

Derek Jackson – Interpretive Ranger

Plantation Perspectives

History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

DNR - Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites
3-1-2022

Class 1

Introduction 10:00

Hello everyone. I'm going to start with an introduction. My name is Derek Jackson, and I am a historian and curator for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. I currently work with Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites as an Interpretive Ranger, hence the uniform, for Jarrell Plantation State Historic Site, which is a historic cotton farm and plantation, which seems a strange distinction, but we will talk about that later in the course.

My degree was focused in cultural studies and communication, and what that really means is that my interest as a historian focuses on looking at moments throughout history from a variety of different angles and perspectives to really understand not only what happened in the past but also why these events developed and what the greater cultural impacts were after. And actually, it's after finishing that type of research that my work as a historical interpreter really begins. It's sort of in that in between space that I hang out most of the time, between the research and the general public.

Historical interpretation, or public history as it's also referred to, is all about meeting people where they are, whether it's from an educational stand point, or just understanding the cultural differences that make up the ideas, opinions, and interests of say visitors to a historic site or students in a classroom, or often times random passersby that wander in to waste a little time, wondering what they've found. It's my job to act as a bridge between the research and the public, making sure that I'm in contact with the latest research but also that I'm using appropriate methods to convey that research effectively. That might be in the form of a guided tour, or a museum exhibit, or a presentation or class. Either way my goal as an interpreter is always the same, to spark interest and conversation on a topic. For instance, there's no way we will cover every aspect of our topic in four class sections. But it's my hope that when you leave here you'll have found at least one thing that really sparks your interest enough to continue learning, reading, and having those conversations.

Class Outline

With that I would like to share a little more about what you can expect from our class together today and over the next three Tuesdays. Broadly, this class is about plantations and GA plantations in particular.

Mar. 1 - Today we will look at how the plantation system developed in early America from the early explorers to the British colonies and founding of Georgia as a colony and later a state. We will look at the personal and political motivations that led to the plantation system that most of us have in our minds when we talk about plantations. We will also take a closer look at the plantations in Georgia's coastal region with discussion on the methods and tools of farming and variety of cash crops in this region of GA.

Mar. 8 – We will begin our closer look at the different perspectives of people living on plantations, and specifically we will dive into a look at the lives of the enslaved Africans that were the main labor force, including discussion of the Atlantic Trade and origins of African slavery. And again, we will look at a couple of Georgia plantations, this time with a focus on central GA and cotton.

Mar. 15 – I want to start class number three with a discussion of a reading that I would like us all to do, and I will put some information up now for that. So, discussing slavery is difficult, it's a difficult topic. It's

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

unimaginable for most, this system of forced labor that our country was built under. And, yet I really want us to have an open discussion about it. I think it's important that we remember this part of our history and talk about it. We'll have some time for discussion at the end of class on Mar. 8, but what I would really like us to do is take this reading as a starting point to help us focus our conversation. I've chosen this book for a couple of reasons. One, I was looking for a slave narrative, two it covers a lot of ground in terms of different types of plantations and types of people, three it serves as an excellent jumping off point as a story of a free man sold into slavery.

Mar. 22 – field trip and why

State of North America by 1492

By 1492, prior to European contact, there are 8 million people in North America who are concentrated along the coasts. They speak 300 different languages vs around 40 in Western Europe, illustrating an ethnically diverse population. These groups know of each other. However, they do not move for a unified government for all 8 ml (note on confederacy govts vs nation state govts). Instead they focused on vast trade networks, and trading had different purposes in America than it did in Europe. Trade was both social and ceremonial. Trade was about renewing alliances or friendships and ending conflicts. The French later became specifically skilled with understanding this gift exchange to sow good will. They realized the more lavish they were with gifts of metal and manufactured tools the more the Hurons were lavish with their gifts of furs. These trade networks were important. They were not only how material goods traveled between communities, but also how ideas spread, so we can see cultural influences from one culture area spread across to others, like making pottery or cultivating crops and seed planting.

-Native Americans in eastern North America discovered farming as early as the Mid Archaic period so around 6000 BCE. They already knew how to harvest from their time as hunter gatherers, but the knowledge of seed planting makes its way up from Mexico. So by 6000 BCE they are beginning to domesticate native plants and some of the first crops being cultivated are varieties of squashes, sunflowers, and later corn, beans, tobacco and other crops would make their way to the east coast of North America through trade networks during the Woodland Period (1000 BCE - 1000 CE).

-Women are the primary farmers in North America, unlike Europe where men do most of the farming, so it is a gender role for women to handle the farming, so when the Spanish make first contact, they find women working in groups to run commercial size farms. When the Europeans see this, they believe women are treated as slaves doing all the labor to provide food for the village. However, Native Americans at this time actually believe in both women and men each providing 50% of the food resources, so the men hunt for meat and the women farm. Men would help clear the fields and harvest when the crops were ripe, but their focus for most of the year was primarily on hunting. Women hoed the soil and formed small mounds where they would plant corn kernels. They also added seeds for companion plants like pumpkins and beans, which added nitrogen to the soil. The corn stalks later served as poles for the beans to climb and shade for the pumpkins. It is this knowledge of farming in this environment and the supplement of hunting that would later save early settlers of the British colonies from starving to death, but also what leads to the first cash crop in North America.

Spanish Explorers & First American Plantations

-BY 1492 Christopher Columbus (Cristoforo Colombo) will find similar communities to this amongst the Taíno people who live in the Bahamas and Caribbean islands.

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

-Taínos were of the Arawak language group and their disposition was friendly and cheerful. They lived across the islands of the Caribbean including modern Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Virgin Islands, and Jamaica. They lived in circular houses covered with woven straw and palm leaves surrounding a central court for ball games and ceremonies. The Caciques or leaders lived in larger rectangular houses. They slept in hammocks made of cotton, which they grew on the island and had furnishings made of wood and woven material and many kept domesticated birds as well. They primarily subsisted on a mixture of fish and meat from snakes, birds, bats and rodents for lack of larger game and cultivated crops. Their farming methods were practically free of maintenance. They raised their crops on mounds or conucos, which were packed with leaves to prevent erosion. Like many North American tribes, they would plant a variety of crops together to ensure the best growth no matter the weather conditions. They grew corn/maize, squash, beans, potatoes, yams, peanuts, and tobacco for smoking, which they enjoyed as a social activity as well as a ritual one. The men generally went naked, but women wore short skirts, and all painted their bodies and adorned themselves with shells and metals like gold panned in small amounts from the internal rivers.

-Columbus noted the good qualities of the Taíno on his arrival: *They ... brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks' bells. They willingly traded everything they owned... They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features.... They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane... They would make fine servants... With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.*

He plants the Spanish flag claiming over 2 million Taínos as subjects of Spain and plans for them to be his labor force for the Spanish colonies. Columbus makes another discovery during his exploration that saves his expedition. You see, Columbus was an Italian mariner with a grand plan for finding a new route to the East Indies to make a fortune in the trade goods of the Indian Ocean like spices, silk, cotton, and indigo. After initial failure, he finally found funding for his venture in Spain. The Spanish Queen and King had finally unified their country into a modern nation state like that of their neighbor Portugal and are eager to start exploration. Portugal has already been exploring the coasts of Africa creating colonies. They are already seeking a new route to the East Indies, since land routes have been cut off by the Turks. The Spanish crown invested in Columbus' expedition with the expectation in a large financial return in the form of lucrative trade goods, so Columbus is under a great amount of pressure.

-He is relieved then when he sees a Taíno girl with jewelry made of gold on the island he dubbed Hispaniola, modern Haiti, which the Taíno call Ayiti, meaning land of high mountains. The discovery of gold will have long reaching effects and a permanent Spanish presence in the Americas and will later launch the Spanish conquistadors and further exploration and colonization of the Americas from South America all the way up through Central America and into the South East of North America. Unfortunately for the Taínos and even the British that settle the East coast in the 17th century, the first contact between Europe and the Americas done by the Spanish. I mentioned that the Spanish had recently unified and that was part of the end to a religious war against the Moors, where they expelled all Jews and Muslims from the now Catholic country. So, the Spanish have been trained to hate people of different colors and religions during that long war. It's engrained in their soldiers, so what we see is unimaginable cruelty to native people as the Spanish scour the Americas looking for gold.

-The Taíno are the first to witness this cruelty, and they do resist. They are forced into gangs to hunt for gold and treated with violence if none is found. Sex is demanded from Taíno women and they are raped if they decline. Others are taken to Spain to be sold as slaves, starting the Atlantic slave trade. By 1495

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

hundreds of Taínos are being captured and enslaved. Many are sent to Spain, but others remain and are sent to estates under the Encomienda system, which was originally a labor system of serfdom – Lords and peasants, where the lord is responsible for providing peasants with protection, churches and priests in return for field labor. The system is perverted after it reaches the sugar plantations on Hispaniola into more of a forced labor camp.

-Paired with these harsh conditions were the infectious diseases that Europeans brought with them, which the native people had no immunities to fight off, and by 1550 the Taíno had been nearly wiped out. They numbered in the hundreds from the 2 or 3 million at time of contact in 1492. What does this leave Columbus in need of by 1551? New labor force-Enslaved Africans as replacement.

