

Nolen Scruggs  
Columbia & Slavery  
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## **Columbia, Coolies, Commerce & Cane: The Intersection of Columbia, Domino Sugar and Slavery**

Although much has been written about Columbia University's involvement in slavery's early days in New York before it was abolished via its staff and students, less has been written on how the university has benefitted from the institution as a whole, even after 1866. While Columbia has not had the same direct ties to slavery (as far as we know now), the university has had financial reasons to be in the good favor of those who very much benefitted directly from slavery, even after the practice was outlawed in the United States in 1866. While domestically, slavery may have ended, the United States, New York City and Columbia continued to directly profit from slavery and its replacement, indentured labor. This paper seeks to examine that relationship through the lens of the once renowned Havemeyer family.

One of the most enduring such examples of the connection to slavery in Columbia's canon is the patronage it received from the Havemeyer family, the same name connected to the building that currently exists on northwest campus to this day. Havemeyer is a chemistry building, which is befitting given the history of the mercantile family who donated the funding that made it possible. This history has been well documented already. In his book, *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*, Craig Steven Wilder details how even in its earliest years,

Columbia had deep ties to mercantilists with businesses rooted in the trade of slaves or products made by slave labor. Wilder writes, "King's [Columbia] was a merchants' college. In its first two decades it enrolled nearly ninety sons of the commercial class, more children of Atlantic traders than any other college in British North America". One such family that is a case example of this relationship is the Livingston family. Wilder describes how in 1679, "Robert Livingston married the wealthy heiress and widow Alida Schuyler Van Rensselaer. The Couple acquired 160,000 acres of land near the village of Hudson and began investing in slaving voyages. Their first venture- the 1690 journey of the *Magriet*- traded slaves, sugar, and tobacco between Madagascar, Barbados and Virginia" (109)<sup>1</sup>. Later in the 1700s, the sons and daughters of the Livingston's would be founding benefactors of King's College. Even from the beginning, the university's financial survival has rested upon the charity of the ultra-wealthy but morally bankrupt New York mercantilist elite. As donations go today, so did they go back then; the hope was that by propping up the university financially, the family bloodline could keep a privileged place at the school.

The relationship between Columbia and slavery does not stop in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Even though slavery in New York City formally ended in 1827, Columbia, and the city as a whole, continued to benefit from the labor of enslaved people well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even as slavery as an institution was abolished nation-wide. No story illustrates that better than that of the Havemeyer family and what would eventually become the American Sugar Manufacturing Company or Domino Sugar.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilder, C. S, 109

Like many tales of industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the story of the Havemeyer family and their sugar empire is one of immigrants. For our purposes, the story of the Havemeyers starts with William Frederick Havemeyer (1804-1874) and Frederick Christian Havemeyer (1807-1891), the son of William Havemeyer. William Havemeyer had been a German immigrant who after learning of the sugar business in London, packed up and moved to the United States to start his own business in 1802. At first, the elder Havemeyer's sugar refining business was tiny. Initially located on Vandam Street with the rest of the city's refineries on the Manhattan waterfront, there were only a handful of employees<sup>2</sup>. In those early days, the refinery was only able to produce nine million pounds of sugar in a year. By the end of the century, the American Sugar Refining Company could do that much in approximately 48 hours<sup>3</sup>. How was it that the Havemeyer's and the rest of the New York sugar business able to jump production that much by the end of the century? The answer lies in the sweaty palms of enslaved peoples, and then afterwards, indentured laborers.

Although the Havemeyers were perhaps one of the most successful sugar families of the New World, they were not the first. Sugar production in the Americas and Caribbean dates back to as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Because sugar was initially a good of the rich and wealthy, production demand from the newly conquered islands of the Caribbean was insignificant compared to goods such as tobacco<sup>4</sup>. Before sugar even touched the Americas, it was cultivated in the Mediterranean, most notably on the island

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<sup>2</sup> "A Century of Sugar Refining in the United States", pg. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pg. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Sugar in the Atlantic World

of Madeira<sup>5</sup>. There the production techniques for sugar that would be utilized in the New World were incubated. Even then, most Europeans were only able to afford about one teaspoon of the product per year. This was due to the fact the majority of the European continent has conditions abhorrent to the production of sugar cane. Sugar cane requires hot, humid regions where the temperature is at least a steady 80 degrees. In addition, the crop also requires steady rainfall and complex irrigation. Once established within the Caribbean, colonialists began developing the seedlings for sugar farms as early as 1513. Christopher Columbus, the Italian explorer who was the first European to reach the Caribbean, was actually married to the daughter of a sugar grower on Madeira and had likely recognized the potential of the islands to grow sugar. Although Columbus died before he could ever realize any such ambition, European colonists had begun to fulfill the potential of the islands.

