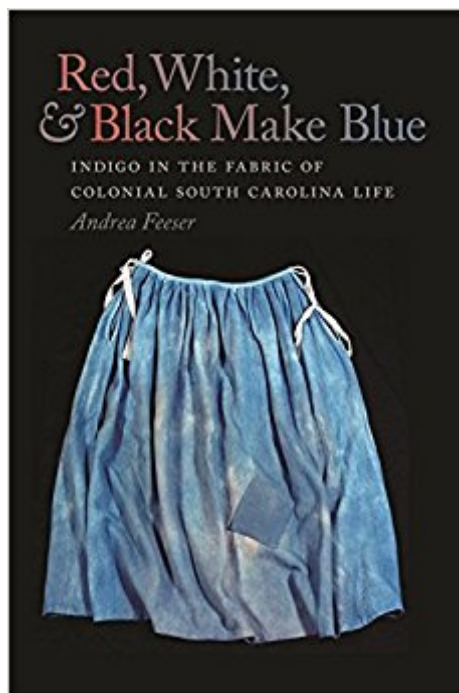




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Red, White, And Black Make Blue: Indigo In The Fabric Of Colonial South Carolina Life



Synopsis

Like cotton, indigo has defied its humble origins. Left alone it might have been a regional plant with minimal reach, a localized way of dyeing textiles, paper, and other goods with a bit of blue. But when blue became the most popular color for the textiles that Britain turned out in large quantities in the eighteenth century, the South Carolina indigo that colored most of this cloth became a major component in transatlantic commodity chains. In *Red, White, and Black Make Blue*, Andrea Feeser tells the stories of all the peoples who made indigo a key part of the colonial South Carolina experience as she explores indigo's relationships to land use, slave labor, textile production and use, sartorial expression, and fortune building. In the eighteenth century, indigo played a central role in the development of South Carolina. The popularity of the color blue among the upper and lower classes ensured a high demand for indigo, and the climate in the region proved sound for its cultivation. Cheap labor by slaves—both black and Native American—made commoditization of indigo possible. And due to land grabs by colonists from the enslaved or expelled indigenous peoples, the expansion into the backcountry made plenty of land available on which to cultivate the crop. Feeser recounts specific histories—uncovered for the first time during her research—of how the Native Americans and African slaves made the success of indigo in South Carolina possible. She also emphasizes the material culture around particular objects, including maps, prints, paintings, and clothing. *Red, White, and Black Make Blue* is a fraught and compelling history of both exploitation and empowerment, revealing the legacy of a modest plant with an outsized impact.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Locating indigo production in both a global economy and the history of enslavement in colonial South Carolina, this book gives us the first tangible explanation of why indigo was such an important crop. Feeser explains just what a "blue"™ meant in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world and does it so well that indigo production makes sense in a way it never has before. (Mart A. Stewart author of "What Nature Suffers to Groe": Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920) The official state color of South Carolina is indigo. Why? Read Dr. Feeser's book. To understand the rich complexities of modern South Carolina, one needs to recognize the multidimensional past illustrated by South Carolina's indigo culture. The history is there along with the material culture, and entwining connections give life and voice to known and unknown characters within a compelling narrative. (Randy L. Akers executive director, The Humanities Council S.C.) This volume stands as a testament to the value of interdisciplinary research. Feeser's sensibility as an art historian breathes life into her study of this high-demand commodity from the eighteenth century and the red, white, and black people who made it. (Megan Hatfield The South Carolina Historical Magazine)

ANDREA FEESER is an associate professor of art and architectural history at Clemson University. She is the author of *Waikiki: A History of Forgetting & Remembering*.

An in-depth study of the culture and material culture that surrounded 18th century South Carolina indigo production including slavery, trade, and many technical aspects. Sometimes I felt like it wandered a little aimlessly in its pursuit of Everything Indigo, but it was enjoyable nevertheless. I expected it to cover some more costume references, given that it is technically about a plant used in costume production

Better than expected.

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