-In fact, due in large part to Spanish exploration, tribe populations as far north as Mississippi, possibly even into Arkansas will decline by half before the British arrive to start colonies, and Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto and his exploits were already decoded into Powhatan oral histories by the time settlers arrive in Jamestown, Virginia. So that's how far reaching Spanish exploration was during the 15th and 16th centuries.

-Closing- I hope you can see why I chose to include this section in the class. These elements here that play into everything that comes after. First, the Columbian exchange begins having long reaching consequences from the diseases that wipe out large populations of Native Americans or new plants that will replace staple food stores all over the world like corn and potatoes. We also see the origins of hostilities that will continue between Native Americans and colonists as well as the reason that the Atlantic Slave Trade. Finally, the Spanish land claims in the Americas and the vast amount of wealth in gold that is being shipped to Spain will entice France and England into their own expeditions to colonize the Americas.

British Colonies

-We are going to look now at the first British colonies in the new world and the early labor systems that they bring and the first cash crop in North America.

France and England are delayed in exploring the Americas until the end of the 16th century. France was in the midst of a religious war between the Catholics and Huguenots, which lasted until 1593. And, England had its own problems relating to religion. Henry VIII's personal life is tied to the country's religion. His wife Catherine of Aragon, daughter of the queen and king of Spain, was not able to give him the male heir he wanted (he also wanted to move on to a new love, Anne Boleyn), so he needed a legal divorce but the Catholic Church wouldn't allow it. So what did Henry do? He created a new national church and replaced the pope as leader of the church, which did not go over well as you can imagine. Religious strife continued under the rule of Henry's daughter, Mary, who took the throne in 1553. Remember I mentioned Mary's mother was Spanish royalty; well Mary was a devoted Catholic and wanted to reverse the English Reformation that her father started. Things don't begin to stabilize until Elizabeth I takes the throne in 1558.

-By 1577 she gives Sir Francis Drake permission to circumnavigate the globe, but also attack and raid Spanish treasure ships coming from the Caribbean. This is how Elizabeth acquires the wealth to start colonizing North America. Sir Walter Raleigh is given permission to explore the American coast and claims land calling it Virginia. Now, even though the English are the last to set up colonies they will end up being the most successful and that's because they built their colonies around families rather than soldiers. What is the problem that would come up with soldiers? Their service time would be up, and they would return home, leading to a lot of instability as groups of soldiers would come and go. Having

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

said all of that, England's first colony on Roanoke Island was a failure, primarily because of a delay in getting supply ships to the colony. The delay was due to a war with Spain that arose primarily because of the piracy that Elizabeth had authorized against Spanish ships, so between 1588 and 1590 no supplies are sent. When the ships do finally arrive in 1590, they find the colony site intact but no colonists. No diaries or journals are found, and the only trace was the word Croaton carved on a door and a tree. At the time they were thought to have been killed in some sort of raid, though no bodies were found. Today, we know they most likely were taken in as refugees by the Croatons on the East coast. Jamestown settlers will hear 30 years later from the Powhatans that they have seen blue and green eyed people in the tribes nearby.

- England doesn't try again until 1606 under King James I, who has succeeded Elizabeth who had no heirs. James grants a charter to the Virginia Company of London to establish colonies in North America. So, the colonies are run by companies going forward with the primary purposes of claiming land for England, dealing with population problems, and above all making a profit. And while the first to arrive struggled with the harsh conditions of the wilderness and regular conflicts with the native Powhatans, they were set on making a fortune for themselves and the company.

-Fortunately, a few things happen by 1619 that sees a prosperous Virginia colony in place. First is the arrival of John Rolfe in 1610, who agrees to marry Pocahontas to create peace between the settlers and the Powhatans. Which sounds noble on his part, and perhaps it was. He had lost his wife and child during the journey to the new world. But Pocahontas at this time had been held prisoner for a year as ransom against the Powhatans for food resources. Food was always a problem for early settlers who didn't understand how to cultivate their own food in this new environment and maintained a shortsighted focus on riches in the new world. 1/3 of the early settlers died every winter in Jamestown and Pocahontas had defied her father on more than one occasion provide stores of corn to the starving settlers. Pocahontas didn't waste her year of captivity and asks several things: to be made fluent in English, to learn the Anglican religion, to be baptized, and to learn how to dress as an English woman. So, she turns a hostage situation into an education. In the end Pocahontas also agrees to marry John Rolfe to bring political safety and peace to their communities, which is accomplished by 1614.

Tobacco as First Cash Crop

John Rolfe's main goal in coming to Jamestown was to find a lucrative cash crop to make his fortune with, and he later witnesses the Powhatans cultivating a type of tobacco among their other crops. After seeing this he develops the notion of trying to grow this North American Tobacco on a large scale in Virginia. However, Rolfe quickly learned that European tastes preferred Caribbean varieties of tobacco over what the Powhatans grew and acquired Trinidad tobacco seeds from the Caribbean to plant around Jamestown. Though production was slow to start by 1630 the Virginia colony was exporting over a million pounds of tobacco every year.

- Why do you think tobacco became such a sought-after import? Pipe tobacco and snuff become popular as an import from Spain and was often flavored with rum and bergamot. The more people tried it the more popular it became raising the demand for imports and the value of tobacco as a cash crop. Tobacco as a cash crop had many advantages including that it was easy to transport across the Atlantic without spoiling and had an established market, it was a crop that didn't require specialty labor and made excellent use of large areas of cleared land for high yields as well. The primary downsides were the need for vast amounts of land since tobacco requires fertile soil but quickly depletes the all the nutrients out of the soil. Tobacco production also requires a large labor force, which would have to be imported as tobacco production increased in Virginia colony.

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

-The cultivation and harvest of tobacco began with seeds collected during a previous harvest, which usually go into ground as soon after Christmas as possible. Farmers plant 10 times the number of seeds for the number of plants they hope to cultivate, and they need 40 square yards of seedbed for every acre they want to grow. The seed beds were cleared, burned and hoed. Then the beds are raked and covered with soil, manure, and straw to protect the seeds. Transplanting will happen in March or April once the leaves of the new plant reach a couple of inches in width. They will then be moved from the tightly packed beds to evenly spaced mounds about three to four feet apart, which means a large amount of space is needed for large scale tobacco planting and the process of mound making was so arduous that only 500 hundred could be made a day by an experienced adult. They often waited until after a rain moistened the mounds before planting. Weeding is necessary by hoe or hand between the plants as they grow as is removal of damaged leaves or leaves touching the ground. To ensure large leaves two of the four leaves closest to the ground are removed after about 2 months growth in a process called priming. The plants are also topped, which involves removing a group of compact leaves growing at the top of the plant. Both priming and topping were done to make sure the plant didn't waste energy by developing seeds or flowers. Topping also made sucker shoots appear at the base of the plant, which needed removing. The total expected harvest will be between 8 and 12 leaves per plant, so managing the number of leaves on a plant is important as is making sure the nutrients the plant absorbs are dispersed properly. A few healthy plants will be selected to go to flower so seeds can be collected for the next year's crop, however. Horn worm and tobacco flea beetle were the primary pests for the plants and a crop could be destroyed without daily checks for pests. In September, once the leaves become sticky and vary in color into shades of yellow, the plants will be cut at the base and a stake will be driven into the bottom so the plant can be hung on racks to dry. After 5 or 6 weeks of drying the leaves can be stripped from the stems in a process called striking and packed or prized into barrels using a press to help retain some moisture in the barrel to keep the tobacco from becoming brittle.

Labor

-With a cash crop in place and tobacco plantations growing there were two enticement systems created to pull people over to America by 1617. First was the Headright system which promised 50 acres per adult, or per head, over the age of 16, with the only caveat that each immigrant would have to pay transportation costs. For those with a little money this was free land, and if you were married and had three adult children you could claim 250 acres. Headrights could also be bought and sold, and many abused this system to gain large tracts of land, some merchants and colonial officials claimed headrights each time they returned to Virginia from abroad thus creating a planter elite who would dominate law making in the colony. This is also how the colony's new labor force arrived. Planters would pay passage for individuals who couldn't afford it and take their 50-acre headright. They would then be required to work 5 to 7 years of indentured servitude as repayment. At the end of their contract they would receive a freedom package of 25 acres of land, usually less desirable land or neighboring a native tribe, and a year's supply of food. Women were also brought over in a similar method where men could bid at an auction to pay the travel expenses for the woman of their choice. They would expect the women to make clothes, candles, soap and bear children. Women expect to gain land with her 50 acres and his 50 they have 100 together. This is also why indentured servants will marry as soon as their servitude ends. An indentured servant would hope to end up with a kind family where they were allowed to eat dinners with the family and sleep in the house. The alternative would be sleeping in the barn and fed on scraps, possibly beaten regularly. If they run away several years may be added to their contract.

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

-The first Africans arrived in Virginia from Angola by 1619 aboard English ship the White Lion and were sent to work the growing tobacco plantations along with poor white settlers as indentured servants with the same opportunity for freedom. By 1661 Virginia passed its first laws legalizing chattel bondage, meaning it was lawful for any free person to own enslaved laborers. The new laws also enslaved all Africans and even the free go back into slavery. Chattel slavery means an enslaved person is permanently owned as are their children and children's children automatically. Indentured servants were the primary labor force for the colonies until a decline in new arrivals by 1680, which led to an increase in the importation of enslaved Africans. 2,000 Africans arrive in the 1680s and this number doubles in the 1690s and doubles again in the first decade of the 18th century making the American colonies into a lucrative slave market by 1710.