By the time the United States existed formally, the appetite and demand for sugar had grown considerably. To realize the potential of the nascent sugar industry, like so many other agricultural endeavors at the time, Africans from the western coast of the continent were taken as enslaved peoples to work the land and harvest the cane. From 1526 to 1827, it is estimated that 12.5 million enslaved Africans were taken to the Americas, and about 10.7 million of them arrived there. By 1820, nearly four Africans were proportional to every European that crossed the Atlantic. 90% of those Africans taken were forced into enslavement in South America and the Caribbean. Plantations on the Caribbean where the Havemeyers sugar cane was produced dwarfed those in the United States. On plantations in the Southern Hemisphere it was normal for plantations to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

hold 150 or more enslaved persons (Gilder Lehrman). By switching from indentured white labor to enslaved African labor, planters in the Caribbean were able to skip out on European work conventions including a rest period in the heat or gender divided labor. Even before 1800, with a population only half of that of the Thirteen Colonies, colonies in the Caribbean were exporting two and one half times more in value per capita; moreover, nearly 30 percent of the exports of the Thirteen Colonies went to the Caribbean, a much larger share than the West Indies shipped of their own exports to the North American mainland<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 1. Exports and populations of export producing areas of selected areas of North and South America in 1770**

|   | <i>Total exports<br/>(millions of<br/>£ sterling)</i> | <i>Total population<br/>(thousands)</i> | <i>White population<br/>(thousands)</i> | <i>Per capita exports<br/>(£ sterling)</i> | <i>White per capita exports<br/>(£ sterling)</i> |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| Danish Caribbean                          | 0.215   | 29                                      | 3                                       | 7.4  | 71.7   |
| Dutch Americas <sup>a</sup>               | 0.573   | 100                                     | 5                                       | 5.7  | 114.6  |
| British Caribbean                         | 2.669   | 479                                     | 45                                      | 5.6  | 59.3   |
| French Caribbean                          | 3.819   | 458                                     | 46                                      | 8.3  | 83.0   |
| All the plantation Caribbean <sup>b</sup> | 7.276   | 1,066                                   | 98                                      | 6.8  | 74.2   |
| New England                               | 0.496   | 581                                     | 566                                     | 0.9  | 0.9  |
| Middle Colonies                           | 0.609   | 556                                     | 521                                     | 1.1  | 1.2  |
| Upper South                               | 1.169   | 650                                     | 398                                     | 1.8  | 2.9  |
| Lower South                               | 0.534   | 345                                     | 189                                     | 1.5  | 2.8  |
| All Thirteen Colonies                     | 2.808   | 2,132                                   | 1,719                                   | 1.3  | 1.6  |

*Notes:* a Excludes Curaçao, Saba; b excludes the Spanish Caribbean.

*Sources:* Population data from McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, pp. 103, 136, 153, 172, 203, 600, 712; except for St. Eustatius, which is from Engerman and Higman, 'Demographic Structure', p. 49. Export estimates from Eltis, 'Slave economies', pp. 113–4, and Shepherd and Walton, *Shipping*, pp. 95–6

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Table 1 quantitatively breaks down exactly how much economic value the Caribbean Islands and the Thirteen Colonies offered to the nascent British Empire at the time. The chart demonstrates how the majority of the value being produced by these islands was clearly done so by the enslaved Africans. Despite the fact that the majority of Caribbean economies at the time focused on agriculture, the sheer mass of the products

<sup>6</sup> Eltis, D., Lewis, F., & Richardson, D., pg.674

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

they were exporting exceeded more than double the value of the exports of the Thirteen Colonies, which only adds more context to how the Caribbean was essentially external farm land for the benefit of the colonies and Europe. Even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the links between consumer, the slave trader, the planter and the overseer were readily apparent. In many ways, the business that the Havemeyer's pioneered only stepped this relationship up further, even after the British Empire would denounce slavery in their colonies.

Until the 1820s, sugar throughout the British Empire was produced by the hands of slave laborers who were brought to the islands forcibly through the institution of slavery. Jamaica, Britain's most profitable island, had about 500,000 acres of land dedicated to sugar production<sup>8</sup>. To work this land such that the island was able to produce the massive amount of value reflected in Table 1, enslaved peoples had to be continuously imported. Because of the harsh conditions, the abuse from overseers and the lack of stable family institutions within the community, Jamaica's enslaved population

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<sup>8</sup> Sheridan, R, pg.13

was one of net natural decrease<sup>9</sup>.

