

Ships returning from the Americas carried new luxuries that transformed daily life—sugar and tobacco.

Beginning in the 1600s, sugar and tobacco offered people on both sides of the Atlantic new flavor sensations. Exotic and expensive, they made some planters in the Americas, merchants in England, and ship owners who connected them immensely rich. The price was the forced labor of millions of African people. The work of field hands on plantations in the Americas changed the lives of consumers elsewhere.

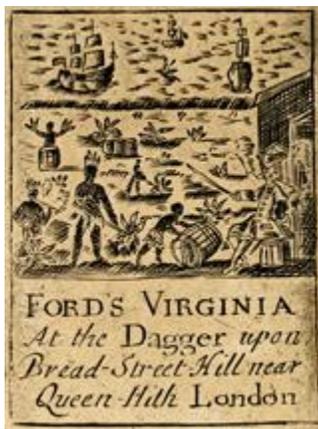
## Tobacco Trade

Spanish traders first brought tobacco to Europe from the Americas in the 1500s. England joined the trade in the 1600s, and tobacco became a favorite indulgence for millions. Tobacco's popularity drove much of the economy of the north Atlantic world. Colonial Virginia and Maryland produced relatively little else, and tobacco profits kept these colonies alive.

Millions of lives revolved around tobacco—Scots and English merchants, Chesapeake planters, indentured servants who worked the fields until their debts had been paid, and enslaved men, women, and children who tended and processed the plants. An international host of sailors connected them all.

## The Atlantic World in Advertising

The connections between tobacco growing, smoking, ships, and African laborers are apparent in these labels and ads. Images of native peoples also suggested the American origins of the products.



**Tobacco label, *Ford's Virginia***

Courtesy of the Jamestown-Yorktown Collection



**Cigar box labels, early 1800s**



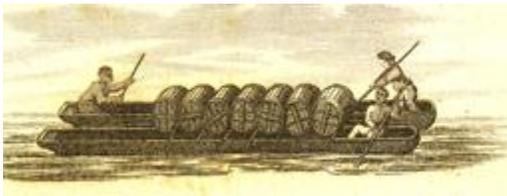
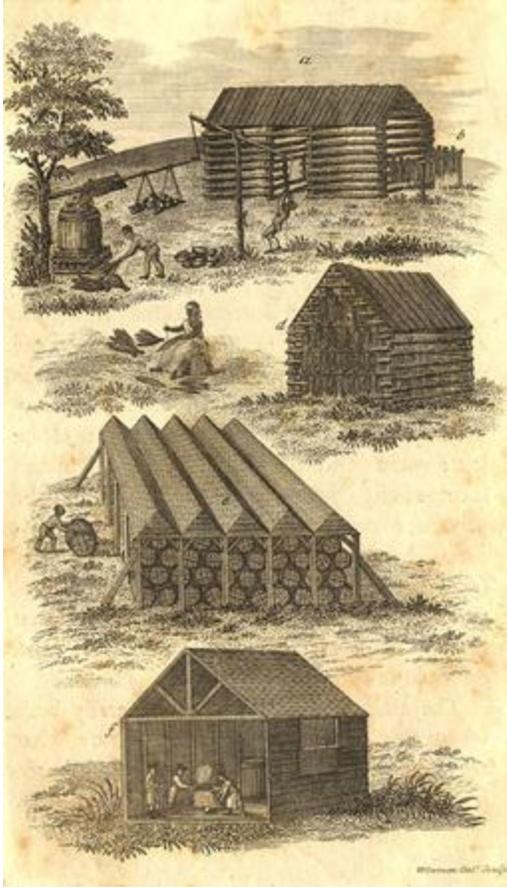
**Cigar box labels, early 1800s**



**Tobacco label, *Ketcherell's, Virginia***

Used on packages of tobacco or snuff, labels like this reflected the trade links between Virginia and England.

Courtesy of the Jamestown-Yorktown Collection



## Care of the Crop

Tobacco required nearly constant attention. Indentured servants and enslaved Africans planted, harvested, and prepared the crop for shipment. These engravings show the laborious process, including drying the leaves in an open building, pressing them into a barrel called a hogshead,

and storing the hogsheads. After the crop was inspected, the hogsheads were taken by boat or rolled overland for loading onto a tobacco ship.

From William Tatham, *An historical and practical essay on the culture and commerce of tobacco* (London, 1800)

Courtesy of the Library of Congress



## **Hogshead**

For shipment, dried tobacco leaves were packed in large wooden barrels called hogsheads. In 1775, Virginia and Maryland exported more than 100 million pounds of the plant. Worth some \$4,000,000, tobacco made up more than 75 percent of the total value of all exports from these colonies.

## **Packing a hogshead**

How much tobacco could fit in a hogshead?

About 1,000 pounds if you knew what you were doing.

Plantation workers packed tobacco for shipment to England. They piled dried tobacco leaves inside the hogshead, pressed them down with weights or a screw and lever, and repeated the process until the hogshead was tightly packed.