1674-1676 –

Bacon's Rebellion – Nathaniel Bacon's army of small landowners, servants, and slaves lose allowing colonial planters to consolidate control over society

Class 2

Last Time – 1:30 We were talking about the origins of plantations in the New World, and the first cash crop for the British colonies, which was tobacco. We also talked about the first labor system in place by 1617. When we wrapped up, we had just finished talking about the new laws that were put in place in the 1660s legalizing chattel bondage in the colonies, which we said was the ability for any free person to own enslaved laborers. This law was followed by one that enslaved all Africans and even free Africans go into slavery. And, enslaved Africans become the main source of plantation labor at the turn of the 18th century. Today, we are going to look at the origins of the Atlantic slave trade on the west coast of Africa and then we will look at the development of the Georgia colony and how it changed into a large plantation economy. From there, we will look at Georgia's cash crops and the daily life of those living on these plantations. We will also discuss the motivations and justifications for the continued use of enslaved labor even amongst strong abolition movements and northern disapproval heading into the 19th century.

Georgia Colony 11:48

- So, the English colonies expand, and new colonies will follow the pattern that Virginia set in place with planter elite running large plantations with an increasing reliance on enslaved African labor. These planter elite will also hold government positions and decide on most of the laws in these colonies. The only differences are the cash crops which vary by region and climate.

-The Georgia colony, however, had a different purpose at first, and it ends up being created for a few reasons. First, there was a need for a buffer zone between the indigo and developing rice plantations of Carolina and the Spanish in Florida. The British colonies have now grown far enough south that boundaries are being disputed. Both groups claim the same land in between, modern Georgia, and fights are frequent. The English attack St. Augustine and the Spanish attack Charleston.

-There is also the problem of the Yamassees. Carolina merchants purposefully let Yamassees get into enormous amounts of debt trading deer skins for guns, cotton, iron tools, and clothes. They then applied pressure to pay the debt back or give up their land, but they created a second enemy, and so they request again for a buffer colony as a military zone.

-The third reason for the creation of the Georgia colony is more of a humanitarian effort by James Oglethorpe who by 1730 has become well known in England for his charitable efforts and for bringing attention to problems with London's prison system after his friend Robert Castell died after being imprisoned over debts and was put in a cell with a prisoner that had smallpox. Oglethorpe exposed the conditions and abuses that many citizens faced in prison for nothing more than being in debt. That's where his idea of Georgia as a colony for England's poor debtors to get a second chance really started, though that idea would quickly fade as the realities and needs of the new colony became clearer. So, Georgia was not a debtor's colony. 97% of colonists have no criminal record, and they are mostly working-class people looking for an opportunity to get ahead. Something about types of craftsmen they were looking for

- 1732 – King George II grants the charter of the Georgia colony to 21 trustees including Oglethorpe. The new colonists will receive free transport and 50 acres, a part of which will include a house in the town.

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

The men will be required to be part time soldiers like the National Guard, which is part of the plan for a military buffer. The trustees plan the economy of Georgia and want to create an egalitarian colony where everyone works to make a comfortable living but no one person amasses a fortune like in the plantation colonies. Ironically, they fail at this at the outset because women are not allowed to own land, so everyone isn't on equal footing. Also, as part of the planned economy, the colonists will be told what to grow as England is almost self-sufficient now with the development of their agriculture colonies. What England really needs is for Georgia to create luxury goods that they are still having to import. The trustees send agents to survey the land and reports say the climate in Georgia is Mediterranean like Greece or Italy and may support production of silk, grape vines, olives, raisins, and nuts.

-Georgia's charter prohibited Oglethorpe from holding office or owning land yet he still left his comfortable life behind and travels with the 114 colonists to Georgia. He negotiated with the Yamacraws for the new colony overlooking the south bank of the Savannah River. The Yamacraw and their chief Tomochichi help Oglethorpe and the settlers because they need friends and allies. They were expelled from Creek nation because they refused to get involved with the Yamassee war. Oglethorpe and Chief Tomochichi become good friends and they work together peacefully to set up the new colony. Interestingly, when it comes time to clear the land for the new colony, the settlers start to complain. They think it's too humid to clear trees, so Oglethorpe brings in enslaved Africans from South Carolina to clear the area but sends them back because the trustees have a concern that these colonists are lazy and won't work if they have enslaved labor. And a large part of the trustees' idea for a classless society means a prohibition on slavery in Georgia. So, slavery is banned in Georgia at first.

-Between 1739 and 1742 The Georgia colony fulfills one of its original purposes defeating Spain in a series of battles culminating in Spain removing to St. Augustine. Spain would not make any further attempts against the Georgia colony. Afterwards Oglethorpe heads back to England to ask for compensation for the personal loans he endured to support the Colony, and without his leadership the colony faces new challenges in the 1740s.

-By the 1740s the intended crops are proving troublesome. Grapes and olives don't grow, which had to do with the mineral content of the soil. Silkworms keep dying as well, since Georgia has the wrong species of mulberry tree for silkworms. So, the settlers start to complain that the trustees brought them there to fail. That their plan was impractical without the help of enslaved labor. Enslaved Africans they believed were better suited to the climate. The trustees saw them as ingrates and call them Malcontents for complaining, but the colonists are looking to the Carolinas and the prosperity of their indigo and rice plantations run by enslaved labor and fight back against slavery ban by lobbying members of parliament. And with Oglethorpe gone many ignore the ban altogether and begin smuggling enslaved people into Georgia. Finally disgusted with the colonists and unable to stop the import of enslaved people the trustees remove ban by 1751. This opened the door for the South Carolina planters to extend their lucrative rice operations into the Georgia low country. So, this is really the beginning of Georgia's plantation economy as these planters arrive in great numbers and effectively take over the Georgia government and by 1755 they have replaced the Georgia slave code with one identical to South Carolina's and in 5 years the enslaved population of Georgia grows from less than 500 to nearly 20,000.

The Atlantic Slave Trade 16:30

-What I want us to look at next is the development of the African slave trade. This trade lasted 300 years and moved 12 million men and women out of Africa by force and 2 million will die on the journey across the Atlantic. They're traded as a commodity due to an increasing need for labor in the agriculture

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

colonies of the Americas. 60% of enslaved Africans are taken to the Caribbean, 35% go to Brazil, 5% go to North America, so around 600,000 people make their way to the British colonies.

-When we talk about the Atlantic World, we are talking about the transfer of raw materials, manufactured goods, and people back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean in a triangular pattern. So, raw materials made their way from the colonies of the Americas and the Caribbean to Western Europe. European manufactured goods made their way back to America or to the west coast of Africa for trade. And finally trade goods and enslaved labor were transported to the Americas and Europe. This was a system that built up over time, especially the export of African people to plantations in the Americas.

-And there are misconceptions that develop about the African slave trade from both white and black communities. One misconception is that enslaved Africans were better off in the Americas away from the violence and warfare of their homeland, and they see conversion to Christianity as a justification for slavery. Another is that European soldiers come in and hunt for Africans to enslave. In reality, enslaved people are actually hunted by African tribes and brought to port cities for sale.

-To understand this a little better let's take a step back and look at African history. There is actually an internal form of slavery being used on the West Coast of Africa as early as 300CE along the Niger River. Ouagadougou/Wagadougou, or Ghana as Arabs name it which means warrior prince after their ruler, had an organized central government with a hereditary monarch. This was a class-based society with nobility that is matrilineal, so nobility passes to the oldest sister's oldest son. An 11th century geographer, Al-Bakri, remarked on his impression of the monarch "The King adorns himself wearing necklaces round his neck and bracelets on his forearms and he puts on a high cap decorated with gold and wrapped in a turban of fine cotton." "He sits in audience or to hear grievances against officials in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses covered with gold-embroidered materials. Behind the king stand ten pages holding shields and swords decorated with gold, and on his right are the sons of the kings of his country wearing splendid garments and their hair plaited with gold." Women are important in this society and control the marketplace. The next class is the warrior class, who only marry into same class. Scribes are the literate part of society, and farmers make up the largest class at about 90%. And at the bottom of this society are the POW slaves who make up the smallest group.

-When a tribe defies the empire of Ghana and loses, they become enslaved as humiliation for losing. These enslaved people do have rights, unlike the enslaved people in the colonies later. They can vote, marry, and take outside jobs to earn money. And if an enslaved woman has a child with a free person that child is free. They are not automatically enslaved. Free women might also purchase a man to marry later, as this enslavement will be temporary, lasting 3 to 5 years. They also have the ability to buy their freedom. So, what do you think is the purpose of this type of system of POW slavery? The long-term goal is not only to eliminate rebels, but to assimilate these people into their culture.

- Another point for us to look at is why Europeans take such an interest in Africa at first. The primary reason the Portuguese set up trade forts on the African coast is not enslaved labor. In fact, there is a mutually commercial trade network setup at these ports, which quickly becomes preferred by Africans in the Niger delta area over cumbersome overland routes of trade and offered large quantities of Asian and European trade goods like silks and porcelain. The Portuguese will trade for ivory, salt, and gold. This part of Africa is rich with gold mines, so rich that they advertise their wealth, and Portugal imports what equals a tenth of the world's gold production at the time. By 1280s BCE Portugal has set up its first trade port called El Mina on the Gold Coast of Africa. This is an attempt to bypass merchants and go straight to the source for gold. They will also stay close to ports to avoid diseases in West Africa, so they

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

are not traveling inland. By this time, they are already importing a small number of enslaved people as well for the wealthy families in Portugal, those POWs will be sold this way, though this only accounts for about 1% of trade at this time.