| Year | Slave population (a) | Change in population | No. of retained slaves (b) | Retained slaves as a per cent of slave population | Ratio of retained slaves to change in slave population |
|------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|---|--|
| 1703 | 45,000               |                      |                            |   |  |
| 1715 | 60,000               | 15,000               | 42,271                     | 70  | 2.82   |
| 1730 | 74,525               | 14,525               | 41,442                     | 56  | 2.85   |
| 1734 | 86,546               | 12,021               | 2605                       | 3   | 0.22   |
| 1740 | 99,239               | 12,693               | 12,736                     | 13  | 1.00   |
| 1745 | 112,428              | 13,189               | 22,626                     | 20  | 1.72   |
| 1762 | 146,805              | 34,377               | 107,334                    | 73  | 3.12   |
| 1768 | 166,914              | 20,109               | 50,164                     | 30  | 2.49   |
| 1778 | 205,261              | 38,347               | 88,056                     | 43  | 2.30   |
| 1787 | 217,584              | 12,323               | 54,122                     | 25  | 4.39   |
| 1789 | 250,000              | 32,416               | 11,823                     | 5   | 0.36   |
| 1795 | 291,000              | 41,000               | 86,894                     | 30  | 2.12   |
| 1800 | 300,939              | 9,939                | 56,790                     | 19  | 5.71   |
| 1807 | 319,351              | 18,412               | 45,478                     | 14  | 2.47   |

Notes: (a) Slave population estimates are arrived at from, John McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 609–612; Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1967), 95–96. (b) The estimates for the number of retained slaves is derived from the total number of Africans imported into the island minus the total number of Africans re-exported to the foreign West Indies and the mainland colonies. See [Table 4](#).

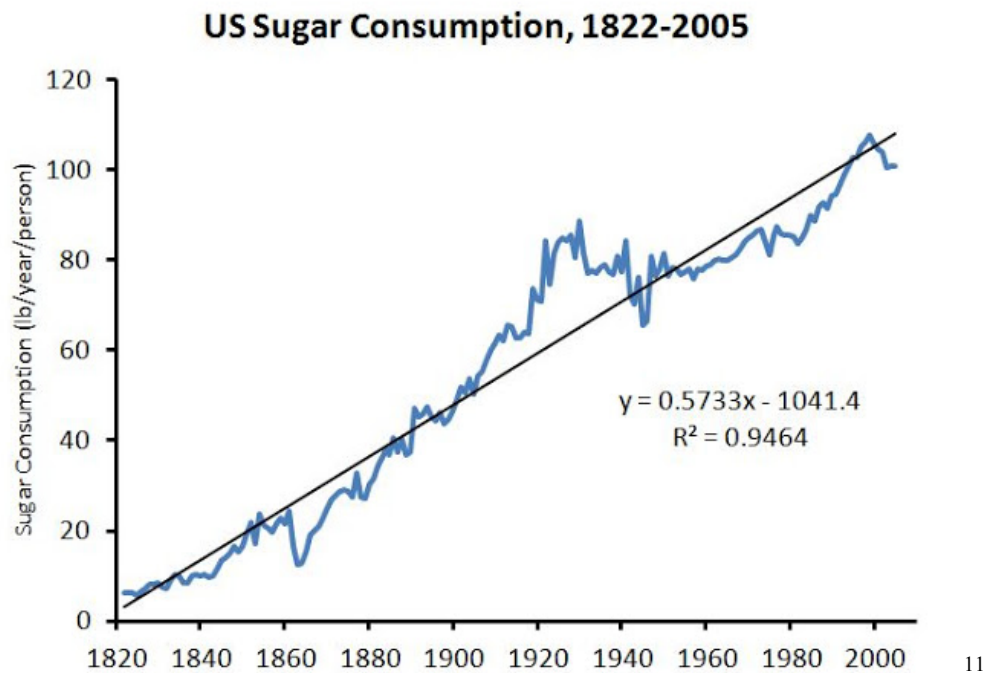
**Table 2: Jamaican Slave Imports and Change in Population 1703-1807<sup>10</sup>**

Table 2 above demonstrates this numerically. As we can clearly see, the enslaved population in Jamaica continued to grow each year until the trade of enslaved peoples was outlawed in 1807 throughout the British Empire. This reflects growing demand from Europeans of the products that the Caribbean produced; tobacco, sugar, molasses. It also reflects how even after slavery, the British were needed to find a way to continue producing cheap labor in order to match growing consumer demand from Western populations. In a graph plotted by independent health and diet consultants, the growth of sugar's popularity with US audiences is remarkably linear (Guyenet). So how did Western markets continue to satisfy their sweet tooth even after the slave trade in the British Empire ended in 1807 and the enslavement of people ended throughout the British

<sup>9</sup> Reid, A., 160

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

Empire in 1834? The answer is that while the formal legal institution of slavery ended, the underlying principles of exploitation that it was founded on never really disappeared.



Due to the threat of constant rebellions from enslaved peoples, as well as a growing abolition movement, in conjunction with the inability to procure new slaves due to the abolition of the slave trade, the abolition movement grew significantly in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although enslaved peoples received their freedom in 1834, they were often conscripted right back to the plantation that they had worked on previously, this time as “apprentices”. This was a simply a legal formality. As apprentices, enslaved peoples were still tied to their former owners. Should they run away, the governor threatened, they would be, “be brought back by the Maroons and Police, and have to remain in APPRENTICESHIP longer than those who behave well”<sup>12</sup>. It wasn’t until 1838 in Jamaica that the formerly enslaved peoples were formally made into wage laborers. To

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<sup>11</sup> Guyenet, S.

