plows became more widely used. The McCormick Reaper patented in 1834 began the mechanization of farming in the North and John Deere invented the steel plow in 1843, which mechanized grain production. But no such inventions spurred cotton production until a century later when mechanized cotton pickers

became common. Planters of the antebellum South had to rely on more fields and more slaves. In January of 1808, the importation of slaves was prohibited, but by then the uproarious demand for slaves to work cotton effectively silenced arguments for ending slavery.

Another lesser-known catalyst for the demand for slaves also coincided in 1808. In the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, experimenting cotton planters crossed Mexican seeds with other strains to create new hybrids. Fiber samples sent to Liverpool in 1808 were received favorably. Hardier disease-resistant types with larger yields became generally known as Uplands Short Staple, Uplands Middling, and Uplands Long Staple in reference to the length of the fibers (Olmstead & Rhode, 2010). Upland bolls were easier to work in the gins and its fibers became the most popular type grown. Thus, the better cotton escalated the demand for slaves precisely when importing them became illegal. After 1815, Uplands began to displace other types. It was planted throughout the Lower Mississippi Valley in the early 1820's, and in Florida, the Carolinas and Virginia before 1830. Mass cultivation spread across the Mississippi and Tennessee valleys in the early 1830's and bales of cotton moved slowly along rivers and roads, the inland traffic terminating in the central coastal ports of Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and especially New Orleans.

British demand for raw cotton was the prime mover. Despite prohibiting slave importation, the demand for slaves in the American South was catalyzed concurrently by the sudden profusion of cotton gins and the sweeping popularity of Uplands cotton. As the tables below illustrate, the lion's share of Britain's cotton came from Dixie. Between 1811 and 1862, the U.S. supplied almost 70% or 34.5 million bales of Britain's total aggregate of approximately 50 million bales. India contributed about 17% or 8.3 million bales in the same period. Indian Dhollera was deemed inferior to Uplands and the quality and quantity of production in India perennially frustrated British merchants who worried about their reliance on Dixie for most of



their cotton. They lobbied for governmental investment to grow more in India without much success until the Union naval blockade in 1861 caused the Great Cotton Famine in Lancashire. Brazil was Britain's third source of supply from which they imported nearly 9% of their total in those five decades, while Turkey and Egypt provided less than 4%, and the West Indies not even 2%. Britain re-exported significant amounts of cotton in the same period, in all about 6.25 million bales, first to Northern France, the Netherlands, and Germany, and later to Belgium, Austria, Catalonia, and Russia. British capital aided in financing factories nearly everywhere they re-exported cotton to.

From 1811 to 1862, Dixie exported about 53% of all her cotton to Great Britain and also directly exported 15% to France and 11% to Northern Europe. Until 1843 more U.S. cotton was exported directly to mills in continental Europe than was kept at home for New England mills, but domestic manufacturing progressed rapidly thereafter, and mills were built in the South as well. The U.S. consumed about 21% of her own cotton in the half century before the war.

COTTON SUPPLY TO GREAT BRITAIN AND BRITISH RE-EXPORTS IN 500 POUND BALES							
YEAR	WEST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	OTTOMAN EXPORT TO G.B.	BRAZIL EXPORT TO G.B.	EAST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	U.S. EXPORT TO G.B.	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL IMPORT	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL RE-EXPORT
1811	35,915	546	66,605	8,231	72,044	183,200	2,400
1812	30,005	845	47,575	1,257	45,950	126,000	2,800
1813	29,099	775	55,965	583	37,720	102,000	15,000
1814	30,265	1,037	63,391	5,480	20,518	120,800	12,400
1815	26,702	669	47,166	11,581	105,180	191,200	13,600
1816	24,557	651	81,126	15,703	85,026	187,800	14,200

YEAR	WEST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	OTTOMAN EXPORT TO G.B.	BRAZIL EXPORT TO G.B.	EAST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	U.S. EXPORT TO G.B.	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL IMPORT	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL RE-EXPORT
1817	23,808	63	60,924	63,947	106,384	255,000	16,200
1818	25,392	1,429	85,474	130,267	109,187	351,800	30,200
1819	15,825	702	66,219	97,289	108,325	288,200	33,200
1820	14,309	1,252	89,683	28,846	150,593	284,400	12,000
1821	18,115	3,069	63,449	15,770	157,237	258,000	29,200
1822	20,326	1,446	76,632	10,286	176,170	284,400	36,400
1823	15,529	3,160	81,271	21,577	254,326	376,200	18,600
1824	13,586	20,228	76,241	27,053	150,221	287,400	26,400
1825	17,274	59,952	104,729	32,661	228,660	448,000	36,000
1826	10,731	28,096	32,798	38,172	233,553	343,000	49,000
1827	18,779	13,606	72,787	44,685	391,946	542,200	36,200
1828	11,753	19,273	98,074	49,725	260,412	439,600	34,600
1829	11,207	14,695	94,764	47,810	463,075	443,600	60,600
1830	7,033	8,851	114,881	21,011	371,116	522,400	17,000
1831	7,008	23,637	104,339	47,594	377,510	561,000	44,600
1832	5,417	26,275	73,105	69,732	401,153	575,600	36,000
1833	8,924	2,546	106,728	62,109	428,289	608,400	34,800
1834	11,785	4,905	69,857	60,052	494,398	641,200	49,000

