

Did You Know?

Dataw produces cash crops for the world

Beaufort County, St. Helena Parish, in the 1680s to the mid 1700s was supported by the fur and lumber trade. Rice became the major export product from South Carolina during the 1700s, but growing conditions for rice in St. Helena Parish were favorable only to the west of the sea islands. During the 1740s developments in perfecting indigo as a crop, made this a very profitable export.



Indigo Plant

In the 1770s, the decade of the most profitable growth for indigo planters, Dataw owner Lewis Reeve, son of Anne Wigg, grew indigo as his major crop.



Picking Cotton

In 1783, Lewis Reeve's sister Sarah Gibbes, who inherited Dataw from Reeve, sold the island to William Sams. He began growing "Anguilla" black seed cotton, which became known as Sea Island cotton. Because the Cotton Gin damaged the fibers of Sea Island cotton, it had to be processed manually and therefore was more expensive. Regular cotton sold for \$.10-\$.15/pound while Sea Island cotton sold for \$.59/pound.

When William Sams passed away, the island was passed on to his two sons, Berners Barnwell and Lewis Reeve. In 1850 B.B. Sams produced 26,000 lbs. of cotton and L.R. Sams produced 28,000 lbs. from crops planted on Dataw Island and Lady's Island.

Dataw was one of the earliest and most successful cotton plantations in South Carolina, and South Carolina was the wealthiest state in the Union during this time.

"Did You Know?" is a feature presentation of the Dataw Historic Foundation. This is one in a series of fascinating facts and short stories about our Island