Detail of pressed tobacco from hogsheads

Courtesy of the Filson Historical Society

## Taking Tobacco

Eaten raw, tobacco leaves are poisonous. But dried leaves were smoked in clay pipes, chewed, or sniffed as a powder. Inhaling powdered tobacco, or snuff, through the nose became fashionable in Spain, France, and the British Isles in the mid-1600s. Users ground their own powder with a small grater, or rasp, which they carried with a plug of tobacco in a small box. By the mid-1700s ready-made snuffs were available, and habitual snuff-takers were “taking a pinch” several times an hour. Snuff boxes, like these dating from 1750 to 1850, came in a variety of sizes and materials.



Engraved snuff box and grater

Gift of Avis & Rockwell Gardiner



Ivory snuff rasp

Gift of Alfred Duane Pell



Wooden man snuff box



Papier-mâché snuff box

Gift of Dr. Leo Stoor



Wooden shoe snuff box

Gift of Mrs. J. W. Harris



**Tobacco ad card, *Newman's best Virginia*, 1700s**

Courtesy Heal Collection, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum



Gifts of Mrs. Dorothy Lee Baxter and Kenneth D. Haynes

**Clay pipes**

Clay tobacco pipes were commonplace in the tobacco-rich world of the 1700s. Their long stems could be broken off when shared with different smokers.



### Ship *Brilliant*

Built in Virginia for British owners, 1775

Gift of the Tobacco Institute, Inc.

### **The Tobacco Ship *Brilliant***

[View Object Record](#)

The new Virginia-built ship *Brilliant* departed for Liverpool, England, in the summer of 1775. The vessel was part of the last tobacco fleet to sail before American exports stopped during the Revolutionary War. Tobacco was so valuable that Great Britain organized convoys to protect its tobacco ships from Dutch, Spanish, and French raiders. With convoy protection, tobacco ships did not need to sail fast, so shipbuilders gave them bigger holds and greater cargo capacity.

### **Miles of Rigging**

This model contains 9/10 of a mile of scale rigging to mimic the 9-1/2 miles of rope rigged on the original ship. Seamen had to know the names and functions of all the ship's lines.

For CHARTER to any Part of Europe,  
**T**HE Ship *Sparling*, *William Prichard* Master, Burthen about 500  
 Hogheads, 23,000 Bushels, or 25,000 Barrels. For Terms apply  
 to the Subscribers, in *Norfolk*.  
 (8) JOHN LAWRENCE, & Co.  
 \* \* \* Who have just imported in said Vessel, from *Liverpool*, *High*  
*Liners*, *Osnabrics*, *Kendal Cottons*, *Felt Hats*, *Sail Canvas*, *Mould*  
*and Dipped Candles*, *Hard Soap*, *Nails*, *Raw Sugar*, *Fine Salt*, *Coals*,  
*Queen's China Plates* in small Crates, *Scotch Twine*, *Bottled Beer*, *Cheese*,  
*&c. &c.* They have also for Sale *High India Rum*, *Old Spirits*, *Musk-*

*Virginia Gazette*, September 1, 1774

Courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

## Imported goods from England to Virginia on the *Sparling*

Ships brought a wide range of materials and items from Europe and the Caribbean to the Chesapeake Bay colonies.

HANOVER TOWN, May 12, 1774.  
**J**UST arrived in *York River*, the *Brilliant*,  
 Captain *Miller*, from *London*, with a Cargo of choice healthy  
 INDENTED SERVANTS, the Sale of which will begin at *Richmond*  
 Town on *Wednesday* the 25th of *May*, among whom are the following  
 Tradesmen, viz. *Blacksmiths*, *Bricklayers*, *Edgetool Makers*, *Bricklayers*  
 and *Plasterers*, *Shoemakers*, *Stone Masons*, *Carpenters*, *Joiners* and  
*Cabinet Makers*, *Cloth Weavers*, *Stocking Weavers*, *Barbers* and  
*Peruke makers*, *Gardeners*, *Farmers*, *Labourers* and *Husbandmen*,  
*Book-keepers* and *Schoolmasters*, *Tailors*, *Silk Dyers*, *Bakers*, *Painters*,  
*Leather Dressers*, *Sawyers*, *Butchers*, a *Steward*, *Grooms*, *Surgeon*,  
*&c.* I will sell them very cheap, for ready Money, or Tobacco; and  
 for those on Credit, Bond and Security will be required.  
 (1) THOMAS SMITH.

*Virginia Gazette*, May 19, 1774

Courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

## Indentured servants arriving in Virginia

Slaves weren't the only type of captive labor in the American colonies. A British ship also named *Brilliant* arrived in Virginia's York River with a load of "choice, healthy" people who were to be sold for "money or tobacco." They were English and African indentured servants—men and women who would work for a specified period of time, usually several years, before gaining their freedom.

that if applied to, they shall be ready to assist Purchasers in making their Purchase; and they certainly know of whom the best, as well as the greatest Number of Sheep, are to be bought.