- By the time of this early trade with Portugal a new gold empire has risen in Mali. The Ghana empire fell by 1076 CE after a 10-year battle with Arab mercenaries from modern Morocco over gold. The Malian Empire is still new when gold becomes the basis for the European economy, which at this time includes England, Spain, France, Italy, and Germany. So, by the 1280s Mali is supplying 2/3rds of Europe's gold. Another important thing to note is that the Malian community largely becomes Muslim, which as I mentioned religion will be a point of contention later with Christian Europeans who will bring missionaries. Original religion "spirits of the land" believed in benevolent ruler who breathed life into all things. A form of honoring ancestors or ancestor worship.

-Malian empire is eventually overthrown from within and the Songhai take power. They are considered the best warriors in Africa. That is why it comes as a shock to many tribes when the Songhai Empire is defeated by mercenaries, again from Morocco. The reason they are defeated is the introduction of the gun. Their enemies have this new technology, and it leads them to victory. I know we are moving kind of fast through this, but the point I want to make is that there were large kingdoms in Africa prior to the great influx of European interest. So after the fall of the Songhai, no superpower rises again in West Africa, and only a dozen smaller tribes are left. The gun symbolizes a new power and these tribes feel they need the gun. Guns will be an important trade good for Europeans by the 1600s when they arrive looking for new labor forces for their colonies. The gun signals a major shift for West Coast Africans at this time who go from a perspective on war being about gold, land, and political power to being about slavery. If you don't have the gun you will be the one captured and enslaved.

- The Spanish start purchasing Africans by 1510 and are the first to bring them to the Americas. Why did they need a new labor force in the Caribbean? To replace the native population that was dying out. The Dutch also begin transporting Africans to the Americas for sale. They have the fastest ships and are relied on during this time for delivering goods quickly. In 1672, the English create the English Royal African Co. under King James II to supply British colonies with African Labor.

-If a nation like the Songhai had survived it perhaps could have regulated the trade of guns for enslaved people, as it will be those smaller remaining tribes that will do the hunting and selling of African people. It started with the POWs, but the introduction of the gun as a trade good means more and more Africans will be captured and sold. The gun will also be used during the capture of Africans. Hunters will travel as far as 500 miles in land to the river valley, and will look to capture Africans 14-25 years old, who will then be shackled and marched to the coast to be put in holding cells. The Africans that are captured will be kept in a cycle of terror and violence to keep them off balance and from getting comfortable with certain places or owners. Traders will also make sure that Africans in these holding cells speak different languages to keep a barrier in place against uprisings.

-Europeans at the trade ports will bring medical doctors in to do humiliating tests before they purchase. They don't want any deformities and they will be looking for markers of health and strength. After their exam they will be branded with a red hot brand. Merchants will be looking to purchase 300 Africans to make the trip across the Atlantic worthwhile, and captains will expect 15% to die on the voyage, that's about 45 people. These enslaved people will be forced to make the trip lying down and chained to prevent mutiny, though women were often allowed to roam the ship. Most will only be brought out in

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

groups for exercise, where they were commanded to jump and shout to the pace of a drum. This is the only exercise they are going to get on a 70 day journey.

-Those Africans that survived the 70 day journey will end up on islands like Barbados, Jamaica, Hispaniola, or Martinique. On arrival they would be required to go through a process called seasoning, which is a sort of cultural reprogramming. During this process their names are changed, so Djimon would become Joe. This name change was basically an attack on identity. A very basic pidgin version of English was also taught, mostly commands about work were included in the instruction. Finally they would be put for auction, another humiliating process where they would be looked over and their bodies discussed as buyers looked for particular attributes for the work they need done. For the British colonies ships will bring enslaved Africans to southern plantations first. Those left after initial auctions will go to northern colonies as house laborers.

-Savannah Slave Trade

Life on Georgia Plantations, Rice Production 9:00

After being purchased at auction, enslaved African laborers will arrive on their owner's plantation and find themselves a part of a plantation hierarchy. This system will be similar across plantation types and is broken down as follows:

-Plantation Owners are at the top of the system and were like English landed gentry. They had to be knowledgeable farmers and business managers to be successful, especially when it came to rice cultivation, which required constant supervision and was heavily dependent on the weather and other conditions. They had large amounts of money invested in these plantations and usually couldn't afford for their cash crop to fail. However, rice plantation owners will be absent from April to November, heading to the nearby cities to avoid the Georgia low country heat and humidity. They were also trying to avoid diseases like malaria that the swamps and marshes in Georgia perpetuated. They will use the phrase "my people" to refer to the enslaved population because they think it's less degrading. For them this is a benign system, and they will believe themselves benevolent and that their enslaved laborers are like children that can't survive on their own. They also felt they had certain privileges including having mistresses among enslaved women. The children he has from his enslaved mistresses will be chattel property, so he is effectively increasing his property from these unions. Their wives usually hate the children from these unions and will find ways to punish the children and mistresses. Even with this difficult dynamic, enslaved populations will dread the death of an owner because it will often break up the entire community and divide families. Families are split between heirs.

-One of the worst examples of this kind of divide occurred in 1859. Pierce Butler who was one of the founding fathers and one of the richest men in the United States had squandered his fortune of \$700,000 and was only saved from bankruptcy selling his huge enslaved population. This became known as the largest single auction of enslaved people in U.S. history with 436 men, women, and children put up for auction in Savannah. Torrential downpours during the auction came to symbolize their tears and they would later remember this as the Weeping Time. A situation like this will be devastating because enslaved people will build their own cultures within this plantation system.

-Overseer- overseers were next in the hierarchy and were usually poor white men who hoped to one day ascend to the heights of being a plantation owner. An overseer's role was vital on Georgia's rice plantations due to the regular absence of the owner. He would effectively manage the plantation by handling all day to day operations, manage the laborers, and see after their welfare. He could be harsh

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

or easy with the laborers and had to find the right balance to keep the work force as productive as possible. An Overseer was also always trying to please the plantation owners, and they could accomplish this in a couple of ways. One would be to increase production, and the other would be to stamp out resistance. Harsh overseers might also gain a reputation as a slave breaker. Slave breakers would try and break the will and resistance of enslaved laborers. They might assign a task, then show up and accuse them of not doing the work properly. They might also use shock value by physically breaking down enslaved people by beating them. Psychologically, they would wear them down by spying on them.

-Driver – drivers were usually African American, and there were usually six to eight on a large plantation usually over 300 acres. Drivers were tasked with day to day supervision and will report that tasks that need to be done to the overseer. They might be a trustworthy enslaved laborer who would be expected to carry a whip to keep the work pace. They would be expected to use the whip if a laborer slacked off or caused damage to crops. And they will carry out this role because they will receive perks that others don't get, like better or extra food, or guarantees that their family might not be sold, usually children were sold at about seven years old. They also might be given a fine horse, which would actually reinforce the idea of ownership. An enslaved person can own a horse a master can own a laborer.

-House Laborers- usually worked as butlers, maids, cooks, wet nurses or nannies. They lived and worked closely with owners and knew a lot about their personal lives. They were separated from their families living and working for their owners 24/7. And being on call all the time means they have little time to themselves. The Field laborers thought they had it easier, though often the psychological stress they endured was worse for them. They were usually the ones that snapped and acted out.

-Field Laborer- This group will encompass the majority of enslaved people on plantations. Their houses would often be out of site because owners didn't want visitors to know how the work was done. Cabins were 20x20 or 10x10 and made of tabby in coastal Georgia, which is a sort of cement made from lime, sand, water, and crushed shells. They usually had dirt floors, a table, a couple of chairs, but no bed. Enslaved laborers expected to sleep on the floor. Although, George Washington did offer his enslaved people beds and was often thought indulgent for doing so. Field workers were given two outfits, one of cotton for summer on of wool for winter, though children would often go without. Their diet per week was 3.5lbs of salted pork, 8qts cornmeal, 1qt molasses. Some would appropriate food if they didn't feel they were given enough. If they were lucky they worked under a task system vs a gang system. A task system meant when work was done enslaved workers could use the rest of their time how they wanted, so if they finished their assigned work early they could spend the rest of the day fishing or gardening for extra food.

Class 3

Rice Cultivation and the Gullahs/Geechees 12:00

-As we touched on last time, rice became one of Georgia's first cash crops as Carolinian planters extended their operations into Georgia after the ban was lifted on enslaved labor by 1751. South Carolina had been experimenting with rice cultivation methods by 1691 and success in the Carolina low country soon led to a major rise in rice exports. As the industry expanded planters of South Carolina soon realized their geographic limits and started looking toward Georgia's coastal low country. As a test they sent Georgia colonists 20 barrels of rice in 1733 and within a few years Georgians had proven successful at rice cultivation and illustrated that the Georgia climate was well suited to rice. However, a few restrictions put in place by Georgia's board of trustees slowed any growth in rice industry in Georgia. Do you guys remember the restrictions? Ban on slavery and limit of 50 acres of land per person. Now, rice needed two particular things. It required a large cheap labor force and large areas of land, so Georgia colonists were stuck watching South Carolina plantations becoming wealthy on rice just across the Savannah River and could do little unless these rules could be changed.

