

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**AMANDA MCNULTY:**

Nicole Thompson works in the interpretive textile department at Middleton Place outside of Charleston. Nicole, when the Middletons were here, the slave women who performed those tasks, were they weaving cloth or spinning or what were they doing?

- No, all of the cloth would have been purchased either from Charleston or up north, and then they would have been sewing clothes for the enslaved Africans that lived here on the plantation.

**AMANDA MCNULTY:**

A woman who worked here, would her outfit have looked something similar to yours?

**NICOLE THOMPSON:**

Absolutely. Lots and lots of layers, typically made of-- this is made of linen but maybe made of a little bit coarser cloth.

- And in wintertime, did they have things that were made of wool?

**NICOLE THOMPSON:**

Not typically the enslaved Africans. The Middletons absolutely would have had warmer clothes. But the enslaved Africans would have worn the same material all year round.

**AMANDA MCNULTY:**

So the women here would have made clothes for infants, children, men, and women who were slaves working at different jobs?

**NICOLE THOMPSON:**

Yes, ma'am.

**AMANDA MCNULTY:**

But we know there were all kinds of fascinating things that people did with textiles, and still do, and so y'all give people a glimpse of some of the other things. Y'all have sheep

running around. What do you do--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

**NICOLE THOMPSON:**

We have Gulf Coast sheep, and we shear them every spring. We take that wool and pick it clean. And then we wash it. You know the lanolin that we all love so much for our hands? That actually comes from the wool. So we wash the lanolin out of it.

And then we do a process called carding where we line up the fibers.

**AMANDA MCNULTY:**

And is that with combs?

**NICOLE THOMPSON:**

It is. It's with two rounded combs. We line up the fibers so that it can be spun into a string or a yarn. And then from there, you can either use it to knit, or you could actually put it on a loom and use it to weave.

**AMANDA MCNULTY:**

You have some wool that I think you died with indigo, and the colors are real different.

- Yes, ma'am, and that depends on how long you leave the wool in the indigo. Or you can dye it multiple times to get a deeper, bluer effect.

- When people would use indigo as a dye, did it last a long time?

- Oh, absolutely. Once the indigo has set into the cloth, you can actually go back and re-rinse it, and that'll help-- and use an acid to help set it into the cloth.

- Gosh, it sounds like y'all have all kinds of fun things going on here that you can demonstrate. And I see other pieces of fiber that have been dyed with some

different things. What are some of the other fun ways of getting color in cloth, from the historical standpoint?

**NICOLE THOMPSON:**

You can use different types of plants, such as marigolds. If you clip marigolds and process them, you can use it to dye cloth. You can even use the peels from red onions, and you can use that to dye cloth. So you can get a lot of different colors from different natural things growing around the plantation.

- Well, I've gotten a lot of wonderful ideas for rainy day dreams here with y'all. It sounds like a grand way to spend a beautiful day.

- It is.

- At Middleton Place.

- It is, and we're glad that you joined us.

[MUSIC PLAYING]