

To the Reader

The Enslaving Virginia story line team developed this Resource Book to support your interpretations of slavery in the colonial Chesapeake that will be the focus of the Becoming Americans theme in 1999.

This Resource Book documents Virginia's particular story of slavery within the context of the Atlantic world from the early seventeenth century to the American Revolution and beyond to the adoption of the fifteenth amendment in 1870. The primary and secondary sources selected both reveal the harsh realities of Virginia's racially based slave system and provide insights into the lives, fortunes, and values of all Virginians, enslaved and free, trapped in its practice. Some of these documents are also testimonies to the triumphant human spirit of those who suffered most from the brutality of slavery and of those who courageously opposed the system.

The Resource Book has been organized into the following sections:

Interpretive Key Points and the Enslaving Virginia Essay
Prologue: Slavery in Human History
American Odyssey: Indentured Servitude to Racial Slavery
American Diversity: Crucible of Cultures
Aspects of Slave Life in Eighteenth- and Early-Nineteenth Century Virginia
The Material World
American Diversity: Williamsburg
American Paradox: Freedom and Slavery
Epilogue: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Evocations of Slavery
Appendices: Williamsburg Directory, 1775; Demographic Information,
Chronology, Biographies, and Bibliography

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Anne Willis and Story Line Members

ENSLAVING VIRGINIA

The “Enslaving Virginia” story line will examine the institution of racial slavery in the colonial Chesapeake, exploring its pervasive influence on the lives, fortunes, and values of all Virginians and its impact on the development of the new nation.

KEY POINTS

I. AMERICAN ODYSSEY: INDENTURED SERVITUDE TO RACIAL SLAVERY

The demands of the world economy shaped the emerging plantation cultures, leading to a shift from indentured servitude to racial slavery in America.

II. AMERICAN DIVERSITY: CRUCIBLE OF CULTURES

The reality of colonial life forced the interaction of diverse peoples and cultures despite the laws and traditions of eighteenth-century Virginia. These interactions had a profound impact on the development of American society.

III. AMERICAN PARADOX: FREEDOM AND SLAVERY

The enlightened ideas of freedom and equality in conflict with the historical practice of slavery and racism shaped the thoughts and lives all Virginians as they moved toward revolution and republican government.

ENSLAVING VIRGINIA

BACKGROUND AND THESIS

A system of hereditary bondage for blacks developed gradually in the decades following the arrival of the first Africans at Jamestown by 1619. Slavery became entrenched in Virginia over the next 150 years. A series of restrictive laws reinforced by community and family mores legitimized its hold on blacks and whites alike.

Slavery – defined as the ownership and forced exploitation of one person by another – was the foundation of the agricultural system in Virginia and the cornerstone of the colony’s economy. At first, planters bought slaves primarily to raise tobacco for export. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, slave-owning farmers were using bound labor throughout the diversified agricultural economy of the region. Enslaved African-Americans also worked as skilled tradesmen in the countryside as well as in the capital city of Williamsburg. Some served as domestics in the households of wealthy white Virginians.

The frequent interaction between black slaves and white masters, and, for that matter, between blacks and whites in general, created a complex interdependence that eventually produced a distinctive hybrid culture. Relations between the races were as destructive as they were unequal. The horrors of slavery, both physical and psychological, were numerous. The system conferred a presumption of superiority on whites whether or not they were slaveholders. Economic reliance on slave labor, fears about the consequences of emancipation, and unyielding racial prejudice and cultural bias all contributed to the maintenance of slavery at the same time that whites severed the colony’s bonds to Great Britain. The “Enslaving Virginia” story explains the effects of slavery and the influence of Africans on every aspect of Virginia society.

The term *African-Virginian* is used to reflect more accurately the distinct differences between the slave experience in Virginia and, to a larger extent, in the Chesapeake from that in the Carolinas or the northern colonies.

SLAVERY TAKES ROOT AND GROWS

The notion that slavery was inconsistent with the Englishman’s love of liberty has long been an argument advanced by die-hard apologists. It is untenable. English settlers seldom doubted the superiority of their own customs and culture. They were quick to adopt the same exploitative policies used effectively by other European colonizers in dealing with the peoples they encountered and conquered in the New World. Their contemporaneous experience subduing the native peoples of Ireland gave them practice and precedent for the conquest of Virginia. Few Englishmen in the seventeenth century doubted that they were God’s chosen instruments to bring the blessings of civilization and true religion to alien peoples who lacked both.

From the beginning, English settlers in Virginia pursued two goals primarily: to make the colony a financial success and to convert Indians to Christianity. The English regarded their possession of North America to be justified and righteous, however much it appears arrogant and immoral today. They believed they could make better use of the land and its resources than did the Indians they dispossessed. They saw it as their duty as Christians to spread the gospel “throughout the world.” They were prepared to employ if possible, and to subdue if necessary, any peoples living within reach of their New World trading empire.

Other Europeans besides the English had similar economic ambitions and held similar convictions about their own cultural and religious superiority. The Portuguese and Spanish had already colonized parts of Central and South America a century before the English gained a toehold in Virginia. Seeking easy profits, Europeans grew semitropical crops – especially sugar and tobacco – for the international market. Such crops lent themselves to plantation production and the forced labor of Native American and, increasingly, African slaves. Between 1450 and 1600, European merchants and colonizers collaborated with certain rulers and merchants in West Africa to establish a regular trade in slaves. European products and New World staples changed hands for African gold, ivory, and human captives. Whereas laws in northern Europe made no provision for slavery, Spanish and Portuguese practice in the New World provided a ready model that later-arriving Dutch, French, and English colonists quickly adopted.

Shortly after the establishment of Jamestown, the Virginia Company revoked its earlier policy and advised the settlers to shun their Indian neighbors. At first, settlers had formed a mutually beneficial alliance with the Algonquin peoples of Tidewater Virginia. The Algonquins had provided the settlers with food, land, and protection from more hostile Native American groups. For their part, the English became valuable trading partners to the Algonquins. Their reciprocal alliance began to crumble by the 1620s. The English settlers’ insatiable desire for land that natives were unwilling to cede often led to bloodshed. Conflicts also arose over English attempts to convert Native Americans to Christianity and efforts to enslave the Algonquins. The Virginia government banished Native Americans from white settlements after 1622 and sometimes even tried to exterminate them altogether. Never-ending guerrilla warfare between Indians and settlers, when coupled with the Virginians’ practice of occasionally enslaving native captives taken in war, encouraged racial hatred. The enslavement of Africans in the following decades forced Native American groups to choose between aiding the English by helping to enforce slave laws or assisting blacks by harboring runaways.

Slavery was not unfamiliar to most Africans. Ancient African civilizations relied heavily on slave labor to perform a variety of tasks, as did many other societies throughout the course of history. The Islamic world sanctioned slavery as a legitimate strategy to convert “pagans” to the true religion. From the seventeenth century on, Arab and Muslim societies traded for slaves in northern and sub-Saharan Africa. Those from sub-Saharan Africa were used as domestic servants or as farm hands; those from North Africa as soldiers, administrators, and house slaves.

Slavery was also a fairly common practice in the kinship-based societies of West and Central Africa. Owning people was a source and a symbol of wealth in societies where the community, rather than individuals, held all rights to land. There, slaves were usually war captives, criminals, debtors (or their designates), and sometimes foreigners. Some were purchased for lifelong servitude, while others could eventually earn their freedom. Depending on the nature of local resources, economic systems, and social and legal structures, slaves in different parts of West and Central Africa were used as agricultural laborers, miners, or porters. Others served as soldiers, clerks, concubines, or religious sacrifices. Like members of the European gentry, privileged Africans gained power, wealth, and status by controlling dependent persons – wives, children, kin, clients, subjects, and servants and slaves. African slavery was thus a part of a continuum of social relationships. Since slavery was already a way of life in several African societies, Europeans at first simply had to establish trading partnerships and alliances (by force if necessary) to tap into existing supplies of enslaved men and women. But soon entrepreneurs organized raiding parties to kidnap captives to meet the growing demand. The New World market gradually transformed traditional forms of African slavery into capitalist enterprise.

The demand for ever-larger numbers of slaves to work New World staple crop plantations and mines led to the forced transatlantic migration of roughly 11.5 million Africans in the three centuries from 1500 to 1800. (Some estimates place the number as high as 40,000,000 to 100,000,000 to account for smuggling, poor record keeping, and higher mortality rates en route to the New World than conventional estimates project.) Almost 75 percent of enslaved Africans, the largest proportion, were taken to Central and South America by the Portuguese and Spanish. Approximately 600,000 Africans were brought into British North America between 1619 and 1775.

Most English slave owners were interested in Africans with skills that matched their needs. They sought out farming peoples and those with metal- and woodworking skills. Despite the horrors of transportation and the burden of work they were expected to perform, Africans brought to mainland North America managed to survive far better than those who ended up in other parts of the Americas. The high rate of survival can be attributed to the more favorable epidemiological environment in British North America as contrasted with that of the Caribbean and Central and South America. It was also owing to their adaptability and resistance and to tobacco cultivation, which less labor-intensive than sugar production. These factors also resulted in unusually high rates of natural increase, especially among creole slaves. By 1770, Africans and their American-born descendants made up 40 percent of Virginia's population. Many counties had substantial black majorities.

Most bound workers in Virginia were white indentured servants, not African slaves, until the 1680s. Thereafter, Virginia planters began purchasing significantly larger numbers of Africans to supplement and eventually to replace dwindling supplies of English and Irish servants willing to work in the tobacco fields. So long as blacks were a small minority of the Chesapeake population (before 1690, Africans and their descendants made up no more than 7 percent of the population in Virginia and Maryland), black and white

laborers usually worked side by side in the fields, ate and socialized together, shared living quarters, and, in some cases, formed mixed race families.

Most blacks, but not all, were bought and sold as chattel slaves. Early on, the circumstances in which transported Africans arrived in the Chesapeake colonies often determined their subsequent status as bondsmen for life or occasionally as free blacks. Between the mid-1660s and the early eighteenth century, the Virginia legislature strengthened the laws that gave planters the right to hold Africans and their descendants as lifelong slaves. These laws reinforced the equation between slaves' bondage and their African ancestry. The legal status of a person of mixed race was determined by his or her mother's race and status. These legal changes made slaves a more attractive investment despite their higher initial sale price.

Until the last quarter of the seventeenth century, many men and women from West Africa were transported to the Chesapeake by way of the West Indies rather than directly from Africa. For some, the islands were a brief stopping place on the forced journey from Africa. Others had labored on Caribbean plantations before they were resold to masters on the mainland. Others were island born. These earliest Africans and their West Indies-born children, especially those from societies long involved in the transatlantic slave trade, were familiar with Europeans. They knew their languages, customs, and religions. Some of them, former middlemen, were personally acquainted with the European slave trade. They drew on this knowledge and on their skills at intercultural negotiation to blunt slaves' abuse and debasement by their New World masters. They knowingly cultivated patrons and embraced mediating institutions such as churches to improve their chances and to establish a place for themselves in a still ill-defined social order. Attempts to tame their oppressors' political and economic institutions proved difficult at best and mostly ineffectual. Surer successes were those that individual slaves negotiated directly with their owners.

A RACIALLY FRACTURED SOCIETY EMERGES

Slave traders brought approximately 54,000 blacks to Virginia and Maryland from 1700 to 1740. The majority were sold to planters in a few lower Tidewater counties, including York and James City, adjacent to Williamsburg. Many forced migrants came from the inland areas of Ibo-speaking West Africa. They were mostly peoples who had had little or no contact with transatlantic trade and European cultures. Transported to the Chesapeake, they found themselves in an alien land where languages, landscape, climate, diseases, and other peoples were utterly unfamiliar. Olaudah Equiano, an African who wrote a narrative of his homeland, capture, and enslavement, described his first encounter with the European slave traders. Equiano remembered, "I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits....When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace of copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted my fate...I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair."

To white Virginians, raw Africans seemed outlandish, godforsaken, and unruly. Masters

set about “taming” them by giving them new names and enforcing their use. Writing to his overseer in 1727, Robert “King” Carter gave specific instructions for renaming newly acquired slaves: Take “care that the negroes both men & women I sent... always go by ye names we gave them.” Slaveholders also punished slaves who tried to maintain traditional African cultural customs or observed their native religious practices. Most were put to work doing repetitious and backbreaking agricultural labor. Slave drivers often used the newly arrived Africans’ ignorance of English and their resistance to enslavement as excuses for imposing harsher discipline and more stringent work rule.

White servants became an increasingly distinct minority among bound laborers by the 1730s. Improving economic conditions at home stemmed the flow of bound immigrants from the British Isles. White indentured servants in the colonies distanced themselves little by little from blacks and demanded privileges that the law denied to slaves but granted to servants because of their European ancestry. Slaveholders and public officials favored the claims of white people, thereby widening the gap between slave and nonslave.

English arrogance soon found ways to rationalize the racist treatment of native Americans and the enslavement of Africans, frequently by invoking the authority of biblical scripture. Whites, too, were divided by wealth, social class, and ethnic heritage. Nevertheless, they forged a common bond in their domination over blacks and Indians. Slaveholders measured social status from the numbers of slaves they owned or hired from other masters. Even poor whites, whether free or indentured, enjoyed the elevated status that came with the color of their skin.

Racism created great divisions in Chesapeake society. Imposed English customs were an affront to the belief systems of Native Americans. English attempts to force them to adopt the Christian religion, European consumer goods, English farming practices, and very different divisions of labor between men and women undermined traditional Indian ways of life. Native religious beliefs were strongly based on achieving harmony and balance between man and the natural world. Conflicts continued over land use and trade. The growing numbers of Africans eventually threatened the status of natives in colonial society. European notions of slavery were abhorrent to Indians. While some tribes tried to remain neutral on the issue in an effort to achieve peace with the English, others found subtle ways to express their displeasure with the practice.

Africans transported to Virginia and forced into an alien culture as adults had very different life experiences than did slave children born in the colonies. The two groups developed different strategies for survival. African-born slaves attached more importance to maintaining their traditional religions because much of their culture was tied to religious observance and ceremony. A Hausa proverb contains the prescription: “It is when one is in trouble that he remembers God.” Although most Africans arrived in the Americas without possessions, they were not without memory and custom, for, as a Chagga proverb put it, “The head of a man is a hiding place, a receptacle.” Creoles – American-born slaves – often made a creative mix of African and Anglo-American culture. Another Hausa maxim guided their strategy: “When the drumbeat changes, the

dance changes.”

Slavery also divided African-Americans into separate occupational and status groups that included foremen, drivers, gang leaders, field hands, tradesmen, and house servants. These were categories created by the slaveholders. Social hierarchies within a slave community were, like as not, based on a slave’s personality or on the significance of his or her work to the community itself. The presence of free men and women of African heritage further complicated the picture. So did those with biracial parents. The lines drawn by a racially based slave system were blurry around the edges.

RACIAL SLAVERY CODIFIED

The institution of slavery was continually reshaped and redefined by government legislation and judgments of the court. The governor, Council, and House of Burgesses made laws setting the terms of slavery. Initially, punishments meted out to indentured servants and apprentices and laws regulating their behavior were extended to cover enslaved workers. Soon those laws proved to be inadequate. Workers held for life could not be required to compensate masters for infractions against the rules by extending their terms of service. Surprisingly quickly, from 1640 to 1662, slave owners interpreted customary law and enacted formal legislation to make lifelong servitude the common condition for all newly arrived Africans. Beginning in the 1600s, statutes also assigned the legal status of children born in Virginia according to the condition of the mother. Slave women had no legal protection against rape, and slave owners could hold in perpetual bondage any children they or other white men fathered with slave mothers.

The law became increasingly restrictive in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It dictated a system of rigid social control: slaves were denied legal marriage, freedom of movement, and even the right to defend themselves against life-threatening physical abuse. A generation later, tutor Philip Vickers Fithian explained that “the slaves in this colony are never married, their lords thinking them improper subjects for so valuable an Institution.” Other laws were passed in response to the growing fear of slave uprisings. Severe sentences could be handed out to slaves who stole white people’s property, traveled without authorization, ran away, or resisted whipping or other punishments.

Virginia rulers sought to curb the growth of the free black population. The presence of free blacks challenged the legitimacy of the slave system. Legal grounds for manumission were narrowly defined until after the Revolution. Free blacks increasingly discovered that they were denied many of the rights accorded to free whites. They were not allowed to own guns, to hold indentured servants, to intermarry with whites, to bear witness against whites in court, or to hold offices of any kind. At the same time, they were obliged to pay higher taxes than comparable white families.

Courts’ administration of the law further defined the terms of slavery. Justices of the peace applied a separate criminal code to cases involving blacks, used different trial procedures, and handed down harsher punishments. Notwithstanding, government officials and magistrates could provide redress for African-Virginians seeking mediation

in disputes between masters and slaves and presenting petitions on a variety of issues. One-third of the petitions brought before the governor's Council between 1723 and 1775 were filed by slaves and free blacks. Matthew Ashby, a free black resident of Williamsburg, was one of the successful petitioners. After purchasing his wife and children from their owner, he asked the Council for permission to manumit them in November 1769. Ashby may also have joined a group of free blacks who asked the burgesses to repeal an unequal law requiring them to pay tithes on their wives and daughters over the age of sixteen. The burgesses granted their request in 1769. These petitioners cited ancient precedent for their tithe argument: Anthony Johnson, believe to have one of the earliest Africans to arrive in the colony in 1619, had sought the same consideration from a Virginia court in the 1640s, and he, too, had won his case.

Being enslaved meant always living in agonizing uncertainty. The only effective restraint on owners' total power over their human property was self-interest. Sometimes passion or greed overruled humanitarian instincts. Masters frequently and arbitrarily revoked long-standing privileges and protections established by informal custom. They could rape or maim their slaves with relative impunity. Courts seldom punished owners who killed slaves in a fit of passion or intoxication. Masters might break up slave families at any time through gift, sale, or hiring out, or force some to move to distant holdings far from their kin. Whenever a slave owner died or got into financial trouble, families were at risk of being parceled out among the owner's heirs and creditors with equally tragic results. These dangers separated slaves from other bonded laborers.

CRACKS IN THE SYSTEM

Educational institutions and the established church encouraged the acceptance and spread of slavery. Anglican ministers preached to black and white Virginians about their "God-given" roles in civilized society and enjoined slaves to accept their fate and obey their masters. The Bray School in Williamsburg taught young black children obedience along with the three R's. At home, white children learned to become masters and mistresses by watching their parents. Likewise, slave children learned survival strategies from their elders. Interestingly, African-Virginians bent both church and school to serve their own interests. Nearly one thousand slaves, children and adults, and a few free blacks were baptized at Bruton Parish Church between 1746 and 1768. Some hoped that accepting Christianity might lead to freedom; others may have sought special protection for their children. Blacks who learned to write in Williamsburg sometimes forged travel passes for other slaves, and readers discovered in the egalitarian pronouncements of white revolutionaries a powerful critique of their masters' hypocrisy.

One institution, the evangelical church, preached a different message. New Light Christians drew increasing numbers of slaves into their fold in the second half of the century by offering hope of deliverance from persecution. Many evangelicals and their followers openly denounced slavery. Some took their beliefs a step further by actively seeking its abolition. About the same time, black preachers began to form their own congregations and deliver openly antislavery messages. Biblical references to obedience were replaced with scriptural passages about the Israelites, Daniel and the Lion, and Job, which encouraged slaves to believe that freedom was possible in their lifetimes.

Against formidable odds, African-Virginians succeeded in establishing families, extending kin connections, and making friends with slaves at other plantations. Kinship networks and informal business relationships also included free blacks. The world blacks made for themselves helped to ease the isolation, loneliness, and degradation of slavery. Africans and their Virginia-born descendants developed their own system of social relations in the quarters. They developed a semiautonomous culture that borrowed from both African and English traditions. Observing customs that whites could not entirely control afforded slaves some small measure of power over their lives and nurtured their solidarity.

Little by little, and here and there, slaves' likes and dislikes worked significant changes in plantation routines, work assignments, and the operation of local exchange networks. By the early eighteenth century, for example, many slaves and masters had reached a general understanding about the minimum amounts of food, clothing, and shelter that owners were obliged to provide. In some cases, slaves were able to persuade owners to agree to "reasonable" hours of labor and levels of output. Slaves responded to arbitrary, unfavorable changes in plantation work rules with slowdowns and sabotage. Sometimes they feigned sickness or ran away. Artisans insisted on customary work routines and production requirements when masters tried to speed up work or to undercut their autonomy. By the 1770s slaves and free blacks living in and around Williamsburg were active and knowledgeable participants in a local cash-based trading economy however much their actions were circumscribed. In theory, only chattels themselves, slaves gradually earned from grudging masters the "privilege" of keeping the profits from the produce they raised in their free time. They quickly transformed those limited privileges into more widely shared rights. By the end of the Revolutionary War, many masters had come to accept their slaves' independent participation in local trading networks, however incongruent with the idea of slavery.

Masters had to concede that there were benefits to allowing slaves to own "property," a practice Thomas Jefferson called the "peculium." Owners recognized that the opportunity to own property got around one of the chief problems of slave labor: the lack of positive incentives. The practice of the peculium was widespread even if the term was not. Slave owners' wills and inventories from the Williamsburg vicinity rarely list clothing, utensils, poultry, or other livestock belonging to slaves. The omission was no oversight, but rather an acknowledgment of the fact that such things were the slaves' own possessions, not their masters'. Archaeological evidence makes it clear that slaves acquired a variety of goods. They purchased "luxury" items with the money they earned from their business ventures. Writing to Thomas Mann Randolph in 1798, Jefferson advised, "I thank you for putting an end to the cultivation of tobacco as the peculium of the negroes...I have ever found it necessary to confine them to such articles as are not raised on the farm. There is no other way of drawing a line between what is theirs & mine." Slaves throughout Virginia, particularly those who lived near urban areas, had many opportunities to buy, sell, and trade products and produce they made or grew themselves. Jefferson's concern about being unable to distinguish his property from that of his slaves shows just how lucrative slave enterprises could be.