<sup>12</sup> Letter addressed to the apprentices. Jamaica, 1834.



offset the costs of actually having to pay the laborers, the British, like so many other of its colonial rivals at the time, resorted to the strategy of importing indentured laborers from Asia to work in the Caribbean.

Capitalizing on recent territorial acquisitions in Asia and the Indian subcontinent, British administrators and agricultural forces (as well as other European empire-nations) began providing the means for the immigration of millions of Chinese and Indian indentured servants to replace the positions that the enslaved Africans once held.

How did these workers, informally known as ‘coolies’, become a part of the colonial projects? And how did they fare once they arrived in South America and the Caribbean? The conditions that indentured laborers from Southern and Eastern Asia were well documented, even in their contemporary time. In 1857, the New York Times reported on a cargo ship from China. The paper reported how on a four month voyage from Amoy to Cuba, “Of the five hundred and eighty embarked, eighty had perished before the voyage ended”. The vessel was, “cast away near Havana on the 28<sup>th</sup> ult”. It was regrettably in the Times’ words, “a vessel owned in New York, and well known in the mercantile marine for its speed”<sup>13</sup>. Once on ships, the indentured workers suffered oppressive conditions. There was few crew, so violence was utilized often to keep the human cargo in check. Just as with slavery, the voyage itself to the Caribbean was a horrific experience.

Once they arrived in the Caribbean or South America, the working conditions that the Indian and Chinese workers faced were horrible. In her part biography, part historical narrative, coolie descendent Gaiutra Bahadur describes how the British worked the

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<sup>13</sup> Coolie Immigration. (1859, August 13)

indentured workers during cane sugar depression. She elaborates how, “as revenues fell, the only way for planters to maintain profits was to lower costs; they did this by squeezing more work, for less pay, out of the indentured”<sup>14</sup>. Even during their lifetimes, the exploitation that these people faced was well documented. Because indentured workers faced forced labor for periods of up to seven years, the overseers interest was in, “extracting the largest amount of service within that term”. Because of the terms of their arrival to Guiana (or elsewhere), and a lack of policy about returning the workers to their homelands, the workers were, “slaves, nominally for seven years; but, substantially, for life since no provision is made for restoring them to their homes, and, while in Cuba, their portion is the inevitable yoke”<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, even if the indentured worker did reach home, often times they faced isolation just for leaving. For example, in Hinduism, to cross the, “*kala pani*, ‘the dark waters,’ of the Indian Ocean”, meant to lose caste<sup>16</sup>. Once they had crossed the ocean, whether consensually or not, these workers quickly lost control of their individual freedoms. Once in they arrived at their final destination, their existence oftentimes became confined to it.

Not only is it the conditions that indentured laborers faced that draws comparisons to slavery, it is also the reality that their ancestors live today that furthers the parallels. In Bahadur’s own account of how she searched for records of her great-grandmother’s past, it becomes apparent how difficult it is to confirm details about the past and one’s ancestors. In order to track down just a few details of her great-grandmother’s past, Bahadur had to travel to Guiana and scour the archives for an immigration pass issued to

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<sup>14</sup> Bahadur, G, pg.76

<sup>15</sup> Coolie Immigration. (1859, August 13)

<sup>16</sup> Bahadur, G, pg.19

her relative. Even then, on a brittle piece of paper, all Bahadur received was a name (misspelled), age, height and caste. This information and a few additional details about pregnancy and scars are all the colonial enterprise cared for. To find out more about the community her great-grandmother had come from, Bahadur also had to travel to the remote corners of India, where even then only more questions waited in answer.

Although the village from which Bahadur can claim ancestry still exists, even the eldest of the community could not provide her with a story that lined up with the details that she herself knew<sup>17</sup>. Just as how it is extremely difficult for many enslaved peoples descendants to learn about their ancestors, so to is it extremely difficult for the descendants of coolie's to discover their past too. Although Indian or Chinese in appearance, oftentimes this diaspora faces sheer alienation from their ancestral communities by virtue of simply leaving their homeland.

Just as how the Northern economy had benefitted greatly from slavery in the South, so too did it benefit from slavery abroad. These indentured workers were headed for, “the guano islands of the pacific...the mines of Peru and Bolivia...the British Colonies adjacent to Demerara, and to the British Islands in the West India Archipelago...Cuba and Porto Rico”<sup>18</sup>. The diversity of the destinations that these laborers faced is a further reflection of just how in demand their labor was in the aftermath of slavery. Just as how North America and Western Europe has developed an insatiable taste for the cheap fix of sugar, so too has the labor market of Southern America and the Caribbean been occupied with a similar fix for inexpensive or virtually free labor.

