

# History of plantations and slavery in southern usa



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Slavery in the New World began in 1619, when a Dutch ship brought 20 African slaves to the shore in the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia. Throughout the 17th century, European settlers in North America used African slaves as a cheaper option to do their work. In an article online, it says that “ Though it is impossible to give accurate figures, some historians have estimated that 6 to 7 million black slaves were imported to the New World during the 18th century alone, depriving the African continent of some of its healthiest and ablest men and woman” (Slavery in America). But where it was most booming was the south. Slavery became a profitable enterprise for the south but today it seems very controversial. Slavery cannot only be defined by owning another person, but it also is known to be one of the greatest contributions to the history of the United States. In the 17th and 18th centuries, black slaves worked on plantations of the southern coast. Slavery was a very important part of the colonization of the Southern Colonies. Slavery was an important part of the colonization of the Southern Colonies due to English colonist believing they were better because of their skin color, how they profited in many areas of the colony, and how they had more slaves in the South.

In the south, many people believed that the color of their skin meant they were higher in the social structure. As slavery spread, the gaps in the South's social structure widened (Kennedy, 69). At the top were the plantation owners who own gangs of slaves and numerous amount of land. They ruled the region's economy and virtually monopolized political power. Beneath the planters, far beneath in wealth, prestige, and political power were the small farmers, which were the largest social group. Under them

were the landless whites who were luckless former apprenticed servants. At the bottom of the societies, the basement was the oppressed black slaves. Slavery was a necessary part of the 18th-century Virginia society. Attitudes and class structure legitimized a slave system based on the color of skin. Slaves who worked in the plantation house usually had slightly better housing near to the house and were given better food and clothing than the slaves that worked in the fields. The slaves that did not have a house, built their own houses and tended to make it like their houses in Africa. Living conditions were cramped with sometimes as many as ten people sharing a hut (The Living Conditions of Slaves in the American South). The slaves were sometimes given pots and pans to cook their food. Slaves had little time to improve their living conditions due to the long hours working. Most plantation owners did not take the time nor money to spend on their slaves. Slaves were often given one pair of shoes and three items of underwear a year. The clothes were very cheap and made of weak material. Slaves had very little free time but some were allowed a day off in a month. Those who appeared African were generally assumed to be slaves. Virginia is the only state to pass a statute that actually classified people by race (Slavery in the United States). Slaves suffered physical abuse because the government allowed it. Treatment of slaves was usually harsher on the larger plantations. Some punishments included whipping, shackling, hanging, beatings, burning, branding, and imprisonment. These punishments were by their masters because of disobedience but sometimes it was to assert the dominance of the master over the slave. Legal status of Blacks was different from whites. According to the Southern colonies whites were never assumed to be slaves. Enslaved people were not allowed to defend themselves against violence

from whites and they had no legal stand in the courts (Life for Enslaved Men and Woman). Slave patrols which were free white men were created to enforce the slave's codes.

With cash crops of tobacco, cotton, and sugarcane, America's southern states became the economic engine. The fuel is human slavery. It is said that if the Confederacy was a separate nation, it would have ranked as the fourth richest in the world as the start of the Civil War (How Slavery Became the Economic Engine of the South). By the start of the war, the South was producing 75 percent of the world's cotton and creating more millionaires per capita in the Mississippi River Valley than anywhere in the nation (Wright, 18). By 1680, the British economy improved and more job was available in Britain. Enslaving Africans became a necessity and more widely accepted. With acceptable climate and available land, property owners in the southern colonies began to establish plantation farms for cash crops like rice, tobacco and sugar cane. To meet the need, wealthy planters turned to slave traders. A new industry even was born, The Slave Auction, in the book *Slavery and American Economic Development*, it says "these open markets where humans were inspected like animals and bought and sold to the highest bidder proved an increasingly lucrative enterprise (Wright, 20). In the 17th century, slaves were bought between five and ten dollars. But by the mid-19th-century, they were bought for an average price between \$1, 200-\$1, 500 (How Slavery Became the Economic Engine of the South). Slaves provided the labor power necessary to settle and develop the southern colonies. Slaves were producing the first mass market which was sugar, tobacco, coffee, cocoa and later cotton. The American Revolution cost

Virginia and Maryland their leading market which was tobacco markets.