THE STRAINED WORK BLACKS AND WHITES MADE AND SHARED

Black and white cultures still retained distinctive traces of their English and African roots in mid-eighteenth-century Virginia. But both were also rapidly becoming hybrid cultures as interactions increased among Africans, Europeans, African-Virginians, and Anglo-Virginians. Blacks and whites were influencing each other's culture in their farming practices, use of medicine, building traditions, material culture, and art and music. The introduction of European stringed instruments expanded Africans' musical repertoire while at the same time slave musicians influenced the way European music was performed. Black musicians like Fiddler Billy of Williamsburg played at balls and other occasions. For their part, not a few Europeans found African instruments pleasing to the ear. European travelers frequently noted the popularity of "Negro jigs" among whites at the dances they attended in Virginia.

Musical traditions are relatively easy to identify. Africans' use and sometimes creative adaptation of European manufactured goods, while harder to document, provide further insights into the mixing of African and European cultures where they can be identified. Archaeological excavations reveal expensive ceramics and other personal items in storage pits at slave quarters. Slaves also made adaptive reuse of European religious beliefs. Blacks in large numbers embraced Christianity, especially during the Great Awakening, although they often introduced their own interpretations of scripture and their own versions of the liturgy.

Cultural sharing was not something that blacks or white pursued deliberately. Yet the product of their interaction is evident everywhere historians look. Many blacks retained their West African religious belief in one supreme being. Africans and their descendants also believed in spirit possession, in the notion that God, or any of his designates, could physically possess the human body. Since evangelicals encouraged a more personal relationship with God, they were sympathetic to slaves' "fits of joy." Over time, this form of expression became common in both black and white evangelical denominations such as the Baptists and Methodists.

Understanding of the slave-master relationship has changed profoundly in recent years. Not only have scholars recognized cultural influences of blacks on whites, but closer examination reveals that slaves, too, exerted more of their influence in day-to-day interactions between the races than was previously supposed. In real life, the relationship between masters and slaves often contradicted law, custom, and prescribed status roles. For example, in 1778, Anne Drummond of Williamsburg discovered that her house had been robbed. She accused her slave Sam of the crime. As punishment, she sold him to a plantation owner in Albemarle County. Sam was the only son of the Drummonds' cook and laundress, who simply refused to work after he was sold. For the next two years, the cook-laundress complained of a sore leg to avoid working for Mrs. Drummond while taking on paid tasks for others in the neighborhood. Anne Drummond finally relented in 1780. Deciding she might have judged Sam wrongly, Anne attempted to reunite mother and son.

Other slave families were not as fortunate. After obtaining freedom in Philadelphia in 1807, James Carter of Caroline County wrote, “My mother has had 9 Children and altho She and Mrs. Armistead has been brought up together from little Girls, She has suffered all my mothers Children to be picked from her. My mothers Family has Served the Family of Mrs Armistead upwards of one Hundred and 30 years.”

At times, blacks and whites often formed emotional attachments to one another. Landon Carter’s diary provides numerous insights into these peculiar friendships. His long and intimate relationships with different slaves on his property illustrate how attached Carter was to them, and how much he understood himself in terms of his relationship toward them. Carter considered himself the father to all on his property. He saw to his slaves’ physical and medical needs and engaged in a variety of amusements with them, yet he could not understand why his “kindness” was not reciprocated with loyalty and honesty. His greatest companion appears to have been Nassau, who repeatedly ran away, cursed him, drank excessively, and even pilfered things from him. Carter punished Nassau and threatened to sell him, but invariably he ended up forgiving every transgression.

Sometimes masters actually sympathized with the plight of their slaves. In 1787, Henry St. George Tucker took a slave boy named Bob with him to Winchester where he intended to practice law. The uprooted Bob became despondent beyond anything young Tucker had witnessed: “I enclose a short note from Bob to his mother. Poor little fellow! I was much affected at an incident last night. I was waked from a very sound sleep by a most piteous lamentation. I found it was Bob. ‘What’s the matter Bob?’ ‘I was dreaming about my mammy Sir!!!’ cried he in melancholy distress. ‘Gracious God!’ thought I, how ought not I feel, who regarded this child an insensible when compared to those of our complexion. In truth our thoughts had been straying the same way. How finely woven, how delicately sensible must be those bonds of natural affection which equally adorn the civilized and the savage. The American and African – nay the man and the brute! I declare I know not a situation in which I have been lately placed that touched me so nearly as that incident I have just related.” Despite his emotional bond with Bob, Tucker continued to use terms like “savage” and “brute” when referring to blacks.

Perhaps the least discussed yet most enduring consequence of the interactions between blacks and white is miscegenation. Interracial sex and procreation between Africans and Europeans began almost from the first contact in Africa and the Americas. The 1662 law that defined a child’s status based on the status of the mother passed on lifelong servitude to children born of mixed parents. Another law made it illegal for “any Christian to fornicate with a Negro man or woman.” Offenders were required to pay double the fine assessed on unmarried couples of European origin. *Mulattoes*, a term applied to children born of African and European parents, is found in practically every slave inventory, runaway ad, law regarding slaves, and planter diary. Unlike the Spaniard or Portuguese, the English did not differentiate between those who were one-half, one-quarter, or less black or white. Mulatto was used for any person of mixed parentage. Black women were not the only females who had mulatto children. Native American and white women also have birth to children of mixed race. A law enacted four separate times – in 1691, 1705, 1753, and 1765 – stipulated that “women servants or free Christian white women servants

who have a bastard child by a negro or mulatto” must pay a fine, serve an additional term of service, and have the child bound out to the parish. Quite a few free blacks born of Englishwomen gained their freedom from their mothers. Determining the numbers and types of mulatto births in Virginia is difficult without further research. How such children and their parents were treated by blacks and whites continues to be a topic of speculation.

Many encounters between blacks and whites were violent. Fithian recounted an incident near Nomini Hall involving a boastful overseer who described his remedy for slaves who were sullen, obstinate, or idle. The tutor wrote, “Says he, Take a Negro, strip him, tie him fast to a post; take then a sharp Curry-Comb, & curry him severely til he is well scraped; & call a Boy with some dry hay, and make the Boy rub him down for several minutes, then salt him, & unlose him. He will attend to his Business.”

Such acts of depravity against slaves were common. Occasionally, the victims retaliated. John Greenhow placed an ad in the *Virginia Gazette* on January 17, 1777: “Run away from the subscriber, in Williamsburg, the two following men, viz. Fox, about 40 years old, who is clad in cotton, and about ten days ago beat his overseer and went off. Emanuel, upwards of six feet high, about 26 years old, a strong able fellow, of a daring resolute temper, very subtle [illeg.] John Greenhow.”

Arson and robbery appear to have been the two most common forms of retaliation by slaves. After James Hubbard’s house was set on fire in January 1770, two slaves were charged with the crime. Isaac, who belonged to Katherine Hubbard, received the death sentence. Hubbard’s slave David was charged with “instigating and abetting.” The court found David innocent but jailed him as a “dangerous person.” Courts seldom prosecuted masters for violence against or murder of slaves, especially if the act was the result of correction. The law required testimony from “one lawful and credible witness.” Slaves, the most likely witnesses, could not testify against their masters or, for that matter, any other whites.

CONCLUSION

The unwillingness of whites to recognize the full and equal humanity of blacks led to many injustices and inhumanities. By the end of the eighteenth century, slavery was no longer just an economic and “necessary evil.” It had become a way of life. Whites were enslaved to the myth of their own superiority while blacks bore the burden of slavery’s terrible reality. Racism, taking root in the slave system, sowed the seeds of future discord, injustice, injury, and emotional desolation.

Despite legislative decrees reinforcing the slave system, whites grew increasingly fearful as the number of blacks increased. That fear fueled repression and violence. Governments guaranteed white Virginians the right to coerce their human property, but realities of everyday management undermined those guarantees. Many whites believed that people held against their will, if not strictly controlled, might seek to throw off the

bonds of servitude by force and harm the individuals responsible for their enslavement.

The specter of insurrection excited the greatest fear of all. Jefferson wrote, “Deep rooted prejudices entertained by whites; ten thousand recollections by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; . . . will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.” Jefferson recognized that slavery could no longer be justified: “Indeed I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever: . . . The Almighty has no attribute which can side with us in such a contest.” He was unable to resolve the issue in his private or public life. He found no answers that would at once satisfy his conscience and his finances. Like many of his contemporaries, Jefferson chose to let the next generation discover the answers to the problem of race and slavery in American society.

“ENSLAVING VIRGINIA” AND THE “BECOMING AMERICANS” THEME

DIVERSE PEOPLE

By the time the English settled Virginia, the practice of enslaving Africans and transporting them to the Americas had already been a well-established trade for almost 150 years in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies in the New World. Slavery took many forms in Africa, all of them different from the ways it developed in the Western Hemisphere under the influence of colonization. The institution acquired still other characteristics and practices in British North America.

CLASHING INTERESTS

Enslaving Virginia’s black population provided the central dynamic in the development of a distinctive Virginia culture. Slavery gave new definition to European notions of a structured society with the landed aristocracy on top and merchant and working classes below. The slave system made a more basic distinction. It divided social groups into free and unfree. Slavery reinforced Anglo-Virginians’ Eurocentric views of racial and ethnic superiority.

SHARED VALUES

Inherent in the term *accommodation* is the idea of acceptance. But, since slaves had no access to justice or redress through the legal system, accommodation must be understood in strictly personal terms. Any latitude given to a slave usually violated statute law. Yet masters and slaves were often willing to live with these contradictions so long as the concessions struck a balance between the slave’s concern for family and a modicum of freedom, and the master’s concern for control and a margin of profitability.

FORMATIVE INSTITUTIONS

As increasing numbers of Africans were imported into Virginia, laws regarding their status, racial distinction, and freedom of movement developed apace. With each passing generation, social and civic institutions (churches, schools, law courts, and governments) reinforced conditions of servitude and reshaped the role of Africans in Virginia society. Although freeing slaves became easier during the revolutionary era, punishments for even small infractions of the law became ever more severe and inhumane.

PARTIAL FREEDOMS

White Virginians regarded the ownership of other humans as their prerogative and justified it on the grounds of racial superiority. Black Virginians were left to make do. They sought any way possible to maintain family life and whatever freedoms they could beg, borrow, or steal from their masters. Blacks and whites learned how to “play by the rules” even if the rules were exceptions to the rule

REVOLUTIONARY PROMISE

The institution of slavery established an unresolvable, inherent contradiction in Virginia culture that transcended even the white man’s self-serving justification. As Virginians imposed a slave system on an entire race of individuals, their actions inevitably defined their relationship to Great Britain as one between masters and slaves. The failure of southern colonists to extend their revolutionary rhetoric to slaves led to petitions and increasing numbers of runaways. Virginians allowed economic interests to cloud their moral judgment.

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER “BECOMING AMERICANS” STORY LINES

Just as the institution of slavery cut across every aspect of society in eighteenth-century Virginia, it runs through the interpretation of every “Becoming Americans” story line at Colonial Williamsburg.

TAKING POSSESSION

The success of Virginia's tobacco economy fueled the desire for the continued expansion and development of Virginia's natural resources. African-Virginians' labor provided much of the manpower for extending settlement and increasing the wealth of slave owners. The concept of private landowning was at first incomprehensible to Africans. They came from societies with a tradition of corporate landholding, as was also the case among Native Americans. Soon after Africans began arriving in the Chesapeake, free Africans and African-Virginians recognized that the private land rights English settlers valued afforded advantages such as enhanced social status, greater family security, and a measure of independence. But whites did not permit slaves to participate in the settlement process except for the labor they contributed. However, beneath the ordered landscape that freeholding Virginians created, African-Virginians imposed a far different structure on the land. On the quarters they occupied, they reinstated communal land use practices such as the notion that everyone who worked the land should reap an equal share of its fruits.

REDEFINING FAMILY

The presence of Africans profoundly affected the evolution of family life in Virginia. White households included slaves as members of their extended families. African-Virginians developed their own nuclear and extended families within the confines of the slave system. Even when disrupted by sales or the practice of hiring out, the black family maintained kinship networks essential for strong family ties.

BUYING RESPECTABILITY

In Virginia, slaves were a commodity just like other goods. The wealth and status of white Virginians were defined in part by the number of humans they owned. Although in theory slaves could not be property holders, they began to participate in Virginia's consumer culture during the second half of the eighteenth century. Merchants willingly accepted the cash that slaves earned from selling produce or by working in their limited free time in exchange for goods they wanted to buy. Although social respectability remained elusive, slaves participated in the economy because it afforded a degree of autonomy and a few comforts.

CHOOSING REVOLUTION

Property rights lay at the heart of the choice many Virginians eventually made in favor of independence from Great Britain. Slaves represented significant property holdings that white Virginians fought to preserve. Ironically, revolutionary leaders used the terms *liberty* and *slavery* to defend their property and to advance their political rights. To them, slavery meant loss of freedom under the tyranny of British misrule. To Virginia's 200,000 slaves, the words defined their condition in the most personal sense. Hundreds risked their lives by responding to Lord Dunmore's November 1775 proclamation offering freedom to slaves and indentured servants who rallied to his side. Alternatively, some free blacks chose to enlist in the American army or navy. Most of the African-Americans who labored actively for the patriot cause did so involuntarily, however. The

Virginia government rented slaves as wagoners, miners, pilots, hospital attendants, and common laborers. Less often, they were hired as soldiers to substitute for free men. The government bought others outright. Although a few gained freedom as a result of their service, most returned to slavery after the war.

FREEING RELIGION

Africans brought to Virginia a variety of religious beliefs and practices. As the slave population increased, their native religions became creolized. By the mid-eighteenth century, only a few elements persisted – particularly the idea of spirit possession. When evangelical Christians began to accept blacks into their congregations, worship services changed to reflect the inclusion of Africans. Several evangelical denominations even began to recognize and eventually to ordain black preachers.

PROLOGUE: SLAVERY IN HUMAN HISTORY

The institution of slavery has been a part of most of the world's civilizations. The following selections provide information about the history of world slavery, life in Africa, and the development of slavery in South America and the Caribbean.

Junius P. Rodriguez provides an overview of the institution of slavery in human history. He notes that it is essential to examine slavery in order to have an understanding of the modern world.

The institution of slavery in all of its varied forms is one of the most idiosyncratic practices found in all of human history. Throughout time, practically all of the world's civilizations and cultures have experienced some type of slavery, and peoples both ancient and modern in societies ranging from the simplest to the most complex have coped with the practice and with the many manifestations of its legacy. In a seemingly dichotomous world, the presence of slavery has occasionally served to fashion a meaning for freedom by defining such an attribute through its negation. So manifest is slavery to the whole of human history that it is difficult to try to understand the modern world without considering one of the most perplexing elements of the human condition. Making sense of slavery, and all of its associated elements and consequences, encompasses much of human history.

Over the years, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, economists, psychologists, and many others have all struggled to find a rational explanation of slavery's origins, its purpose, and its essential place in the human experience. Variations, both subtle and pronounced, characterize the meaning of the word "slavery," and it evokes discordant images throughout history. Although no single explanation exists that is suitable as a global definition of the institution, certain characteristics are commonly found in those societies that have practiced slavery. These attributes help to structure an institutional matrix of bondage that has existed in society from the dawn of civilization to the modern age.

Certain characteristics are basic to an understanding of the institution of slavery. First, most slave societies tended to dehumanize the individual by considering the slave to be property that is owned by another. Even though each polity often legislated the level of mobility that was afforded the slave, he or she remained bound as legal property that could be bought, sold, or traded at the whim of another. Second, slaves were generally objectified as lesser beings by legal codes which maintained that the commercial rights and prerogatives of owners or masters were superior to any natural rights that the slave might possess. In such a system, a slave's level of production was deemed to be far more important than his or her actual person or identity, and accordingly, the slave was essentially an economic creature. Third, most slave societies tended to marginalize the slave by enslaving only people who might be considered as separate from the community – especially criminals, foreigners, and war captives. These individuals endured what some scholars have described as "social death" as they owed their very survival to the magnanimous mercy of their captors. Within such a society, there was no rights or privileges that applied to the once-spared. Essentially, slavery was perceived as a benevolent act.

One feature that seems common among most slave societies was the understanding that enslavement was not something done to one's own people. Although voluntary slavery was permissible in many societies, it was usually restricted only to

those situations that involved the repayment of a debt. Early slave societies did not use race or ethnicity as a determinant in who would be enslaved, but they did recognize the value of group identity and would not generally submit one of their own to involuntary enslavement. For example, though they were ethnically similar as Greeks, it was permissible for Spartans to hold the Messenians in a form of virtual slavery as Helots. Although the Peloponnesus (peninsula in southern Greece) was a relatively small place, group identity prevailed and helped to determine societal norms.

Most societies did not deny all rights to the slave. In most legal codes, the slave was protected from the most extreme physical abuse that an owner or overseer might inflict. Yet statutes alone could not protect most slaves from harm, and societies often maintained fluid definitions of what constituted necessary and proper action when disciplining an unruly slave. Societies also maintained differing attitudes toward the slave's right to marry and live in a family setting. Although some slave societies stressed the beneficent results that family living produced (i.e., slaves were more productive and less likely to escape), other cultures had no respect for slave kinship and some went so far as to control the slave's sexuality and reproductive abilities for the owner's pleasure or economic benefit. Slaves enjoyed some rights within all slave societies, but the distribution of justice was certainly not fair and impartial, and even in the most enlightened settings, the liberties afforded to slaves were always more theoretical than real as the rights of property owners superseded the rights of the property.

It is not known precisely how or when slavery began. The most ancient of civilizations all appear to have had some form of slavery present in their earliest years. Slave laborers worked the fertile fields along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Mesopotamia; they also toiled along the Nile in Egypt during the Old Kingdom period; and slaves worked in the budding civilizations of India and China that formed in the Indus and Yangtze (Chang) River valleys, in the forests and savannas in the earliest of African civilizations, and even in the Americas, where pre-Columbian indigenous peoples maintained social structures that included a class of slaves. Thus, we are presented with a paradox. In the societies that represent the birth of civilization – the cultural transformation from primitive to modern – we find the transfer and continuation of an ancient practice that has had a sweeping influence on modernity. Culturally advanced peoples have incorporated slavery into their social systems over time, and history has had to reckon with the consequences.

In all societies where slavery has existed it has become a part of the manifest culture of that particular setting. As a cultural phenomenon, slavery has always been directly influenced by the various cultural attributes that exist in each society where it appears. The interaction between slavery and the political, social, economic, religious, intellectual, and aesthetic spheres of cultural life creates the primary attributes that distinguish one form of slavery from another. For just as the cultural dimensions influence slavery, so too does slavery influence each respective sphere. Thus, even in two societies that seem culturally similar, subtle variations might still be detected in ways that slavery operates in each.

In ancient societies, slavery was accepted as being part of the natural social order. As an economic tool that could distribute labor and institutionalize wealth, its validity and purpose were unquestioned. Neither governments nor organized religions made any attempt in the earliest societies to intervene on behalf of the enslaved to mitigate the

circumstance of their bondage. No systematic movement toward abolition ever existed in ancient societies because slavery was not viewed as an issue of public mortality. Accordingly, it is difficult for the modern world to comprehend the values and the structures that legitimized such a system.

Slavery in the Ancient World

In the earliest societies of the Near East, slavery assumed much of the form that it would have throughout history. In the societies of Mesopotamia, slavery generally existed in one of two basic forms. Some viewed slavery as a type of punishment that might be imposed upon one who had transgressed the laws or customs of the polity, or perhaps one who had taken up arms against the community in warfare and in so doing, had become an enemy of the state. Others throughout the institution had a more utilitarian purpose. For them, slavery was a way of organizing laborers to perform much needed responsibilities that were critical to the welfare of the entire community. An important characteristic common to both views was that slavery did not utilize race or ethnicity to distinguish between the slaveowner and the bondsman or bondswoman. Slaves were culturally indistinguishable from free people. Although one Sumerian pictograph represents the idea of a slave as a “male of foreign land,” the conflicts that ensued between ethnically similar neighbors produced a class of slaves who were not dissimilar to their masters.

The Code of Hammurabi, issued in the eighteenth century BC, demonstrates that the ancient Babylonians understood the complex nature of the institution of slavery and passed laws to regulate the practice. Even though the code regarded the slave as merchandise, it contained significant humanitarian terms that recognized basic rights owing to the slave. Male slaves could marry freewomen, own property, and in some cases purchase their own freedom, but the code continued to view them as chattel rather than as human beings. In formulating these legal distinctions, the Code of Hammurabi and subsequent law codes that addressed the issue fashioned a spectrum of various status levels ranging from one of abject powerlessness to one of supreme control. Thus, the slave occupied an indistinct status that often varied according to individual circumstance and location. In the Hittite Code, which was in effect from the seventeenth to the fourteenth centuries BC, the slave was recognized as a human being, but the inferior status of the enslaved was more manifest.

Certain ancient civilizations practiced forms of slavery in which the slave’s status was not very different from that of the slaveowning class. In such societies an institutional process of manumission (formal emancipation) usually existed to facilitate the transition from slave status to freedom. Among the Hebrew people it was understood that a slave of Hebrew origin became free after six years of servitude. By combining notions of adoption with their practices of enslavement, many West African societies incorporated practices that allowed slaves and their progeny an opportunity to live in freedom after manumission. Yet, even with the existence of these customs, the condition enjoyed by the formerly enslaved was not comparable to the modern Western notion of personal freedom. Most scholars agree that that notion was born several centuries later in the city-states of classical Greece.

Ancient Egypt was the early civilization that was generally the least dependent upon the economic value of slave labor. In Egypt, the existence of a large regimented population and a limited amount of agricultural land under royal ownership precluded the need for large-scale agricultural slavery in the valley of the Nile. War captives who became slaves tended to be employed on temple estates, in government quarries, or on certain state construction projects. Egyptian society also included a significant number of individuals who submitted themselves voluntarily into slavery as a result of indebtedness until the practice was ended in the eighth century BC. One indication of the relative social worth of the slave as compared to the slaveowner was the practice of murdering slaves so they might accompany their deceased owners into the afterlife.