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<sup>17</sup> Bahadur, G, pg.21

<sup>18</sup> Coolie Immigration. (1859, August 13)

It is at the same time period that indentured laborers were being imported to the New World that the Havemeyer's grew their relatively small sugar operation into a monopoly. While it was no doubt the renewed source of cheap labor in the form of coolie workers that had propelled sugar families like the Havemeyer to riches, few things are monocausal. It was also the result of several technological advances in sugar processing. These advances were well documented, amongst the Havemeyers themselves too. Although back in those days, sugar refining required 20 to 30 steps. Devices like the centrifugal machine, the vacuum pan, the boneblack filter and the polariscope has revolutionized the methods of refining sugar<sup>19</sup>. Although the fundamentals of refining sugar then were the same as they have been in the early-Colonial days, new tools allowed the refiners to extract even more sugar product from the cane. Whereas previously, to reach a state of consumption, it is necessary to melt, clarify, filter and crystallize by boiling the product. Sugar was then shaped into molds and baked. Because of the invention of the centrifugal machine and granulator however, granulated sugar became a possibility. The granulator can both dry the sugar and screen it from the unwanted bits. The massive

The importance of science and precision to the sugar business is perhaps reflected most by the relationship of Columbia professor Frederick Charles Chandler to the Havemeyers. According to a centennial report made by the Office of Public Affairs, Chandler arrived to Columbia as a janitor and instructor before being appointed a professor in 1864 within the School of Mines. He became dean a year later<sup>20</sup>. Although Chandler's primary duties were teaching, he spent a considerable amount of time outside

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<sup>19</sup> "A Century of Sugar Refining in the United States", pg. 11

<sup>20</sup> Nelson, B., 2

the classroom consulting for the NYC Metropolitan Board of Health and more importantly, the Havemeyer family. In addition to giving direct consultation to the family, Chandler also supplied them his chemistry graduates for the company's own laboratories. It is through these ties to the Havemeyer's via Chandler that Havemeyer Hall received most of its funding in 1896, during the prime of the American Sugar Refining Company. Chandler was able to convince Frederick Havemeyer's grandson, Harry, to contribute \$450,000 (about \$13 million with today's inflation)<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, Chandler's relationship to the Havemeyer's is crucial to linking the morally deficient sugar industry of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to Columbia University. Chandler's relationship demonstrates how it was Columbia faculty and graduates who were the intellectual muscle of the sugar industry, but also how the relationship between academia and industry was reciprocal, a theme that has been echoed throughout Columbia's history. In return for intellectual capital, the university has received financial support.

How was it though, that the Havemeyer's were able to go from being small sugar refiners to one of the most influential and wealthy families in not only New York City but the United States? Their wealth is directly tied not only to unethical business practice abroad, but domestically too. Although the Havemeyer's sugar business first started in Manhattan, Frederick C. Havemeyer eventually relocated it to Brooklyn on Vandam Street, close to the water. One of the first refiners to make the moves to Brooklyn, the Havemeyer's eventually had at the time in 1858, the largest sugar refining plant in the world. At this time, the company was known as Havemeyers & Elder Refinery. Initially, the Havemeyer's edge was simply the size of their refining facility. In a self-descriptive

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid

passage about the company, a description of the factory on Vandam between Third and Fourth Street is given<sup>22</sup>. The buildings occupied, “fully five-city blocks”, and they contained, “more than sixteen acres of floors, with a water frontage of thirty-three rods, and a depth of water sufficient to accommodate the largest ships engaged in the trade”<sup>23</sup>. On its docks, the factory would receive, “the products of every sugar-producing country; some in hogsheads, some in boxes, some in bamboo baskets, some in bags, and some in mats made of fibrous vegetable resembling the palm-leaf”. The sugar mostly came from Cuba, Puerto Rico, the English, French and Dutch West Indies, Brazil, Java, China, India, and the Philippine Islands. It was the size of the physical space itself that allowed the Havemeyer’s to absorb the highest amount of raw sugar and produce a higher output than any of their rivals.

It was due to their relative size compared to their rivals that the Havemeyer family had the leverage to form the monopolistic Sugar Trust. Although Frederick Havemeyer was instrumental in establishing a foot for his family’s sugar business within the city, it was the next generation of Havemeyer’s, most notably Henry Osborne Havemeyer, that would turn the company into an empire. Henry Osborne Havemeyer, who was not an affiliate of Columbia but partly responsible for the donation made to Columbia, created the American Sugar Refining Company as a means of unifying sugar producers on the East Coast for their mutual benefit, which was the formal title of the Sugar Trust. Because of improvements in refining technology, as well as continued access to a cheap labor pool in the Caribbean and South America, sugar became unprofitable towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In order to ensure a stability of prices, the Havemeyer’s secretly