YEAR	WEST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	OTTOMAN EXPORT TO G.B.	BRAZIL EXPORT TO G.B.	EAST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	U.S. EXPORT TO G.B.	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL IMPORT	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL RE-EXPORT
1835	15,091	28,943	95,045	78,092	505,238	723,400	65,600
1836	22,918	23,908	101,721	150,133	523,060	821,600	63,400
1837	19,287	27,894	81,201	100,751	586,300	816,400	79,400
1838	20,580	20,790	96,250	75,040	787,360	1,002,000	61,200
1839	25,056	23,316	69,113	92,498	566,892	777,200	77,400
1840	16,279	27,740	62,269	157,972	903,375	1,166,800	77,400
1841	24,017	29,711	68,839	199,728	658,825	979,800	75,400
1842	13,113	14,857	66,022	193,669	768,157	1,057,000	90,600
1843	13,523	37,283	75,407	139,124	1,067,155	1,334,000	79,200
1844	13,405	51,092	86,481	182,002	955,125	1,288,800	94,400
1845	6,794	63,304	85,074	119,737	1,157,969	1,432,600	85,800
1846	10,036	46,783	65,002	73,108	765,129	961,000	131,000
1847	3,695	15,608	83,091	167,991	659,071	929,800	150,000
1848	6,241	22,910	79,158	179,725	1,086,566	1,372,800	148,000
1849	7,207	57,499	129,729	144,302	1,170,338	1,508,600	198,000
1850	4,469	62,485	134,691	241,394	928,413	1,371,200	204,800
1851	3,910	53,785	86,743	262,382	1,112,173	1,520,200	224,000
1852	9,878	148,881	113,053	173,656	1,402,654	1,904,400	223,800

YEAR	WEST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	OTTOMAN EXPORT TO G.B.	BRAZIL EXPORT TO G.B.	EAST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	U.S. EXPORT TO G.B.	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL IMPORT	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL RE-EXPORT
1853	7,244	83,898	105,390	386,298	1,219,472	1,804,800	297,000
1854	8,486	66,096	87,230	251,573	1,359,293	1,773,200	246,600
1855	7,049	90,922	98,600	313,711	1,285,891	1,802,200	248,600
1856	9,439	94,309	100,685	383,646	1,455,872	2,042,000	284,800
1857	9,130	61,327	136,471	549,844	1,197,456	1,952,200	268,200
1858	5,460	88,704	89,208	303,240	1,565,172	2,050,000	283,600
1859	5,726	85,378	105,166	430,009	1,756,664	2,381,800	348,000
1860	8,310	92,856	87,598	477,594	2,188,434	2,871,600	491,600
1861	8,051	81,174	83,000	818,878	1,528,528	2,522,800	551,400
1862	15,112	108,229	98,762	758,250	52,963	1,066,200	433,800
TOTAL	752,850	1,847,390	4,404,782	8,315,768	34,442,538	49,655,800	6,243,400
	WEST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	OTTOMAN EXPORT TO G.B.	BRAZIL EXPORT TO G.B.	EAST INDIES EXPORT TO G.B.	U.S. EXPORT TO G.B.	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL IMPORT	GREAT BRITAIN TOTAL RE-EXPORT

Bale weights were standardized after the Civil War, thus bale weight averages varied annually until then. For clear and simple analysis, bale weights have been converted to 500 lb. Yearly net weight bale amounts are derived from the following sources:

Watkins, James L. (1895) *Production and Price of Cotton for One Hundred Years*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Statistics, Bulletin #9. Washington: Government Printing Office, pp. 6-14

Ellison, Thomas. (1886) *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., pp. 356-358

U.S. COTTON EXPORTS AND DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION IN 500 POUND BALES					
YEAR	U.S. CROP	EXPORT TO GREAT BRITAIN	EXPORT TO FRANCE	EXPORT TO NORTHERN EUROPE	DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION
1791	4,000	378	*	*	*
1792	6,000	277	*	*	*
1793	10,000	975	*	*	*
1794	16,000	3,203	*	*	*
1795	16,000	12,522	*	*	*
1796	20,000	12,213	*	*	*
1797	22,000	7,577	*	*	*
1798	30,000	18,720	*	*	*
1799	40,000	19,064	*	*	*
1800	70,000	20,250	*	*	*
1801	96,000	35,548	*	*	16,000
1802	110,000	46,752	*	*	18,000
1803	120,000	64,110	*	*	*
1804	130,000	59,558	*	*	*
1805	140,002	65,230	*	*	22,000
1806	160,000	53,105	*	*	*
1807	160,000	79,287	*	*	*
1808	150,000	13,182	*	*	*
1809	164,000	63,227	*	*	*
1810	170,000	158,544	*	*	32,000

YEAR	U.S. CROP	EXPORT TO GREAT BRITAIN	EXPORT TO FRANCE	EXPORT TO NORTHERN EUROPE	DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION
1811	160,000	72,044	*	*	34,000
1812	150,000	45,950	*	*	*
1813	150,000	37,720	*	*	*
1814	140,000	20,518	*	*	*
1815	200,000	105,180	*	*	49,500
1816	248,000	85,026	*	*	*
1817	260,000	106,384	*	*	*
1818	250,000	109,187	*	*	*
1819	334,000	108,325	*	*	*
1820	320,000	150,593	*	*	*
1821	360,000	157,237	*	*	*
1822	420,000	176,170	*	*	*
1823	370,000	254,326	*	*	*
1824	430,000	150,221	*	*	*
1825	510,000	228,660	*	*	*
1826	700,920	233,553	*	*	*
1827	633,720	391,946	126,361	39,766	98,979
1828	482,797	260,412	118,815	21,390	80,797
1829	762,800	463,075	123,857	52,942	81,058
1830	662,301	371,116	160,633	33,769	85,775
1831	708,493	377,510	101,623	21,629	124,221