-The argument to they took to the trustees was that they needed slave labor due to the immense physical demand of clearing the river swamps, and the unhealthy nature of the air around the low country which caused disease. They were aware by this time that the enslaved population in South Carolina was less affected by the diseases of the swamps and marshes. They argue that Africans are essential to perform labor that they cannot do.

-They may not have known why that was scientifically at the time, but they were right that people who came from West Africa were less affected by malaria. People like the Gullah/Geechees who came from rice growing areas of Africa have a genetic trait (sickle cell trait, 1 altered gene, 1 normal gene) that gives them a strong immunity to malaria that plagues white Europeans in Georgia's coastal climate. This will be one of the reasons that enslaved labor from these tribes is sought after. What do you think is the other reason? Another reason the Gullah/Geechees are brought over in large numbers is because they already have the skills and technological knowhow to cultivate rice. The Golas and the geezis/Gizzis are growing rice on the west coast of Africa when they are taken. The success of rice plantations in Georgia and South Carolina will partly be because they bring specialty knowledge with them like how to make tools for rice harvesting like the fanner baskets for winnowing rice, and this makes the Gullah/Geechees even more valuable to rice planters. One unintended effect of the Gullah/Geechee being brought over together, instead of being separated like people of other tribes, is that they maintain large parts of their African culture and heritage. So the religious practices, the music, and the crafts will come over.

- By 1742 the Georgia population had shrunk from 5000 to around 500 and with fear of the complete collapse of the Georgia colony the trustees, kind of annoyed by the colonists, relent and remove the ban on slavery. This is quickly followed by removal of land restrictions and resignation of the trustees' charter altogether, they are washing their hands of it. The Georgia colony becomes a royal province and now royal governors are handling the land grants. As we mentioned earlier, it's the Carolinians who take advantage of these changes and move into Georgia. This is primarily due to the large cost involved with setting up a rice plantation, from the land value to enslaved labor, livestock, tools, an overseer and various other items. This will be out of reach for smaller farmers in the 1750s. So, what eventually happens is exactly what the trustees were trying to avoid.

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

-The cultivation of rice was one of the most labor intensive of North America's cash crops. It required the draining, clearing, and leveling of swamps just to start, and it relied on rain water and dammed springs for irrigation, which was susceptible to droughts. This system of inland swamp rice cultivation was switched in favor of the tidal flow system using tidal marshes by 1771 in Georgia. These river plantations were placed to utilize the tides to raise and lower water levels, but situated just far enough in land to avoid the salt water. These plantations used a series of embankments, culverts, trenches, and floodgates and drains to control water flow, and they could flood fields at high tide and drain them at low.

-The irrigation system required a lot of land and was only part of the process. After harvest in the autumn work is done to maintain the irrigation system, like checking for leaks along embankments, repairing floodgates, and flushing drains. The fields are then hoed, the don't have draft animals for ploughing - there's no extra land for feed crop and animals are often too heavy for the soft soil. The fields would then be flooded for a few weeks and continually cultivated until planting time in spring. Planting time was decided by the arrival of the spring flood tides in conjunction with the full moon, so the freshly planted rice could be easily covered. Planting took 4 to 5 weeks and was done in carefully laid out trenches 13 to 15 inches apart, 2 inches deep, and 3 to 4 inches wide. The field once planted would be immediately covered with water 12 to 18 inches deep, which protected the seed from birds and rodents and promoted germination. The water was then removed 3 to 6 days later to allow the seeds to take root, which they wouldn't do until the ground dried out. Once they had enough root to support themselves a state known as the needle state, the second irrigation, the point flow, began and lasted 8 to 10 days and had the main purpose of killing grass that had grown during the dry stage. When the water was removed again hoeing commenced, then the continuous stretch flow was released for 3 weeks, covering the plants and encouraging rapid growth. After this the fields were drained and left to dry for 30 to 40 days. The final harvest flow helped support the heads of the rice under the weight of the forming ears, which lasted another 40 days.

- Harvest began around late August and lasted for about 8 weeks. Rice was cut by hand with a rice hook or sickle and left to dry for a day. It was then collected and taken to the mill house to cure. Next the plant is threshed to remove the rice, winnowed to separate the grain from the chaff, and ground or pounded to remove the two hulls that surround the kernel. After this the rice was ready for market.

-By following this process Georgia's rice economy continued to grow substantially into the 19th century and peaked at 51.7 million pounds of rice produced in 1859. However the rice plantations of Georgia were so dependent on the labor of enslaved Africans that they would not survive after the Civil War. Many rice plantations were devastated or destroyed during Sherman's March and African labor would not return. These things along with frequent hurricanes in the late 19th century and competition from growing rice plantations in the southwest Louisiana-Texas-Arkansas and South East Asia would put an end to Georgia's rice trade. The reason being that those other locations can support heavy machinery.

Issues at the Turn of the 19th Century

1776-1787 – Declaration irony of Jefferson and liberty, Constitution, 3/5 compromise to appease south and keep in union

1774-1804 – American Revolution

-Enslaved Africans freed in North as far South as Virginia

– Northern states abolish slavery because it was not a major part of the northern economy.

-Women looked at as "Republican Mother" and a new push for education for women. Parents are first teachers and will raise the next generation of citizens to run the country.

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

-Voting rights.

-1787 state constitutions being amended

-Indian affairs put under the dept. of war in the Articles govt. and initiates a series of treaties with tribes in 1780s

-1780s one of the biggest problems of Articles govt. is economic as farms were destroyed during war tobacco, cotton, and canals and flood gates for rice fields damaged. Crop prices also drop low after the war. 1784-1785 also had record crop failures due to drought and late frost. States start to raise property taxes to war damages and repairs, which doesn't go over well.

-Shay's Rebellion

- Three-fifths Compromise - The compromise counted three-fifths of each state's slave population toward that state's total population for the purpose of apportioning the House of Representatives. Even though slaves were denied voting rights, this gave Southern states a third more Representatives and a third more presidential electoral votes than if slaves had not been counted

1791-1804 – Haitian Revolution

-started with the affranchis' frustrations with a racist society, turmoil created in the colony by the French Revolution, nationalistic rhetoric expressed during Vodou ceremonies, the continuing brutality of slave owners, and wars between European powers

- in August 1791 thousands of slaves rose in rebellion

-1804, the entire island was declared independent under the Arawak-derived name of Haiti. Many European powers and their Caribbean surrogates ostracized Haiti, fearing the spread of slave revolts, whereas reaction in the United States was mixed; slave-owning states did all they could to suppress news of the rebellion, but merchants in the free states hoped to trade with Haiti rather than with European powers. More important, nearly the entire population was utterly destitute—a legacy of slavery that has continued to have a profound impact on Haitian history.

-Louisiana Purchase- Napoleon loses Haiti and decides he wants no stake in Americas \$15 mil all or nothing. US reps only wanted coast/ports for their farmers (New Orleans mostly) and only approved to spend \$2 mil. 828,000 sq miles doubles US. (notes US Hist 1)

-laws in colonies regulating behavior of enslaved people.

Slaves had few legal rights: in court their testimony was inadmissible in any litigation involving whites; they could make no contract, nor could they own property; even if attacked, they could not strike a white person. There were numerous restrictions to enforce social control: slaves could not be away from their owner's premises without permission; they could not assemble unless a white person was present, nor could they transmit or possess "inflammatory" literature;

1. may not read or write

2. may not have weapons

3. may not gather in groups-might plan rebellion

4. may not legally marry- but still expected to have children. Makes owners feel more human to sell individuals instead of families or break up families.

1793 – Eli Whitney invents cotton gin at Mulberry Grove Plantation-Nathaniel Greene Cathy Greene, has long reaching consequences on slavery/plantations. The land

used to grow tobacco was being exhausted and an economic crisis was starting to form.

England, during this time had a growing demand for cotton from America due to changes in the

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

textile industry and new mechanizations to the textile making process. Southern planters switch from tobacco to cotton to meet the demand and the need for enslaved labor continues to grow.
1794 – Slave Trade Act of 1794 – signed into law by George Washington prohibits American ships from taking part in the slave trade or transportation of slaves from the US to any foreign country.

1796- Pinckney's Treaty – Thomas Pinckney- treaty with Spain to settle border disputes

1807 effective 1808, Jan. 1 –

Act of Prohibiting Importation of Slaves of 1807 –federal law effective Jan. 1 1808, which was the earliest date allowed by the Constitution. Transatlantic slave trade abolished by an Act of congress. Even some southern congressman joined north in passing legislation. However, the south had a self-sustaining population (children of enslaved people born into enslaved life) of over 4 million enslaved people and trade of enslaved people within southern states continued. This trade was not prohibited. Thomas Jefferson promoted legislation in 1806 State of the Union Address. Great Britain also banned slave trade by this time. African labor continued to be imported to South America (Brazil & Cuba) until 1860s.