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<sup>22</sup> Industrial America. “The Sugar Refinery of Havemeyers & Elder, New York”, pg.11

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

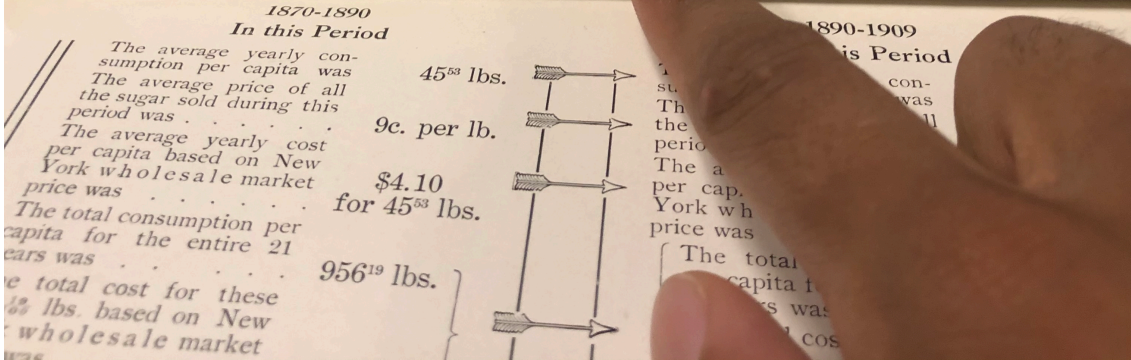
unified the leading sugar manufacturers at the time. In the eventual sensational case anti-trust case covered by the New York Times, it was reported that, “Henry O. Havemeyer, Charles H. Senff and Washington B. Thomas, now President of the American Sugar Refining Company, appointed a committee to purchase and acquire the factories of all and any independent companies throughout the country and a special committee to fix and determine the price of refined sugar throughout the United States”<sup>24</sup>. Table 3 held within the American Sugar Refining Company archives at the Brooklyn Historical Society visibly demonstrates this concerted effort.

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<sup>24</sup> Federal Attack On Sugar Trust. (1910, November 29)

Table Showing Prices Before and After the Organization of the American Sugar Refining Company

| 1870-1890 (inc.)<br>BEFORE<br>the organization of the American Sugar Refining Co. |   |                                 |   | 1891-1909 (inc.)<br>AFTER<br>the organization of the American Sugar Refining Co. |   |                                 |   |
|---|---|---------------------------------|---|--|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Year  | Yearly consumption per capita in pounds | New York wholesale market price | Wholesale cost of yearly consumption per capita | Year   | Yearly consumption per capita in pounds | New York wholesale market price | Wholesale cost of yearly consumption per capita |
| 1870  | 35 <sup>20</sup> pounds                 | 13 <sup>01</sup> cents          | \$4.77  | 1891   | 67 <sup>45</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>55</sup> cents           | \$3.14  |
| 1871  | 37 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 13 <sup>12</sup> cents          | 4.93  | 1892   | 63 <sup>76</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>55</sup> cents           | 2.77  |
| 1872  | 39 <sup>10</sup> pounds                 | 12 <sup>27</sup> cents          | 4.84  | 1893   | 63 <sup>83</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>44</sup> cents           | 3.09  |
| 1873  | 40 <sup>20</sup> pounds                 | 11 <sup>50</sup> cents          | 4.56  | 1894   | 66 <sup>24</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>12</sup> cents           | 2.75  |
| 1874  | 41 pounds                               | 10 <sup>00</sup> cents          | 4.31  | 1895   | 64 <sup>23</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>12</sup> cents           | 2.65  |
| 1875  | 40 <sup>20</sup> pounds                 | 10 <sup>01</sup> cents          | 4.26  | 1896   | 60 <sup>90</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>03</sup> cents           | 2.76  |
| 1876  | 38 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 10 <sup>51</sup> cents          | 4.05  | 1897   | 63 <sup>50</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>07</sup> cents           | 2.86  |
| 1877  | 46 pounds                               | 10 <sup>73</sup> cents          | 4.94  | 1898   | 60 <sup>20</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>07</sup> cents           | 2.99  |
| 1878  | 38 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 9 <sup>7</sup> cents            | 3.40  | 1899   | 61 pounds                               | 4 <sup>22</sup> cents           | 2.70  |
| 1879  | 40 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 9 <sup>81</sup> cents           | 3.59  | 1899   | 66 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>32</sup> cents           | 3.54  |
| 1880  | 42 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 9 <sup>90</sup> cents           | 4.29  | 1900   | 69 <sup>70</sup> pounds                 | 5 <sup>5</sup> cents            | 3.52  |
| 1881  | 44 <sup>20</sup> pounds                 | 9 <sup>70</sup> cents           | 4.29  | 1901   | 72 <sup>20</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>46</sup> cents           | 3.25  |
| 1882  | 48 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 9 <sup>50</sup> cents           | 4.53  | 1902   | 70 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>4</sup> cents            | 2.99  |
| 1883  | 51 <sup>10</sup> pounds                 | 8 <sup>55</sup> cents           | 4.42  | 1903   | 75 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>77</sup> cents           | 3.59  |
| 1884  | 53 <sup>10</sup> pounds                 | 6 <sup>75</sup> cents           | 3.60  | 1904   | 70 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 5 <sup>26</sup> cents           | 3.71  |
| 1885  | 51 <sup>00</sup> pounds                 | 6 <sup>23</sup> cents           | 3.38  | 1905   | 76 <sup>10</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>51</sup> cents           | 3.43  |
| 1886  | 52 <sup>25</sup> pounds                 | 6 <sup>23</sup> cents           | 3.27  | 1906   | 77 <sup>34</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>05</sup> cents           | 3.61  |
| 1887  | 53 <sup>11</sup> pounds                 | 6 <sup>2</sup> cents            | 3.20  | 1907   | 81 <sup>17</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>96</sup> cents           | 4.03  |
| 1888  | 54 <sup>23</sup> pounds                 | 7 <sup>18</sup> cents           | 3.89  | 1908   | 81 <sup>18</sup> pounds                 | 4 <sup>76</sup> cents           | 3.86  |
| 1889  | 52 <sup>64</sup> pounds                 | 7 <sup>89</sup> cents           | 4.15  |  |   |                                 |   |
| 1890  | 54 <sup>36</sup> pounds                 | 6 <sup>27</sup> cents           | 3.42  |  |   |                                 |   |
|   | 956 <sup>19</sup> pounds                |                                 | \$86.00   |  | 1313 <sup>31</sup> pounds               |                                 | \$61.24   |