YEAR	U.S. CROP	EXPORT TO GREAT BRITAIN	EXPORT TO FRANCE	EXPORT TO NORTHERN EUROPE	DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION
1832	714,933	401,153	165,767	37,097	125,136
1833	749,307	428,289	166,014	28,607	136,088
1834	875,116	494,398	173,139	52,845	142,596
1835	920,677	505,238	201,976	44,609	159,196
1836	1,015,101	523,060	212,950	74,391	176,603
1837	1,079,339	586,300	208,578	50,821	168,685
1838	1,365,535	787,360	257,184	83,815	186,516
1839	1,044,889	566,892	193,794	31,526	211,982
1840	1,694,356	903,375	357,972	166,044	226,118
1841	1,288,344	658,825	279,021	95,863	234,263
1842	1,336,758	768,157	318,503	121,198	212,673
1843	1,945,919	1,067,155	276,911	178,988	265,956
1844	1,673,057	955,125	226,148	129,256	285,722
1845	1,987,437	1,157,969	287,486	254,975	322,870
1846	1,726,641	765,129	287,762	181,114	347,377
1847	1,533,197	659,071	193,189	150,199	368,936
1848	2,034,781	1,086,566	223,337	227,929	513,781
1849	2,499,970	1,170,338	294,607	290,438	560,247
1850	2,002,330	928,413	231,701	169,437	526,381
1851	2,042,096	1,112,173	241,086	241,168	404,031
1852	2,676,121	1,402,654	337,100	316,592	590,300

YEAR	U.S. CROP	EXPORT TO GREAT BRITAIN	EXPORT TO FRANCE	EXPORT TO NORTHERN EUROPE	DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION
1853	2,992,603	1,219,472	341,382	326,085	704,063
1854	2,644,481	1,359,293	299,246	306,106	634,023
1855	2,588,926	1,285,891	327,945	254,690	613,170
1856	3,070,667	1,455,872	384,509	502,867	653,301
1857	2,747,238	1,197,456	330,686	377,504	728,103
1858	2,879,488	1,565,172	307,202	360,219	526,477
1859	3,592,909	1,756,664	360,557	507,166	829,320
1860	4,482,111	2,188,434	471,670	471,138	901,756
1861	3,672,393	1,528,528	462,450	342,674	804,928
1862	4,293,000	52,963	126,361	39,766	352,980
* TOTAL SINCE 1827	60,975,927	32,348,481	9,051,161	6,544,857	13,031,428
TOTAL SINCE 1791	75,056,753	35,176,260	*	*	*
YEAR	U.S. CROP	EXPORT TO GREAT BRITAIN	EXPORT TO FRANCE	EXPORT TO NORTHERN EUROPE	DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION

\* Reliable statistics before 1827 for U.S. exports to France, Northern Europe, and for U.S. consumption are not extant.

Bale weights were standardized after the Civil War, thus bale weight averages varied annually until then. For clear and simple analysis, bale weights have been converted to 500 lb. Yearly net weight bale amounts are derived from the following sources:

Watkins, James L. (1895) Production and Price of Cotton for One Hundred Years. *U.S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Statistics, Bulletin #9*. Washington: Government Printing Office, pp. 6-14

Ellison, Thomas. (1886) *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., pp. 356-358



After gins proliferated outward from Georgia, the bounty of the South's "white gold" was finally realized. Planters transacted their produce through commission merchants in the major ports. Many planters received word of their cotton by written reports from their factors. These cotton factors in turn negotiated with British or New England shippers for the cargo's journey abroad, mainly to Liverpool, but also to other British, European, and American ports. Profits for the factors depended on maximizing volume sales rather than maximizing value of any individual sale.

At Liverpool, the cotton was unloaded onto the Merseyside docks and then held by merchants or brokers in warehouses until the bales were purchased and sent to the mills. These stacked bales often rode flat barges in canals. Offloaded and transported by wagon toward the ground floors of Lancashire mills, the burlap was then unbanded, the fiber pulled out in small bunches and laid out flat in piled layers that were eventually beaten loose of debris and readied to be spun into yarn.

British and other European demand caused King Cotton's meteoric rise in U.S. economic life during the 1820's. American textiles, while not completely insignificant, were wholly dwarfed by Britain. Without tariffs enacted by Yankee governments—tactics used by Parliament against India's cloth purveyors—the New England mills might have never flourished. By 1860, the value of American cotton textiles amounted to about \$5,000,000 while the British output was valued at \$180,000,000. Lancashire could boast over 2,650 cotton factories, many mammoth, employing about 446,000 hands while the U.S. had 1,091 factories, mostly puny, employing 122,028 (Harley, 1992). U.S. mills worked about 5.2 million spindles and possessed 126,000 power looms while the Brits worked over 30 million spindles and utilized 400,000 power looms (Rose, 2000). From 1800 to 1860, British demand for cotton rose an astounding 1000%.

Technologically speaking, antebellum American mills, not as sophisticated as those in Lancashire, were largely incapable of producing truly fine cotton cloth. Despite the innovative integrated factories at Lowell and Waltham, their workers, not generally skilled machinists, produced low-quality coarse fabrics woven with primitive power looms or even by hand. The heavy, coarse American cloth came to be known as the Rhode Island type. In contrast, the British with highly skilled workers using mules and advanced power looms, spun fine yarn and wove it with flying shuttles. American mills were always fifteen years behind the British in acquiring and implementing the latest machines.

The British demand for Southern cotton caused the incredible influx of slaves into Dixie before the war and not so much the industrial demands of the new Yankee mills. If cotton had been supplied merely for domestic consumption, the demand for slaves in the South would have been minimal if not non-existent. After Whitney's gin made cotton cheap and available to the working and middle classes of the world, the profits from growing it motivated the westward migration in the U.S., which necessitated removing the Indians. Thus, by 1808, when importing slaves to the U.S. was prohibited, the demand for Africans soared, and forcibly removing Native American tribes to open land for cotton culture became a federal imperative.