Before the American Revolution, tobacco was the colonies' main cash crop, according to an article, it says that with exports of the aromatic lead increasing from 60, 000 pounds in 1622 to 1. 5 million by 1639 (A History of Slavery in the United States). Another reason why slavery was important for the economy was that Britain was importing more than 20 million pounds of tobacco per year. It all came to an end when the colonies won independence, and Britain no longer favored American products. Another cash crop was promised which was cotton. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 gave slavery a new life in the United States. This invention enabled the cultivation of the short-staple cotton in a wide variety of areas, leading to the development of large areas of the Deep South as the cotton country in the 19th century (A History of Slavery in the United States). The rapid expansion of large-scale plantation and single-crop agriculture in the Deep South greatly increased demand for slave labor and became the backbone of the British colonies. More and more plantations became cotton orientated due to the invention of the cotton gin. This machine revolutionized the production of cotton by greatly speeding up the process of removing seeds from cotton fiber (Wright, 30). According to *History. com* , one slave could pick the seeds out of 10 pounds of cotton in a day. The cotton gin could do 100 pounds at the same time. Many believed that this new invention would decrease the demand for slaves but in reality, the more cotton processed, the more it could be exported to the mills of Great Britain and New England. This invention also corresponded with other developments that opened global trade. Another statement from *History. com* says that cargo ships were built bigger, better and easier to navigate. New invented steam engines powered <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-plantations-and-slavery-in-southern-usa/>

the ships, as well as looms and weaving machines, which increased the capacity to produce cotton (Wright, 42). The international trade also brought new wealth. With this new cash crop, the number of plantations expanded in the South and moved west into new territory. As cotton became the backbone of the Southern economy, slavery showed impressive profits. Slaves in the south had many economic benefits for the south. Each plantation economy was part of a larger national and international political economy. A saying called "cotton was king" was true in the South but in reality, it was also king in the United States. Plantation-grown cotton was the foundation of the existing southern economy. Slaves provided many other benefits to other, the value of investment slaveholders held in their slaves was used to secure loans to purchase more land and slaves. Slaves were also used to pay off debts too (A History of Slavery in the United States).

Slave labor demand increased dramatically. Demand helped determine inventions like the Cotton Gin meant more slave labor was needed as more land was cultivated for cotton. The demand meant more slaves were brought from Africa. Cultivating these crops of plantation required labor and the south was a place with plenty of lands but few people. European servants satisfied the work until they turned to African slaves. U. S. slaves lived primarily in the South. Slaves in the Southern population in 1680 took up less than a tenth of the population.

It grew a third by 1790, which at that date, 293, 000 slaves lived in Virginia alone which made up 42 percent of all slaves in the U. S. at that time (Slaves in the United States). South Carolina, North Carolina, and Maryland each had over 100, 000 slaves (Slaves in the United States). After the American

Revolution, the Southern slave population grew to reach about 1.1 million in 1810 and over 3.9 million in 1860 (Slaves in the United States). The demand for slaves to keep up the large and profitable plantations increased largely. These jobs required numerous amount of slaves. Slaves helped the economy and got the work done on the plantations and it was cheap for the masters. They harvested things like rice, cotton, tobacco, and indigo. These were then goods were sold for money. Slaves worked in the fields, they plowed, planted, and chopped cotton, and took care of the plantation (Life for Enslaved Men and Woman). They did all the work in the home including taking care of the children and serving the family. The South wanted slaves because the South had so much to offer. They wanted workers but not having to pay them for the work they are doing. This way the South could make more money. The south even used slaves for the army. When they realized they needed more, they look to slaves and put them to work in factories so whites could help in the fight (Kennedy, 76). The Southern colonies depended on slaves whether it was for the economy, society, or their own personal needs. The ones that didn't have slaves still depended on them just because they were beneath them and made them feel better about their place in society. Southern societies were changing its ways according to the needs of slavery because the economy was its foundation (Kennedy, 80). The rise of King Cotton in the lower south rapidly had an increase in the number of slaves. The cotton area of the lower south depended on slaves much more than the upper south was with tobacco.

We all can have different thoughts on if slavery was beneficial or not but it was important to Souths success. Slavery was a very important aspect of the

colonization of the Southern colonies due to whites believing they were superior to blacks, how they profited off slavery, and how the demand for slaves in the south was more than anywhere. Whites believed they were better than Africans. Everyone had slaves for whatever reasons they had. In the south, slavery was the backbone of economic success. It helped boost the economy by growing cash crops on the wonderful plantations the south had. The standards for a well working plantation was in the south and that's why they profited so well. The demand for slaves was insane. In the south, they needed someone to work for them and was not expensive to them. All the work that was needed, they looked to slaves which benefitted them the most. It was a cheaper option for the work that needed to be done. Slavery was important for the south because they needed a turning point in society. It helped economically and with society.

## Work Cited

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