**Table 3: Showing Prices Before and After the Organization of the American Sugar Refining Company**

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From 1870 to 1890, the per capita rate of sugar consumption increased greatly. By 1890, Americans were eating about 20 more pounds of sugar than they had been just been 20 years ago. This corresponds to about a pound increase in consumption every year. At the same time as consumption rates went up however, prices for sugar steadily dropped.

25 "A STATEMENT in regard to The American Sugar Refining Company".



After 1891, when the American Sugar Refining Company was created, sugar prices stabilized around four to five dollars. Yet, sugar consumption was still climbing steadily. This reversal in the downward trend is most likely attributable to the scheming of the Havemeyer's and their Sugar Trust. Although 30 subsidiaries and 39 men were named for conspiracy in the Federal prosecution of the Sugar Trust, the majority of the stocks of the company fell back to Henry Osborner Havemeyer after its dissolution.

While it proved difficult within the scope of this paper to identify just how deep the relationship between the Sugar Trust and Caribbean sugar cane producers is, it is more than easy to identify the relationship of the United States to Cuba (the largest sugar exporter by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) ,and how the Sugar Trust took advantage of that, even after the formal end of slavery in the islands in 1886. Even before the Spanish-American War, it was plain to see where American interests in Cuba lay. From 1866 to 1869, the years immediately following the American Civil War, the disproportionate amount of sugar received at New York City from Cuba demonstrates the market importance of the Caribbean island to New York City and the rest of the nation (sugar processed in New York was sold throughout the country). In 1866, the NYC Chamber of Commerce reported that Cuba had exported 183,081 tons of 2,240 pounds to the city. Aside from 1867, that number climbed straight, eventually reaching 219,713 tons of 2,240 pounds of sugar annually<sup>26</sup>. These records demonstrate the entire Cuban economy was centered on the production of sugar for North America and Western Europe. This was true in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially as the United States ramped up its Monroe Doctrine.

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<sup>26</sup> “NYC Chamber of Commerce Annual Records: 1866-1869”

When the United States assisted Cuba in gaining independence from Spain in 1898, it was quick to establish its hegemony over the island nation. In 1903 the United States Congress passed the Platt Amendment<sup>27</sup>, which was a treaty signed under the guise of protecting Cuba from foreign intervention. In reality, it permitted the United States to continue occupying the island and essentially turn Cuba into a protectorate of the United States. The advantaged position that the US government and US business interests had in Cuba during the aftermath of the war with Spain ensured their privileged access to Cuban sugar markets throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars have pointed out that because of their privileged position, US investors were able to buy cane fields, shifting the framework of the plantation system. Instead of owning their production, “cane farmers who previously owned their lands became tenants (*colonos*) and farmed corporate lands. As *colonos* transferred their cane to the *centrales*, ‘they lost much of their independence and became bound to the mills’ and to the market price of sugar”<sup>28</sup>. Even after the end of slavery, as well as the end of indentured labor, the sugar industry was still based on the exploitation of indigenous labor.