U.S. COTTON PRODUCTION and EXPORTS TO BRITAIN in 500 POUND BALES						PRICES		
YEAR	PRODUCTION	TOTAL EXPORTS	EXPORTS TO GREAT BRITAIN	% of U.S. CROP TO G.B.	% of ALL G.B. EXPORTS FROM U.S.	NEW ORLEANS	N.Y.	LIVERPOOL
1791	4,000	400	378			-	26	13
1792	6,000	286	277			-	29	20
1793	10,000	1,000	975			-	32	13
1794	16,000	3,333	3,203			-	33	12
1795	16,000	12,520	12,522			-	36	15
1796	20,000	12,213	12,213			-	36.5	12
1797	22,000	7,577	7,577			-	34.5	12
1798	30,000	18,720	18,720			-	39	22
1799	40,000	19,064	19,064			-	44	17
1800	70,000	35,580	20,250	29%	57%	-	24	16
1801	96,000	41,822	35,548	37%	85%	-	44	18
1802	110,000	55,002	46,752	43%	85%	14.7	19	16
1803	120,000	75,424	64,110	53%	85%	15.0	19	12.5
1804	130,000	70,068	59,558	46%	85%	19.6	20	14
1805	140,002	76,742	65,230	47%	85%	23.3	23	16.5
1806	160,000	71,314	53,105	33%	74%	21.8	22	18.25
1807	160,000	127,883	79,287	50%	62%	16.4	21.5	14.5
1808	150,000	21,261	13,182	9%	62%	13.6	19	22
1809	164,000	101,980	63,227	39%	62%	13.6	16	20
1810	170,000	186,523*	158,544	68%	62%	14.7	16	15.5
1811	160,000	124,116	72,044	45%	58%	08.9	15.5	12.5
1812	150,000	57,775	45,950	31%	80%	...	10.5	16.75
1813	150,000	38,220	37,720	25%	99%	15.5	12.5	23
1814	140,000	35,458	20,518	15%	58%	16.9	15	29.5
1815	200,000	165,998	105,180	53%	63%	27.3	21	20.75
1816	248,000	163,894	85,026	34%	52%	25.4	29.5	18.25
1817	260,000	170,084	106,384	41%	63%	29.8	26.5	20.12
1818	250,000	184,942	109,187	44%	59%	21.5	24	20

1819	334,000	175,994	108,325	32%	62%	14.3	24	13.5
1820	320,000	255,720	150,593	47%	59%	15.2	17	11.5
1821	360,000	249,787	157,237	44%	63%	17.4	14.3	9.5
1822	420,000	289,350	176,170	42%	61%	11.5	14.3	8.25
1823	370,000	347,446	254,326	69%	73%	14.5	11.4	8.25
1824	430,000	284,739	150,221	35%	53%	17.9	14.7	8.5
1825	510,000	352,900	228,660	45%	65%	11.9	18.5	11.62
1826	700,920	409,071	233,553	33%	57%	09.3	12.1	6.75
1827	633,720	565,348	391,946	62%	69%	09.7	9.2	6.5
1828	482,797	402,000	260,412	54%	65%	09.8	10.3	6.37
1829	762,800	504,680	463,075	61%	92%	08.9	9.8	5.75
1830	662,301	568,842	371,116	56%	65%	08.4	10	6.87
1831	708,493	527,186	377,510	53%	72%	09	9.7	7.75
1832	714,933	642,240	401,153	56%	62%	10	9.3	6.62
1833	749,307	606,900	428,289	57%	71%	11.2	12.3	8.5
1834	875,116	746,328	494,398	56%	66%	15.5	12.9	8.62
1835	920,677	750,882	505,238	55%	67%	15.2	17.4	10.25
YEAR	PRODUCTI ON	TOTAL EXPORTS	EXPORTS TO GREAT BRITAIN	% of U.S. CROP TO G.B.	% of ALL G.B. EXPORTS FROM U.S.	NEW ORLE ANS	N.Y .	LIVERP OOL
1836	1,015,101	832,536	523,060	52%	63%	13.3	16.5	9.87
1837	1,079,339	886,102	586,300	54%	66%	09	13.2	7
1838	1,365,535	1,193,850	787,360	58%	66%	12.4	10.1	7
1839	1,044,889	824,832	566,892	54%	69%	07.9	13.3	7.87
1840	1,694,356	1,437,016	903,375	53%	63%	09.1	8.92	6

1841	1,288,344	1,035,038	658,825	51%	64%	07.8	9.5 0	6.25
1842	1,336,758	1,163,607	768,157	57%	66%	05.7	7.8	5.37
1843	1,945,919	1,644,180	1,067,155	55%	65%	07.5	7.2	4.62
1844	1,673,057	1,342,708	955,125	57%	71%	05.5	7.7	4.87
1845	1,987,437	1,729,471	1,157,969	58%	67%	06.8	5.6	4.12
1846	1,726,641	1,370,027	765,129	44%	56%	09.9	7.8	4.87
1847	1,533,197	1,069,914	659,071	43%	62%	07	11. 2	6.12
1848	2,034,781	1,549,572	1,086,566	53%	70%	05.8	08	4.12
1849	2,499,970	1,942,816	1,170,338	47%	60%	10.8	7.5	5.12
1850	2,002,330	1,364,392	928,413	46%	68%	11.7	12. 3	7
1851	2,042,096	1,654,606	1,112,173	54%	67%	07.4	12. 1	5.5
1852	2,676,121	2,091,760	1,402,654	52%	67%	09.1	9.5	5.31
1853	2,992,603	2,214,878	1,219,472	41%	55%	08.8	11	5.75
1854	2,644,481	1,994,467	1,359,293	51%	68%	08.4	10. 9	5.37
1855	2,588,926	1,947,973	1,285,891	50%	66%	09.1	10. 3	5.62
1856	3,070,667	2,481,869	1,455,872	47%	59%	12.4	10. 3	5.31
1857	2,747,238	2,000,359	1,197,456	44%	60%	11.2	13. 5	7.75
1858	2,879,488	2,289,962	1,565,172	54%	68%	11.5	12. 2	6.87
1859	3,592,909	2,701,134	1,756,664	49%	65%	10.8	12	6.75
1860	4,482,111	3,479,788	2,188,434	49%	63%	11.1	11	6.25
1861	3,672,393	2,983,700	1,528,528	42%	51%		13	8.56
1862	4,293,000	615,269	52,963	1%	9%			
TOTAL BALES & %'s 1791- 1862	45,752,311 PRODUCTI ON	32,382,459 EXPORTS	19,968,96 0 EXPORTS TO GREAT BRITAIN	46% U.S. CROP TO G.B.	66% COTTON EXPORTS TO G.B..	13¢ NEW ORLE ANS	17¢ N.Y .	11.2 (d) LIVERP OOL

Currency rates between the U.S. dollar and British pound hovered between \$5.00 and \$4.50 to 1 pound, therefore the pence was worth roughly twice a penny from 1791 to 1862. Geopolitical ramifications notwithstanding, prices for short-staple cotton from the U.S. were generally lowest in New Orleans, higher in New York, and highest in Liverpool.

