

The Economy of the Southern Colonies

Children IN HISTORY

1 Eliza Lucas Pinckney

Eliza Lucas Pinckney moved to South Carolina with her parents in 1738. When she was 16 years old, her father had to return to the West Indies. Eliza started experimenting with indigo seeds her father had sent her. She worked so hard that she wrote, "I hardly allow myself time to sleep or eat."

After three years, Eliza was able to grow an indigo plant that produced an excellent dye. She gave some of her seeds to neighbors and friends. Within a few years, South Carolina planters were selling one million pounds of indigo a year to clothmakers in Europe.

Make It Relevant Why is it important to work hard at whatever task you have?



Cash Crops

Seaports like Charles Town were important to the economy of the Southern Colonies. Plantations produced tons of cash crops each year, and those crops needed to be shipped to markets in England and the West Indies to be sold.

Adapting to the Climate

Plantations in different colonies grew different crops. In Maryland, Virginia, and northern North Carolina, tobacco was the main cash crop. Growing tobacco required many workers and a lot of land. After about seven years, tobacco plants would use up all the nutrients in the soil. As a result, farmers had to clear more land.

In southern North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, the climate was

too warm and wet for tobacco to grow well. Many farmers and plantation owners began growing rice. In fact, rice became such a major cash crop in South Carolina that it was often called Carolina gold.

On drier land, rice did not grow well. Here, farmers found they could grow indigo plants. These plants produced a blue dye called **indigo**, which was used in the clothmaking process.

Indigo became an important cash crop after **Eliza Lucas Pinckney** experimented with the plant. By the 1740s, indigo was a major cash crop throughout South Carolina.

READING CHECK SUMMARIZE

What cash crops were grown in the Southern Colonies? **tobacco, rice, and indigo**

The Economy Grows

Plantations were largely self-sufficient, but they depended on merchants and others for some goods and services. Traders and merchants depended on plantations for cash crops and other raw materials. Depending on one another for economic resources is called **interdependence**.

Exporting Goods

As plantations got larger, more cash crops were exported. The owners of large plantations often sold their crops through a broker. A **broker** is a person who is paid to buy and sell for someone else. Brokers took the crops to market to sell and bought the goods the planters wanted.

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Location affected how well plantations did. The most successful plantations were on rivers or near ports, which made it easier to ship crops.

Location affected the growth of cities, too. By the mid-1700s, towns along the southern Atlantic coast, such as Norfolk and Savannah, had grown into large cities.