JAMES HOLT.

For L I V E R P O O L,

(To sail in a Month)

THE Ship BRILLIANT, WILLIAM

PRIESTMAN Master; can take in 200 Hogheads of Tobacco on Freight, with Liberty of Consignment. For Terms apply to

JOHN LAURENCE, & Co.

Who have also FOR CHARTER, a SHIP of 400 Hogheads, and a BRIG of 8000 Bushels Burthen.

NORFOLK, June 6, 1775.

THE Volunteer Company of *Dinwiddie*

County would willingly engage with an expert ADJUTANT to instruct them in military Discipline.

THE Subscriber being very desirous of

*Virginia Gazette*, June 10, 1775

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

**Tobacco ship *Brilliant*'s first and only known sailing from Virginia**

## The Sugar Trade

Europeans introduced sugarcane to the New World in the 1490s. Cane plantations soon spread throughout the Caribbean and South America and made immense profits for planters and merchants. By 1750, British and French plantations produced most of the world's sugar and its byproducts, molasses and rum.

At the heart of the plantation system was the labor of millions of enslaved workers, transplanted across the Atlantic like the sugar they produced.



From W. Clark, *Ten Views in Antigua*, 1823

Courtesy of the Burke Library, Hamilton College

***Cutting the Sugar-Cane . . .***

In the hot Caribbean climate, it took about a year for sugar canes to ripen. At nine or ten feet high, they towered above the workers, who used sharp, double-edged knives to cut the stalks. Once cut, the stalks were taken to a mill, where the juice was extracted.

Caribbean islands became sugar-production machines, powered by slave labor. In pursuit of sugar fortunes, millions of people were worked to death, and then replaced by more enslaved Africans brought by still more slave ships.



From W. Clark, *Ten Views in Antigua*, 1823

Courtesy of the Burke Library, Hamilton College

### ***Shipping Sugar***

Blocks of sugar were packed into hogsheads for shipment. Workers rolled the barrels to the shore, and loaded them onto small craft for transport to larger, oceangoing vessels.

## **Rum**

In the early 1600s sugar planters in the Caribbean began converting the waste products from sugar making into rum. Rum was first produced to meet the local demand for alcoholic beverages and to supplement the diet of plantation slaves. Before long, it was an important export. Like tobacco, rum was used as currency by some merchants. Like sugar, it was easily packed and shipped in barrels. But, unlike sugar, it could be warehoused for long periods of time and age increased its value.



From W. Clark, *Ten Views in Antigua*, 1823

Courtesy of the Burke Library, Hamilton College

### ***Exterior of a Distillery***

After the juice was squeezed from the sugarcane in mills, it was boiled in large cauldrons. Impurities rose to the surface and were skimmed off. The juice was transferred to smaller cauldrons and then to wooden barrels or earthenware molds. The remaining impurities became molasses, which was processed and distilled to make rum. The entire enterprise—making sugar, molasses, and rum—relied on the labor of slaves.



Gift of Catherine Bullowa (1788 coin)



Gift of Mrs. Olga E. Raymond (1792 coin)

### **Barbados Pennies, 1788 and 1792**

Slavery and sea power were so vital to the sugar-producing economy of Barbados that symbols of each appear on these tokens, the earliest minted coins struck on the island.

### **The Sugar Craze**

Sugar reached Europe and North America as semirefined loaves, powder, molasses, and rum. It quickly encouraged a change of diet, and became a cheap, sweet source of calories. People poured sugar into hot, bitter beverages like tea, coffee, and chocolate. It was also used in medicines and in new kinds of cakes, candies, and confections. The pleasures of sugar hid other risks—it sometimes replaced healthier foods in an era when malnutrition was common.

### **A Sweet Addition**

In the 1700s and 1800s, sugar evolved from a luxury to an everyday pleasure on both sides of the Atlantic. In the early 1700s, this proper English *Family of Three at Tea* has a sugar dish and tongs for taking tea. By the 1800s, molasses and sugar were ingredients in ginger beer, rum punch, and other drinks consumed by ordinary Americans in the *Village Tavern*. A jar of sugar sits behind the bar.



## *Village Tavern*

By John Lewis Krimmel, 1813–14

Courtesy of the Toledo Museum of Art



## *A Family of Three at Tea*

From a painting by Richard Collins, about 1727

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum

## **Teatime**

In the early 1700s, English people consumed more coffee than tea, but tea drinking quickly grew more popular. The taste for tea—another colonial import—went hand in hand with their taste for sugar.



### **Silver sugar tongs, 1750–75**

Used for adding sugar to a cup of tea, these silver utensils were also known as tea tongs.

Gift of Mrs. Alice James Pope



- **English tea set**

This porcelain tea set was made in England between 1751 and 1783 and represents the type of service used by the well-to-do.

Gift of Alfred Duane Pell



- **Jelly mold**

This mold was manufactured in England between 1760 and 1800. The jelly created in this mold would have been heavily sweetened with sugar.

Gift of Dr. Lloyd E. Hawes