

Local cotton industries in Greater Manchester



Horizontal condensing engine,
Museum of Science & Industry



Manchester warehouses,
© *Richard Weltman*



Lancashire loom used
at Pennington Mill,
Museum of Science & Industry



Manchester Royal Exchange,
© *Richard Weltman*



Crompton's Mule, 1802
© Bolton Museum and Archive Service

Crompton's Mule, 1802

Bolton Museum and Archive Service

Samuel Crompton developed his first spinning mule in 1779. It was called a mule because it combined two previous cotton spinning machines, the water frame and the spinning jenny.

It produced large quantities of fine, strong cotton **yarn**. From 1781-1791, the first decade of the mule's use, the amount of raw cotton supplied to Britain more than tripled. The mule helped to **revolutionise** the British cotton industry. It massively increased the amount of cotton **yarn manufacturers** could produce, which meant more demand for raw cotton to supply the mills.

Despite the success of the mule, Samuel Crompton was unable to **patent** his design and made very little money from it. He eventually died in poverty in 1827. However, after his death

he became a local hero in Bolton, and nationally known as the inventor of the mule.

Crompton's invention meant large scale employment, especially in Greater Manchester, and the cotton industry generated a huge amount of wealth for Britain.

The mule in the photograph ended up in the firm Dobson and Barlow of Bolton which **manufactured** cotton machinery. The mule was lent to Bolton museum to teach the history of the cotton industry. It became a permanent part of the museum collections when the last Dobson family member retired from the firm in the early 1900s.

The mule is probably one of the most important objects in any museum in the north west of England because of the impact the cotton spinning industry had in the region.



Souvenir cotton bale, 1884
© Gallery Oldham

Souvenir cotton bale, 1884

Gallery Oldham

Throughout the 1800s most of Oldham's cotton came from the southern states of America. Raw cotton was **processed** and packed in large bales for shipping. This cotton bale is from the World Exposition Trade Fair held in New Orleans in 1884-85. Cotton was one of America's most important and well recognised export products. The cotton bale is labelled 'A souvenir of the sunny south'.

Slavery was abolished in the USA at the end of the American Civil War in 1865 but cotton continued to be exported, grown by the **descendants** of enslaved Africans.

With the **mechanisation** of the cotton spinning industry in and around Manchester throughout the 1700s and 1800s, more raw cotton was needed from the **plantations**.

Slave-grown cotton from the southern states of America provided 70% of the raw material fuelling Britain's **Industrial Revolution** at its height.

Manchester's cotton mills produced 'coarse checks' (cloth or fabric with a pattern of crossed lines) and silk handkerchiefs. These were sent to Africa and traded for enslaved Africans, completing the triangle of trade between Britain, Africa and the Americas.

This cotton bale was donated to Gallery Oldham in 1942, by Councillor E Henthorn, whose grandfather Thomas Henthorn was a cotton dealer in the 1880s, and later the manager of a group of Oldham cotton mills.



Interior of the Royal Exchange, 1877
© Manchester Art Gallery

Manchester Royal Exchange, 1877 *Manchester Art Gallery*

Manchester was the world's first industrial city. It was an important centre for the spinning of cotton during the **Industrial Revolution** as well as the **commercial centre** of the industry. The Exchange was where the business took place. In 1874 it was called 'the largest trading room in the world'.

The painting by HL Saunders and Frederick Sargent is an important historical document as it names key individuals involved in Manchester's cotton trade at that time.

The Manchester Exchange had a membership of up to 11,000 cotton **merchants** who met every Tuesday and Friday to trade their goods. These **merchants** represented 280 cotton towns and villages in and around the north west of England.

The original Manchester Exchange was built in 1729. A new larger exchange was completed in 1809 at the corner of Market Street and Exchange Street. As the cotton industry continued to expand a much larger building again was needed. This was completed in 1849. When Queen Victoria visited Manchester in 1851 she was welcomed in the new exchange not the town hall. After her visit the building was called the Manchester Royal Exchange, and a large royal coat of arms was added to the exterior.

Since 1973 the building has been the Royal Exchange Theatre. This painting was given to Manchester Art Gallery in 1968 by the Royal Exchange committee but is currently in Manchester Town Hall.

Questions

- 1 How important were machines to the cotton industry?
- 2 How did Greater Manchester benefit from cotton?
- 3 Why was there so much money to be made from the cotton trade?
- 4 Can you compare conditions for cotton workers in Greater Manchester and enslaved Africans on America's cotton **plantations**?
- 5 Was Manchester 'built' on slavery?