Bale weights were standardized after the Civil War, thus annual bale averages varied until then. For clear and simple analysis, bale weights have been converted to 500 lb. Yearly net weight bale amounts are derived from the following sources:

Watkins, James L. (1895) *Production and Price of Cotton for One Hundred Years*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Statistics, Bulletin #9. Washington: Government Printing Office, pp. 6-14

Ellison, Thomas. (1886) *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., pp. 356-358

In December of 1807, less than a month before the U.S. outlawed importation, Jefferson enacted his Embargo in protest of impressment of American sailors by the British and French navies. That year saw about half of the American cotton crop, almost 80,000 bales, exported to England. As the Embargo wore on, however, contemporaries expressed anger and incredulity—especially New England shipping interests— at Jefferson's strangulation of the economic lifeblood of the country. At this time, cotton accounted for almost 65% of the total value of U.S. exports. Under the Embargo, exports declined almost 80%, while imports suffered a loss of about 60%. Regardless, some Southern cotton was smuggled to England in 1808, less than 15% of the entire crop. The Embargo lasted until March of 1809. During those fourteen months, the Jefferson Administration received numerous and widespread reports of goods smuggled to Europe through Canada and the Caribbean (Frankel, 1982). Smuggling enterprises were formed during the Embargo and were further motivated by Madison's Non-Intercourse Act (1810), his Non-Importation Act (1811), and the ensuing War of 1812. American privateers captured 1,345 British ships during the war, while the U.S. Navy netted only 245. For almost a decade, the high seas were a veritable free-for-all for Americans, where daring smugglers refined and perfected their methods, widened their contacts and established their bases. By 1820, when smuggling slaves became a capital crime, there was little fear of official reprisal for transgressing the law because traffickers' techniques for evading capture were by then routine. Even when they were apprehended, sympathetic courts usually dismissed their cases or slapped them on the wrist. Only one captain was ever hung for the crime and then forty years after the law had been on the books.

The lifting of Jeffersonian embargoes saw sales of stockpiled surplus cotton: 111% of the crop was exported in 1810. In the New York market, cotton prices fell annually from 22.5¢ a pound in 1806 to 10.5¢ in 1812. Conversely, Liverpool prices leapt from 14.5 shillings in 1807 to 22 shillings the next year, falling to 12.5 by 1811. Sporadic sales of cotton to England from 1807 until the Treaty of Ghent in 1815, nonetheless inspired still more American investment in slaves to grow cotton. By 1821, cotton had become the leading U.S. export, winning out over both tobacco and wheat.

This traffic, mostly carried on flatboats, keelboats and barges was sluggish and expensive although a handful of steamboats had begun service in the Mississippi Delta and the tributaries of the Yazoo River. Paddle steamers numbered fewer than 20 in 1815 but carrying cotton quickly became lucrative and there were over 200 steamboats on the Lower Mississippi by 1820. (Rothman. *Slave Country*, 2005)

Farmers and planters, gentry and yeomen alike, turned to planting Uplands, abandoning even corn, wheat, or tobacco (Olmstead & Rhode, 2010). The larger planters outsourced their need for other crops, concentrating solely on cotton. From 1833 to 1842, planters bought most of the 19,000,000 acres sold across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas and Florida, investing \$ 80,000,000 in the new banks of those states. This heart of Dixie went on to produce nearly 10,000,000 bales in that time, nearly 3/5ths of the total U.S. crop. Consequently, slavery in those states rose almost 90% in the same period (Gray, 1933).

When the cotton gin first came on the scene, the federal government attempted to transform Indian tribes into planters by providing the machines for them. However, intertribal jealousies coupled with the impatient avarice of white planters and settlers quickly convinced the government to devise ways of removing the tribes en masse so that the way could be cleared

for cotton production in the Mississippi Territory. Andrew Jackson's ironclad determination to remove them gave white planters more than 100,000,000 acres with which to cultivate.

The most debilitating tactic first employed by the government was to speed up the decline in the deerskin trade integral to many tribal communities at the time. Already in economic trouble because of declining prices for pelts in Europe, not to mention the scarcity of animals after a century of indiscriminate hunting, the Chickasaws, Creeks, Choctaws and Cherokees were in dire straits long before Jackson forced them west in the 1830's. In the burgeoning cotton boom, Thomas Jefferson sought land for planters between the Mississippi and Alabama rivers. In 1802, he schemed to displace them by usury:

[We] establish among them a factory or factories for furnishing them with all the necessaries and comforts they may wish (spirituous liquors excepted), encouraging these and especially their leading men, to run in debt for these beyond their individual means of paying; and whenever in that situation, they will always cede lands to rid themselves of debt. (Usner, 1985)

Trading companies that once happily transacted with the tribes began to shift their business toward buying and exporting cotton. The issue of Indian debt was vigorously pursued thereafter. To collect, traders colluded with speculators, merchants and federal agents familiar with Indian commerce to manipulate the tribes into ceding their lands in lieu of payment. By 1822, the Choctaws alone were bilked out of more than 13,000,000 acres in this manner.

