



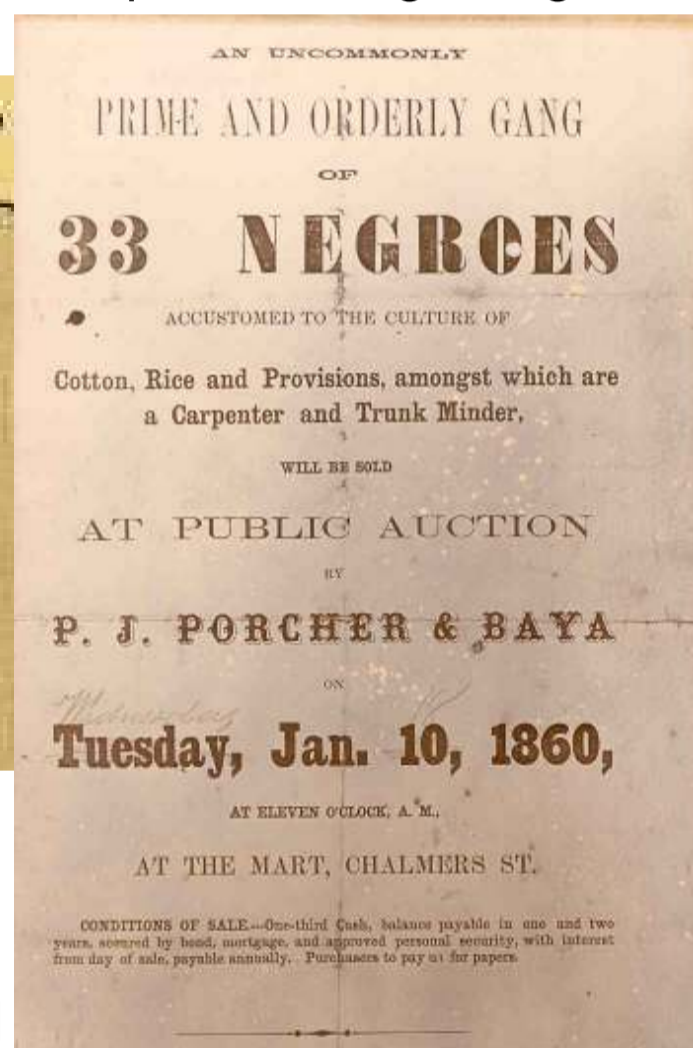
## BEYOND THE BICENTENNIAL – 1788-1838 EXPLORING 50 YEARS OF THE SLAVE TRADE

### THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SLAVES

#### *The anti-slavery campaign*

The campaign in Britain to abolish slavery began in the 1760s, supported by both black and white abolitionists like William Wilberforce. The battle was long and hard. Pro-slavery campaigners arguing that the slave trade was important for the economy. However the frequent rebellions by enslaved Africans and evidence of the appalling conditions led to growing support for the abolition of the slave trade. In 1791, thousands of pamphlets were printed which encouraged people to boycott sugar produced by slaves. Estimates suggest sales of sugar dropped by a third to a half.

Hundreds of thousands of people also signed petitions calling for the abolition of the slave trade. Many supported the campaign against their own interests. The strength of feeling made even pro-slavery politicians re-consider the consequences of ignoring public opinion.



#### *Abolishing the slave trade*

The slave trade was outlawed before the practice of slavery itself was abolished. In 1807, Parliament passed an Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which abolished the trade by Britain in enslaved peoples between Africa, the West Indies and America.

During the years following the 1807 Act, women became more actively involved in the anti-slavery movement. They pressed for the immediate rather than gradual emancipation of slaves in all Britain's colonies. In 1833 the Abolition of Slavery act was passed. Slavery was finally abolished in British Caribbean colonies from 1834, though slaves were forced to undertake a further 4 year period of apprenticeship before they were finally freed. The achievement of freedom is therefore dated from 1 August 1838.

However, trade continued in many British colonies until the 1890s. Between 1808 and 1869 the Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron seized over 1,600 slave ships and freed about 150,000 Africans but despite this, it is estimated that a further 1 million people were enslaved and transported throughout the 19th Century.