Slavery existed in some form or another in all of the earliest civilizations, but that does not suggest that these ancient societies had a dichotomous social order that pitted the free against the unfree. The spectrum of status that existed in the ancient world was generally fluid as one's social identity and hierarchical significance depended upon the degree of liberty that one was allowed to enjoy. Cultural variations developed, and certain forms of intermediate status – e.g., Babylonian *mushkenum*, and Indian Sudras – became a part of the social identity that existed within distinct cultures.

All early civilizations practiced slavery, but none can be accurately described as a slave society. In none of these cultures did slaves constitute a majority of the population – in fact, in most of them, the percentage of slaves within the society was comparatively small. Accordingly, the economic value of the labor performed by slaves in the ancient world was generally insignificant, and thus economic determinism alone cannot be used as a rationale to justify the perpetuation of slavery within ancient cultures. Apparently the value of slavery as a social institution that absorbed the outsider into a culture was justification enough to perpetuate its existence. The concept of “social death” produced a sense of societal order that in a cost-benefit analysis can be viewed as basic to the establishment of civil societies.

Slavery in Classical Societies

It was in the civilizations that developed in Greece and Rome that the world's first true slave societies came into existence. Perplexing as it may be, the same societies that are credited with formulating some of humankind's most stellar accomplishments in philosophy and the arts and sciences were also the first people to elevate slavery to an institutional level that had not been attained in more primitive societies. In short, “the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome” stemmed largely from slave-based economies that utilized human capital to an unprecedented extent.

The evolution of slavery in ancient Greece is particularly noteworthy because many Western notions of freedom and liberty developed in the milieu of defining and institutionalizing slavery. Ironically, contemporary notions equating slavery with tyranny stem from this era in which liberty was defined by its negation and the birthright of freedom came to be cherished by all – except slaves. Also significant in this context is the realization that for centuries, apologists for slavery used classical Greece as a shining example of the achievements that were attainable in a society in which slavery was a natural part. For these reasons, a clear understanding of slavery as it existed in the classical age is critically important if one hopes to comprehend the legacy of slavery and its nature in the modern world.

The Greeks used philosophy to rationalize their acceptance of slavery. Plato did not oppose slavery as an institution, but he did not look favorably upon the practice of Greeks' enslaving fellow Greeks. Aristotle echoed this concern, but believing that Greeks were superior to foreigners, he felt that it was quite logical and proper for superiors to rule over inferiors. Aristotle also viewed slaves as instruments that could be used by their betters to perform unsavory tasks in society, which would allow the superior Greek citizens to have a greater amount of leisure in which to pursue more sophisticated cultural attainments.

The society that formed in the autonomous Greek city-states was heavily dependent upon slave laborers. The Homeric epics indicate that slavery existed in Greece in the earliest years (c. twelfth century BC), but these references also indicate there was no organized trade in slaves at that time. During the late archaic period (eighth to sixth centuries BC), substantial numbers of Athenians held in bondage as debt-slaves worked the agricultural holdings of their fellow citizens. So pervasive was this social practice that by the sixth century BC, it had produced a political crisis in Athenian life, and only substantial reform of the institution could remedy the situation.

Large numbers of poor Athenian farmers worked as sharecroppers on the lands of aristocratic citizens, and increasingly farmers, their wives, and their children were being enslaved as debtors because of an inability to produce the shares demanded by their landlords. Hoping to avert a crisis, in 594 BC the Athenian lawgiver Solon freed all Athenian slaves and outlawed the practice of enslavement for nonpayment of debts. Thereafter, Athens was a slave-based society, but the enslaved had to be foreign-born noncitizens – generally, captives of war. Athenian participation in the Persian Wars provided a ready source of war captives, and as Athens entered the classical period (fifth to third centuries BC), perhaps one-third to one-half of the population of Athens consisted of slaves. In the second century BC, the Greek historian Polybius described slaves as being among “the necessities of life” and considered them as being comparable to cattle.

Although transformations in slavery certainly changed Athenian society – making Athens a more cosmopolitan city-state – the institution of slavery also had a profound impact throughout the Greek world. In the seventh century BC, the Spartans conquered neighboring Messenians and subjugated the population there to a state of virtual enslavement as Helots. After several decades, the Messenians rose in revolt and tried to end the Spartan overlordship. The 30-year rebellion was fierce, and though the Spartans eventually were able to overcome the formidable Messenian challenge, Sparta learned the true cost of maintaining a slave society. Vigilance was the key to self-preservation, and Sparta developed into a garrison state based on rigid militaristic lines so it might be constantly prepared for the potential onslaught of another slave-inspired rebellion. Sparta, in adopting this posture of having a perpetual war economy, reflected the truism that both master and slave are enslaved by the institution of slavery. Once again, the meanings of freedom and liberty were defined by their negation.

Sparta eventually fought and defeated Athens in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) that hastened the end of the Golden Age in Greece. Practically all the Greek city-states were left in a weakened condition by the prolonged intensity of this conflict, and the entire peninsula was unable to avert the invasion by the Macedonians that culminated in the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC. Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the

Great, freed most, but not all, of the Greek slaves. The institution of slavery continued in a somewhat modified form in the Hellenistic world as Alexander the Great extended Greek customs and practices throughout his far-flung empire of conquest. Reliance upon slavery declined during the Hellenistic age, partly because of the moderating influence of the Stoic philosophy, which condemned slavery and war, but also because the economic prosperity of the times made it cheaper to hire free laborers and pay them wages than to purchase and maintain slaves.

Slavery was an uncommon institution when the city of Rome was developing along the banks of the Tiber River, but that would change as Rome emerged victorious from several wars of conquest. Rome and the North African city of Carthage vied for control of Sicily and the right to navigate the Mediterranean freely, and the two eventually fought a series of three Punic Wars. Rome emerged victorious from these conflicts and became the sole power in the Mediterranean world, but the economic and social tensions that accompanied these victories would lead to the eventual undoing of the Roman Republic. As a result of the wars of conquest and the many captives accrued in the process, Rome became a slave society.

Although the Roman Republic existed initially as a community of small independent farmers, wars of conquest gave the Romans an abundance of slaves that eclipsed the levels of previous civilizations. The decision to employ these slaves in agricultural pursuits had the effect of reordering or restructuring Roman society. With slaves increasingly being used to perform agricultural labor in the countryside, many Roman farmers found employment in the military. As the armies swelled, additional wars of conquest produced even more captives and the expansion of slavery continued. As the economy became increasingly based upon estate slavery, many independent farmers lost their landholdings, moved to the urban centers, and essentially became wards of the state. A decline in civic virtue, caused in large part by the massive development of a slave system, was one of the factors that helped precipitate the collapse of the Roman Republic.

The slave system that developed in the Roman Republic was unparalleled in antiquity. Military conquests in Syria, Galatia, Gaul, and North Africa produced numerous war captives, and thousands of slaves labored on the large estates (*latifundia*) in the Roman countryside under the tacit control of a few very wealthy owners. These owners had virtually limitless power over their vast number of slaves since the Romans viewed absolute authority as an equalizing force that would help prevent any type of unrest among the slave population. Yet rather than preserving public order, cruelty and mistreatment occasionally caused significant numbers of slaves to rise in concert to overthrow their owners' control. Servile rebellion was one of the few avenues available to slaves to demonstrate their humanity. The revolt Spartacus led from 73 to 71 BC is probably the best known of these uprisings. For Romans, the ever-present fear of slave revolt was one of the unanticipated consequences of their military success and subsequent rise to greatness. Even though they recognized the possibility that every slave within the republic was a potential insurgent, the Romans were also confident that their legions could suppress any insurrection that might arise.

Political destabilization and declining public morality were two of the major forces that destroyed the Roman Republic, but even as the republic faded and Rome moved toward imperial administration, the institution of slavery remained relatively

unscathed. Aristocratic Romans had become accustomed to a lifestyle of excessive luxury that was made possible largely by a dependence upon slave labor, and few were willing to alter or challenge the institution that had created the socioeconomic status they enjoyed. As the Roman Empire extended its boundaries, slavery continued to flourish.

The Romans believed that manual labor was a sign of lowliness and should be performed only by slaves, but as the empire expanded, the Roman attitude toward labor became much more inclusive. In the early years of the Roman Empire, slaves occupied many of the white-collar and blue-collar jobs in Roman society, and thus some of them were able to attain positions of great wealth, power, and prestige. Many slaves held significant positions in business and in government bureaus during the first century of the Principate (27 BC - AD 180). Slaves constituted as much as 30 percent of the population in the early years of the Principate, but the number of Roman slaves gradually declined as many were legally converted to *coloni* (serfs) and it became increasingly difficult for the Romans to find new sources of outsiders to enslave.

The advent of Christianity did not have a significant impact upon the practice of slavery in the Roman world. Like the Jewish tradition from which it developed, Christianity questioned neither the morality nor the legitimacy of the institution of slavery. The teachings of Jesus included no official condemnation of slavery, and both the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible contain passages that reflect an acceptance of the social and political conditions of the times - including an acceptance of slavery as it existed. Perhaps the most significant influence of Christianity upon slavery was the message of hope that was found in the otherworldly focus of this new faith. Regardless of how horrid the conditions of the temporal life might be, Christianity offered the promise that great rewards awaited the true believer in an eternal life within the kingdom of God. Although the writings of Paul and other early fathers of the church reflect a sense of pity for the slave, their works condemn neither the institution of slavery nor the slaveowner.

Slavery in the Medieval World

The 1,000-year period that followed the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west was a formative period in the historical evolution of slavery. The Byzantine Empire, which perpetuated a sense of Roman rule in the east, maintained significant reliance upon a slave system until the thirteenth century, while at this same time, Western Europe developed into a feudal society that maintained an economic system based upon manorialism and the use of serfs and slaves as agricultural laborers. The rise of Islam and its rapid expansion during the seventh and eighth centuries generated new slave-based societies in the Near East, parts of Africa, and Europe. This era also witnessed the extension of the institution of slavery into the Crimea and modern Russia.

Especially significant during this era was the formation of sophisticated kingdoms in western Africa's Sudan region. The respective states of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai developed into societies that practiced slavery, and each maintained commercial ties with European and Near Eastern cultures through trans-Saharan trade routes. Items traded in this fashion included gold, ivory, salt, and also slaves. Additional trade in Zanj slaves from eastern Africa to the region of modern-day Iraq also occurred during this era. Significant numbers of Zanj slaves who were assigned to clearing salt flats for use as agricultural lands rose in revolt during the ninth century.

Some twentieth-century scholars have argued that the medieval era marks a significant point in the historical evolution of labor as slavery gave way to serfdom and serfdom, in turn, developed into wage labor. Certain Marxist scholars who share this opinion would posit that wage labor is nothing more than a transitional phase that will eventually give way to the revival of a primitive form of communism similar to what is found in a state of nature. Accordingly, much of the scholarship regarding slavery in the medieval era, particularly in Western Europe, tends to pit conflicting economic communities - the free and the less-than-free - against one another in a classic proto-Marxist struggle for social and economic viability.

It appears that the practice of slavery that survived in Western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire was more harsh than earlier forms of slavery. Several barbarian law codes treat the slave on the same level as livestock, and the most basic elements of human rights were not acknowledged by these codes. The practice of slavery survived for several centuries during the Middle Ages, and England's Domesday Book indicates that large numbers of slaves still existed when that census was taken in 1086. Various political and economic forces within Europe combined to make slavery practically nonexistent within Western Europe by the eleventh century, but sporadic Viking and Magyar raids continued to enslave those who were unfortunate enough to be taken as captives. Large numbers of Irish, in particular, were enslaved in this fashion during the medieval period.

Perhaps the most significant development in the history of world slavery during the medieval period was the rise of Islam. Although both Judaism and Christianity acknowledged the institution of slavery and neither faith sought to condemn the practice, Islam was the first of the major world faiths to take a limited type of abolitionist stance regarding certain aspects of the institution. The Qur'an specifically prohibits the enslavement of Muslims by fellow Muslims, and though this prohibition was not always enforced, its articulation was a powerful indication that slavery was a less-than-palatable practice and one that should not be imposed upon coreligionists. In later centuries, some people would argue that Christians also adopted this prohibition as a de facto custom, although such a view was perhaps more an aspiration than actually practiced.

Even more spectacular than the rise of Islam was the rapidity with which the new faith spread throughout the Near East, across North Africa, into the sub-Saharan Sudan, and into Europe. Within less than a century after its founding, Islam had become a dominant force in much of the Mediterranean-centered world, and the religious rivalries that ensued often included familiar practices of warfare - the taking of captives and their subsequent enslavement. Both Christians and Muslims developed their own notions of the meaning of a "just war," and each faith developed its own rules of engagement that permitted the taking of captives and the enslavement of the same under certain conditions. In later centuries, the desire of Europeans to find Christian allies who might join the fight against Islam encouraged the early expeditions that explored the African coastline searching for the mythical Prester John and his legendary Christian warriors.

Many within western Africa's sudanic kingdoms accepted Islam when it was introduced by trans-Saharan traders in the eighth century. Initially transmitted orally, before the Qur'an was standardized into a written text, Islam spread rapidly in a culture that had a historical affinity for the oral tradition. Many of the leaders of the West African kingdoms converted to Islam, and in so doing, large numbers of their subject

people were also converted. The new faith seemed especially common among the merchants and traders who maintained a more cosmopolitan outlook through international trade with associates in other regions. In the kingdoms of West Africa, Islam always maintained its strongest support among the cultural elite, and the religion was primarily urban-based. Muslim theology was compatible with many indigenous religious practices of West African societies, and the promise of equality in the large Muslim community was appealing to many.

Certain dynastic Muslim states such as the Ummayyad caliphate, the Abbasid caliphate, and eventually the Ottoman Empire arose in the Near East as slave-based societies. Household slavery tended to be a more common practice in this setting than dependence upon agricultural slavery. Frequently, slave women were imported to served as concubines of the wealthy, and some private harems were quite large. Emasculated male slaves were purchased to guard these harems from intruders. Only about 10 percent of these eunuchs survived the crude form of castration that was generally performed before they were transported to their final destination as slaves, but among those who did survive, many found favor at the court and attained positions of power and prestige. Over the centuries, Christian children were enslaved and trained to served as Janissary soldiers - an elite fighting corps that served the Ottoman rulers.

Christian Europeans maintained a strained relationship of prolonged hostility with the Islamic states, and occasionally the feelings of ill will escalated into warfare. Both groups viewed this type of religious conflict, or holy war, as a justification for enslaving captives. During the Crusades, Christians enslaved large numbers of Muslims who were captured in battle, and Muslim pirates countered by enslaving large numbers of Christians captured in commercial raiding expeditions. Even the Byzantine city of Constantinople, which was a major commercial center and a transshipment point for slaves, was attacked by the European warriors during the Fourth Crusade.

On the Iberian Peninsula, where Islamic forces first entered Western Europe in 711, Christian warriors mounted a campaign of reconquest that survived intermittently for seven centuries until Muslim forces were finally removed from Spain in 1492. During the Reconquista, the Spanish captured and enslaved the Moors (North African Muslims) as new territories were liberated by advancing forces. The practice that developed during this extensive campaign against the Muslims - granting privileges (*encomienda* rights) to certain Christian warriors (*adelantados*) who reestablished Spanish control - was the same system that was later modified and employed to subjugate indigenous populations in the Americas.

Africa and the Slave Trade

Until the mid-fifteenth century, slavery had been practiced extensively in various cultures and settings, but it had never been affiliated with race or ethnicity. Enslavement was simply the custom that befell people who had been defeated in conflict and were captives of war. In a theoretical sense, it was a humanitarian gesture that prevented the wholesale execution of captives, but that notion began to change as European navigators explored the coastline of West Africa and large-scale commerce in a human commodity began to develop.

As in other societies, slavery had existed in Africa since antiquity, but the African variety of slavery was indeed different from that found in other settings. Generally,

African societies did not consider slaves to be personal property, and slavery was seldom viewed as a permanent condition. The rights of the slave were usually protected by local tribal law and custom, and avenues generally existed through which a slave could purchase freedom for himself or for his family members. These practices and customs were challenged as increasing numbers of European expeditions reached the African coastline and a harsher system of slavery was imposed upon the peoples of western Africa.

Seeking adventure and wealth, and emboldened by innovations in sailing technology, Portuguese navigators began a gradual process of exploring the West African coastline shortly after the conquest of the port of Ceuta in modern-day Morocco in 1415. By the 1440's, sailors had reached Cape Verde on the coast of modern-day Senegal and were able to exchange trade goods for several Africans who were shipped back to Portugal and sold into slavery. What began as a trickle soon became a veritable torrent as Europeans realized there was an almost limitless supply of Africans who lived to the south of the Sahara. The recognition that these Africans were either pagans who practiced indigenous religions or perhaps Muslims tended to legitimize their enslavement in the eyes of many European Christians. Papal pronouncements soon declared that any African who was captured for the purpose of enslavement might be properly viewed as a foe who was taken in an act of just war. Other papal pronouncements would later expand upon this notion and declare that the enslavement of the African was an act of Christian benevolence aimed at the slave's moral uplift.

As Europeans began to appreciate the need for African slaves on a larger scale, internal problems in West Africa destabilized the region and contributed to the intensity of the slave trade. Civil strife between the various peoples who constituted West Africa's vast Songhai Empire created an atmosphere of instability that only exacerbated development of the transatlantic slave trade. Even worse, the introduction of trade goods that could be employed as armaments of war perpetuated the internal strife, and a vicious cycle of extended hostility ensued. A near-constant state of warfare produced many captives of war, and Europeans were more than willing to exchange trade goods for these captured Africans.

Slavery in the Caribbean

Initially, Europeans followed the advice of conquerors like Hernan Cortes who suggested that the Americas contained a sufficient population of native peoples who might be enslaved to do the bidding of their European masters. The Spanish sought to plunder the riches of the Americas and believed that the indigenous peoples could be made unwilling accomplices in this endeavor. The combined effects of intensive forced labor and the introduction of European diseases decimated the ranks of the native people as thousands died from the burden that was placed upon them by the Spanish. Those who could escape did so, and the Spanish soon realized that attempting to enslave these people was impractical.

At the same time, religious leaders like Bartolome de Las Casas began to appeal to the Spanish authorities on behalf of the enslaved native populations, urging that the Spanish rely instead upon African slavery as a solution to the perennial colonial labor shortages. Las Casas, known thereafter as "the apostle of the Indies," would later recant his suggestion of using African slavery, but the Spanish and the other European powers

that established colonies in the Caribbean basin continued to rely upon an extensive use of enslaved African labor. The trade would last for four centuries and would influence permanently the character and definition of slavery in the modern world.

The transition in the Spanish Caribbean from enslaving indigenous peoples to the enslavement of Africans was complicated by the geopolitical realities of the early sixteenth century. In 1493, shortly after Columbus's first expedition to the Americas, Pope Alexander VI issued a papal bull that fixed a line of demarcation dividing the Atlantic world between Spanish and Portuguese interests. The following year, this practice was made a part of the European diplomatic arrangement through the Treaty of Tordesillas, which drew a line 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands that divided all eastern (Portuguese) regions from all western (Spanish) areas. If the Spanish wanted to maintain the pretense of honoring this arrangement, and thereby assure their sole right to claim the Caribbean basin and much of South America, they would have to devise a system of importing slaves from Africa - a region that fell entirely within the Portuguese sphere.

The solution that was developed was the Spanish crown's practice of offering an *asiento* (contract) to Portugal, and later to other European powers, to transport African captives as slaves for use in the Spanish colonial possessions. This practice maintained the spirit of the Treaty of Tordesillas, and it afforded the Portuguese, or whichever nation held the right, a lucrative contract that offered the possibility of substantial profits. Over the centuries, the *asiento* belonged to different nations as it became a valuable prize of war that occasionally fell into the hands of the victors during treaty negotiations. For those nations that held the contract for significant periods - especially the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English - slave trading became a systematic practice in which efficiency and profitability tended to overshadow the inhumanity of the practice.

An elaborate system to capture, trade, and transport Africans across the Atlantic as slaves developed in the sixteenth century and continued to function until the rise of the Atlantic abolitionist movement forced an end to the practice in the early-nineteenth century. Estimates suggest that as many as 11 million slaves may have been transported across the Atlantic over four centuries in what came to be called the Middle Passage. Although Africans were certainly victimized by this system, many African kingdoms and states trafficked in slaves and assisted the European and American slavers who plied the West African coast searching for captured Africans to complete their cargoes. For much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a "triangular trade" existed between ports in New England, West Africa, and the Caribbean. This commerce had the effect of providing enslaved Africans to the labor-starved colonies of the Americas in exchange for trade goods from the New World.

European (and later American) slave traders maintained a limited presence along the western coastline of Africa, occupying factories, barracoons, or commercial forts where the actual trading and exchange of slaves took place. Tropical diseases took their toll on the unacclimated slavers who visited the region, and those Europeans and Americans who were drawn to the area by an interest in the slave trade seldom ventured into the African interior. Africans who were captives of war or who were victims of raids into the interior conducted by other Africans were brought to the coastal locations where they were exchanged for trade goods.

As the demand for slaves in the Americas grew and the interior raids became increasingly frequent and more intense, captives were taken from distant inland villages and forced to march to the coast where they were sold. Large numbers of Africans died in the process, and the effects of depopulation upon the African continent resulting both from death in captivity and from enslavement was enormous. Additionally, the nearly constant practice of conducting slave raids and the wars that ensued between rival peoples had a terribly destabilizing effect upon Africa.