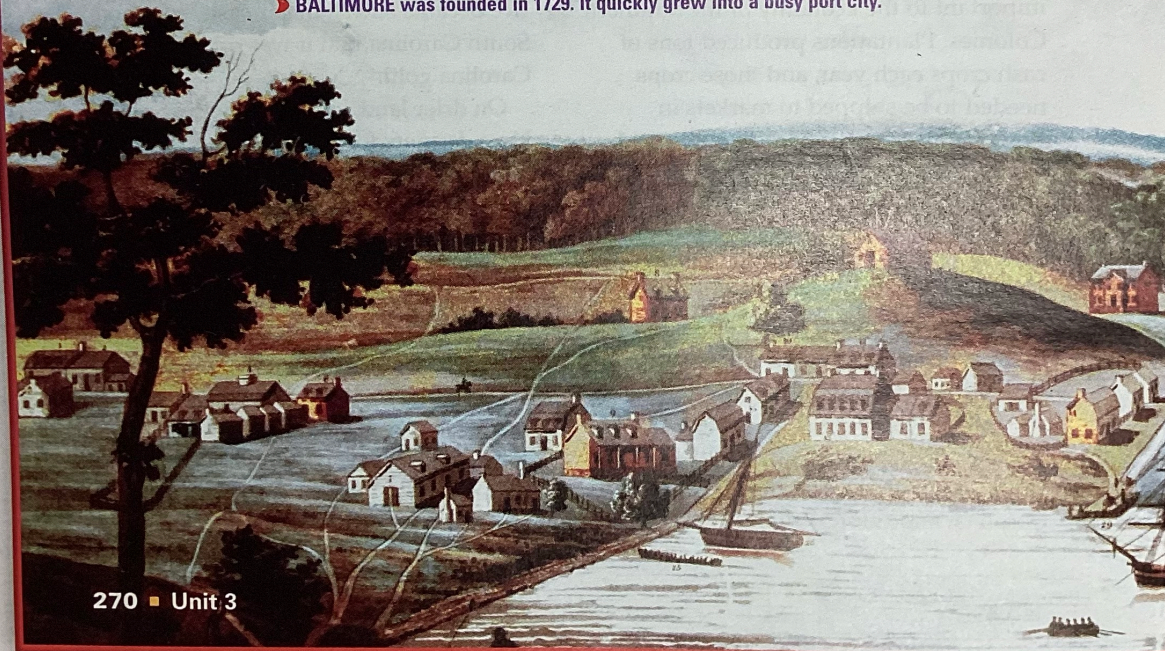
Baltimore, Maryland, was founded in 1729 on the Patapsco River, which flows into Chesapeake Bay. Baltimore exported large amounts of grain and tobacco. As more goods were exported, the demand for new ships grew. Before long, Baltimore became a major center for shipbuilding. Over time, shipbuilders developed the Baltimore clipper. It was one of the world's fastest sailing ships.

Other Industries

Although farming was the most important part of the Southern economy, the region had other industries. Its forests were important natural resources. Forests helped **Wilmington**, North Carolina,

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► **BALTIMORE** was founded in 1729. It quickly grew into a busy port city.





► **SHIPPING** Large wooden barrels were used to ship everything from tobacco to rice.

become an important shipping center for forest goods. Colonists there built sawmills and also made naval stores used in building and repairing ships.

READING CHECK **SUMMARIZE**

Why were forests an important resource of the Southern Colonies?


They provided forest products for export, creating an important shipping center.


Summary

The Southern Colonies had an interdependent economy. Enslaved people and other workers produced cash crops and naval stores. Merchants and traders shipped these products to markets.

REVIEW

- 1. WHAT TO KNOW** How did people in the Southern Colonies use natural resources to earn a living?
- 2. VOCABULARY** What parts of the word **interdependence** help you remember what it means?
- 3. GEOGRAPHY** In what colony was Baltimore located?
- 4. CRITICAL THINKING** How did a farm's or a plantation's location affect the kind of crops that were grown?

- 5. MAKE A TABLE**  Make a two-column table. List the Southern Colonies in the first column and the crops grown in each colony in the second column.

- 6. FOCUS SKILL**  **SUMMARIZE** On a separate sheet of paper, complete this graphic organizer.

Key Facts

Summary

Brokers were an important part of the Southern Colonies' economy.