Jackson's Indian Removal later vacated them from the upper valleys of the Pearl River in 1830; Chickasaws left the northern Mississippi Delta in 1832; Creeks left Alabama the same year; and finally the Cherokee's sad exodus in 1835 opened a large portion of the Tennessee River Valley.

During the Removals, land speculators went wild but future deeds were often contingent on the exit of the natives who stalled as long as they could in many cases. Frenzied speculation ensued in the boom years of 1831 through 1835. Land Offices were overwhelmed, and distressed



Surveyor Generals tried to deal with thousands of square miles of unprocessed land claims. Clearing the way for well-to-do planters to buy the land, “pre-emption” laws were passed that forced squatters to pay up their claims within a year or the land was foreclosed and re-sold. Speculators gobbled up these pre-emption claims as many squatters could not afford to stay on the land they had already in some cases improved. However, many of these quick sales were transacted with banknotes instead of hard cash. This currency traded anywhere between 1 and 10 % interest based on the reputation of the bank. In early 1836 the Whigs and Democrats finally agreed to disburse federal tax revenue surplus from land purchases to all the states in the form of specie. Between September 1836 and May 1837 specie reserves in New York drained from 7.2 million to 1.5 million (Johnson, 2013). Jackson’s insistence on specie caused consternation as to the value of all the banknotes previously transacted. In response, the Bank of England cautiously increased the discount rate for transactions conducted with American scrip because of its unstable value. Even so, the continual progress of technological innovation in textile manufacturing and distribution, spurred more demand for raw cotton, even as prices for cloth steadily fell. Thus, the Cotton Kingdom expanded despite the bursting economic bubble. Indians and poor whites were cast out or thrust aside, the means of their eviction as worthless as the paper it was printed on. Fluctuating and unpredictable cotton harvests exacerbated the situation. Raw cotton prices fell. Planters, factors, and traders went immediately broke, their ventures busted, companies divested, estates foreclosed. Today, our history textbooks for students usually blame the Panic of 1837 on general market uncertainties caused by Jackson's war against Nicholas Biddle, head of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bank of the United States, but the reality was that it tied directly to cotton, slaves, and Indian Removal.

In the 1840's, cotton created extraordinary profits on both sides of the Atlantic even while complications arose. British financiers, merchants, and industrialists chafed at their reliance on

America as virtually their only supplier of raw cotton. Investors were perennially risking their money blindly, never knowing whether the crops across the pond would be blighted by parasites, scorched by heat-waves, or washed out by downpours. The Panic of 1837 motivated the Brits to seek alternative sources but they deemed Indian cotton inferior to American. From 1840 to 1845, over 4,000,000 bales of cotton from Dixie crammed Liverpool harbors and warehouses even though the Liverpool/Manchester railway was in constant use, having been built expressly for carrying cotton from port to the mills. In fact, by 1845, Brits had stocked enough cotton to supply nine months of consumption. The rate of American production was beginning to outpace British demand. As a result, prices dropped to their absolute historical nadir in 1845, 5.63 cents and 4 pence a pound. Also contributing to lower prices was the expansion of mills in continental Europe, due in part to the British Parliamentary repeal of laws prohibiting the exportation of mill machinery in 1843.

Incidentally, the number of slaves recorded as being landed in Cuba also fell to an all-time low in 1845, mirroring the low point of cotton prices. Cuba benefited just as much from the re-export of slaves as Great Britain did from re-exporting cotton. Ostensibly, sugar production in Cuba called for a constant influx of slaves but rapid technological advances in sugar production throughout the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ultimately reduced the number of hands needed. Many Africans shipped to Cuba were smuggled into the U.S. . The connection between cotton prices and slave demographics in Cuba will be made less tenuous in Chapter III.

Other complications affected the cotton trade throughout the antebellum period, especially during the 1840's, and these were the matters of U.S. tariffs and British import duties. Protectionist tariffs favoring Yankee manufacturers were first enacted at the end of James Madison's second administration and carried through Andrew Jackson's first term. The

Nullification Crisis of 1832-1833 notwithstanding, the tariff was moderately liberalized thereafter until the end of Van Buren's presidency.

The Black Tariff of 1842, reluctantly signed into law by John Tyler, outraged his fellow Southerners as duty rates on British cotton clothing were raised to 95%, forcing the populace to purchase New England's inferior products while jeopardizing the value of Southern cotton exports to Britain. Southerners also rightly feared the consolidation of Yankee abolitionist political power derived from the tariff's clear favoritism of Northern manufacturing. Other items listed under the tariff were raised even higher than cotton and international trade fell drastically. President Polk vowed to abolish the hated Black Tariff and did so with the passage of the Walker Tariff in July of 1846, which cut the duty rate on cotton down to 25% *ad valorem*, assuaging both planters and consumers of British cloth products.

The successful enactment of the Walker Tariff was necessarily presaged by another progressive free trade legislative measure abroad. Parliament had finally repealed the Corn Laws—equally hated by Britain's working class—just a month earlier. Indeed, Polk's election was strongly supported by Manchester merchants who, in the interest of competing with the New England mills in supplying clothing for slaves, contributed \$100,000 to his campaign. Repealing this long-standing stricture all but erased British duties on imports of foreign grain. Grain farmers in the western states as well as an influential coterie of railroad interests both allied with Southern planters in realizing the Walker Tariff and the repeal of the Corn Laws in Britain. Free trade thereafter greatly encouraged markets as importation of British products to the U.S. tripled from 1846 to 1857 (James & Lake, 1989). U.S. tariff revenues stood at \$64,000,000 in 1857, when yet another even more liberal tariff leveraging all duties at 17% was approved by the Buchanan administration. Despite the financial panic that occurred later that

year—the third economic disaster since 1819—these incredibly low duty rates lasted until Lincoln was elected.