Many Africans who were transported across the Atlantic Ocean as slaves would later attest that the Middle Passage was the most horrible aspect of their enslavement. Large numbers of Africans were tightly packed in an often less-than-seaworthy vessel and forced to endure an ocean crossing that might range from three weeks to two months in length depending upon the route taken and the fortune of the winds. During these crossings, the male slaves were generally kept in chains so as to reduce the possibility of an uprising at sea. The vessels were overcrowded, fresh water and sufficient food supplies were seldom adequate for the voyage, disease and occasional epidemics were rampant on the vessels, and not surprisingly, large numbers of enslaved Africans died during the Atlantic crossing.

Those Africans who survived the voyage found themselves put in the slave markets of the Caribbean basin where they were purchased at auction and introduced to the intensive labor of agricultural slavery. Newly recruited Africans who were unseasoned as slaves were not highly valued upon their introduction to the Caribbean because the anticipated mortality rate among this group was excessively high. The market value of those slaves who survived the rigors of disease, acclimation, and work increased as they were recognized as being seasoned and more apt to survive an extended period of enslavement in the Caribbean.

Large-scale importation of Africans as slaves into the Caribbean coincided with the “sugar revolution” that occurred in the seventeenth century. As sugar cultivation spread from the Portuguese colony of Brazil to Suriname and island such as Jamaica, Cuba, and Barbados, sugar’s profitability and its reliance upon labor-intensive planting and harvesting techniques created an almost insatiable demand for slave laborers in these locations. Owners of vast sugar plantations reaped huge profits from the labor of African slaves who worked their estates, and the potential for immense earnings fashioned a cycle in which the destinies of sugar and slavery became inextricably intertwined.

The Enlightenment and the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement

It was not until Europeans entered the eighteenth century’s age of the Enlightenment that slavery came to be questioned as an institution that denied human dignity and was, therefore, a practice that should be abolished. This view was not one that was immediately accepted by the countries involved in the slave trade, and it would take more than a century of agitation before the humanitarian impulse, buttressed by legislative action, would initiate a movement that aimed at abolishing the African slave trade and, eventually, slavery itself.

While intellectuals debated the merits of abolition, the institution of slavery became entrenched in the Americas as sugar cultivation spread, the cultivation of tobacco, rice, indigo, and cotton expanded, and the importation of Africans continued unabated. By the early seventeenth century, the practice of using enslaved Africans as

slave laborers was common throughout the Caribbean basin, Brazil, and northern portions of South America, and after a Dutch trading vessel introduced 20 Africans into Virginia in August 1619, the practice of slavery developed within a generation in the English colonies on the North American mainland. The moral imperative against the practice notwithstanding, slavery continued to spread because it was perceived by many people to be a profitable venture. Although the first Africans introduced into the Virginia colony were brought there as indentured servants rather than as slaves, it seems that they and their descendants were being held in perpetual bondage as early as the 1640s. By the late seventeenth century, slavery was the legally sanctioned and commonly accepted status of Africans throughout the colonies in British North America. The perception of slavery as a matter of racial distinctiveness is one that developed more strongly in the English colonial experience than in Iberian-influenced societies. Whereas the Spanish and the Portuguese had experienced several centuries of Muslim domination and had developed cultures in which domestic slavery was common, the English had no comparable experiences upon which to draw, and thus their attitudes toward race evolved differently. Certainly the English attitude toward race was a factor in some areas in the gradual transformation from using large numbers of white indentured servants as laborers to a total dependence upon using imported Africans or Caribbean-born blacks as slave labor.

In the same age in which slavery was becoming institutionalized in the Americas, the abolitionist message began to be voiced by some people who abhorred the practice of slavery. Antislavery ideology in early modern Europe can be traced back to the works of the French jurist Jean Bodin (1530-1569), who criticized the practice of slavery as immoral and viewed it as counterproductive in that it excluded individuals from complete membership in civil society. Similar stirrings of abolitionist thought could be found in Elizabethan England when in the Cartwright decision (1569), court justices decreed that “England was too pure an air for slaves to breathe in.”

Abolitionist sentiments grew throughout the eighteenth century as the writers of the Enlightenment were almost unanimous in their condemnation of slavery, and such ideas helped to inspire the French Revolution and the revolution in Saint Domingue (modern Haiti) that sounded the death knell for slavery in the French Caribbean. In the English colonies in North America, the Society of Friends (Quakers) was the first group to advocate publicly the abolition of slavery, and support for that position would galvanize during the generation of the American Revolution.

When Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence in 1776, few people failed to see the troubling irony when Jefferson, a slaveowner, wrote “that all Men are created equal...[and] are endowed by their Creator with...Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” Even more perplexing perhaps was the practice of equating England’s onerous rule over North American colonies with the practice of slavery. Jefferson and the other American Founders considered revolution to be an appropriate response if it were to throw off the oppressive yoke of tyranny (or slavery), but only the most extreme would have argued that slaves held in bondage had the same right to revolt since they too were “created equal” and maintained liberty as a natural right until it was stolen from them by enslavement.

Decisions regarding the future status of slavery in the United States that were made when the American Revolution ended had profound implications for the institution and strongly influenced the direction and the practices that the antislavery movement

would follow in the nineteenth century. In many respects, the U.S. attempt to be half slave and half free made eventual emancipation almost inevitable, though the timing and the circumstances of that decision were yet to be decided.

Seven Northern states (Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and New Hampshire) each devised strategies to end the practice of slavery within their borders, but for those states, emancipating their slaves was neither an economic nor a social hardship. In Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, the practice of slavery continued, and the U.S. Constitution, which was written in 1787 and was ratified and took effect in 1789, gave legal standing and judicial protection to the institution. Because of these decisions, the notion of emancipating the slaves in the United States had the potential makings of a constitutional crisis, and political leaders generally sought legislative consensus through compromise solutions to postpone a crisis over the issue.

Much of the credit for the rising attitude in the Atlantic world during the late eighteenth century was owing to the tireless efforts of abolitionists who agitated against the African slave trade in the British Parliament. After many unsuccessful attempts, leaders like William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson were finally able to gain parliamentary approval in 1807 of a measure that outlawed the African slave trade within the British colonial sphere as of January 1, 1808, the search and seizure of suspected slaving vessels on the high seas, and provided funding for the liberation of captured slaves. The U.S. Congress also enacted a measure in March 1807 that prohibited the importation of slaves into the country after January 1, 1808. Supporters of both the British and the U.S. measures believed that cutting off the supply of new slaves by prohibiting importation and working actively to end the effective trade were important steps that would doom the institution of slavery to certain death. When this assessment failed to materialize, both the British and the U.S. governments pursued alternative routes to ending the practice of slavery.

By the late eighteenth century, the English economy was being transformed by the effects of the Industrial Revolution. English investors made huge capital investments to construct factories, develop canal projects and create other transportation infrastructure networks to assist the establishment of new commercial ventures. Ironically, much of the “old money” that supported this new spirit of enterprise had been earned through profits from the trade in sugar and slaves. The abolition of slavery was one part of the social economic transformation that occurred as an older order based upon a colonial mercantilist system gave way to a new industrialized, capitalistic society. To many people, the transition from dependence upon slave labor to that of wage labor was essential if the new order were to maximize workplace efficiency and generate the profits that a manufacturing-based economy could produce. Accordingly, shortly after the British Parliament passed the Reform Act of 1832, which restructured archaic political structures according to a more modern model, Parliament also enacted the Emancipation Act of 1833, which promised an end to slavery within the British Empire by 1838.

In the United States, the abolitionist campaign followed a different track than the British model. Late eighteenth century abolitionists like the Quaker John Woolman believed that persuasion and human reasoning were sufficient tools to inspire slaveowners to manumit their slaves, but the effectiveness of such campaigns was localized and limited. In the 1830s, a new and more assertive attitude became common

among many abolitionists after William Lloyd Garrison began publishing the *Liberator* in 1831, in which he demanded an end to all attempts at compromising on the issue of slavery. Calls for unconditional emancipation polarized attitudes between the non-slaveholding states of the North and the slaveholding South. In addition, as the United States expanded to the west in the era of “manifest destiny,” the issue of whether or not slavery should be allowed in the newly acquired territories became the primary political question in the United States during the antebellum period.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), which included the political decision to allow the question of slavery’s expansion to be decided by popular referendum, encouraged many abolitionists to adopt a more direct approach in the crusade against slavery. The Republican Party, a political party founded in 1854 upon the principle that the further expansion of slavery should be halted, represented a new tactic in the abolitionists’ methodology as the divisive issue of slavery continued to dominate the national debate. Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln’s election in 1860 as president of the United States was the signal to several slave-holding states that their “peculiar institution” would soon be in jeopardy, and the decision that those states made to secede from the Union precipitated a constitutional crisis that threatened not only the future of slavery in the United States but the future of the United States itself.

The U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) is an important conflict in world history in that it was one of the first truly modern wars, but its relationship to the issue of slavery is also noteworthy. Although the issue of slavery was certainly not the only issue responsible for causing the Civil War, its importance as a contributing factor cannot be denied. As the war progressed, Lincoln’s wartime aims increasingly became connected to the issue of emancipation. In September 1862, Lincoln issued a draft of the Emancipation Proclamation that took effect on January 1, 1863, and freed slaves in areas that were still in rebellion against the U.S. government as of that date. Eventually the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865 legally abolished the practice of slavery in the United States.

Though a joint effort of the governments of the United States and Great Britain to abolish the African slave trade persisted through the nineteenth century, attempts to monitor African coastal waters with naval patrols could not always be totally effective, and some slaving vessels still managed to get through. The African captives aboard the slaving vessels that were seized were generally taken to either Liberia or Sierra Leone on the West African coast, two states that had been established as homelands for repatriated former slaves who had served as slaves in the United States or in the British colonies. Some vessels were able to elude capture and continued to transport slaves during the antebellum era. In the post-war period, they transported captive Africans to Cuba and to Brazil where the practice of slavery continued for another generation beyond the end of the U.S. Civil War.

The abolition of slavery in the Americas did not herald the end of Africa’s experience with slavery. Throughout the many years of the slave trade, many African states had come to specialize in the taking of captives and exchanging them for trade goods. Some local leaders had become quite wealthy through this practice, and the custom of slavery within Africa and the domestic slave trade that was required to perpetuate it were quite common in many parts of Africa during the nineteenth century. English abolitionists such as Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton organized groups like the

Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa to combat these practices by introducing the establishment of new settlements in Africa that encouraged agriculture so legitimate commerce might replace the necessity for trading in slaves. Inspired by a spirit of trusteeship, much of the missionary activity in the nineteenth-century Africa was aimed at ending slave-trading practices, and a major component of the new imperialism that inspired the “scramble for Africa” in the 1880s was the moral imperative to end the practice of slavery on the African continent.

Slavery in the Modern World

If the institution of slavery were something that only ancient peoples had practiced, the custom would be nothing more than a historical curiosity in the modern world, but that is not the lesson that history teaches us. Modern postindustrial peoples have managed to practice various forms of slavery in the twentieth century, and it is quite probable that the practice continues even today among some of the world’s developing nations as certain forms of debt-peonage, pseudo-adoption, concubinage, contract labor, child labor, servile forms of marriage, and more traditional forms of enslavement persist. Thus, the study of slavery reveals that its practice is ubiquitous - regardless of the progress that has been made in human history, the practice of enslaving fellow human beings has not disappeared entirely from history.

Slavery still existed in parts of Africa and Asia at the start of the twentieth century. In China, the imperial government officially abolished the practice of slavery in 1906. The Korean government had abolished slavery in reforms of 1894, but it was commonly accepted that the institution of slavery survived in Korea until 1930. A vigorous domestic trade in slaves continued in parts of Africa until the end of World War I in 1918, and following the end of that conflict, the League of Nations took upon itself the international obligation to bring an end to slavery in those areas where the practice continued to exist.

During the years of World War II (1939-1945), barbarous new practices of slavery were applied in both major theaters of the conflict. In Europe, the Nazi regime instituted a systematic campaign in which Jews and other “undesirables” were assigned to forced-labor camps where they labored unceasingly until their death. In this genocidal system, the slave was viewed as nothing more than a consumable resource whose labor could be used for the benefit of the state. Millions died in the forced-labor camps and the extermination camps that were a part of Hitler’s “final solution.”

In the Pacific theater, another form of slavery appeared during the years of World War II. The Japanese government regularly recruited young women to serve as comfort women, or sexual slaves, to satisfy the carnal needs of Japanese servicemen who were stationed in Korea and China. These young women were raped repeatedly and suffered the dual humiliation of being enslaved by the Japanese and of being shunned for bringing shame upon their families. Even 50 years after the end of the war, the issue of the comfort women remains a contentious diplomatic issue between the governments of both Korea and Japan.

In the years since World War II, the United Nations has worked to abolish the practice of slavery in the modern world. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, enacted in 1948, proclaimed both the immorality and the illegality of slavery in all its forms. Subsequent UN conventions in 1949, 1953, and 1956 reaffirmed

earlier protocols attesting that slavery was illegal and member states agreed to these statements. Even at the end of the twentieth century, the UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery still carefully monitors reports that surface about incidents of contemporary slavery, and investigations are ongoing. In addition, several private organizations - like Anti-Slavery International and the American Anti-Slavery Group - monitor reports concerning cases of contemporary slavery from around the world and try to publicize these events to draw the world's attention to what remains a perplexing issue.

Epilogue

In his work *Hecuba* (c. 425 BC), the Greek dramatist Euripides described slavery as “that thing of evil, by its nature evil, forcing submission from a man to what no man can yield.” Much of both ancient and modern human history contains a record of slavery and its legacy for civilized societies, but the lessons of the past have not prohibited the sporadic reappearance of “that thing of evil” in our world. The effects of slavery certainly touch the human psyche, but a complete understanding of the practice still eludes total comprehension. The practice of slavery appears to be a societal character flaw that waxes and wanes - a recessive historical gene that can reappear almost without warning. As a result, we must study about slavery to learn more about ourselves and our world.

Human history marvels at the accomplishments of previous civilizations, but the art, architecture, philosophy, law, science, and literature that have been bequeathed to the modern world from the ancients are only a part of this brilliant cultural inheritance. How nations have struggled through the centuries with war, slavery, and other issues of social justice is also important as we try to comprehend an essential meaning for the human condition. Though slavery remains an enigma and its demons burden us still, the institution of slavery is an indelible part of our history.

Source: Junius P. Rodriguez, ed., *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, 2 vols., (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1997), I:xiii-xxiii. See also Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

The following selections from William D. Pierson's book—*From Africa to America: African American History from the Colonial Era to the Early Republic, 1526-1790*—focus on life in the forest regions of West and Central Africa; the role that Africa played in the Atlantic economy and the slave trade; and the Middle Passage.

LIFE IN THE FOREST REGIONS OF WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

I was born at Dukandarra in Guinea, about the year 1729. My father's name was Saungm Furro, Prince of the tribe of Dukandarra. My father had three wives. Polygamy was not

uncommon in that country, especially among the rich . . . By his first wife he had three children. The eldest of them was myself, named by my father, Broteer . . . I descended from a very large, tall and stout race of beings, much larger than the generality of people in other parts of the globe, being commonly considerable above six feet in height, and every way well proportioned.

The New England slave Venture Smith, *A Narrative of the Life
And Adventures of Venture (1798)*

Most of the ancestors of contemporary African Americans did not come from the Grasslands empires of West Africa and their hinterlands in Senegambia but from the forest regions along the great bend of the western coast where the dense tropical forests hindered communications and made large imperial-sized states virtually impossible. In the wetter forest regions people customarily lived as small-scale subsistence farmers with their political lives organized around kinspeople and fellow villagers. The small villages and tiny states of the forests were at the farthest and poorest ends of the long-distance trade routes that fed the imperial international trade of the African grasslands.

In the forest societies local trading was for the most part in the hands of women, who also oversaw agricultural production. Although males worked cooperatively at the start of the growing season to clear fields around the villages and burn brush, they soon settled back into a life of relative ease while women took over the day-to-day tasks of tending the crops. Since tropical soils were so quickly exhausted, new brush-covered lands had to be cleared yearly; after several years' use the old plots needed time to lie fallow and recover.

Because of the constant shifting of fields within large reserves of fallow brushland, individual land ownership of private plots was not economical in the forested regions of West Africa; instead land was held communally and redistributed by kin groups of individuals on the basis of need. People settled in central villages comprising closely clustered housing compounds rather than on isolated individual farmsteads, which would soon have been in fields no longer cultivated. As a result, forest life was characterized by intense social interactions, especially between kinspeople who shared a common ancestry, whether through paternal or maternal lineage. Because people had to live so closely together, manners and socially approved behaviors were rigorously enforced by intense pressure from both families and wider community.

In the same way, since the economic life of the forest regions revolved around the cultivation of family landholdings, most important economic decisions were made within the councils of the large extended families. The older members of kin groups were considered the wisest and most deserving of respect; their opinions carried the most weight. People did what was required of them because it was their family responsibility. This attitude prevailed even in religion: deceased ancestors were believed to be actively watching over the living, helping their heirs when asked, and punishing them with

misfortune and illness if they strayed from the course of proper social and family conduct.

When the needs of the community crossed family lines, new forms of social organization took over. Secret societies that represented the power of the ancestors or other spiritual forces brought together men and women of various lineages and clans. In areas where political authority was weak, the social authority of the secret societies to hold communities together and reinforce proper modes of behavior was especially strong. Unlike life outside the societies, group members could rise to the top ranks on the basis of their individual abilities rather than primarily by seniority or family status. The groups' public presentations, which featured both fearsome and humorous maskers, were an important part of all holiday celebrations.

Traditional forms of slavery in the region developed out of the need to incorporate outsiders, such as prisoners of war, into the predominantly kin-based social systems. As Ibo-born Olaudah Equiano explained:

Those prisoners which were not sold or redeemed we kept as slaves; but how different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West Indies! With us they do no more work than other members of the community, even their master; their food, clothing and lodging were nearly the same as theirs (except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were freeborn), and there was scarce any other difference between them than a superior degree of importance which the head of a family possesses in our state, and that authority which, as such, he exercises over part of his household. Some of these slaves have even slaves under them as their own property and for their own use.

Prior to the Atlantic commerce, slavery was neither particularly important nor overly harsh in the forest regions. The institution would later be exploited, however, by Africans and foreigners alike, and in its more virulent form African slavery became a curse both to the continent and the people like Olaudah Equiano who were sent off into the Atlantic diaspora.

Although by the seventeenth century royal political organizations were becoming more common in the expanding states of the forest regions, the basic democratic principles of local life endured. Kings were usually elected from candidates among a large royal family (unlike their European counterparts, who were elevated on the basis of seniority and consanguinity no matter what their competence). On the village level, most day-to-day political decision-making required family consensus.

Because the hot, humid climate made the long-term preservation of agricultural and other surplus extremely difficult, status in the forest societies was acquired more by redistributing wealth than by accumulating it. Since a large family was the mark of a great man or woman, people strove to expand their families as fast or faster than their wealth. This practice promoted relatively egalitarian living conditions, since a richer man had to divide his assets among more dependents. It also kept the emphasis on social obligation rather than on self-interest.

Much like the rural peoples of colonial North America, most African families tried to be as economically self-sufficient as possible. With the help of kinspeople, adults built their own houses, most with thatched roofs made from palm leaves. No single style

of housing was common to all the forest societies. In Dahomey mud-walled houses predominated; nearby the Yoruba built their walls with large earthen bricks; to the southeast the Ibo used wattle-and-daub construction; even farther south the Bakongo interlaced prefabricated palm branches and leaves to quickly form walls and roofs.

The diets of most forest farmers revolved around palm oil and highly caloric (but not very nutritional) yams. Stews were commonly prepared from both ingredients, along with peas, beans, melon seeds, onions, and okra, and then highly seasoned with peppers. After a long, slow cooking, the stew was poured into a large calabash platter and served with a loaf of a warm doughy yam paste called *fufu*. After washing their hands, diners would squat around the common calabash to eat. Many people would begin the meal by pouring out a small quantity of the food as a libation to the spirits of the ancestors, after which they would take turns breaking off pieces of *fufu* to form into small balls for soaking up the tasty stew. In most societies women and children, as well as slaves, were expected to eat separately from the men.

Olaudah Equiano has left us a good description of day-to-day life among his Ibo people of the early eighteenth century:

As our manners are simple, our luxuries are few. The dress of both sexes are nearly the same. It generally consists of a long piece of (cotton cloth) wrapped loosely round the body . . . this is usually died blue, which is our favorite colour. It is extracted from a berry (indigo) and is brighter and richer than any I have seen in Europe. Besides this, our women of distinction wear golden ornaments. . . . on their arms and legs. When our women are not employed with the men in tillage, their usual occupation is spinning and weaving cotton, which they afterwards dye, and make into garments. They also manufacture earthen vessels (and tobacco pipes) of many kinds.

Traditionally the troops of the forest states armed themselves with spears, bows and arrows, daggers, and swords. The regional craftsmanship in wood and metal work was very high quality, and most weapons were of local manufacture until European-made guns began to be imported in considerable numbers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By the time large numbers of slaves were imported into English North America, the coastal societies were extremely well armed and most local infantrymen carried muskets.

Although the forest states were not particularly impressive by international standards of size, wealth, or military strength, they fostered one of the world's great traditions in the visual and musical arts. The religiously oriented wooden sculpture and masks they designed to emphasize fertility and the power of the ancestors helped shape the abstract vision that characterizes most of today's modern art, while the complex and improvisational musical and dance styles that originated in the forest regions were the progenitors of the African-American musical and dance forms that have come to dominate much of the modern world.

In his recollections of his African childhood, Olaudah Equiano emphasized the importance of the arts to his Ibo people and the region as a whole:

We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets. Thus every great

event, such as triumphant return from battle, or other cause of public rejoicing, is celebrated in public dances, which are accompanied with songs and music suited to the occasion. The assembly is separated into four divisions which dance either apart or in succession, and each with a character to itself Each (dance) represents some interesting scene of real life, such as a great achievement, domestic employment, a pathetic story, or some rural sport; and, as the subject is generally founded on some real event, it is therefore ever new. This gives our dances a spirit and variety which I have scarcely seen elsewhere. We have many musical instruments, particularly drums of different kinds, a piece of music which resembles a guitar, and another much like a (xylophone).