Life in the Southern Colonies

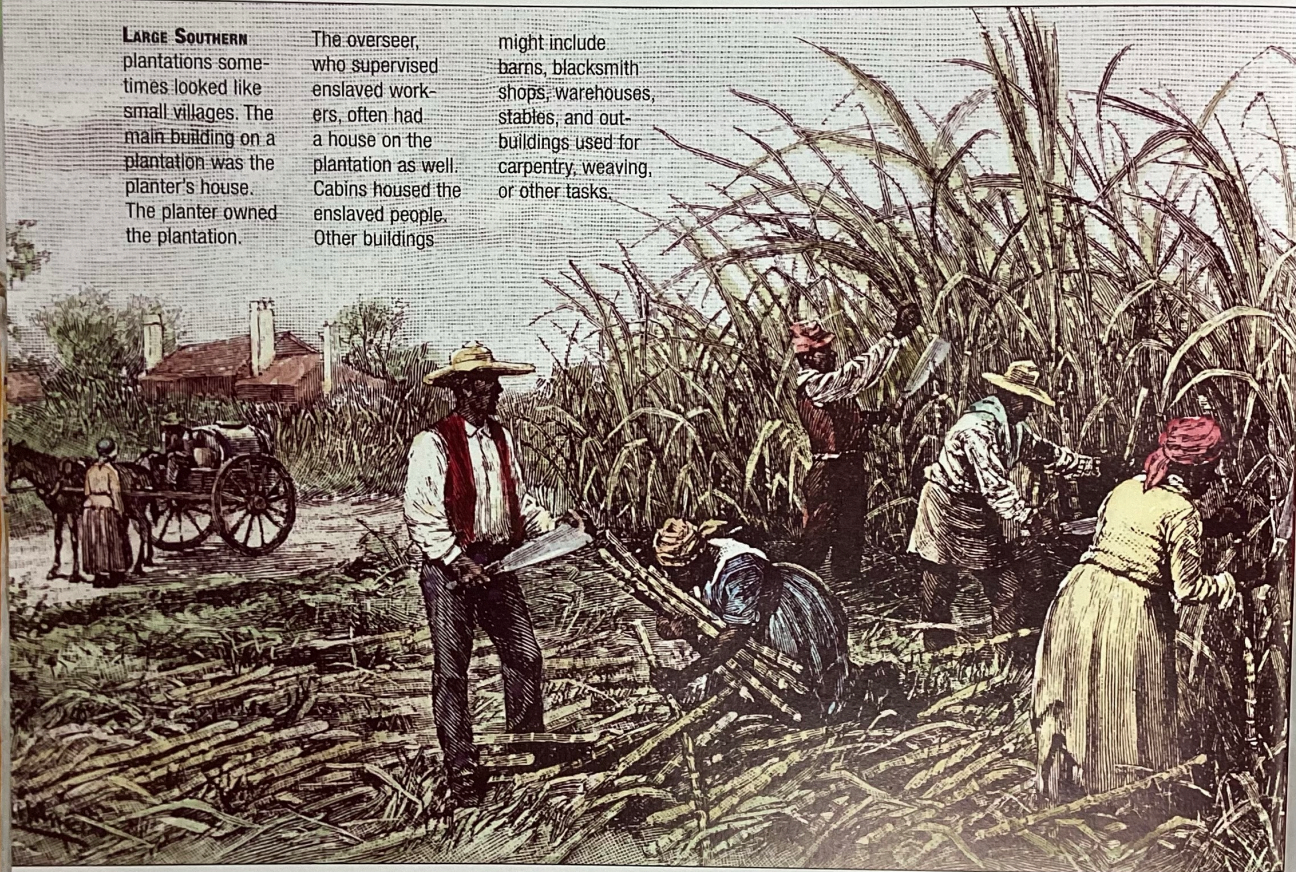
Good weather makes farming easier and more profitable. The Southern region has mild weather all year long. That made it easy for planters in the Southern Colonies to raise crops such as tobacco, indigo, rice, sugarcane, and cotton. But they didn't do

it alone. The slave trade brought in tens of thousands of enslaved Africans. Using slave labor, a single landholder could farm large areas and make lots of money. Southern planters grew very rich, but enslaved people saw none of the profits of their labor. The lives of wealthy planters were very different from the lives of enslaved people.

LARGE SOUTHERN plantations sometimes looked like small villages. The main building on a plantation was the planter's house. The planter owned the plantation.

The overseer, who supervised enslaved workers, often had a house on the plantation as well. Cabins housed the enslaved people. Other buildings

might include barns, blacksmith shops, warehouses, stables, and outbuildings used for carpentry, weaving, or other tasks.



◀ **FARMS AND** plantations were not the only industries that profited from slave labor. Enslaved people worked in the lumber and naval stores industries, too. Slavery became institution-

alized, or part of a formal system, as the backbone of the South's economy. A select group of landholders grew richer and richer off of the forced labor of others.