The other commodity essential to southern culture was dispatched primarily from West Africa and then onto the American mainland via the Gulf of Mexico. Thousands of slaves were smuggled in every year from 1808 to 1861, mostly from Spanish Cuba to labor on plantations spreading across Dixie. The greatest concentration worked the largest cotton plantations that ranged across the alluvial bottomlands of Mississippi and Louisiana. The slave traffic to the Deep South, legal or otherwise, was continued in perpetuity not only because new plantations created the demand, but also to replace those slaves who had perished from cholera, malaria and yellow fever in the humid mosquito-infested watersheds. The annexation of Texas in 1845 added to the swelling African population, though slaves had been brought up the Sabine and Brazos rivers from the Gulf of Mexico for half a century previous. In Texas, Anglo planters brought in slaves even though Mexican law had prohibited slavery in 1829. That dilemma resulted in the Texas Revolution, at heart a war fought for the right to own slaves. Indeed, after Sam Houston's army caught Santa Anna's taking a siesta at San Jacinto, forcing that would-be Mexican Napoleon to surrender and sign the Treaty of Velasco in April of 1836, one of the first actions of the new Republic's legislature was to force all free blacks out of the territory. Section 9 of the General Provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Texas read:

All persons of color who were slaves for life previous to their emigration to Texas, and who are now held in bondage, shall remain in the like state of servitude, provide the said slave shall be the bona fide property of the person so holding said slave as aforesaid. Congress shall pass no laws to prohibit emigrants from the United States of America from bringing their slaves into the Republic with them, and holding them by the same tenure by which such slaves were held in the United States; nor shall Congress have power to emancipate slaves; nor shall any slave-holder be allowed to emancipate his or her slave or slaves, without the consent of Congress, unless he or she shall send his or her slave or slaves without the limits of the Republic. No free person of African descent, either in whole or in part, shall be permitted to reside permanently in the Republic, without the consent of Congress, and the importation or admission

of Africans or negroes into this Republic, excepting from the United States of America, is forever prohibited, and declared to be piracy. (1836)

Despite the seemingly stringent command regarding importation, the Lone Star Republic brought in slaves illegally mostly through the Brazos and Colorado rivers but also from across the Rio Grande and up the Sabine River bordering Louisiana.

During the 1840's, when overstocked cotton in British warehouses caused prices to fall, prices for African slaves in New Orleans and elsewhere in the South steadily rose. The cotton bonanzas of the 1850's made painfully apparent the inexorable interlocking connections between British, European, and Yankee demand for raw cotton and the supply of African slaves to grow the commodity and new fields to grow it on. By 1850, the average cotton plantation counted about 400 acres, while many counted over 1,000, and a few over 10,000. Between 1850 and 1860, the fields growing cotton in the leading states expanded by 16.4%. The total crop increased more than 100% in the same decade (Gray, 1933). The demand for slaves to meet this frenzied production caused slave prices to skyrocket. Despite the constant influx of slaves, legal or illegal, labor shortages beleaguered ever expanding Southern plantations in the decade before The War. Even with the increasing political pressures of abolitionism both at home and abroad, demand for more slaves did not cease until the cannons boomed at Fort Sumter in 1861.

Ludicrous as it seems, the most highly esteemed historians of the slave trade conveniently omit the importance of cotton in causing slavery to rapidly spread across the antebellum South. For instance, Philip Curtin, in refuting the veracity of records kept by the British Foreign Office from 1848 which stated 135,000 slaves were still being imported to the Americas annually, this "immaculate scholar" explains, "[The slave trade] was sustained first by the postwar boom of the 1820's, then by the sugar boom in Cuba and the coffee boom in Brazil." (Curtin, 1969) Sugar and coffee were important it's true, but after 1820 cotton was more lucrative than both commodities

put together. How could Curtin have failed to consider cotton as a factor when discussing the illegal slave trade after 1808? Cotton is not even listed in the index of *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (1969), though coffee and sugar are.

Curtin's disqualification of cotton carried over into Fogel and Engerman's widely read *Time on the Cross* (1974):

To those who identify slavery with cotton and tobacco, the small U.S. share in the slave trade may seem *unbelievable*. Consideration of the temporal pattern of slave imports, however, clearly reveals that the course of the Atlantic slave trade *cannot be explained* by the demand for these crops...Eighty percent of all slaves were imported between 1451 and 1810. This *fact* clearly rules out cotton as a dominant factor in the traffic since the production of cotton was still in its infancy in 1810. [Italics ours]

What is unbelievable is that these cocksure historians overlooked the economic prominence of Southern cotton, its incredible escalation of production and the inevitable demand for slaves it caused. The "fact" they cite is far from incontrovertible and their assumption that a significant number of slaves could not be smuggled in during the four decades before the Civil War shows a terrible disregard for the factual.

More recently, the inbred arrogance of this strain of historians has culminated in the persons of David Eltis and David Richardson a truly criminal negligence of history, not to mention an inexplicable motive to revise it in almost Stalinist fashion. In December of 2010, these two "experts" were featured in an interview on National Public Radio to promote the publication of their *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (2010):

NPR's Neal Conan: One of their most striking findings was that just 4 percent of trans-Atlantic shipping traffic carried slaves to what would become the U.S. .

David Eltis: When the slave trade came to an end, the number of people living in North America that were enslaved was larger than anywhere else. *And it's extraordinary that the slave trade accounts for such a small share of that number*. Because North America had relatively benign living conditions, black populations did reasonably well—though not as well as the white populations. North American slaves fared better than their counterparts in the Caribbean and Brazil. Because of this the growth in the slave population in North

America was more the result of natural population growth than an active slave trading industry. *A common misconception is that the slave trade in North America was mostly about cotton; in fact, sugar was the main driver.* [Italics ours]

David Richardson: In the antebellum American South, cotton was a major agricultural product while much of Brazil and the West Indies concentrated on sugar production. But conditions were harsh in the sugar sectors, and while Brazil and the West Indies boasted large numbers of slaves, those slaves had a harder time reproducing. (Eltis, Richardson. NPR, *Talk of the Nation*. 12/27/2010)

Did this foremost expert on the slave trade really broadcast over the airwaves to millions of people that antebellum sugar was more important than cotton? In 1860, there were about 200,000 slaves producing sugar. Cotton involved almost 2.5 million slaves. Eltis is propagating an egregious distortion.