The artistic heritage that Equiano described easily merged with similar ones from other West African nations and would be familiar to any student of early African American culture, although the drums he mentioned would have to be downplayed in North America.

Although the people of West Africa did not carry their material wealth to the Americas, they brought with them assets far greater in terms of cultural wealth, an inheritance upon which much of the best of American artistic achievements still depend. In this sense, certainly, African Americans were not stripped of their cultural heritage. But the individual heritages that West Africans carried with them across the ocean had to change when they intermixed with other African peoples in the Americas and interacted with Native and European Americans as well. The result was a new cultural and artistic style that, because of the mixing, was far more accessible to non-Africans and thus ultimately far more influential in the world at large.

THE EAST ATLANTIC SLAVING SYSTEM

I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
 Was snatch'd from *Afric*'s fancy'd happy seat:
 What pangs excruciating must molest,
 What sorrow labour in my parent's breast?
 Steel'd was that soul and by no misery mov'd
 That from a father seiz'd his babe belov'd.
 Such, such my case. And can I then buy pray
 Others may never feel tyrannic sway?

Phillis Wheatley, "To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth,
 His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for North America" (1773)

Africa entered the sixteenth century enjoying an age of relative peace and prosperity. The recent expulsion from European Iberia of the Moors of the North African Almohad empire did not seem particularly threatening, for no foreign power had ever successfully invaded the interior of Africa. The majority of Africans were subsistence farmers, living in small, relatively egalitarian societies, unaware that a great storm from the northwest was about to disrupt their world and change their lives forever.

That the distant thunder from the north was still unnoticed is not so surprising, for western Europe was just emerging from a long history of underdevelopment. Moreover, the small and undistinguished Portuguese nation, which would first turn Europe's disadvantages into opportunities, was isolated on the Atlantic coast, far from the rich Mediterranean commerce. Yet the Portuguese put what they learned from their difficult location on the Atlantic together with nautical insights gained on the Moorish frontier to develop the caravel, a new form of warship sturdy enough to withstand ocean storms and therefore strong enough to carry heavy guns and survive the terrible shocks of their recoil.

Originally the Portuguese had only a minor interest in West Africa; their primary intention was to turn the Moorish flank by sailing around the continent to the riches of Asia. When Vasco da Gama rounded the horn of South Africa in 1498 and with incredible good fortune reached Indian, he lost two-thirds of his men and half of his ships, but by bypassing hundreds of land-based middlemen and taxing units with his direct trade route, he was able to turn a profit 60 times the cost of his voyage and so whet the appetite of western Europe for more oceanic trade. More and more ships began arriving off the African coast.

Since local settlement patterns kept African traders' interests centered on the rivers, it was European oceangoing vessels that quickly came to dominate the new carrying trade of the western coasts. In the interior, African merchants continued to control both the traditional land and river trades, for Europe was still too weak to drive far inland into Africa, much less to conquer territory. Indeed, so stoutly was the continent defended by both African armies and tropical diseases that it would be 450 years (1450-1900) before the Europeans penetrated most areas of Africa. The forest regions of the coast, moreover, quickly proved a veritable "white man's grave": some 60 percent of the European traders died during their first year in residence, principally from tropical fevers.

Most African rulers welcomed increased international commerce, and although local authorities occasionally had to punish dishonest European merchants by placing an embargo on further commerce until debts or misdeeds were made good, a steady Atlantic trade was soon in operation between the African coastal states and western European middlemen. For most societies bordering the sea this trade spelled amazing new opportunities for wealth. Previously the coastal peoples had been poor relations far from the commercial activity of the continent's great interior empires. The new ocean trade changed all that; the coast was now the cutting edge of commerce, and thus the new foreign trade was avidly welcomed by local rulers.

African rulers rented coastal trading stations to Europeans, who fortified them for protection from cutthroat European competitors. The local rulers did not fear these trading stations because they could cut the European traders off from food, water, and commerce whenever necessary; local middlemen were not worried because African rulers simply refused European traders permission to enter into the interior; where they might become competitors for Africa's domestic trade. Yet the nature of the trade would soon be changed by events far across the western ocean.

Europe's conquest of the Americas had opened up a treasure trove of minerals and vast, fertile agricultural lands - if only the conquerors could find skilled laborers capable of working profitably in the new climate. Initially the white invaders tried to

meet their labor needs with Native Americans who had been legally, if immorally, enslaved during the wars of conquest, but when far too many of them succumbed to disease and cruel treatment, it became clear that their enslavement was not a viable long-term policy. White workers were sent out from Europe, but too few Europeans were willing to emigrate as common laborers to the American wilderness, and fewer still - even among those sent unwillingly as bound labor or in punishment for crimes - had the agricultural skills and physical endurance to handle the challenge.

The solution came when the Spanish and other Atlantic European powers found an alternative source of labor at their trading stations on the African coast, where workers who knew both mining and tropical farming could be purchased cheaply and transported for extremely low prices. African slaves proved a bargain in the lower Americas because their labor in the mercantile systems of the New World was worth so much more than it was in tropical Africa, where hoe agriculture produced little in the way of surplus wealth. Moreover, Africans, who were carried by shorter transport routes to the Americas and possessed superior resistance to tropical fevers, died at only one-third the rate of Europeans brought to New World plantations.

Ironically, despite their low cost, suitable abilities, and superior health, African laborers might not have been the only labor choice for New World plantations if capitalism had been further developed toward wage labor or if steamships had been sailing the high seas when the Americas were discovered. After the ending of the Atlantic slave trade in the nineteenth century, contract labor continued to pour into the Caribbean and other ports of the New World, but by that time, when steamships were providing healthier and cheaper long-range oceanic transportation, people from India, China, and nonwestern Europe were preferred for their even lower labor costs. In the economic era before steam, however, Africans quickly became the labor of choice for American development.

The primary source for the millions of slave laborers who would be transported across the Atlantic was West and West Central Africa. Most victims of the slave trade originally lost their freedom after being taken prisoner during African wars. There were no international rules about the treatment of prisoners of war, and enslavement seemed less brutal than many of the alternatives. In places like western Europe at that time it was still considered a captor's right to execute his prisoners if he so desired.

Many other Africans became slaves when they were kidnapped by armed thugs (usually from neighboring territories) who roved the interior trade routes of Africa alongside legitimate merchants. Smaller numbers of people were forced into slavery by traditional legal actions that mandated enslavement to settle debts or as punishment for certain crimes. For the most part, it is fair to say, Africans enslaved not countrymen but enemies, whom they sold away to the foreign traders on the coast.

The vast majority of the new slaves were youths between 10 and 24 years old, just entering the prime of their lives. In composition, 14 percent were children (children made up 30 percent of the African population), 30 percent were young women (who made up 25 percent of the African population), and 56 percent were young men (also 25 percent of the general population). Among the young adults, twice as many men were transported across the Atlantic as women. American demand rejected older slaves as difficult to train and unlikely to survive, and so men and women over 30 were rarely sold and brought much lower prices. As a result, older adults were seldom kidnapped, and

aged captives were either retained on the coast or killed by the raiders at the place of battle.

Far different from the European emigrants, who tended to be from the lower classes, the African slaves exported to America, especially those taken in war, were commonly, as an English observer of the Gambian region observed, “people of distinction, such as princes, priests and persons high in office...conducted by Mandingoes in droves of twenty, thirty and forty, chained together.” Even African royalty often ended up in slavery; as a result, Africa lost more leadership, and Afro-America gained more, than is commonly realized.

The pricing of the international slave trade was driven as much by local African supply as by foreign demand: since the supplies of African slaves on the coast did not go up and down in direct response to increasing and decreasing Euro-American labor requirements, African traders clearly had agendas of their own. The much greater demand for males in the Americas should have driven up the price for men; instead, women cost more than men on the African coast (twice as much in Senegambia, for example). The higher price for women reflected the decisions of African men in the coastal societies to take advantage of the slave trade by purchasing additional wives, thereby raising the prices.

European and American merchants purchased African slaves for what seemed to them relatively low exchange values in textiles, guns, liquor, metals, and cowrie shell money. But to the African suppliers, the prices appeared remarkably high. Thus, both African and European slave traders raced to make gains in what seemed to them a profitable situation. The potential advantage for West African dealers can be seen when it is realized that in the 1680s a male slave could be legally traded for 17 guns on the western coast; at that time the value of 17 trade muskets was roughly equivalent to six times the yearly cost of living for a common man. Today, in our own world, many a thief will take a man’s life for much less.

Deeper into Africa, of course, the original enslaver got less than the coastal trading price when he sold his slaves; indeed, he usually got even less than it would have cost to raise a child to an age equivalent to that of the young person he was selling. Why then did merchants engage in the slave trade, since the continent was losing value with each person sold away? Part of the answer is that the continent was not doing the trading.

For the original enslavers, who were taking human beings through war or kidnapping, slaves seemed almost like free goods. The slave dealers profited on their deals; it was the societies losing members that were being injured, but they had no say in the exchange. Thus, the private wealth of certain powerful African elites increased at the same time that the public wealth in human capital of certain African societies was declining. It is a familiar problem, in other guises, in our own era.

One victim of the slave trade who later came to reflect on its causes blamed the greed of whites and blacks alike. Olaudah Equiano was kidnapped as a child by African traders before eventually being sold to Europeans on the coast.

From what I can recollect of [the battles between African states] they appear to have been eruptions of one little state or district on the other, to obtain prisoners or booty. Perhaps they were incited to this, by those traders who brought the European goods...amongst us. Such a mode of obtaining slaves in Africa is

common; and I believe more are procured this way, and by kidnapping, than any other. When a trader wants slaves, he applies to a chief for them, and tempts him with his wares. It is not extraordinary if on this occasion he yields to the temptation with as little firmness, and accepts the prices of his fellow creature's liberty, with as little reluctance as the enlightened merchant. - Accordingly he falls on his neighbors, and a desperate battle ensues. If he prevails and takes prisoners, he gratifies his avarice by selling them.

From the perspective of those Africans who traded in slaves, the people they sold away were not countrymen but outsiders - prisoners of war, criminals, or kidnap victims from other societies. Thus, selling them was not considered immoral; instead it seemed both reasonable and profitable. Moreover, bartering for the provisions white slavers needed for the Atlantic crossing brought the coastal elite an additional 50 percent in profits. All in all, for those on the coast, selling foreigners was a lucrative business.

For Africa as a whole, however, the economics were much different. For the continent the profitability of the slave trade was canceled out by the high costs of increasing warfare, the social insecurity caused by slave raiding, and the loss of so many young productive people. Moreover, the small upper class who gained from the trade too often frittered away much of their new wealth on imported luxury goods; there was little domestic investment of the kind that would bring productive new growth to the continent. Caught between economic stages of development, Africa gained little from the private economic decisions of its coastal elite; in that sense, being on the periphery of the expanding capitalist world proved as injurious for Africa as it did for those shipped away from the continent to the Americas.

We must remember that most of the negative results of the slave trade either were invisible on the coast or would not show up until later. Since the coastal lands had traditionally been among the most poorly developed regions of sub-Saharan Africa, when new trading opportunities arose, the local people saw the commerce as a heaven-sent opportunity to increase their wealth and power. As a result, the era of the slave trade was marked by great increases in the size and influence of Africa's western coastal states, while at the same time greater use of new American food crops was increasing the population growth rate and thus distinguishing the negative demographic effects of exporting people.

Since the coastal peoples did not organize their world in racial categories, they saw no immorality in selling foreign African slaves to white Europeans. Indeed, early on the trade was often considered a necessity to finance defense spending, since the lucrative international commerce with Europe led to increasing conflicts between the African coastal states struggling to dominate the new trade. Since the winners became rich and the losers enslaved, the battles set off a series of costly arms races: by 1730 some 180,000 muskets a year were entering West Africa from the coast, and by 1800 over 500,000 weapons were imported yearly.

Africa was not yet dependent on Europe. Indeed, things seemed to be going well: the coastal states were growing in size and influence, their elites were becoming vastly wealthier, and cheap foreign imports such as East Indian textiles were improving the material standard of living of the common people. African states were trading what they considered excess and dangerous population for foreign luxuries, cheap textiles, tools,

metals, bargain-priced cowrie money, and guns. Although the majority of women and children taken in slavery were not sent abroad but were incorporated into coastal societies, the excess men were usually sold overseas. This sexual imbalance led to coastal societies becoming increasingly polygynous and densely populated, while the smaller interior states were seriously weakened.

Unfortunately, as the Atlantic slave trade increased, so, too, did the numbers of people held in indigenous forms of African servitude, which were becoming less and less protective of human rights. Africa, like the New World, was inevitably being corrupted by the moral cost of large-scale commerce in human beings. Indeed, by 1770 there were probably as many slaves in West and West Central Africa as in all the countries of the Americas - approximately 2.5 million people were in African bondage.

Most coastal kings were pleased with the commerce, which had made them richer and more powerful than they had ever been. Unfortunately, as the Dahomean ruler Agaja Trudo came to discover when he tried to end the corrupting slave trade in his region, the world market, not the African merchant, was setting the basic terms of the exchange. Thus, if Dahomey wanted foreign imports, the Dahomeans had to sell people or business and weapons would flow in dangerously high amounts to their enemies.

In retrospect, we can see that the Atlantic slave trade was not as beneficial a commerce as it first appeared from the African traders' perspective. It vastly increased African domestic slavery but not African labor efficiency: moreover, imported luxuries did nothing for Africa's productive development. In fact, cheap foreign textiles undercut local producers. In those rare areas where Europeans were able to force an entry into Africa - the east coast Swahili city-states and the Kongo region in Central Africa - they proved incompetent to hold the trading networks together, and these old centers of power fell into poverty much as did the former Inca and Aztec empires in America.

All told, Africa sent nearly 12 million of her sons and daughters westward to the Americas in the years between 1500 and 1900. It is worth noting that this number roughly parallels the nearly 12 million who were sent eastward and northward across the Sahara Desert, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean by Arab slave traders during the longer period of 650-1900. Some scholars have speculated that the result of these forced human emigrations from the continent may have been a reduction in Africa's potential population growth: the continent's estimated population of 50 million in 1850 might have been closer to 100 million without the international slave trades.

In return for the Atlantic commerce, Africa grew materially richer, and many of its coastal states grew far more powerful. As Africa grew wealthier, however, it lost human capital and thus grew less self-sufficient and dangerously more dependent on foreign trade.

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE AND BEYOND

Jesus, Estella, Esperanza, Mercy:

Sails flashing to the wind like weapons,
sharks following the moans the fever and the dying;
horror the corposant and compass rose.

Middle Passage:

Voyage through death
To life upon these shores

The African American poet Robert Hayden, "Middle Passage,"
Selected Poems (1966)

The process of enslavement, transport, and seasoning was a passage through hell that carried a terrible price in suffering and death. The horror had begun in Africa with wars and small-scale raiding during which nearly as many people died as were finally enslaved. Only a minority of those taken captive or kidnapped were destined to be sold away from the continent, but that minority was unlucky enough to experience African slavery at its worst - which was bad enough that very few Africans who gained their freedom in America ever tried to make their way home. Of those new slaves shipped to the African coast, nearly one in five died of disease or mistreatment along the way or in the barracoons awaiting departure.

Among the 12 million Africans who survived to be placed aboard the ships of the foreign slave traders, conditions got no better. Somewhere between one in five and one in ten of all the people put on board would die crossing the ocean during the deadly Middle Passage. Imagine a modern airline trip on which an average of one passenger in every row dies before the plane lands, their bodies unceremoniously dumped out of the rear of the plane along the way.

Even arrival on American shores did not bring a halt to the slaughter: one of every four who had been strong enough to make it across the Atlantic would die during the first several years of American "seasoning," as adjusting to the new environment was called. In total, then, nearly one in every three of the original captives taken in Africa died from the process of enslavement.

Such an immense loss of life would not have made any economic sense if the native population of the Americas had not been expiring even more rapidly. The wars and cultural shocks that followed the European invasion of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, combined with the onslaught of Old World diseases for which Native Americans had no immunities, threatened to all but destroy the original peoples. In those early years Europeans were not willing to emigrate in numbers anywhere near sufficient to replace the native labor force; those Europeans who did come to the Americas too often quickly died. Indeed, Europeans, when they were put to work in tropical conditions - in the West Indies, for example - died off at six times the rate they would have in Europe and at three times the rate of black workers.

The imperial nations of Europe had found their answer to the labor problems of the Americas in West Africa, where black laborers could be purchased both easily and relatively cheaply. Although carrying Africans as slaves across the Atlantic Ocean always remained a chancy enterprise, and earnings varied considerably from place to place and voyage to voyage, profits usually ran somewhere between 25 to 50 percent. The result was an important and profitable business - but a brutal and inhumane one.

It is hard to imagine how soul-testing the passage from African freedom to American slavery must have been for those who experienced it. First there was the trauma of capture during war or by kidnappers. Then came a trip to the coast that was

usually as physically exhausting as it was cruel; the traders who specialized in bringing slaves to coastal barracoons and river stations tried to move their captives as quickly and cheaply as possible before illness or escape could lessen their profits. Comfort and kind treatment were not part of the equation.

Psychologically the last days in the barracoons of Africa took captives a considerable distance along the brutal passage from freedom to chattel slavery. Days of cramped waiting, often in the cellars of the stifling hot slaving stations (called factories in those days), must have dragged by, sweat drop by sweat drop, in endless boredom. Even worse, when depression lifted enough for conversations to begin, talk too often revolved around rumors that the prisoners were to be sold to hideously repulsive foreigners who were going to carry their victims off to the lands of cannibal death far across the western sea. Even those new slaves long since reduced to vacant stares must have groaned in dismay when, as in a fevered dream, the fearsome aliens materialized in large ocean-going vessels gliding silently into view, their masts towering heavenward and rigged like monstrous cannibal fetish shrines.

Mohamommah Gardo Baquaqua described the terror of that irrevocable moment: "I had never seen a ship before, and my idea of it was, that it was some object of worship of the white man. I imagined that we were all to be slaughtered." To Belinda, a young slave woman, the alien appearance of white men, "whose faces were like the moon and whose bows and arrows were like the thunder and lightning," seemed to be visual proof of their evil magic and horrible ways.

"I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits and that they were going to kill me," recalled Olaudah Equiano. Coming on deck to see desolate blacks chained next to a great copper boiling pot convinced the young boy that he was "to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose hair," who barked their orders so cruelly in an alien tongue.

In the tropical heat the stench of the ship and its unwashed crew was overpowering. Chained below in the darkness, the new slaves could feel the departing vessel begin its slow rolling, creaking morbidly with every invisible swell. Most must have longed to give up the ghost; those weakened by illness moaned pitifully, while others cried out in fear or railed angrily against their fate. Often it was not long before the seas became heavier and the wrenching sounds of sea sickness would fill the dark hold.

After that, no matter how often the necessary tubs were emptied or the hold was washed down with seawater and vinegar, below deck it would continue to reek of sweat, vomit, and the putrid human wastes that had sloshed back and forth when the hatches were battened down. Certainly some voyages were better than others; if the new slaves stayed healthy, if the seas were light and the winds brisk, and if the crew was more humane than usual, it might have seemed tolerable. Too often, though, captives found the conditions unbearable. Some rapidly died of illnesses that in other circumstances they would have survived. Others tried to kill themselves by jumping overboard or refusing to eat.

Slavers tried to reduce the likelihood of Africans making suicidal leaps into the sea by rigging nets along the sides of the ship. If slaves still reached the water, crewmen were sent after them so that an example could be made; such would-be suicides were, ironically enough, executed. Afterward their bodies would be mutilated, for the slavers

were convinced that Africans believed mutilation would end the cycle of rebirth that otherwise carried a suicide back home to his family.

When other slaves, out of depression, illness, or suicidal intent, chose not to eat, the crewmen would use hot coals to sear open their lips or force funnels into their mouths to pour food down their throats. To those who feared cannibalism, the white crewmen's actions seemed strong evidence that they were fattening their captives for the kill.

Despite the slavers' torturous attempts to keep their human cargo alive, on most voyages there were men and women whose desire for freedom and release led them to suicide or a willful death. Since these victims of the Middle Passage believed they would return to their former African homelands in the next life, their deaths mark one of the world's greatest, but most overlooked, religious martyrdoms.

Because the conditions of the Middle Passage were so terrible, the slavers often faced battles to the death during uprisings by the prisoners held aboard ship. John Newton, a reformed slave trader, explained both the extreme dangers and the measures slavers took to reduce the likelihood of such revolts in *Thoughts upon the Africa Slave Trade*, published in 1788:

Usually about two-thirds of a cargo of slaves are males. When a hundred and fifty or two hundred stout men, torn from their native land, many of whom never saw the sea, much less a ship, till a short space before they had embarked; who have, probably, the same natural prejudice against a white man, as we have against a black; and who often bring with them an apprehension they are bought to be eaten: I say, when thus circumstanced, it is not to be expected that they will tamely resign themselves to their situation. It is taken for granted, that they will attempt to gain their liberty if possible. Accordingly, we dare not trust them, we receive them on board from the first as enemies.

Thus, slaves were often put in irons until the ship was at sea. Later each man was fettered hand and foot to a fellow victim so the movement became possible but only with great teamwork and deliberation. When the men were brought on deck to exercise, chains were commonly run through the irons of each pair so that escape and insurrection became extremely difficult.

The women and children were kept separately and were often free of chains and irons, but far too often they were at the mercy of vicious seamen who had perhaps the worst jobs and dispositions in all Christendom. On the loading of the slaves, the sorry and savage dregs of humanity who served as crew for the slave ships (and who often would not survive the voyage) would stand on deck rudely calling out their foulest thoughts as the women passed before them naked, shivering, and terrified. John Newton recalled the scene: "The poor [black women] cannot understand the language they hear, but the looks and manner of the [crewmen] are sufficiently intelligible. In imagination, the prey is divided, upon the spot, and only reserved til opportunity offers."

