

Cotton has been grown in the Salt River Valley for thousands of years. The Huhugam grew short staple cotton which they wove into textiles. The long staple cotton which is still grown today was developed at the Sacaton Experimental Station in the early twentieth century. This variety, known as Pima cotton, became an enormously profitable crop across southern Arizona. It was developed from the same strain of Egyptian long staple cotton seeds that Dr. Chandler received from David Fairchild. Fairchild was charged with travelling the world to find crops that could be grown in the newly reclaimed lands of the American west. While in Egypt, Fairchild collected long staple cotton seeds, which he sent to Chandler to experiment with growing them in Arizona. Dr. Chandler successfully grew the Egyptian long staple cotton on his ranch, which revolutionized the cotton industry. Long staple cotton could be used in all sorts of products from clothing to tires, and before long farmers all over the Salt River Valley were planting the crop in massive amounts in the hopes of getting rich on it. World War I cut off the supply of Egyptian cotton, boosting the demand for Pima cotton. It was at this time that the Goodyear Rubber and Tire Company began looking into growing their own cotton on ranches in Arizona. Goodyear used cotton as radials in their tires, and Pima cotton was a perfect substitute for the Egyptian variety. The company leased 8,000 acres of land from Dr. Chandler four miles south of the recently settled Chandler townsite. The cotton market crashed in 1920, forcing Goodyear to consolidate its operations to the West Valley. Once the market stabilized, local farmers once again began growing Pima cotton. Though the market never returned to the heyday of World War I, cotton has remained an important cash crop for many Chandler farmers.

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