

Mulatto: person of both black and white ancestry.

Under the influence of the United States, racism in Mississippi became more rigid than it had been under the Spanish. Mulattoes, who had held a vague status between white and black and were sometimes allowed more freedom than dark-skinned blacks, found themselves considered "black" by new laws and customs. Free blacks were increasingly restricted. In Southwest Mississippi, plantation agriculture, based on slavery, continued to grow.

Sir William Dunbar, Mississippi Scientist

William Dunbar was born in Scotland in 1750, the fourth son of a Scottish nobleman. He graduated from King's College at Aberdeen, where he studied astronomy and math. Because he was the fourth son, there was almost no chance for him to inherit his father's estate, so he sailed for America when he reached 21. His ambition in America was to make money and live well. After a false start near Baton Rouge, Dunbar moved to Mississippi in 1792.

However, Dunbar was more than a planter. He was the most brilliant scientist in the new territory. He studied astronomy, biology, the weather, and almost everything else he could investigate. He developed a press for making cotton into square bales, easier to ship than the old sacks had been. He processed cottonseed oil and recognized its usefulness almost a century before it was used commercially. Among his other investigations, he kept records of the temperature, rainfall, and barometric pressure, and the rise and fall of the Mississippi River.

Andrew Ellicott, the American surveyor, introduced him to Thomas Jefferson. Dunbar's brilliance impressed President Jefferson, and in 1804 he asked Dunbar to explore part of the Louisiana Purchase. Because Congress did not give the expedition enough money, Dunbar explored only as far as Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Near the end of his life, Dunbar served as a judge in the Mississippi Territory and as a member of the territorial legislature. He spent his last years on his plantation conducting experiments and died in 1810.

Organization of Mississippi Territory

Winthrop Sargent, appointed by President John Adams, became the first governor of the new territory. Originally from Massachusetts, he was a Federalist, a member of the same party as Adams. His job was difficult: he had to create a government out of nothing. Soon after his arrival, he organized a court system and militia and divided the territory into districts with justices of the peace, sheriffs, and other officers.

Natchez was the first territorial capital. In 1802, the government moved six miles east to Washington, but Natchez

Sargent arrived in August 1798.

Militia: similar to today's National Guard.



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