It is not surprising that the Africans looked for any opportunity to rise up and strike back against such vile treatment. John Newton understood such insurrections for what they were - noble struggles for liberty or death: "An attempt to rise upon the ship's company, brings on instantaneous and horrid war; for, when they are once in motion, they are desperate.... Sometimes when the slaves are ripe for an insurrection, one of them

will impeach the affair....The traitor to the cause of liberty is caressed, rewarded, and deemed an honest fellow. The patriots, who formed and animated the plan, if they can be found out, must be treated as villains, and punished, to intimidate the rest.”

Parenthetically we should note that Newton captured one of the basic themes of the colonial era, the struggle for freedom, but from a perspective we seldom encounter. Historians have commonly given far too much honor to the Founding Fathers, who were in reality traitors to the principles of freedom, and missed altogether the greater heroism of those black men and women who were a truer vanguard of liberty.

Despite all the precautions of chains, guards, and vicious punishments, revolts remained common on the slave ships. There was an uprising every year or so on French slavers, about one in every 15 voyages; British ships had fewer revolts, but one every other year was common enough. On the smaller vessels that American slavers used there were often several years between uprisings; fewer than 2 percent of the voyages reported revolts.

Few of the Africans successfully carried across the Atlantic were delivered to the English colonies of North America. Brazil took eight times more slaves than did the North American colonies, some 40 percent of the total exported from Africa; the islands of the Caribbean and the settlements of the Guianas between them took another 50 percent. From the perspective of the Atlantic traders, the more distant North America was almost an afterthought; Englishmen in the mainland colonies purchased only about 5 percent of the Africans who were transported from the coast.

In the Caribbean the profits made off a new slave in his first year of bondage paid back the entire cost of the original investment. It is no wonder that conditions remained so harsh in the islands, that six slaves died there of every slave child born: it was cheaper to work a slave to death and purchase a replacement than it was to pay for proper human maintenance and upkeep.

In North America, where the crops slaves produced had less value and higher production costs, it took much longer to earn back the original purchase investment in a slave; therefore, bondspeople were generally better treated. A healthier climate may have been equally important in boosting the North American survival rate. Whatever the cause, blacks died in the English colonies at no worse a rate than white.

But did physical survival come at the price of cultural death? There is no easy answer to this vexing question. Non-English immigrants from Europe quickly assumed British ways during the colonial era even when they were not enslaved, and contemporary Africans have eagerly adopted American lifestyles without coercion. Living culture is never static. The early Africans who improvised their way into African American life should be as respected for their accomplishments, which shaped all our lives, as pitied for how much they unwillingly lost. The new lives of these Africans varied considerably across time and from region to region, not to mention from slave to slave; to understand what happened we must look into the specific circumstances of a variety of smaller communities in the different colonial regions.

Source: William D. Piersen, *From Africa to America: African American History from the Colonial Era to the Early Republic, 1526-1790*, (New York, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), pp. 16-33.

Philip D. Curtin examines various types of cultural encounters, the development of slavery in the Americas (with a focus on Brazil and the Caribbean), the role of Spain and Portugal in the slave trade, and the differences in the organization of plantations in the Caribbean and the American South in the following excerpts from his book entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*.

The plantation complex was an economic and political order centering on slave plantations in the New World tropics. During the century centered on about 1800, these plantations played an extremely important role in the European-dominated portion of the world economy. Though the core of the complex were the slave plantations growing tropical staples, the system had much broader ramifications. Political control lay in Europe. Much of the labor force came from Africa, though some came from Amerindian societies on the South American mainland. In a final phase in the middle to late nineteenth century, most of the labor was to come from India and China. At its peak, many of the trade goods to buy African slaves came from mainland South America. Northern North America and Europe were important trading partners, supplying timber and food to the plantations and consuming the sugar, rum, indigo, coffee, and cotton they produced.

The origins of this economic complex lay much further back in time. Its earliest clear forerunner was the group of plantations that began growing cane sugar in the eastern Mediterranean at the time of the European Crusades into the Levant. These plantations, like their successors, produced mainly for a distant market in Europe, thus becoming the center for a widespread commercial network to bring in labor and supplies and to carry off the finished product.

With the passage of time the heart of the complex moved westward by way of the Atlantic islands, Brazil, and the Caribbean. It ultimately stretched from Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil to the Mason-Dixon line, and it had outliers, even at its eighteenth-century prime, on the Indian Ocean islands of Reunion and Mauritius. Later on it spread even more widely to Peru, Hawaii, Queensland, Fiji, Zanzibar, and Natal - among other places - but this worldwide dispersion during the nineteenth century took place just as the complex began to be dismantled - first with the ending of the slave trade from Africa, then with the widespread emancipation of slaves throughout the tropical world under European control. The plantation complex was therefore much more than an economic order for the tropical Americas alone; it had an important place in world history at large...

...

Forms of cultural encounter

The peculiarity of the plantation complex stands out clearly in contrast to other forms of cultural encounter between Europe and non-Western societies. In these same centuries, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth, four different balances of cultural demography can be distinguished.

One was the trade diaspora of merchants scattered along trade routes to facilitate trade between people of their own society and their hosts. It was the most ancient form, occurring at all periods back to the Agricultural Revolution. The merchants were nearly always a small minority in the host society, but their need to trade forced them to learn about the local culture - to become, in effect, cross-cultural brokers. The men and women of these trade diasporas therefore enjoyed a cross-cultural experience of unusual intensity.

With the Maritime Revolution of the fifteenth century, Europeans gained the capacity to make direct voyages to virtually any part of the world, and the character of trade diasporas under European control began to change. Some voyages were peaceful and purely commercial in intent and conduct, but by the sixteenth century, most European trade to Asia was militarized, with armed shipping based on fortified trading posts or trading cities like Goa, Bombay, or Batavia. These “trading post empires” were to serve in the longer run as a point of departure for the European conquest of India and Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, they served as a link between Asia and the plantation complex.

A second form of cultural encounter was outright military conquest and rule over an alien society. The Christian West had expanded its control in the Mediterranean basin during the Middle Ages, but Europeans began their imperialist phase overseas with the conquest of highland South and Middle America in the mid-sixteenth century. As the Spanish government took over political power from the Inca and Aztec oligarchies, it needed Spanish cadres as soldiers and officials. A few more Spaniards drifted in as merchants, miners, and sometimes ranchers, but without displacing the native American community. The result was a cultural-demographic type sometimes called “territorial empire” or “true empire.” Unlike the trading post empires, where Europeans settled only in crucial strong points, with territorial empires they meant to govern the whole, though with Indian help. The number of Europeans required to run a true empire overseas rarely amounted to as much as 5 percent of the total population. The local communities remained intact and kept much of their culture, even after centuries of European rule.

The earliest examples of true empire were the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, British India and the Dutch rule over Java had been added, and they expanded during that century to include all of South Asia and Indonesia. After the 1880s, mainland Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa were added. These new European empires outside the Americas, however, came into existence as the plantation complex was being phased out. The empires important to the plantation complex at its height were the nearby empires on the mainland of tropical America.

A third cultural-demographic type is sometimes called “settlement empire” or “true colonization.” As Europeans began to settle the North American mainland in the early seventeenth century, they found the native inhabitants to be comparatively few. Many died from their encounter with European diseases. Others were pushed aside or herded into cultural enclaves like the later Indian reservations. This encounter with blanket immigration is in one sense the opposite of true empire. With true empire the natives were many and the alien rulers were few; with true colonization, the natives were few and the alien immigrants were many. The United States is the obvious type case, but Argentina and Uruguay, Australia and New Zealand, and much of Siberia were all added to this category by the nineteenth century.

The fourth major type was the plantation complex, where Europeans conquered and then replaced the vanishing native peoples with settlers - but not settlers from Europe. At first, these settlers were drawn mainly from Africa, but later they came from Asian lands as well.

Both true empire and true colony are demographic extremes, with a wide range of possibilities in between. Where the minority - whether natives or settlers - was at least 5 percent of the total population, it could usually maintain its existence as a community and practice its culture.

Instances where two or more cultural communities exist within a single society are often called "plural societies." European settlers created plural societies in several parts of Africa and Asia - in Africa, Algeria, Tunisia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa; and in Asia, Israel, and several regions within the USSR. Plural societies in the Americas had a different origin. Until the sixteenth century, the Americas had been isolated from the main disease environments of the Afro-Eurasian landmass. This meant that the native Americans lacked appropriate immunities against the diseases introduced by Europeans and Africans. A series of epidemics reduced most New World populations by as much as 90 percent during the first century and a half after contact. The number of European settlers in South and Middle America was tiny compared to what was to follow in the nineteenth century, but they increased through natural growth, whereas the Indian population diminished. By the late seventeenth century, Mexico and Peru had become plural societies, with Indian and Spanish cultural communities living side by side in the same state. In time, these separate cultural communities influenced each other and created a new, integrated culture as a middle ground between them. In Mexico by the early twentieth century, cultural integration had gone so far that the majority of the people could only be called Mexican, though separate Spanish and Indian cultural communities still existed alongside it.

Still another mixed type came into existence on the North American mainland. Some plantations, especially for tobacco, had begun in the seventeenth century, but the workers were mainly from Europe. In the eighteenth century, however, the slave trade reached North America as well. Throughout the U.S. South, a plantation society grew up alongside the true colony to become a mixed neighbor to the mature plantation societies of the Caribbean.

...

Africa and African history have a peculiar place in Western historical writing and in Western consciousness. Some of it has to do with the special relationships between Africa and Western civilization over the past 400 or 500 years, and especially with the fact that Africans were the principal slaves in the Western-controlled world from the sixteenth century well into the nineteenth. But that was not always so. The prototypical slaves in the medieval world were Slavs - the people exported from the Black Sea slave trading posts. In classical Latin, the word for "slave" was *manicipium*, but the predominance of Slavic people in the medieval trade added a new term, *sclavus*. This word and its successors, like "slave," have been the dominant terms for people owned by other people in most European languages ever since.

People of African descent were nevertheless the stereotypical slaves in Western societies from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, and this fact of history was one source of Western suppositions about alleged African racial inferiority. And Africa's exceptional place in Western thought continued well into the twentieth century. Africa was the last of the inhabited continents to have its history included in the curricula of European and American universities.

...

Brazil was peculiarly important in the history of the plantation complex. In our ethnocentric way, many of us tend to think of the United States as the place where most slaves were landed. In fact, it was Brazil. Brazil was also the place where the characteristic elements of New World tropical slave plantations were first put together. Finally, in 1888 Brazil was the last country in the Western Hemisphere to abolish slavery.

...

Feudalism from above was abolished, only to appear from below - largely as a political reflection of power relationships of a rural society, where the dominant social and economic unit was the slave plantation. With variants, these powers of feudalism from below were to reappear in the Caribbean when the plantation complex moved on to the northwest in the seventeenth century.

...

The economics of sugar and disease

The change from settlement to plantation took place for a number of reasons; some were mere accidents of time and place, whereas others were more fundamental. One of these was the economic nature of sugar as a commodity. At any date up to the late nineteenth century, all things being equal, sugar had a high price elasticity of demand. This means that, as the price decreased, people were willing and able to buy more of it. Historically, this high price elasticity lasted until people could afford to buy all they wanted, but the seventeenth-century European market for sugar was far short of that condition. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, every step toward greater efficiency of production, every step toward cheaper, more secure ocean shipping, and every step toward cheaper labor costs lowered the price and increased the demand.

The new European maritime capability, pioneered by Dutch shippers since the last decades of the sixteenth century, was a factor of that kind. Cargoes with high ratios of bulk to value could now be carried economically, whereas a half-century earlier they could not. These improvements applied to the cost of bringing slaves from Africa to the New World as well. Cheaper freight rates also made possible a greater division of labor in sugar production. In the sixteenth century, Brazil had been virtually self-sufficient in food. Each plantation region produced its own food, as well as sugar for export. From the middle of the seventeenth century, islands especially well-suited for sugar production could concentrate on this single crop, importing most of their food for slaves and managers from overseas.

A second fundamental condition emerged only gradually in European consciousness. This was the epidemiological difference between Europeans and Africans in the West Indies. Both the French and English colonial planners in the early seventeenth century intended the Caribbean island to be settled by Europeans, and both took it for granted that the vast majority of the settlers would be servants. "Servants" for this purpose would be indentured or *engages*, using the legal form of engagement or indenture for a predetermined number of years (most often three or seven). The engagement contract, furthermore, could be sold to a third party without the servants' consent, and its terms could be enforced by penal sanctions. In theory, men and women bound themselves to work for a specific number of years in return for a free passage to America and a minimal standard of material support once they arrived there. In practice, young and poverty stricken Europeans were lured into a temporary condition of semislavery.

The possibility of using African slaves was rarely considered at first. The ultimate goal was to tap the fabulous wealth of the Spanish territorial empire, and island colonies like Barbados or Martinique were to provide potential garrisons at crucial points - for trade in the short turn, for conquest in the future. For these purposes, a rural population of African slaves would have been worse than useless, a source of weakness, not strength.

But rumors based on the Portuguese experience in Brazil had already carried the word that Africans could work in the tropics, whereas Europeans could not. That belief was mistaken, but it was to have a long life and is barely dead today. It drew part of its strength from the correct observation that, though newly arrived Europeans and Africans both died in greater numbers than old residents did, the European death rate was much higher than the African. The apparent difference was race, but the effective difference was not so much heredity as immunities acquired in childhood. The West African disease environment included the normal range of Old World diseases of the kind that had killed off the Amerindians, but it also included a range of tropical diseases not present in Europe. The chief of these were yellow fever and falciparum malaria.

Acquired immunity to falciparum malaria was less effective than it was to yellow fever. Part of the reason is that falciparum malaria is actually the work of five or more different species of a protozoa, each of which - and even different varieties within a single species - leaves its individual trail of immunity in the victim fortunate enough to survive. Even this is not a true immunity. The apparently immune individual shows no dramatic clinical symptoms, but he or she remains infested with the parasite. The immunity will usually last as long as the individual is periodically re-infected. Thus, even apparently immune Africans who moved from one part of Africa to another were likely to come down with malaria. Those who moved to the Americas also lost some of their immunity, but they were far more likely to survive an attack than newly arrived Europeans were.

The other common form of malaria in the Caribbean was *Plasmodium vivax*. Even for Europeans, it was rarely fatal by itself, though it was seriously debilitating and could contribute to death from other causes. Vivax malaria was altogether absent from West Africa. West Africans, moreover, have inherited protection against vivax malaria, associated with certain hemoglobin characteristics, and their ancestors carried this protection with them to the Americas.

The disease and mortality data for the eastern Caribbean in the seventeenth century are uncertain, but comparable mortality data for the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth show Europeans newly arrived as young adults dying at about four times the rate of newly arrived Africans in the same age group. The sparser seventeenth-century data suggests a similar difference for that period. From the point of view of a planter, given a choice of European or African servants, the choice was clear. The European servant cost about half as much as the African, but the contract ran for only three to seven years; and the individual was likely to die before it had expired. For the African, servitude was lifelong, and life was likely to be longer.

...

The plantation complex had obvious weaknesses, the most obvious of which was the institution of slavery. After experimenting with Indian slavery, Spain had settled on the *encomienda* and other forms of forced labor in Spanish America. Northern Europeans did not practice slavery at home, even on the limited scale of Mediterranean Europe. Even in the Mediterranean basin, slavery was rare in agriculture, especially now that sugar planting had moved out into the Atlantic. In Brazil itself, the slave regime had the obvious weakness that deaths exceeded births, requiring a continuous supply of new labor. In retrospect, it is hard to see how such an obviously wasteful system could possibly fill any but a transitional role in American development. Yet the seventeenth century was to be a key transitional period, when the plantation complex moved on to the Caribbean and even to the southern American mainland, laying the basis for still more growth in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

...

The settlement colonies

Some of the more ethnocentric versions of U.S. history imply that the American South was the heart of the plantation sector in the New World. That was not the case. The mainland colonies bought a few slaves in the seventeenth century, who were usually assimilated to the status of indentured servants. It was only from the early eighteenth century on that slave plantations became characteristic of the American South, after the sugar revolution had already moved to the Greater Antilles. When plantation slavery did come, it copied from the British West Indies, just as the Lesser Antilles had earlier copied Brazil.

Even then, the American South was not fully part of the plantation complex. In the typical sugar islands, 75 to 95 percent of the population were slaves, and many of the free people were either mulatto or black. In the American South generally, most people were not slaves at all, but colonists of European descent. Even where, as in South Carolina, a majority of the working class were slaves, they worked alongside a Euro-American working class that was free.

The American South also differed from the heart of the plantation complex in work organization and plantation size. The typical Caribbean sugar plantation had at least 50 slaves - more often 200 or even 300. In the United States, even in the 1850s, when slavery reached its fullest development, fewer than half of the slaves belonged to

planters who owned 30 or more. Gang labor, where dozens of men and women worked side by side under constant disciplinary surveillance, was most typical of sugar cultivation. The more diversified plantations of the American South often grew specialized export crops like cotton and tobacco, but they also grew food for themselves and for the rest of society. Raising pigs, cattle, and chickens, as well as field crops, created too great a variety of tasks for continuous supervision.

The demographic history of the American South was also strikingly different from that of the tropical plantation colonies. In the tropics, slave populations experienced an excess of deaths over births from their earliest settlement on. European populations of the tropical Caribbean also had more deaths than births. Both had to be renewed by continuous immigration from Europe and Africa. In North America, on the other hand, the slave population soon began to grow from natural increase, and the population of free settlers from Europe grew even more rapidly. Further migration from Europe and Africa simply increased the total. It is not yet possible to account for this striking difference. Part of the explanation must be found in the healthier environment of a country with winter frosts to kill off some tropical diseases, but the American South had malaria and occasional yellow fever epidemics. Part may be the American achievement of a more even sex ratio in the slave population at an early date, which, in turn, may reflect the greater variety of tasks and the smaller size of the American slave plantation.

In any event, both Afro-American and Euro-American populations in the mainland colonies grew from natural increase, and they increased more rapidly than contemporaneous populations did in Europe. As a result, the United States is thought to have the largest population of partial or total African descent in any country in the Americas - about 30 percent of all Afro-Americans in the New World - even though their African ancestors made up only about 6 percent of the total slave trade.

Though the number of African-born in each North American generation was comparatively small, our African ancestors arrived a good deal earlier than our European ancestors did. The median date of arrival for the ancestors of present-day Afro-Americans was about 1770 - half, that is, arrived before that date and half arrived later. The equivalent median date for the arrival of Euro-Americans was about 1900.

This comparatively early arrival also made an enormous difference in the history of African culture in the United States. Though many Euro-Americans have talked to a grandfather or grandmother who was born in Europe, this is simply not possible for most Afro-Americans, other than those descended from the new African immigrants who began to arrive in the 1950s. It is sometimes said that the passage through slavery muted the survival of African culture. That may be, but the passage of time muted it even more. Marked survivals of African culture are less frequent among black Americans than they are among Afro-Cubans, some of whom could still speak Yoruba in the 1980s. By the same token, the remnants of African culture that did survive in the United States came to be very widely diffused, especially in the South. Cultural traits of African origin can be found in the white community, as well as the black, and in new forms that have continued to evolve in the United States - forms as various as jazz, southern cooking, and expected behavior in church.

To say this is not to play down the importance of African culture in the United States or the importance of slave plantations in the history of the American South. They were obviously crucial to the development of the southern economy, of southern society,

and of the regional differences that helped to bring on the American Civil War. But in the broader perspective of the plantation complex, the plantation regime of the American South was a curiously atypical and late-flowering institution that reached its peak between the 1820s and the 1850s, when many plantation societies in the Caribbean were already in dissolution.

...

For twentieth-century North Americans, the Atlantic slave trade is hard to put in perspective. More Americans trace their ancestors to Africa than to any continent other than Europe, and it was the slave trade that brought them; but that phase of our past carries strong emotional overtones - for Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans alike. These feelings involve guilt, shame, and the attempt to assess blame for atrocities committed by people long since dead.

No one today defends the slave trade as a humane institution, and few indeed defend it on any grounds. It may be well to concede that the era of the slave trade is beyond the effective range of moral condemnation - and to try to find out what happened and why, rather than placing blame, however well deserved. The Atlantic slave trade grew to be the largest intercontinental migration up to its time. One way to begin is to see the trade as an economic enterprise.

Source: Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. xi-xii, 13-16, 29, 46, 56, 79-81, 86, 108-110, 113.

In *Sugar and Slaves* Richard Dunn examines how the sugar planters in Barbados, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands created a system of race-based slavery.

The sugar planters of Barbados, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands were the first Englishmen to practice slavery on a large scale. Before the close of the seventeenth century they brought a quarter of a million Negroes from Africa to these six islands and branded them as perpetual bondsmen. Without English precedents to draw upon, the colonists worked up a law code and a set of customs that divided island society starkly into two classes: white masters and black slaves. The Negro was defined as a chattel and treated as a piece of conveyable property, without rights and without redress. To be sure, as in all slave systems, the Negroes in the English sugar colonies exerted certain countervailing pressures against their masters. As David Brion Davis puts it, "Even the most authoritarian master, supported by the most oppressive laws, was to some extent limited by the will of his slaves, who had the power to appeal, flatter, humiliate, disobey, sabotage, or rebel." Yet the thrust of the system was all the other way. Slavery in the English islands was ruthlessly exploitive from the outset, a device to maximize sugar production as cheaply as possible. And it was nakedly racial, for only Africans and Indians were enslaved. The seventeenth-century English sugar planters created one of the harshest systems of servitude in Western history.

...

