

OVERVIEW

Agriculture has always defined the South and, in particular, Arkansas, since the earliest days of settlement. Though farming has been among the primary economic forces and occupations in Arkansas since the 1800s, cultivation of the land is more apparent in the cultural history and heritage of the Delta.

-cotton was in America when Christopher Columbus landed in the New World in 1492. Can you think of other crops that were intrinsic to North America in the 15th Century?

-cotton is one of the most important fibers in use today. How has cotton become an integral part of our lives over the past 200 years?

-the old adage, "Cotton was King" described the South during the Antebellum era of American history. What does that mean?

TIMELINE

1790s- The cotton gin was introduced. This machine automated the cottonseed separation process and increased profitability of cotton production.

Early 1800s- Cotton plantations were made possible with the arrival of regular steamboat traffic, which permitted easy transport of cotton crops on the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers.

1820- The Missouri Compromise established the legality of slaveholding in the Arkansas Territory.

VOCABULARY

CULTIVATION	INTRINSIC
INTEGRAL	ANTEBELLUM
STAPLE	GIN
ADAGE	INTENSIVE
CENSUS	PLANTATION
MISSOURI COMPROMISE	ARKANSAS TERRITORY

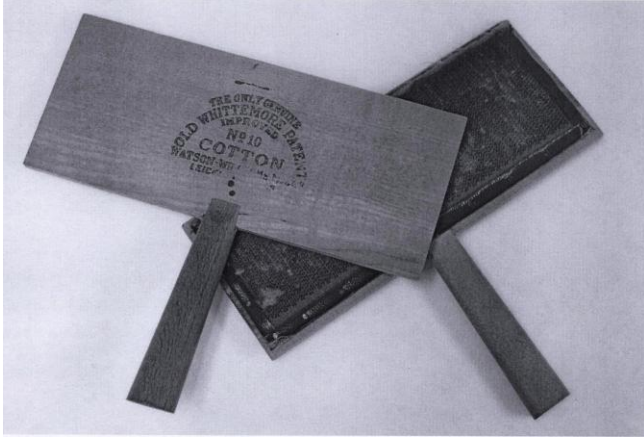
Cultivation of cotton was very labor intensive. As cotton production increased in the Delta, the need for more slaves likewise increased prior to the Civil War. Because of the increasing need for labor to plant and harvest cotton, the number of slaves in Arkansas increased from 1,617 in 1820 to 104,375 in 1860, according to the official United States census data.

Regionally, eastern Arkansas continued to be the hub of cotton production for the state throughout the years prior to and during the Civil War.



From the collection of Historic Arkansas Museum.

WOOL/COTTON CARDS



(Cotton Cards, Set of wooden cotton/wool cards or "combs." circa 1900 - 1930, 10 3/4" x 9 1/4", wood, metal, leather Made by L. S. Watson Company, Leicester, Massachusettes Delta Cultural Center Collection 2011.02 a-b)

How were cotton cards used to separate the cotton seed from the fiber?

How did the introduction of the cotton gin impact cotton production in the Delta?

WHAT CAN YOU MAKE FROM A BALE OF COTTON?

215 jeans

249 bed sheets

409 men's sport shirts

690 terry bath towels

765 men's dress shirts

1,217 men's t-shirts

1,256 pillow cases

2,104 boxer shorts

3,085 diapers

4,321 mid-calf socks

6,436 women's knit briefs

21,960 women's handkerchiefs

313,600 \$100 bills

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

o	c	d	i	n	a	r	a	m	g	cotton
t	g	i	n	c	e	n	s	u	s	gin
b	t	a	o	b	c	a	c	l	t	plantation
n	o	i	t	a	t	n	a	l	p	slavery
e	r	e	t	l	n	v	r	e	n	bale
a	t	a	o	e	e	n	d	b	r	delta
u	t	o	c	r	l	d	s	e	e	census
n	a	n	y	b	n	a	c	t	n	antebellum
i	o	a	e	d	n	a	c	n	n	cards
b	t	a	n	n	e	l	e	a	r	

Go to www.deltaculturalcenter.com for more educational resources.

The following is a quote from an 1859 edition of *The Helena Shield* that gives us an idea of the fertile ground needed to grow cotton in the Arkansas Delta:

"Some idea may be formed of the extraordinary fertility at Phillips County lands when we state one small field of six acres, situated about 16 miles south of Helena, has, this season, produced over twenty thousand pounds of seed cotton. Sixteen thousand pounds have already been gathered, and it is estimated that there are six or seven thousand in the field. The land is owned by our fellow townsman, R.W. Casteel, Esq., who has in the same tract several hundred acres equally as fertile. In truth, there are hundreds of thousands of this description of land in the counties of Phillips, Mississippi, Desha, and Crittenden, and all that is needed to insure heavy crops is proper cultivation, and good season."

