

REINHART

History of Cotton

No one knows exactly how old cotton is. Scientists searching caves in Mexico found bits of cotton bolls and pieces of cotton cloth that proved to be at least 7,000 years old. They also found that the cotton itself was much like that grown in America today.



In the Indus River Valley in Pakistan, cotton was being grown, spun and woven into cloth 3,000 years BC. At about the same time, natives of Egypt's Nile valley were making and wearing cotton clothing.

Arab merchants brought cotton cloth to Europe about 800 A.D. When Columbus discovered America in 1492, he found cotton growing in the Bahama Islands. By 1500, cotton was known generally throughout the world.

Cotton seed are believed to have been planted in Florida in 1556 and in Virginia in 1607. By 1616, colonists were growing cotton along the James River in Virginia.

Cotton was first spun by machinery in England in 1730. The industrial revolution in England and the invention of the cotton gin in the U.S. paved the way for the important place cotton holds in the world today.

Eli Whitney, a native of Massachusetts, secured a patent on the cotton gin in 1793, though patent office records indicate that the first cotton gin may have been built by a machinist named Noah Homes two years before Whitney's patent was filed. The gin, short for engine, could do the work 10 times faster than by hand.

The gin made it possible to supply large quantities of cotton fiber to the fast-growing textile industry. Within 10 years, the value of the U.S. cotton crop rose from \$150,000 to more than \$8 million.

Cotton grows in warm climates and most of the world's cotton is grown in the U.S., Uzbekistan, the People's Republic of China and India. Other leading cotton-growing countries are Brazil, Pakistan and Turkey.

Today, the world uses more cotton than any other fiber, and cotton is a leading cash crop in the U.S. At the farm level alone, the production of each year's crop involves the purchase of more than \$5.3 billion worth of supplies and services. This stimulates business activities for factories and enterprises throughout the country. Processing and handling of cotton after it leaves the farm generates even more business activity. Annual business revenue stimulated by cotton in the U.S. economy exceeds \$120 billion, making cotton America's number one value-added crop.

Cotton is a part of our daily lives from the time we dry our faces on a soft cotton towel in the morning until we slide between fresh cotton sheets at night. It has hundreds of uses, from blue jeans to shoe strings. Clothing and household items are the largest uses, but industrial products account from many thousands of bales.

For further details we recommend to visit the National Cotton Council website:
<http://www.cotton.org/pubs/cottoncounts/resources.cfm>.