The initial difference between slavery in the two sectors of English America is that the island colonists plunged into the slaveholding business and the mainland colonists inched into it. The first Barbados settlers brought ten Negroes with them in 1627. The English on Tortuga and Providence acquired their first slaves in 1633, and five years later the blacks on Providence Island staged the first slave revolt in English America. When the Spaniards captured this island in 1641 they found four hundred Englishmen and six hundred slaves. The colonists in the eastern Caribbees owned fewer slaves than this during the tobacco years, but with the beginnings of sugar production, five hundred Negroes reportedly arrived at Barbados in 1642 and a thousand in 1645. By 1660, as we have seen, there were about twenty thousand blacks in Barbados, two thousand in the Leewards, and five hundred in Jamaica - as against a thousand in Virginia.

...

By 1650 certainly, and probably a good bit earlier, slavery in Barbados had become more than a lifetime condition. It extended through the slave's children to posterity. Richard Ligon, who thought the Negroes were treated better than white servants, sharply distinguished between the two categories of servitude: "The Iland is divided into three sorts of men, viz. Masters, Servants, and slaves. The slaves and their posterity, being subject to their Masters for ever, are kept and preserv'd with greater care than the servants, who are theirs but for five years, according to the law of the Iland." The blacks in these early days of sugar production probably did receive better treatment than later. But they were already clearly construed as articles of private property.

...

The slave laws enacted by the island legislatures in the seventeenth century tell us a good deal about the treatment of Negroes and the character of slavery in the Caribbean colonies. These laws set formal standards, to be sure, which were not necessarily enforced. But it was the big planters on the islands who sat in the assemblies and composed these laws, which is to say that in the statute books the chief slaveholders articulated their views on how to handle Negroes. Unfortunately seventeenth-century West Indian legislation on slavery is hard to piece together. The main body of surviving island statutes for this period is still in manuscript in the Public Record Office. Only a handful of acts passed by the island assemblies was printed contemporaneously, and the compilations of West Indian acts of assembly published by the home government early in the eighteenth century omit most obsolete seventeenth-century legislation. When the scattered manuscript and printed laws of the seventeenth century are scrutinized, it turns out that very few predate the Restoration. Thus the big problem with the island slave laws is that the earliest ones are mostly missing. Tantalizingly the Barbados slave act of 1661 speaks of the "many good Lawes and Ordinances" already issued by the Barbadians on this subject. We do not know what these good laws said.

By 1661, at any rate, Barbados had a comprehensive slave code. The act passed in 1661 by the Barbados Assembly "for the better ordering and governing of Negroes" is

the most important surviving piece of legislation issued in the English islands during the seventeenth century. It was reenacted with slight modifications by later Barbados assemblies in 1676, 1682, and 1688, was copied by the assemblies of Jamaica, in 1664, South Carolina, in 1696, and Antigua, in 1702. The preamble to this document implies that Negro slaves are chattels, for it undertakes “to protect them as wee doe men’s other goods and Chattles.” It explicitly characterizes Negroes as “an heathenish, brutish and an uncertaine, dangerous kinde of people,” unfit to be governed by English law. Yet “the right rule of reason and order” tells the Barbadians that slaves cannot be left “to the Arbitrary, cruell and outragious wills of every evill disposed person.” They require somewhat fuller protection than other forms of property, “as being created Men, though without the knowledge of God in the world.” Thus the Barbados code aimed to protect the masters from the brutish slaves and the slaves from their bloody-minded masters. But in fact the masters were offered far fuller protection than the slaves.

The Barbados code of 1661 accorded masters, servants, and slaves carefully differentiated rights and obligations. The master had almost total authority over his slaves and markedly less power over his servants. He was obliged to give his Negroes new clothing once a year - a pair of drawers and a cap for every male, a petticoat and cap for every female - but no rules were laid down about slave food or slave working conditions. The master could correct his slaves in any way he liked, and if while beating a Negro for a misdemeanor he happened to maim or kill him (“which seldom happens”), he suffered no penalty. To be sure, the master could be stiffly fined (three thousand pounds of sugar or about £ 25) for wantonly killing his slave; the fine was a good deal stiffer for wantonly killing someone else’s slave. But since the master could always claim to be correcting a slave for a misdemeanor, this fine was easy to evade. By contrast, in legislating for servants, the colony government fixed minimum food allotments as well as clothing allotments and permitted servants to sue in court or appeal to the magistrates if mistreated. The master could be fined for failing to take proper care of a sick servant, and he could be charged with murder should a servant die at his hands. Servants’ corpses were routinely checked for signs of lash marks or starvation.

Slave crimes were judged and punished by a different standard than servant crimes. The guilty servant was given an extended term of indenture: one year of extra servitude for laying violent hands on his master, two years for theft, three years for running away or getting a female servant pregnant, seven years for entertaining a fugitive slave. A Negro found guilty of these same offenses was whipped, branded, or had his nose slit. Though castration appears to have been a favorite slave punishment, it was not officially incorporated into the Barbados code. Murder, rape, arson, assault, and theft of anything beyond a shilling in value were all capital crimes for Negroes. A key difference between servant and slave justice is that servants were entitled to jury trial, whereas “brutish slaves deserve not for the baseness of their Conditions to bee tried to the legall tryall of twelve Men of their appears [i.e., peers] or Neighborhood.” So the Negro was tried by his master for petty offences and by two justices of the peace and three freeholders for major crimes. The most heinous Negro crime was rebellion or conspiracy against the white ruling order, tried by court-martial. The master of a rebel slave received compensation from the island treasury when his Negro was executed. But should a black man fight and hurt a fellow black, he might be merely whipped while his master paid compensation to the owner of the injured slave.

The Barbados slave act of 1661 was in large part a policing measure, designed to control the restive black population on the island. Within each plantation the overseers were expected to keep the Negro cabins under close surveillance, searching twice a month for stolen goods, clubs, and wooden swords. Six days a week the overseers kept the slaves busy at their tasks, but Sundays were free and therefore worrisome days for the whites. The Negroes tended to wander to neighboring plantations and hold markets. The act of 1661 stipulated that a slave who left his plantation on Sunday must carry a ticket stating the hour his master expected him back. The white man who found an unticketed Negro wandering loose was encouraged to give him a “moderate whipping.” A French visitor to Barbados in 1654 saw slaves given fifty lashes for walking off limits on Sunday, which shows what “moderate” could mean. To punish a more serious offence, he says, the master sometimes applied a firebrand all over the slave’s body, “which makes them shriek with despair.” The Barbadians were particularly concerned about stolen and fugitive slaves in 1661. They established a registry of runaway slaves and organized a posse of twenty men to scout the island fastnesses and capture them dead or alive. Evidently some whites in Barbados were suspected of entertaining fugitive slaves, for the colony government promised immediate freedom to any servant who revealed that his master was keeping a runaway and fined the guilty master £ 80. Note that the fine for adopting a fugitive was much heavier than for murdering a slave. The Negro who caught a fugitive slave was rewarded with a fancy new set of clothes adorned “with a Badge of a Red crosse on his right Arme, whereby hee may be knowne and cherished by all good people” - the archetype of Uncle Tom.

The Barbados slave code was modified in one important respect in 1668, when the Assembly decided to classify Negroes as real estate instead of chattels, so that a slave could be legally tied to a given plantation. The purpose of this measure was to prevent executors from dismantling plantations in probate settlements. Sometimes creditors attached and sold all the slaves on an estate, leaving the heirs with “bare land without Negroes to manure the same,” and the Assembly wanted to keep the island plantations as viable working units. What effect, if any, this legislation had upon the slave himself is a moot point. Eugene Sirmans has argued that the Barbados Negro, enjoying the status of freehold property, became a species of serf, and that his master, bereft of absolute ownership, had a right only to his services, not to his person. In practice, however, the Barbados slave certainly enjoyed no new freedom. If anything, the slave laws of the later seventeenth century further restricted his opportunities.

The Barbados Assembly betrayed a growing sense of alarm as the black population rose and the white population fell. In 1676 Barbados Negroes were prohibited from entering such skilled crafts as cooper, smith, carpenter, tailor, or boatman, so as to reserve these occupations for Christian artisans, which might encourage freed servants to remain on the island. An act of 1682 berated the Negroes for driving the small white planters away by their insolent carriage. Policing measure to deal with slaves who prowled and stole at night were tightened up. Another measure of 1685 tried to shut down the Sunday markets by prohibiting white persons from trading with Negroes for pots of sugar and jars of molasses filched from their masters. The last major Barbados slave act of the century, in 1688, mainly echoed the provisions and language of 1661, with greater emphasis than before on the wickedness of Negro “Disorder, Rapines and Inhumanities to which they are naturally prone and inclined.” For the first time,

however, the Assembly admitted that some Negroes stole food because they were starving. The master who failed to provide his slaves with enough to live on was “in some measure guilty of their Crimes” and could not expect compensation from the island treasury when his Negroes were executed.

In Jamaica the chief Negro problem during the initial decade of settlement was how to handle the fugitive Spanish slaves, or Maroons as they became called, who hid in the remote northwestern mountains and raided the English colonists. The English could neither conquer nor tame the Maroons. Some of the Spanish Negroes came to terms; in 1663 Gov. Charles Lyttelton granted them “the same state and freedom as the English enjoy,” with full power to manage their own affairs - as long as they stayed well away from the English. But other Maroons refused to join this treaty, and they remained totally independent, a state within a state in Jamaica. Trouble broke out sporadically whenever the Maroons killed English hunters who penetrated into their territory, but generally these people isolated themselves and caused little trouble after 1670. Sometimes they even helped the English track down fugitive plantation slaves.

Meanwhile in January 1664 the Jamaica Assembly drew up its first statute for governing plantation slaves. Finding that it was too expensive and inconvenient to try Negro crimes by due process, the Assembly directed any master “whose slave has committed any offence worthy of Death” to bring the culprit before a justice of the peace and two neighbors for formal sentencing. No other English statute of the century stated quite so nakedly the white man’s arbitrary determination of black crime. But this legislation was quickly superseded. A new governor, Sir Thomas Modyford, arrived from Barbados in June 1664, bringing with him a copy of the Barbados slave law of 1661. Modyford’s first Assembly in the fall of 1664 issued a new “Act for the better ordering and Governing of Negro Slaves,” which copied the language and all major provisions of the Barbados statute almost exactly. Thanks to Governor Modyford, Jamaica adopted the Barbados slave code, lock, stock, and barrel.

The Jamaican legislation of 1664 was revised a number of times, but the final statement of the century, the Jamaica slave act of 1696, remained very similar to the Barbados slave act of 1688. In minor respects the Jamaicans did deviate from the Barbados model. For one thing, since they were always short of slaves in the seventeenth century, they were reluctant to execute too many troublesome Negroes. In 1683 the Assembly decreed that whenever a black gang committed a crime short of murder, only one member of the group should be executed as an example to the rest. Another special Jamaica problem was that runaways could easily join the Maroons or hole up in the unoccupied sectors of the island. If a planter had a slave who was always running away, he fitted him with an iron yoke that had three long hooks projecting from it to hinder his future escapes. The Assembly directed that any plantation deserted by its owner for six months should be “ruinated” lest it become “a Receptacle for Fugitives.” A Jamaican master could be fined five shillings for failing to clothe a Negro properly. More surprisingly, Jamaican masters were urged in 1696 to instruct their bondsmen in Christianity and “cause to be baptized all such as they can make sensible of a Deity and the Christian Faith.” This seems to have been the first official endorsement of religious instruction for Negroes in the English sugar islands, and it suggests - what was undoubtedly the case - that Jamaican slaves were generally better off than their brothers in Barbados. The two colony governments, however, expressed very much the same

alarm about slave revolts in the closing years of the century. Echoing Barbados's complaint in 1688 of Negro "Disorder, Rapines and Inhumanities," the Jamaica Assembly in 1696 worried over their slaves' "bloody and inhuman Practices" and their "often Insurrections and Rebellions." And indeed, as we shall see, the Jamaica slaves did often rebel.

The Leeward colonists defined the legal status of their slaves quite loosely in the seventeenth century. The assemblies in these four islands enacted plenty of policing measures, but they did not adopt comprehensive slave codes - or at least I have discovered none until the Antigua slave act of 1702. Probably the Leeward slaves enjoyed rather more freedom than in Barbados or Jamaica. There was enough interracial fraternization to upset the Nevis Assembly, which in 1675 forbade "the unchristianlike association of white people with Negroes: their drinking together in common upon Sabbath dayes," or other days for that matter. On Antigua and Montserrat slaves were customarily whipped rather than killed for stealing horses and cattle. On Montserrat and Nevis the master was expected to plant an acre of provisions for every eight slaves. If, however, the master discovered any meat in his slave's cabin, he was directed to cut off the culprit's ear! This is by no means the only sign of extreme brutality in the Leeward Islands. A Nevis law of 1675 tried to make "severall evill minded persons" pay compensation for the "many" Negroes they had "frivolously" killed. In Montserrat during the 1690s one black was hanged for stealing and quartered for running away, with "his quarters put up in Publicque places as usual." And when Antigua finally passed a comprehensive slave law in 1702, modeled on the Barbados and Jamaica codes, it was for the better government "of Slaves and free Negroes." Antiguan blacks, once freed, could enter craft apprenticeships, work as wage laborers, or own up to eight acres of land. But they were subject to the same criminal code as the slaves.

When Governor Atkins sent home some Barbados laws for review, he feared that the slave legislation "may seem to shock." He need not have worried. The legal counsel to the Plantation Office approved of Barbados's severed code of justice for slaves. Since Negroes are "a brutish sort of People and reckoned as goods and chattels in that Island, it is of necessity or at least convenient" to enact separate laws for them. The Lords of Trade did boggle at one feature of the West Indian slave code. They thought the penalty for wantonly killing a Negro was too light; a murderer should be more than fined. The Jamaica Assembly added a three-month prison term, but the home authorities were still not satisfied. So in 1696 Jamaica reluctantly stipulated that the bloody-minded Negro killer would get benefit of clergy for his first offense, but would be charged with murder, punishable according to English law, for a second offense. The Barbados and Leeward governments, however, continued to fine Negro murderers.

Thus the English sugar planters rapidly evolved a legal system of chattel slavery. By the 1660s, if not before, they erected a comprehensive slave code that became the basic social and economic law of the islands. Not surprisingly the island colonists worked out their slave laws more quickly than the mainland planters. Virginia, for example, did not draw up a code comparable to the Barbados statute of 1661 until 1705. The seventeenth-century island laws proved to be remarkably durable; they continued in force with only minor modifications for 150 years. As in any slave-based society, the West Indian laws disciplined and regimented the masters as well as the slaves. The chief planters, speaking through the island assemblies, required each slave owner to act as a

policeman, to suppress his humanitarian instincts, and to deal with his Negroes lash in hand. The slave laws legitimized a state of war between blacks and whites, sanctified rigid segregation, and institutionalized an early warning system against slave revolts. After all, the price of tyranny is eternal vigilance.

Source: Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), pp. 224, 226, 228, 238-246.

**AMERICAN ODYSSEY:
FROM INDENTURED SERVITUDE TO RACIAL SLAVERY**

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1624/5—The Population of Virginia

1624/5—The Muster of Edward Bennett’s Servants in Wariscoyack and Captain William Tucker’s Muster in Elizabeth City

October 1629—ACT IX

September 17, 1630—Punishment of Hugh Davis

1635—Headright System Expanded to Include Africans

1640s—Economic Changes in Virginia

January 1639/40—ACT X

- June 30, 1640—Commission to Organize a Group to Pursue Runaway Blacks
- July 9, 1640—Punishment for Runaway Servants
- October 17, 1640—Punishment for a White Man and a Black Woman Who
Committed
Fornication
- March 31, 1641—Suit of John Graweere
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- April 18, 1644—Native American Attack
- Fall 1644—The “rioutous & rebellious” Activities of Mrs. Wormeley’s Slaves
- February 1644/5—ACT VIII
- [February] 27, 1645/6—Deed from Henry Brooks Junior to Nicholas Brooks
Senior
- Last day of February 1645/6—Inventory of the Estate of Lieutenant Thomas
Smallcomb
- December 1647—Mortgage of Thomas Wallace to George Ludlow
- Early 1647/8—Term of Servitude for Captain William Taylor’s Indian Girl
- Early 1647/8—Estate of William Pryor to Captain John Chisman
- 1648—Estimated Population of Virginia
- October 1649—ACT II
- March 1655—Anthony Johnson’s Suit to Regain Possession of His Slave
- March 1655/6—ACT I. *An Induction to the Acts concerning Indians*
- 1656—Elizabeth Key’s Suit for Her Freedom
- 1657 to 1666—An Increase in the Importation of Africans to York County
- October 25, 1657—The Manumission of Mihill Gowen
- March 1657/8—ACT XLVI. *What Persons are Tithable*

March 1659/60—ACT XVI. *An Act for the Dutch and all other Strangers for Tradeing to this Place*

1660 to mid 1670s—Virginia Planters Make Arrangements to Buy Africans

March 1660/1—ACT XXII. *English running away with negroes*

August 1661—Proclamation of Governor Berkeley

March 1661/2—ACT CII. *Run-aways*

March 1661/2—ACT CV. *Against trading with servants*

March 1661/2—ACT CXXXVIII. *Concerning Indians*

March 1661/2—Freedom for Metappin

December 1662—ACT XII. *Negro womens children to serve according to the condition of the mother*

December 1662—ACT XIII. *Women servants whose common employment is working in the ground to be accompted tythable*

September 1663—ACT XVIII. *An act prohibiting servants to go abroad without a lycence*

September 1667—ACT III. *An act declaring that baptisme of slaves doth not exempt them from bondage*

September 1668—ACT VII. *Negro women not exempted from tax*

October 1669—ACT I. *An act about the casuall killing of slaves*

October 1670—ACT IV. *Noe Negroes nor Indians to buy christian servants*

October 1670—ACT XII. *What tyme Indians to serve*

1670—Enquiries to the Governor of Virginia from the Lords Commissioners of Foreign Plantations; Answered by Sir William Berkeley in 1671

September 1671—ACT IV. *An act providing how negroes belonging to orphans of*
intestates shall be disposed of

1672—Charter to the Royal African Company

1672—Attempts to Restrict the Movement of Slaves

September 1672—ACT III. *An act concerning tythbles borne in the country*

September 1672—ACT VIII. *An act for the apprehension and suppression of*
runawayes, negroes and slaves

June 1673—Punishment for Will

June 16, 1675—The Petition of Philip Gowen for his Freedom

June 1676—ACT I. *An act for carrying on a warre against the barbarous*
Indians

September 1676—Nathaniel Bacon's Loyalty Oath

October 1676—The British Use Treachery to Get the Remainder of Bacon's
 Army to
 Surrender

February 1676/7

Part IV—An Increase in the Restrictions on Slaves and Free Blacks

1677—Petition of Susannah

1678—John Barber's Petition

1678—Andrew James Secures his Freedom

April 1679—ACT I. *An act for the defence of the country against the incursions*
of the
Indian enemy

1680—Changes in Relationships Between White Indentured Servants and Black
 Slaves

June 1680—ACT VII. *An act asserting the time when Negroe Children shall*
be

tythable

June 1680—ACT X. *An act for preventing Negroes Insurrections*

1681—Lord Culpepper's Estimation of Virginia's Population

1681—A Case of Miscegenation

November 1682—ACT I. *An act to repeale a former law making Indians and others*

ffree

November 1682—ACT II. *An act declaring Indian women servants tithables*

November 1682—ACT III. *An additional act for the better preventing insurrections by*

Negroes

March 23, 1684/5—Deed of Gift from William Booth to William

October 24, 1687—Governor Effingham Reveals a Planned Insurrection by Slaves

November 1687—Proclamation from Governor Effingham

April 26, 1688—Punishment for Sam

1689—End of the Monopoly of the Royal African Company

1690—Proportion of Africans and Their Descendants in the Chesapeake

July 26, 1690—Proclamation Issued by Governor Nicholson

April 1691—ACT XVI. *An act for suppressing outlying slaves*

April 1692—ACT III. *An act for the more speedy prosecution of slaves committing*

Capitall Crimes

June 1692 to February 1694/5—Status of Mary Walter

April 14, 1694—Proclamation of Governor Andros

May 24, 1694—Presentment of Mary Jewell for Bearing an Illegitimate Child

April 1695—William Cattilla's Petition

1697—The Need for a Christian Overseer on Plantations

1698—The Slave Trade Opened to All British Subjects

1699 and 1702—Advice on the Management of Servants and Slaves

April 1699—ACT XII. *An act for laying an imposition upon servants and slaves imported into this country, towards building the Capitoll*

June 1699—A Difference Between Slaves Imported From Africa and Those Born
in
Virginia

December 14, 1699—The Will of Jane Merry

August 1701—ACT II. *An act for the more effectually apprehending an outlying negro who hath committed divers robberyes and offences*

Part V—Virginia Summarizes the Legislation That Established Slavery

September 1705—The Need for a Definition of Who was a Mulatto

October 1705—CHAP. IV. *An act declaring who shall not bear office in this country*

October 1705—CHAP. VII. *An act concerning Tithables*

October 1705—CHAP. XI. *An act for the speedy and easy prosecution of Slaves, committing Capitall Crimes*

October 1705—CHAP. XII. *An act to prevent the clandestine transportation or carrying of persons in debt, servants, and slaves, out of this colony*

October 1705—CHAP. XIX. *An act for establishing the General Court, and for regulating and settling the proceedings therein*

October 1705—CHAP. XXII. *An act declaring the Negro, Mulatto, and Indian slaves within this dominion, to be real estate*

October 1705—CHAP. XXIV. *An act for settling the Militia*

October 1705—CHAP. XLIX. *An act concerning Servants and Slaves*

Part VI—Conclusion

Selection from Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*

Selection from Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*

Part I—Introduction

The English who arrived in Virginia in 1607 found that they had to adapt their way of life to the New World. Factors that made it difficult to recreate English institutions in Virginia included disease, conflicts with the Native Americans, the struggle to find a profitable commodity, and the acute need for labor. The early settlers endured starvation and malaria and feared attacks by members of Powhatan's confederacy during the colony's first decade. The leaders also worked to establish their authority in a settlement in which they lacked many of the material goods that set them off from the other settlers. The fortunes and direction of the colony changed in 1614 when John Rolfe (after two years of work) raised a strain of tobacco that sold in the English market. Colonists who hoped to emulate Rolfe's success began to grow tobacco on every available acre, even the streets in Jamestown. The men who grew rich from tobacco exploited the labor of others for their own profit. Those who labored in the tobacco plantations of the colony's prosperous residents included individuals from England and Africa.¹

Recent documentary research provides background information on “20. And Odd Negroes” who arrived in August 1619 on a Dutch ship. The individuals who arrived at Point Comfort in the summer of 1619 had been taken off a Portuguese slave ship by the Dutch. The Portuguese captured this group of recently enslaved persons in Angola on the west coast of Africa. It is possible that they had been baptized and made Christians (according to Portuguese law) before they arrived in Virginia.²

It is likely that the “20. and Odd Negroes” were slaves in the eyes of the Portuguese and Dutch. The English were familiar with the concept of lifetime servitude, but they did not have a system of slavery to transport to the New World. As a result, the Africans who arrived in the colony during the first part of the seventeenth century occupied an ambiguous position. Kathleen Brown notes that “the history of early Virginia was not initially one of black people and white people but of Indian, African, and English peoples who had yet to define the meaning of ‘black’ and ‘white.’” The English settlers needed the presence of “others”—both Native Americans and Africans—in order to create their

¹ See the selections from Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* in the Background section of the resource book for information on the differences between plantations in the American South and other regions in the Western Hemisphere.

