

# The Work of the Slaves in Cotton Production



*A close up of ripe cotton bolls*

Cotton was grown in: Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Vincent, Jamaica and British North America- chiefly Louisiana. The slaves would clear the land and then dig holes for the cotton seeds to be planted. The seeds were planted one metre apart. The slaves continuously weed and fertilize the soil using animal manure. Other cash crops are planted between to prevent soil erosion. When the cotton bolls burst this is an indication that they are ready for harvesting! The slaves then pick the crop boll by boll using their bare hands. The bolls do not open all at the same time so the slaves were to keep moving up and down the rows to ensure that they get all the ripe cottons. Each slave is given a sack to put the fluffy white bolls in. slave drivers check the amount in each sack and administer lashes to those slaves who do not meet the minimum required amount. The slaves then empty their sacks and hurry back to the fields to resume picking.

The bolls are then spread out on a platform to dry. Old and sick slaves, joined by the children, pick out any trash or leaves that may have been gathered with the

bolls. Another set of slaves separated the fibres in the boll. They are then packed and shipped off.



*Cotton pickers at work*