1820 –

Transatlantic Slave trade was declared an act of piracy and carried the death penalty. However ship owners, merchants and officials continued the trade illegally into 1860s

1850 – Compromise of 1850

Slave Narratives

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/>

Slave narratives make up one of the largest and most influential traditions of African American Literature and until the depression era were the primary form of writing from African American writers. The tradition of this style inspired other works of the era like Twain's Huckleberry Finn, and Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin as well as more modern works like Toni Morrison's Beloved. These autobiographical works were a bridge between black and white communities to talk about slavery and the humanity of those suffering under its harsh realities. Slave narratives were never meant to be unbiased works. They were written with the purpose of sparking debate and used as abolition propaganda, which can often be seen in asides that discuss liberty or direct confrontations with the reader. They also serve today as a source of firsthand accounts of day to day life on southern plantations with details on the gritty labor and conditions that would otherwise be lost to time. Many of these narratives sold in the tens of thousands and caught the attention of many readers not as an anti-slavery document, but as freedom narratives that would parallel national sentiments of the pursuit of life liberty and happiness. For the writer these narratives served many purposes as well, establishing their humanity amongst nation of prejudice and proving their independence both psychologically and spiritual.

12 Years a Slave Discussion Topics and Quotes

Liberty

▪ Ch. III The voices of patriotic representatives boasting of freedom and equality, and the rattling of the poor slave's chains, almost commingled. A slave pen within the very shadow of the Capitol!

▪ Ch IV So we passed, hand-cuffed and in silence, through the streets of Washington—through the Capital of a nation, whose theory of government, we are told, rests on the foundation of man's inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness! Hail! Columbia, happy land, indeed!

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

▪ CH XIV night—converse with him in trustful confidence, of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," and they will find that ninety-nine out of every hundred are intelligent enough to understand their situation, and to cherish in their bosoms the love of freedom, as passionately as themselves.

▪ Ch XIX Look here, Epps," continued his companion; "you can't laugh me down in that way. Some men are witty, and some ain't so witty as they think they are. Now let me ask you a question. Are all men created free and equal as the Declaration of Independence holds they are?"

There are monkeys among white people as well as black, when you come to that," coolly remarked Bass.

If they don't know as much as their masters, whose fault is it? They are not allowed to know anything. You have books and papers, and can go where you please, and gather intelligence in a thousand ways. But your slaves have no privileges. You'd whip one of them if caught reading a book. They are held in bondage, generation after generation, deprived of mental improvement, and who can expect them to possess much knowledge? If they are not brought down to a level with the brute creation, you slaveholders will never be blamed for it. If they are baboons, or stand no higher in the scale of intelligence than such animals, you and men like you will have to answer for it. There's a sin, a fearful sin, resting on this nation, that will not go unpunished forever. There will be a reckoning yet—yes, Epps, there's a day coming that will burn as an oven. It may be sooner or it may be later, but it's a coming as sure as the Lord is just."

I would say that Slavery was an iniquity, and ought to be abolished. I would say there was no reason nor justice in the law, or the constitution that allows one man to hold another man in bondage. It would be hard for you to lose your property, to be sure, but it wouldn't be half as hard as it would be to lose your liberty. You have no more right to your freedom, in exact justice, than Uncle Abram yonder. Talk about black skin, and black blood; why, how many slaves are there on this bayou as white as either of us? And what difference is there in the color of the soul? Pshaw! the whole system is as absurd as it is cruel.

Fear

▪ Ch XI A slave caught off his master's plantation without a pass, may be seized and whipped by any white man whom he meets. The one I now received was dated, and read as follows:
"Platt has permission to go to Ford's plantation, on Bayou Bœuf, and return by Tuesday morning.
John M. Tibbeats."

▪ Ch XI gentlemen, whose dress indicated the possession of wealth, frequently took no notice of me whatever; but a shabby fellow, an unmistakable loafer, never failed to hail me, and to scrutinize and examine me in the most thorough manner. Catching runaways is sometimes a money-making business. If, after advertising, no owner appears, they may be sold to the highest bidder; and certain fees are allowed the finder for his services, at all events, even if reclaimed. "

▪ Ch XIV From the time of the commencement of sugar making to the close, the grinding and boiling does not cease day or night. The whip was given me with directions to use it upon any one who was caught standing idle. If I failed to obey them to the letter, there was another one for my own back. In addition to this my duty was to call on and off the different gangs at the proper time. I had no regular periods of rest, and could never snatch but a few moments of sleep at a time.

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

▪ Ch XVI The requisite qualifications in an overseer are utter heartlessness, brutality and cruelty. It is his business to produce large crops, and if that is accomplished, no matter what amount of suffering it may have cost. The presence of the dogs are necessary to overhaul a fugitive who may take to his heels, as is sometimes the case, when faint or sick, he is unable to maintain his row, and unable, also, to endure the whip. The pistols are reserved for any dangerous emergency, there having been instances when such weapons were necessary.

▪ Ch XVI Besides the overseer, there are drivers under him, the number being in proportion to the number of hands in the field. The drivers are black, who, in addition to the performance of their equal share of work, are compelled to do the whipping of their several gangs. Whips hang around their necks, and if they fail to use them thoroughly, are whipped themselves.

Religion – Plantation owners will begin to rely more on religion to justify the enslaved labor on their farms as the bible includes slavery. One favorite sermon is about the Hebrew bondage in Egypt- though they will leave out exodus. The will make specific reference to the Hebrew word Ebed, meaning righteous punishment of God. They might quote Ephesians 6:15 – obey your masters as you would obey Christ, their ownership is biblically sanctioned. For the history of slavery the will look to Genesis 9:25 and the curse of Hamm – Hamm saw noah uncovered when he should have looked away and was cursed generationally. Hamm’s son would become servant of servants, which happens in Canaan, so all enslaved people the children of Canaan.

▪ Ch V It was but a short time I closed my eyes that night. Thought was busy in my brain. Could it be possible that I was thousands of miles from home—that I had been driven through the streets like a dumb beast—that I had been chained and beaten without mercy—that I was even then herded with a drove of slaves, a slave myself? Were the events of the last few weeks realities indeed?—or was I passing only through the dismal phases of a long, protracted dream? It was no illusion. My cup of sorrow was full to overflowing. Then I lifted up my hands to God, and in the still watches of the night, surrounded by the sleeping forms of my companions, begged for mercy on the poor, forsaken captive. To the Almighty Father of us all—the freeman and the slave—I poured forth the supplications of a broken spirit, imploring strength from on high to bear up against the burden of my troubles, until the morning light aroused the slumberers, ushering in another day of bondage.

▪ Ch VII We usually spent our Sabbath at the opening on which days our master would gather all his slaves about him and read and expound the scriptures.

▪ Ch IX Like William Ford, his brother-in-law, Tanner was in the habit of reading the Bible to his slaves on the Sabbath, but in a somewhat different spirit. He was an impressive commentator on the New Testament. The first Sunday after my coming to the plantation, he called them together, and began to read the twelfth chapter of Luke. When he came to the 47th verse, he looked deliberately around him, and continued—"And that servant which knew his lord's will,"—here he paused, looking around more deliberately than before, and again proceeded—"which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself"—here was another pause—"prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

"D'ye hear that?" demanded Peter, emphatically. "Stripes," he repeated, slowly and distinctly, taking off his spectacles, preparatory to making a few remarks.

"That nigger that don't take care—that don't obey his lord—that's his master—d'ye see?—that 'ere nigger shall be beaten with many stripes. Now, 'many' signifies a great many—forty, a hundred, a

hundred and fifty lashes. That's Scriptor!" and so Peter continued to elucidate the subject for a great length of time, much to the edification of his sable audience.

Property

- Ch IV Unsoundness in a slave, as well as in a horse, detracts materially from his value. If no warranty is given, a close examination is a matter of particular importance to the negro jockey.
- Ch IV Goodin then turned to me, took hold of my arm, turned me partly round, looked at me sharply with the air of one who considered himself a good judge of property, and as if estimating in his own mind about how much I was worth.
- Ch VI customers called to examine Freeman's "new lot." The latter gentleman was very loquacious, dwelling at much length upon our several good points and qualities. He would make us hold up our heads, walk briskly back and forth, while customers would feel of our hands and arms and bodies, turn us about, ask us what we could do, make us open our mouths and show our teeth, precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for or purchase. Sometimes a man or woman was taken back to the small house in the yard, stripped, and inspected more minutely. Scars upon a slave's back were considered evidence of a rebellious or unruly spirit, and hurt his sale
- Ch XIV When a slave, purchased, or kidnapped in the North, is transported to a cabin on Bayou Bœuf he is furnished with neither knife, nor fork, nor dish, nor kettle, nor any other thing in the shape of crockery, or furniture of any nature or description. He is furnished w
- Ch XIV It is for the interest of the master that the servant should not suffer in health from starvation, and it is also for his interest that he should not become gross from over-feeding. In the estimation of the owner, a slave is the most serviceable when in rather a lean and lank condition, such a condition as the race-horse is in, when fitted for the course, and in that condition they are generally to be found on the sugar and cotton plantations along Red River.
Ignorance and knowledge

Women on Plantations

- CH XIII companions. She had been literally excoriated. Her back bore the scars of a thousand stripes; not because she was backward in her work, nor because she was of an unmindful and rebellious spirit, but because it had fallen to her lot to be the slave of a licentious master and a jealous mistress
- CH XIII The enslaved victim of lust and hate, Patsey had no comfort of her life.
- days—he would whip her, merely to gratify the mistress; would punish her to an extent almost beyond endurance, for an offence of which he himself was the sole and irresistible cause.
- Ch XIV Thus, upon the head of Patsey—the simple-minded slave, in whose heart God had implanted the seeds of virtue—the force of all these domestic tempests spent itself at last.