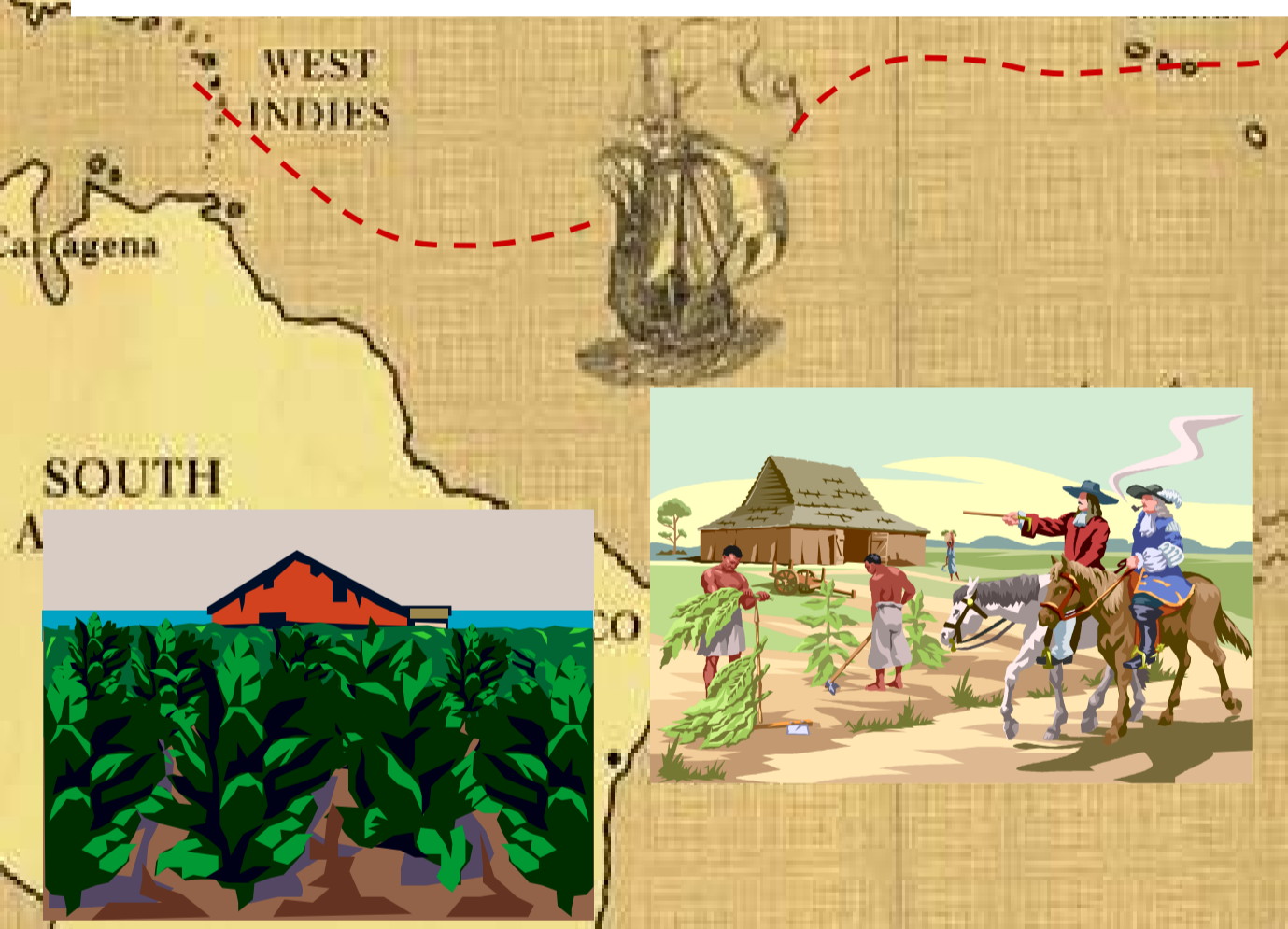
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### SUGAR AND THE SLAVE TRADE...

#### – *the Bittersweet connection*

After the discovery of the New World, vast fields of crops such as sugar cane were grown to feed the European empires. Before long large British and French sugar plantations were developed all over the West Indies. British west coast ports such as Bristol and Liverpool thrived on the sugar cane industry and refineries and packaging factories were set up. But this went hand in hand with a much more sinister trade of the time - the transatlantic slave trade.

A great deal of labour was required to produce large quantities of sugar on relatively small areas of land and the slave trade supplied it. Ships, laden with goods left British ports destined for West Africa in exchange for people.



#### *The Triangular Trade*

Tightly packed into ships, slaves were sailed from Africa across the Atlantic to the West Indies. During the journey they were often chained down and kept in horrendous conditions. Any slaves who had managed to survive the journey were taken to shore and sold to plantation owners where they spent the rest of their lives working to produce goods like sugar cane.

This became known as the 'Triangular Trade' so-called because the route usually taken between Europe, West Africa and the West Indies formed a triangle.

Throughout the duration of the transatlantic slave it is estimated that around 11 million Africans boarded ships to be transported to the Caribbean and America. Roughly 9.6 million survived the voyage to be sold into enslavement in the plantations, estates, mines and households of mainly European settlers.