For US investors and capitalists, the cost benefit analysis clearly demonstrated, “it was cheaper for U.S. capitalists to buy relatively undeveloped land in eastern Cuba and import new machinery than it was to buy and improve existing mills in western Cuba”<sup>29</sup>. The farmers that did own their land had no way of competing with the capital rich Westerner investors. Many of them were forced to move to different plots, often of a lesser quality. Additionally, because the demand for labor during the harvest season of

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<sup>27</sup> Platt Amendment. (1903)

<sup>28</sup> McCollum, J, pg. 6

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

sugar cane, investors and capitalists continued to import cheap non-white labor to the island anyways. When the price of sugar would drop, local Cubans found themselves competing with the imported workers not afraid of working for below the standard<sup>30</sup>. Because Cuba's economy ran on credit as a result of sugarcane's highly seasonal nature, US banks were able to gain disproportionate lending power within Cuba. When the beet sugar industry in Europe recovered after WWI, causing sugar to drop, it caused the Cuban economy to inflate. Fearing disaster, the Cuban Congress passed a banking bill which most of the Cuban national banks could not survive. As a result, American banks (aside from one Canadian one) became the primary financial institutions in Cuba. It was not until the Communist Revolution in Cuba that the Cuban sugar economy was re-organized and US hegemony was broken. Similar outcomes for other Caribbean and South American countries also did not manifest until the period of decolonization in the 1960s when many former British colonies formally declared their independence. In many ways, the revolutionary or decolonization movements that were widespread in the southern hemisphere are direct reactions to the exploitative nature of the sugar industries within those countries.

So where are the Havemeyer's now? What happened to their sugar empire? And what are the outcomes that faced the people and families that have suffered for their benefit? It has already been established that the US government due to its monopolistic nature eventually broke up the Sugar Trust. In 1921, the federal government's suit for the American Sugar Refining Company's dissolution was announced. In less than two decades, the Havemeyer's went from controlling a majority of the domestic sugar market

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 7

to only 24%. Furthermore, as European beet sugar rose in importance, the reliance of the United States and the globe on American refined cane sugar gradually decreased. While the American Sugar Refining Company continues today in the name of Domino Sugar, the Havemeyer's no longer owns it. In 1901, the Havemeyer's actually began focusing increasingly on the production of raw cane sugar in Cuba, rather than refining. Although by 1907 it had owned about 98% of domestic refining, by 1911 that market share was 72%, and by 1922 that share had dropped drastically to 24%<sup>31</sup>.

The refinery in which the Havemeyer's conducted their sugar processing, although still standing today, has been shuttered, It currently waits demolition after which it will be re-developed. In 2014, renowned artist Kara Walker actually created an exhibit within the factory that reflected the buildings connection to slavery<sup>32</sup>. Although the larger than life sugar sphinx that Walker created is no longer on display at the factory now, it further demonstrates how the memory of the sugar business and slavery intersect at almost every juncture.

Havemeyer Hall still stands on Columbia's campus to this day, as well as Chandler Lab. Although there have been previous efforts that have identified the Havemeyer's connection to slavery, there is little written about their connection to the evolution of that institution as manifested in Asian indentured labor. In Havemeyer Hall there is a brief exhibit that explains the history of the building, however, little is said within about the sordid connection the funding for it had to slavery or indentured labor. Because of the international scope of this topic, it is hard to identify where exactly Columbia's responsibility in making amends for its connection to this history is.

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<sup>31</sup> Guide to the American Sugar Refining Company records 2008.042. (2016)

<sup>32</sup> Als, H. (2014). The Sugar Sphinx.

However, as a start, acknowledgement and information should be the priority of the university if it is serious about recognizing the active role it played in promoting slavery as well as benefitting from it. Something even along the lines of Kara Walker's sphinx, which quietly but powerfully acknowledges the history of the refinery's connection to slavery

Although indentured labor was formally ended in the colonies around 1915, the evidence of its occurrence exists in plain sight today. Although thousands of individuals from Southern and Eastern Asia made their way to the Caribbean as foreigners, today they have become fully integrated into the local cultures of their respective locations. Curry, eggplant, okra, roti, dhal, pilaf and chutney, which all have origins in the Indian subcontinent but yet are ubiquitous throughout most of the Caribbean. As mentioned before, the integration of Indian and Asian workers into the Caribbean has largely erased ancestral tradition and culture. In a recent conversation with my grandmother (who is herself the descendant of coolie laborers who moved to Jamaica in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century), she spoke of how when my great-grandparents were in process of the journey to the New World, they somehow lost their actual surname, most likely a result of the colonial administrators (Bahadur recounts a similar experience in her book). My grandfather's name was Rajaram Maragh, yet somehow on his official documentation, Rajaram was listed as his surname. To this day this error still persists within my family, which demonstrates perhaps how the history mentioned in this paper is not as ancient as we may think. The reality is that the world we live in, the city that we traverse everyday, and the school we attend all sprung from the hands of exploited black and brown hands.

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