Children on Plantations

- Ch VII In many northern minds, perhaps, the idea of a man holding his brother man in servitude, and the traffic in human flesh, may seem altogether incompatible with their conceptions of a moral or religious life. From descriptions of such men as Burch and Freeman, and others hereinafter mentioned,

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

they are led to despise and execrate the whole class of slaveholders, indiscriminately. But I was sometime his slave, and had an opportunity of learning well his character and disposition, and it is but simple justice to him when I say, in my opinion, there never was a more kind, noble, candid, Christian man than William Ford. The influences and associations that had alwa

- Ch XIV The existence of Slavery in its most cruel form among them, has a tendency to brutalize the humane and finer feelings of their nature. Daily witnesses of human suffering—listening to the agonizing screeches of the slave—beholding him writhing beneath the merciless lash—bitten and torn by dogs—dying without attention, and buried without shroud or coffin—it cannot otherwise be expected, than that they should become brutified and reckless of human life.

- Ch XIV It is not the fault of the slaveholder that he is cruel, so much as it is the fault of the system under which he lives. He cannot withstand the influence of habit and associations that surround him. Taught from earliest childhood, by all that he sees and hears, that the rod is for the slave's back, he will not be apt to change his opinions in maturer years.

- Ch XIV There may be humane masters, as there certainly are inhuman ones—there may be slaves well-clothed, well-fed, and happy, as there surely are those half-clad, half-starved and miserable; nevertheless, the institution that tolerates such wrong and inhumanity as I have witnessed, is a cruel, unjust, and barbarous one.

- Ch XVIII The effect of these exhibitions of brutality on the household of the slave-holder, is apparent

- Ch XVIII The influence of the iniquitous system necessarily fosters an unfeeling and cruel spirit, even in the bosoms of those who, among their equals, are regarded as humane and generous.

Sugar Cane from Ch XV – By 1802 75 sugar plantations border the Mississippi river prodcing 5 million pounds of sugar a number that doubles by 1810. The number of enslaved laborers grew faster in this time than white residents.

-The ground is prepared in beds, the same as it is prepared for the reception of the cotton seed, except it is ploughed deeper. Drills are made in the same manner. Planting commences in January, and continues until April. It is necessary to plant a sugar field only once in three years. Three crops are taken before the seed or plant is exhausted.

Three gangs are employed in the operation. One draws the cane from the rick, or stack, cutting the top and flags from the stalk, leaving only that part which is sound and healthy. Each joint of the cane has an eye, like the eye of a potato, which sends forth a sprout when buried in the soil. Another gang lays the cane in the drill, placing two stalks side by side in such manner that joints will occur once in four or six inches. The third gang follows with hoes, drawing earth upon the stalks, and covering them to the depth, of three inches.

In four weeks, at the farthest, the sprouts appear above the ground, and from this time forward grow with great rapidity. A sugar field is hoed three times, the same as cotton, save that a greater quantity of earth is drawn to the roots. By the first of August hoeing is usually over. About the middle of September, whatever is required for seed is cut and stacked in ricks, as they are termed. In October it is ready for the mill or sugar-house, and then the general cutting begins. The blade of a cane-knife is fifteen inches long, three inches wide in the middle, and tapering towards the point and handle. The blade is thin, and in order to be at all serviceable must be kept very sharp. Every third hand takes the lead of two others,

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

one of whom is on each side of him. The lead hand, in the first place, with a blow of his knife shears the flags from the stalk. He next cuts off the top down as far as it is green. He must be careful to sever all the green from the ripe part, inasmuch as the juice of the former sours the molasses, and renders it unsalable. Then he severs the stalk at the root, and lays it directly behind him. His right and left hand companions lay their stalks, when cut in the same manner, upon his. To every three hands there is a cart, which follows, and the stalks are thrown into it by the younger slaves, when it is drawn to the sugar-house and ground.

If the planter apprehends a frost, the cane is winrowed. Winrowing is the cutting the stalks at an early period and throwing them lengthwise in the water furrow in such a manner that the tops will cover the butts of the stalks. They will remain in this condition three weeks or a month without souring, and secure from frost. When the proper time arrives, they are taken up, trimmed and carted to the sugar-house.

In the month of January the slaves enter the field again to prepare for another crop. The ground is now strewn with the tops, and flags cut from the past year's cane. On a dry day fire is set to this combustible refuse, which sweeps over the field, leaving it bare and clean, and ready for the hoes. The earth is loosened about the roots of the old stubble, and in process of time another crop springs up from the last year's seed. It is the same the year following; but the third year the seed has exhausted its strength, and the field must be ploughed and planted again. The second year the cane is sweeter and yields more than the first, and the third year more than the second.

-sugar-house and the process of manufacture:

The mill is an immense brick building, standing on the shore of the bayou. Running out from the building is an open shed, at least an hundred feet in length and forty or fifty feet in width. The boiler in which the steam is generated is situated outside the main building; the machinery and engine rest on a brick pier, fifteen feet above the floor, within the body of the building. The machinery turns two great iron rollers, between two and three feet in diameter and six or eight feet in length. They are elevated above the brick pier, and roll in towards each other. An endless carrier, made of chain and wood, like leathern belts used in small mills, extends from the iron rollers out of the main building and through the entire length of the open shed. The carts in which the cane is brought from the field as fast as it is cut, are unloaded at the sides of the shed. All along the endless carrier are ranged slave children, whose business it is to place the cane upon it, when it is conveyed through the shed into the main building, where it falls between the rollers, is crushed, and drops upon another carrier that conveys it out of the main building in an opposite direction, depositing it in the top of a chimney upon a fire beneath, which consumes it. It is necessary to burn it in this manner, because otherwise it would soon fill the building, and more especially because it would soon sour and engender disease. The juice of the cane falls into a conductor underneath the iron rollers, and is carried into a reservoir. Pipes convey it from thence into five filterers, holding several hogsheads each. These filterers are filled with bone-black, a substance resembling pulverized charcoal. It is made of bones calcinated in close vessels, and is used for the purpose of decolorizing, by filtration, the cane juice before boiling. Through these five filterers it passes in succession, and then runs into a large reservoir underneath the ground floor, from whence it is carried up, by means of a steam pump, into a clarifier made of sheet iron, where it is heated by steam until it boils. From the first clarifier it is carried in pipes to a second and a third, and thence into close iron pans, through which tubes pass, filled with steam. While in a boiling state it flows through three pans in succession, and is then carried in other pipes down to the coolers on the ground floor. Coolers are wooden boxes with sieve bottoms made of the finest wire. As soon as the syrup passes into the coolers,

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

and is met by the air, its grains, and the molasses at once escapes through the sieves into a cistern below. It is then white or loaf sugar of the finest kind—clear, clean, and as white as snow. When cool, it is taken out, packed in hogsheads, and is ready for market. The molasses is then carried from the cistern into the upper story again, and by another process converted into brown sugar.

-Georgia plantations began supplementing rice production with sugar cane in the nineteenth century as it was a good fit for the type of land, near water, and labor force on rice plantations. In Camden County, Georgia near St. Marys, John Houstoun McIntosh added a sugar operation and mill on his plantation New Canaan by 1829. You can still see the Tabby ruins of his mill today, which was a large building with three rooms, one for each step of sugar production. The first room would have the mill for grinding cane; the second was for boiling the juice down and had an earthen floor do to the extreme heat. Finally the last room was where the syrup was poured to crystalize. After this step the sugar could be separated from the molasses.

Resistance

-On the Plantation

People trapped in this system do fight back. House laborers: a cook slapped might burn Sunday dinner when the preacher visits. A nursemaid might drop a baby because it will be future owner. Field worker might work slowly or poorly. They might also let the horse or mule loose. A second level of resistance will be to runaway- steal their own value. They will go north or to Midwest, some give up and go back to face owner like Solomon Northup does. Running away will become easier under new system created by Quaker Isaac Hopper. Quakers opposed slavery and didn't use products produced by slavery i.e. Sugar and cotton. Quakers believe all are equal because God put a small spark inside every person, so it doesn't make sense to put another man beneath us. Hopper creates the underground railroad, a series of safe houses and counted on guides to take people from safe house to safe house. They use train lingo – take a trip-guides are conductors, safehouse is station or depot. If they are caught, they can just say they are talking about the railroad. Travel at night in disguise and only told about next 2 houses in case caught. The final mode of resistance will be rebellion.

▪ There have been hours in my unhappy life, many of them, when the contemplation of death as the end of earthly sorrow—of the grave as a resting place for the tired and worn out body—has been pleasant to dwell upon. But such contemplations vanish in the hour of peril. No man, in his full strength, can stand undismayed, in the presence of the "king of terrors." Life is dear to every living thing; the worm that crawls upon the ground will struggle for it. At that moment it was dear to me, enslaved and treated as I was.

-Harriet Tubman escaped through underground railroad and came back to help others. Helps 60 and always carried a gun to confront those who want to go back. Either keep going or be shot. The programming of slavery is so strong many tried to go back.

▪ Ch XVII No man who has never been placed in such a situation, can comprehend the thousand obstacles thrown in the way of the flying slave. Every white man's hand is raised against him—the patrollers are watching for him—the hounds are ready to follow on his track, and the nature of the country is such as renders it impossible to pass through it with any safety.