By 1860, cotton plantation acreage averaged across all the producing states resulted in a norm of nearly 800 acres per planter. Stampf succinctly stated, " the yeoman labored in competition with the slaves." As a result, many of the smaller cotton farmers, even a few with slaves, especially in the Deep South, became extensions of the vast holdings of aristocratic planters. The wealthiest planters, able to more readily afford pricier slaves than yeoman farmers and gentry, expanded their holdings and squeezed many of the smaller farmers out (Stampf, 1956). By 1860, nearly one million slaves belonged to planters who owned less than 10 slaves, over two million belonged to planters with more than 20 slaves, while almost another million were held on plantations with 50 or more slaves (Hammond, 1897).

While cotton remains preeminent, other crops in the U.S. needed slaves. The other staples of the south, in order of importance were, tobacco, sugar, rice, and hemp, all of which slaves grew. Planters of the Deep South held an average of five more slaves per owner than those of the Upper South, the majority installed on the largest cotton plantations of the Black Belt, the Yazoo River basin, and along the banks of the Mississippi in Louisiana. Smaller numbers were taken to work on plantations that grew the aforementioned staples.

While the cultivation of indigo and flax virtually disappeared after 1790, tobacco cultivation spread from Virginia's coastal plains to North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and even Georgia. Though not as prosperous as it was before 1775, tobacco only bowed before King Cotton in 1821. Tobacco production spiked dramatically in the 1850's because of the discovery of Bright Yellow, so that tobacco output overall made a profitable comeback in the last antebellum decade. Even so, profits from tobacco exports for that decade were about 5% of cotton's. The 1850 U.S. census estimated that about 350,000 slaves worked to produce tobacco on plantations and in factories. By 1860, tobacco plantations large and small worked a median average of 20 slaves compared to 37 per cotton plantation (Goodman, 1993).

Cotton plantations shared the rich alluvial soil of the lower Mississippi River and its bayou country with an increasing number of sugar operations that ranged along the river as far as a hundred miles north of New Orleans. Producing about 207,000 tons in the peak year of 1858, Louisiana produced about 95% of domestic antebellum sugar. Production tumbled thereafter, only reaching 1858 levels again in the 1890's. Sugarcane advanced north into the watershed of the Red River in the 1840's after King Cotton's prices tumbled beginning with the Panic of 1837. Many sugar planters wrongly predicted that sugar would displace cotton in both domestic and export value. Thus its cultivation spread despite the fact that cotton, even with its sinking prices, continued to dominate the market. Nevertheless, the Red River demarcated the northern limit of sugar production. Louisiana planters produced 264,000 tons of sugar in 1861, a figure previously unsurpassed. The war halted its cultivation and Louisiana would not exceed the 1861 amount again until 1893 (Deerr, 1949).

Some of the most affluent planters in the Deep South grew both staples. Because the production of sugar was much more labor intensive and unhealthy than that of cotton, the unfortunate slaves engaged in it had higher mortality rates. Slaves who expired from disease or



heat exhaustion were often replaced by illegals taken upriver from New Orleans, or overland from Galveston, Texas. Some were sold down the river from cotton plantations to be punished. While slaves were usually imported into the sugar parishes, a significant number of them were on occasions exported from them to cotton plantations as the value of the commodities they grew continued to fluctuate through the antebellum era (Schmitz, 1977). The U.S. Census of 1850 estimated about 150,000 slaves laboring in sugar. The industry attained its highest productivity and profitability in the last antebellum decade when nearly 2 million tons or 20 million hogsheads were copped, each with about 50 gallons of sugar.

In contrast with relatively profitable tobacco and sugar plantations was the struggling rice industry in the low country of South Carolina and Georgia, which hosted the lion's share of the nation's production. Its mosquito-infested paddies were as deadly as the sugar plantations, especially between May and November. By 1850, about 125,000 slaves were knee-deep in its cultivation. Steamboats encouraged rice culture along the Mississippi, but Louisiana's production declined rapidly after 1861. On the whole, rice farming was unprofitable until the very cusp of the Civil War. Rice farmers rarely earned over 6% profits against their operating costs though this percentage would increase upwards until it halted when the war began (Swan, 1975).

Along the Missouri River, in a region known as Little Dixie, an oft-overlooked staple, hemp, was produced steadily throughout the antebellum period. Hemp was used mainly for rope-making and for the burlap that covered bales of cotton. Its production involved about 60,000 slaves by 1850, as compared to nearly 2 million slaves working in the cotton fields.

## U.S. SLAVES IN 1860

IN AGRICULTURE	3,300,475	
	COTTON	2,409,346
	TOBACCO	462,066
	SUGAR	198,029
	RICE	165,023
	HEMP	66,010
OTHER PURSUITS	653,285	
	TRADES	
	DOMESTICS	
	FACTORIES	
	TRANSPORTATION	
TOTAL	3,953,760	
	MALES	1,982,625
	FEMALES	1,971,135

Labor statistics for 1860 are calculated from percentages in the U.S. Census of 1850. Unfortunately, the U.S. Census of 1860 omitted such figures. In 1850, it was estimated that 2,800,000 slaves worked in agriculture. Therefore, assuming the growth of the total slave population of 1860 with the percentage of agricultural slaves in 1850, we arrive at a figure of 7.9% growth, or roughly half a million more slaves in agriculture than a decade previous. Over 60% of all the slaves produced cotton. About 20,000 slaves labored for the Southern railroads in 1860, and approximate numbers for slaves in other trades are guesses at best. Also, about 250,000 free blacks are estimated to have lived in the South by 1860. These figures are for the sake of comparison and are not stated as empirical fact.

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