-Nat Turner Rebellion

Plantation Perspectives: A History of the Plantation System and Enslaved Labor in America

- CH V Brought up in fear and ignorance as they are, it can scarcely be conceived how servilely they will cringe before a white man's look. It was not safe to deposit so bold a secret with any of them, and finally we three resolved to take upon ourselves alone the fearful responsibility of the attempt
- Ch XVII Such an idea as insurrection, however, is not new among the enslaved population of Bayou Bœuf. More than once I have joined in serious consultation, when the subject has been discussed, and there have been times when a word from me would have placed hundreds of my fellow-bondsmen in an attitude of defiance. Without arms or ammunition, or even with them, I saw such a step would result in certain defeat, disaster and death, and always raised my voice against it.
- Ch XVII speak—there are not fifty slaves on the shores of Bayou Bœuf, but would hail with unmeasured delight the approach of an invading army.
- Ch XVII They are deceived who imagine that he arises from his knees, with back lacerated and bleeding, cherishing only a spirit of meekness and forgiveness. A day may come—it will come, if his prayer is heard—a terrible day of vengeance, when the master in his turn will cry in vain for mercy.

Cotton Plantations

If you remember our discussion on the Taíno people, we know they are growing small amounts of cotton by the time of European contact, which they used in making hammocks. And, while cotton was being grown in the colonies in small amounts, even after the American Revolution cotton was still not an important cash crop for Georgia. At this time Georgians were growing a long staple variety of cotton they imported from the West Indies to the coastal region in 1875. This variety was difficult to grow but easy to separate from the seeds. The main problem was it would only grow in a coastal environment due to its need for a longer growing season. So, it took two important developments for cotton to take off as a major cash crop in Georgia. The beginning of Indian removal and westward expansion as new land opened up to settlers, and the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1793 and its later perfection for use on large farming operations.

Cotton Production Ch XII

The ground is prepared by throwing up beds or ridges, with the plough—back-furrowing, it is called. Oxen and mules, the latter almost exclusively, are used in ploughing. The women as frequently as the men perform this labor, feeding, currying, and taking care of their teams, and in all respects doing the field and stable work, precisely as do the ploughboys of the North.

The beds, or ridges, are six feet wide, that is, from water furrow to water furrow. A plough drawn by one mule is then run along the top of the ridge or center of the bed, making the drill, into which a girl usually drops the seed, which she carries in a bag hung round her neck. Behind her comes a mule and harrow, covering up the seed, so that two mules three slaves, a plough and harrow, are employed in planting a row of cotton. This is done in the months of March and April. Corn is planted in February. When there are no cold rains, the cotton usually makes its appearance in a week. In the course of eight or ten days afterwards the first hoeing is commenced. This is performed in part, also, by the aid of the plough and mule. The plough passes as near as possible to the cotton on both sides, throwing the furrow from it. Slaves follow with their hoes, cutting up the grass and cotton, leaving hills two feet and a half apart. This is called scraping cotton. In two weeks more commences the second hoeing. This time the

furrow is thrown towards the cotton. Only one stalk, the largest, is now left standing in each hill. In another fortnight it is hoed the third time, throwing the furrow towards the cotton in the same manner as before, and killing all the grass between the rows. About the first of July, when it is a foot high or thereabouts, it is hoed the fourth and last time. Now the whole space between the rows is ploughed, leaving a deep water furrow in the center. During all these hoeings the overseer or driver follows the slaves on horseback with a whip, such as has been described. The fastest hoer takes the lead row. He is usually about a rod in advance of his companions. If one of them passes him, he is whipped. If one falls behind or is a moment idle, he is whipped. In fact, the lash is flying from morning until night, the whole day long. The hoeing season thus continues from April until July, a field having no sooner been finished once, than it is commenced again.

In the latter part of August begins the cotton picking season. At this time each slave is presented with a sack. A strap is fastened to it, which goes over the neck, holding the mouth of the sack breast high, while the bottom reaches nearly to the ground. Each one is also presented with a large basket that will hold about two barrels. This is to put the cotton in when the sack is filled. The baskets are carried to the field and placed at the beginning of the rows. When a new hand, one unaccustomed to the business, is sent for the first time into the field, he is whipped up smartly, and made for that day to pick as fast as he can possibly. At night it is weighed, so that his capability in cotton picking is known. He must bring in the same weight each night following. If it falls short, it is considered evidence that he has been laggard, and a greater or less number of lashes is the penalty... The day's work over in the field, the baskets are "toted," or in other words, carried to the gin-house, where the cotton is weighed. No matter how fatigued and weary he may be—no matter how much he longs for sleep and rest—a slave never approaches the gin-house¹⁰ with his basket of cotton but with fear. If it falls short in weight—if he has not performed the full task appointed him, he knows that he must suffer. And if he has exceeded it by ten or twenty pounds, in all probability his master will measure the next day's task accordingly. So, whether he has too little or too much, his approach to the gin-house is always with fear and trembling. Most frequently they have too little, and therefore it is they are not anxious to leave the field. After weighing, follow the whippings... The same fear of punishment with which they approach the gin-house, possesses them again on lying down to get a snatch of rest. It is the fear of oversleeping in the morning. Such an offence would certainly be attended with not less than twenty lashes. With a prayer that he may be on his feet and wide awake at the first sound of the horn, he sinks to his slumbers nightly... An hour before day light the horn is blown. Then the slaves arouse, prepare their breakfast, fill a gourd with water, in another deposit their dinner of cold bacon and corn cake, and hurry to the field again. It is an offence invariably followed by a flogging, to be found at the quarters after daybreak. Then the fears and labors of another day begin; and until its close there is no such thing as rest. He fears he will be caught lagging through the day; he fears to approach the ginhouse with his basket-load of cotton at night; he fears, when he lies down, that he will oversleep himself in the morning. Such is a true, faithful, unexaggerated picture and description of the slave's daily life, during the time of cotton-picking, on the shores of Bayou Boeuf [Louisiana].

12 Years a Slave: People

Solomon Northup - The author, subject, and protagonist of the narrative. Solomon Northup born 1808 was a free Black man from New York. Solomon has several different jobs in Saratoga: he's a carpenter, a construction worker on the railroad, and a violin player, and he sometimes works at the United States Hotel during its busy season. He was kidnapped and sold into slavery in 1841. He remained enslaved in Louisiana until 1853. A well-spoken, well-liked entrepreneur from the North, Solomon endures his twelve years of enslavement with ingenuity and strength, but he suffers at the hands of cruel masters. As narrator, Northup is often dispassionate and journalistic in his approach, but he sometimes portrays his own feelings of despair, anger, and bitterness in intimate detail. Father Mintus, Wife Ann Hampton

Henry B. Northup of Sandy Hill – relatives help Northup's father in slavery

Brown and Hamilton, two respectable-looking white men who are searching for a musician to accompany their traveling circus to New York City and Washington, D.C

James H. Burch & Ebenezer Radburn- A well-known slave-dealer of Washington and Solomon's first apparent enslaver. Burch appears to a newly chained Solomon and informs him of his new identity as a slave. When Solomon protests and declares himself a free man, Burch whips him mercilessly. Burch is a mean-spirited, violent man who lies at his eventual trial in Virginia to be released. William's Slave Pen

Eliza - A fellow enslaved woman sold at an auction in Virginia. Eliza is the first real subject of Solomon's pity, as he watches helplessly as she is separated from her children at an auction. Children **Emily and Randall**

William Ford - Solomon's first master in Louisiana. William Ford is described as a compassionate and caring man who is nevertheless blind to the blatant immorality of slavery. Ford protects Solomon from Tibbeats's wrath and treats Solomon with kindness and respect. He later forces Tibbeats to sell Solomon, likely saving his life.

John M. Tibbeats - A cruel overseer and master of plantations on the Red River. Tibbeats is the first dangerous antagonist Solomon meets in Louisiana. He displays a cruel and violent personality. Tibbeats targets Solomon, and his attacks result in Solomon's near-lynching and eventual sale to Edwin Epps.

Edwin Epps - Solomon's master for ten years. Epps is an especially cruel master who punishes his slaves for his own amusement when he is drunk. When sober, Epps's cruelty is even more targeted and purposeful. Northup says that no kindness or justice could be found in Epps's heart.

Patsey - A particularly talented, intelligent woman and a slave on Epps's plantation. Patsey is described as the queen of the cottonfield, outpicking her fellow slaves each day. She also faces the torture of being subject to Epps's sexual aggression and his wife's jealousy over it. Patsey is whipped and tortured, and her spirit is eventually broken by her cruel masters.

Mistress Epps - Epps's wife and mistress of his plantation. Mistress Epps is jealous and hateful towards her personal servant and slave Patsey. It is clear Epps rapes Patsey, and out of jealousy, Mistress Epps tortures the girl and demands that her husband whip her.

Bass Avery - A white carpenter with sympathy for the enslaved people he works alongside. Bass Avery effects Solomon's freedom by mailing letters to his friends in Saratoga, New York. Bass argues the immorality of slavery with Epps, of all people, in front of Solomon.

Abram - An older, venerable enslaved man from Epps's plantation. Abram is a quiet yet supportive and wise member of Solomon's community on the Red River.

Armsby - An overseer on a nearby plantation who betrays Solomon to Epps.