² Engel Sluiter, “New Light on the ‘20. and Odd Negroes’ Arriving in Virginia, August 1619,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., LIV(1997):395-398; and John Thornton, “The African Experience of the ‘20. and Odd Negroes’ Arriving in Virginia in 1619,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., LV(1998):421-434.

William Thorndale argues that the Virginia Census of March 1619 should be interpreted as March 1618/9; however, Martha McCartney's analysis of this census indicates that the correct date is March 1619/20; see Thorndale, “The Virginia Census of 1619,” *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy*, 33(1995):155-170; and McCartney, “Analysis of March 1619/20 Census,” unpublished research notes, November 1998.

own identity in the New World.³ There were opportunities for African men and women and their descendants to gain their freedom across much of the seventeenth century before Virginia's leaders firmly defined a system of slavery in the colony.

Philip D. Morgan points out that Virginia changed from a slaveowning society to a slave society during the seventeenth century: "In the former, some slaves exist; in the latter slavery is the determinative institution. A slaveowning society may become a slave society, but only when a significant proportion of its population is enslaved (say, for argument's sake, more than 20 percent) and, more important, when slavery becomes central to the economic functioning of that society." Morgan finds that

Race relations tended to be more flexible in slaveowning than in slave societies. Three features particularly reveal the differences between the two systems. First, the legal status of black was often uncertain or ambiguous in societies where bondsmen were few, and the slave might pass fairly readily from bondage to freedom or live in some twilight zone between the two. By contrast, whenever slavery became a central institution, elaborate legal codes dispelled any uncertainty concerning the slave's status, and the opportunities for freedom generally narrowed. Second, in societies where slavery was economically marginal, the niches for blacks tended to be quite wide-ranging. At least work was not primarily associated with the drudgery of field labor, so prevalent in slave societies. Finally, sexual relations between whites and blacks tended to involve choice as well as coercion in slaveowning, as opposed to slave, societies. Slaveowning societies and slave societies were not, of course, uniform across space and time. Rather, within each type a spectrum existed, with differences in environment, demographic structure, and, in particular, stage of economic development producing significant variations.

Virginia's planters preferred to purchase white indentured servants instead of slaves until the 1680s when the supply of English servants decreased. The planters turned to enslaved Africans to work in their tobacco fields. Slaves did not account for twenty percent of Virginia's population until 1710. Morgan concludes that "During this slave owning phase of Virginia's history, access to freedom was greater for blacks than it ever would be again until the Civil War."⁴

³ Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996), p. 6. See also p. 45.

⁴ Philip D. Morgan, "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans, circa 1600-1780," in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1991), pp. 163-164, 171. See also Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1998).

* * * *

The following documents provide information about the system of slavery that Virginians developed during the seventeenth century. “American Odyssey” begins with five documents (from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) that detail the horrors of the Middle Passage, from the point of view of a ship owner, the captain of a slaver, a sailor, and an enslaved African. Documents from William Waller Hening’s *The Statutes at Large* and H. R. McIlwaine’s *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia* trace the evolution of lifetime slavery in the Old Dominion. Excerpts from local records reveal the fluidity in race relations during Virginia’s first century. The “American Odyssey” concludes with selections from two historians—Edmund S. Morgan and Allan Kulikoff—who analyze the evolution of slavery in Virginia.

Part II—The Middle Passage

1678 to 1712—John Barbot’s Writings on West Africa

John Barbot, an agent for the French Royal African Company, made at least two voyages to the West of Africa, in 1678 and 1682. He used his voyage journals and printed sources to begin an account of West Africa in 1683. Barbot, a Huguenot, fled to England in 1685 and finished his work in 1688. When he realized that he could not get his account published in French, he translated it into English, enlarged it, and continued to revise it until his death in 1712. Barbot’s manuscript was published in 1732.

The following excerpts focus on conditions on the English slave ship, *Don Carlos*. Barbot’s nephew, James Barbot, Jr., sailed on the *Don Carlos* in 1700-1701.

As to the management of our slaves aboard, we lodge the two sexes apart, by means of a strong partition at the main mast; the forepart is for the men, the other behind the mast for the women. If it be in large ships carrying five or six hundred slaves, the deck in such ships ought to be at least five and a half or six foot high, which is very requisite for driving a continual trade of slaves: for the greater height it has, the more airy and convenient it is for such a considerable number of human creatures; and consequently far the more healthy for them, and fitter to look after them. We build a sort of half-deck along the sides with deals and spars provided for that purpose in Europe, that half-deck extending no farther than the sides of our scuttles and so the slaves lie in two rows, one above the other, and as close together as they can be crowded.

...

The planks, or deals, contract some dampness more or less, either from the deck being so often wash’d to keep it clean and sweet, or from the rain that gets in now and then through the scuttles or other openings, and even from the very sweat of the slaves;

which being so crowded in a low place, it perpetual, and occasions many distempers, or at best great inconveniences dangerous to their health.

...

It has been observ'd before, that some slaves fancy they are carry'd to be eaten, which make them desperate; and others are so on account of their captivity: so that if care be not taken, they will mutiny and destroy the ship's crew in hopes to get away.

To prevent such misfortunes, we used to visit them daily, narrowly searching every corner between decks, to see whether they have not found means, to gather any pieces of iron, or wood, or knives, about the ship, notwithstanding the great care we take not to leave any tools or nails, or other things in the way: which, however cannot be always so exactly observ'd, where so many people are in the narrow compass of a ship.

We cause as many of our men as is convenient to lie in the quarter-deck and gun-room, and our principal officers in the great cabin, where we keep all our small arms in a readiness, with sentinels constantly at the doors and avenues to it; being thus ready to disappoint any attempts our slave might make on a sudden.

These precautions contribute very much to keep them in awe; and if all those who carry slaves duly observ'd them, we should not hear of so many revolts as have happen'd. Where I was concern'd, we always kept our slaves in such order, that we did not perceive the least inclination in any of them to revolt, or mutiny, and lost very few of our number in the voyage.

It is true, we allow'd them much more liberty, and us'd them with more tenderness than most other Europeans would think prudent to do; as, to have them all upon deck every day in good weather; to take their meals twice a-day, at fix'd hours, that is, at ten in the morning, and at five at night; which being ended, we made the men go down again between the decks; for the women were almost entirely at their own discretion, to be upon deck as long as they pleas'd, nay even many of the males had the same liberty by turns, successively; few or none being fetter'd or kept in shackles, and that only on account of some disturbances, or injuries, offer'd to their fellow captives, as will unavoidably happen among a numerous croud of such savage people. Besides we allow'd each of them betwixt their meals a handful of Indian wheat and Mandioca, and now and then short pipes and tobacco to smook upon deck by turns, and some coconuts; and to the women a piece of coarse cloth to cover them, and the same to many of the men, which we took care they did wash from time to time, to prevent vermin, which they are very subject to; and because it look'd sweeter and more agreeable. Toward the evening they diverted themselves on the deck as they thought fit, some conversing together, others dancing, singing, and sporting after their manner, which pleased them highly, and often made us pastime; especially the female sex, who being apart from the males, on the quarterdeck, and many of them sprightly maidens, full of jollity and good-humour, afforded us abundance of recreation, as did several fine little boys, which we mostly kept to attend on us about the ship.

We mess'd the slaves twice a day, as I have observed; the first meal was of our large beans boil'd, with a certain quantity of Muscovy lard. . . . The other meal was of pease, or of Indian wheat, and sometimes meal of Mandioca . . . boiled with either lard, or suet, or grease by turns: and sometimes with palm-oil and malaguettes or Guinea

pepper I found they had much better stomachs for beans, and it is a proper fattening food for captives.

...

At each meal we allow'd every slave a full coconut shell of water, and from time to time a dram of brandy, to strengthen their stomachs. . . .

Source: Barbot, "A Supplement to the Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea," in Mintz, ed., *African American Voices: The Life Cycle of Slavery*, pp. 50-52.

June 10, 1679—Edwyn Stede and Stephen Gascoigne to the Royal African Company, Barbados

The two slavers described below stopped for provisions in Barbados after about nine weeks at sea. Many Africans who ended up in Virginia arrived in stages and had their first view of North America in the West Indies.

On Thursday the 29th of May Capt. Wm. Smith in the *Blossom* arrived here In about 9 weeks from Cape Corsoe bound for Virginia touching here for wat'r and Refreshments for the Negroes not having touched at the Islands. he brought hither 117 men one Boy and one hundred twenty six women in pretty good Condition. on his arrivall wee searched the Ship and found noe Negroes more than before menconed nor other private trade the Factor Mr. Lynch also assuring us there was none. they saild the 5th Instant Leaving with us cobby of their acco't of disposall of their cargo at Guynie signed by the Master and Factor to be sent the Compa.

This day arrived the *Swallow* Evan Seyes from new Callabar in 9 weeks and in 9 weeks 4 daies from Anibo where he touched for refreshm'ts and came hither for Provisions his Yeams being all rotten. they tooke in at Callabar 179 Neg'rs and Lost 19 of them. wee shall furnish them with all speed with such provisions as this country at present affords and will dispatch them with all speed to their designed port of Virginia.

Source: Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, I:249-250.

1704—William Snelgrave's Recollection of a Mutiny on Board a Ship Bound for Virginia

Captain William Snelgrave published *A New Account of some Parts of Guinea, and the Slave Trade* in London in 1734, after some thirty years in the business of slaving. In this selection from the book, he recounted an unsuccessful uprising that took place on a slaver that had not yet left Africa for Virginia. Snelgrave recalled that a young man who intervened on behalf of the ship's captain was given his freedom and worked for Colonel Carter in Virginia before setting out on his own.

The first Mutiny I saw among the Negroes, happened during my first Voyage, in the Year 1704. It was on board the *Eagle* Galley of London, commanded by my Father, with whom I was as Purser. We had bought our Negroes at the River of Old Callabar in the Bay of Guinea. At the time of their mutinying we were in that River, having four hundred of them on board, and not above ten white Men who were able to do Service: For several of our Ship's Company were dead, and many more sick; besides, two of our Boats were just then gone with twelve People on Shore to fetch Wood, which lay in sight of the Ship. All these Circumstances put the Negroes on consulting how to mutiny, which they did at four a clock in the Afternoon, just as they went to Supper. But as we had always carefully examined the Mens Irons, both Morning and Evening, none had got them off, which in a great measure contributed to our Preservation. Three white Men stood on the Watch with Cutlances in their Hands. One of them who was on the Forecastle, a stout fellow, seeing some of the Men Negroes take hold of the chief Mate, in order to throw him over board, he laid on them so heartily with the flat side of his Cutlace, that they soon quitted the Mate, who escaped from them, and run on the Quarter Deck to get Arms. I was then sick with an Ague, and lying on a Couch in the great Cabbin, the Fit being just come on. However, I no sooner heard the Outcry, That the Slaves were mutinying, but I took two Pistols, and run on the Deck with them; where meeting with my Father and the chief Mate, I delivered a Pistol to each of them. Whereupon they went forward on the Booms, calling to the Negroe Men that were on the Forecastle; but they did not regard their Threats, being busy with the Centry, (who had disengaged the chief Mate,) and they would have certainly killed him with his own Cutlace, could they have got it from him; but they could not break the Line, wherewith the Handle was fastened to his Wrist. And so, tho' they had seized him, yet they could not make use of his Cutlace. Being thus disappointed, they endeavoured to throw him overboard, but he held so fast by one of them that they could not do it. My Father seeing this stout Man in so much Danger, ventured amongst the Negroes to save him; and fired his Pistol over their Heads, thinking to frighten them. But a lusty Slave struck him with a Billet so hard, that he was almost stunned. The Slave was going to repeat his Blow, when a young Lad about seventeen years old, whom we had been kind to, interposed his Arm, and received the Blow, by which his Arm-bone was fractured. At the same instant the Mate fired his Pistol, and shot the Negroe that had struck my Father. At the sight of this the Mutiny ceased, and all the Men-negroes on the Forecastle threw themselves flat on their Faces, crying out for Mercy.

Upon examining into the matter, we found, there were not above twenty Men Slaves concerned in this Mutiny; and the two Ringleaders were missing, having, it seems, jumped overboard as soon as they found their Project defeated, and were drowned. This was all the Loss we suffered on this occasion: For the Negroe that was shot by the Mate, the Surgeon, beyond all Expectation, cured. And I had the good Fortune to lose my Ague, by the fright and hurry I was put into. Moreover, the young Man, who had received the Blow on his Arm to save my Father, was cured by the Surgeon in our Passage to Virginia. At our Arrival in that Place we gave him his Freedom; and a worthy Gentleman, one Colonel Carter, took him into his Service, till he became well enough acquainted in the Country to provide for himself.

Source: Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, II:353-354.

April 30, 1723—Captain Edward Hollden to the Owners of the *Grayhound*, Barbados

By the time the slaver the *Grayhound* reached Barbados en route to Virginia from Bonny in present-day Nigeria, one hundred and twenty-five slaves had died, more than one third of those who had boarded the ship. The captain, at a loss to explain such a high rate of mortality, defended his oversight of the slaves. He planned to continue to Virginia, leaving behind twenty-five sick slaves in Barbados. Before they even arrived in Virginia, then, the *Grayhound's* slaves had had a particularly stark encounter with the horror and the capriciousness of slavery.

Sir, This With My Humble Servis to you and the Rest of the Gentlemen Owners of the Ship *Grayhound* Galley and is to certifie you of my Arrivall hear haveing seven Weeks Passage from Bony but very Dismall and Mortall for outt of 339 Slaves I brought in hear butt 214 for the Like Mortalaty I think Never was known for Jolly Likely Men Slaves to Eatt thair Diett over Night and the Nex Morning Dead 2 and 3 in a Night for severall Days after Wee Came from Bony as for Managementt I think itt Could Nott be Better I always had their Victualls in good order and Took that Care to keep them and the Ship Sweet and Cleane allthoyt I Did itt my Self and Nott to Sufer any of them to Wett Their Foott on No Acctt: att my Arivall hear I aplyd my self to Mr. Crump and Heasell as Orderd I haveing on bord aboutt 20 or 25 Slaves outt of flesh and do think itt for your Intrust to Leave them With Mr. Crump and Mr. Heasell for I think there Will be More Gain then Loss for to Run the Risk in Carrying them to Virginia and besids Discomodeing them as is in health. Provicions I have an Nought as Bread, beefe, Rice, beanes, yames so I Desire to Take in hear Sum Plantains a barrell of Flower a few Limes and sum Rum for a Recrute and so make the best of My Way to Virgina as Directted by your orders hear Capt. Coster is hear butt is under sum Troble his Vesell was seise on the Acctt of his being a foriner as I under stand itt is Nott over itt [yet] Nor No one know when itt Will. Gentellmen I Purchase att Bony 339 Slaves 189 Men and 128 Women 16 boys and 6 Girles I buried 17 before Came over the bar and 113 after Wards and have bought 28 Teeth Weighing between 15 and 16 hundred pound and Sum Red Wood. Dockter Smith is Dead and the Copper [cooper] and four Sailors and one boy besides.

Source: Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, II: 299-300.

1789—Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African*

In the following excerpt, Olaudah Equiano recounts his experience during the Middle Passage from Africa to Barbados in the 1750s.

The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time . . . some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air. But now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place and the heat of the climate, added to the number of the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us.

This produced copious perspirations so that the air became unfit for respiration from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died—thus falling victims of the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, which now became insupportable, and the filth of the necessary tubs [toilets] into which the children often fell and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women and the groans of the dying rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.

Happily perhaps for myself, I was soon reduced so low that it was necessary to keep me almost always on deck and from my extreme youth I was not put into fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon the deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself. I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with, served only to render my state more painful and heightened my apprehensions and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites.

One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea. Immediately another quite dejected fellow, who on account of his illness was suffered to be out of irons, followed their example. I believe many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck, and there was such a noise and confusion among the people of the ship as I never heard before to stop her and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However, two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other and afterwards flogged him unmercifully for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery.

I can now relate hardships which are inseparable from the accursed trade. Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the necessary tubs, carried off many.

Source: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African* (London, 1789), in Mintz, ed., *African American Voices: The Life Cycle of Slavery*, pp. 55-56.

The Africans who arrived in Virginia in late August 1619 probably became part of the group of servants who labored for the London Company. In the early years of the colony the English did not have precise legal identities for English or African servants. The indenture process was informal and many people—white and black—faced indefinite terms as servants. It is possible that the presence of Africans—some of whom arrived on Dutch ships as slaves—helped leaders define the conditions and length of servitude for white men and women. A precise legal definition for slavery in the colony was not created until 1662. The following selections indicate that Africans and their descendants received unequal treatment in the years before the General Assembly decided that children of enslaved women would be slaves for life. The documents also reveal that relations between English and Africans had a degree of fluidity during the seventeenth century as Virginia developed into a society where race, instead of status, determined one's place in the social hierarchy.

November 30, 1624—The Testimony of John Phillip

John Phillip's status as a Christian may have allowed him the right to testify in the General Court on November 30, 1624.

It is likely that several of the Africans who arrived in Virginia in the late 1610s and the early 1620s were baptized. As Thad W. Tate notes, Christian names such as Anthony, Isabella, and John Pedro suggest that the Portuguese baptized the Africans before they were transported to the colony. Anthony and Isabella's son, William, received his baptism in Jamestown soon after his birth in late 1624 or early 1625. The couple gave him their master's surname, Tucker.

John Phillip A negro Christened in England 12 yeers since, sworne and exam sayeth, yt beinge in a shipp wth Sr *Henry Maneringe*, they tooke A *spanish* shipp aboute Cape *Sct Mary*, and Caryed her to *mamora* in wch shipp was A spanish ladye and divers other, And beinge in *mamra* Mr *Symon Tuchinge* Cam into *Mamora* in a smale shipp, and after some Conference had by ye said *Tuchinge* wth the *Spaniards* taken as aforesaid, he was by them ymployed in ye said smale shipp to *Lisbone* to feach money for the Ransominge of the said lady, wch Accordinglie he pformed.

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*, p. 33; Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, pp. 65-66.

1624/5—The Population of Virginia

Two documents, *A List of Names of the Living and the Dead in Virginia* dated February 1623/4 and *The Virginia Muster of 1624/5*, provide details about the early residents of Virginia. Colonists took the 1623/4 list to have a record of the individuals who survived the 1622 Indian attack. The 1624/5 muster is a house-to-house survey of Virginia's inhabitants that the Crown ordered after it took control of the colony from the Virginia

Company in 1624. Irene W. D. Hecht analyzed the muster to learn details about the population of Virginia in 1624/5.

In 1624/5, there were 1,218 persons living in the colony. A total of 115 individuals had died since 1624. The majority of the population—934 (76.7%) were male. The females accounted for 270 (22.1%) individuals, and the gender of fourteen (1.2%) could not be determined. There were twenty-two Africans, a child born to African parents, and two Native Americans who lived as part of the colony. The 1,218 men, women, and children lived in 309 households and about one-third of the households had at least one servant.

Two tables from Hecht's article follow.

Table V—Servants in Virginia, 1625

	Males	Females	Unknown	Total
Negroes	13	9	1	23
Indians	1	-	-	1
Hired Servants	3	-	-	3
White Servants	437	43	1	480
Total	454	52	2	507

Fifteen of the twenty-three Africans lived in two households. The remaining eight belonged to five households. All but two of the Africans lived in households that were among the fourteen largest in the colony.

Table VII—Distribution of Negro Servants or Slaves in Virginia, 1625

Muster	Total No. of Servants	<u>Negro Servants or Slaves</u>			Total
		Male	Female	Child	
A. Piersey	40	4	2	1	7
G. Yeardley	36	3	5	0	8
W. Tucker	18	1	1	1	3
W. Pierce	17	0	1	0	1
E. Bennett	12	1	1	0	2
F. West	6	1	0	0	1
R. Kingsmill	4	1	0	0	1
	133	11	10	2	23

Source: Hecht, "The Virginia Muster of 1624/5," p. 77, 78.

1624/5—The Muster of Edward Bennett's Servants in Wariscoyack and Captain William Tucker's Muster in Elizabeth City

Both Edward Bennett and William Tucker had Africans in their households in 1624/5. The muster does not indicate whether the Africans were seen as servants or slaves. The fate of Tucker's Anthony, Isabella, and William is unknown. Bennett's Antonio arrived in the colony in 1621 and survived the Indian attack the following year—perhaps because the Native Americans spared the lives of Africans. Antonio married Mary, an African woman who was brought to Virginia soon after the 1622 uprising. Antonio and Mary gained their freedom and moved to the Eastern Shore. Antonio, later known as Anthony Johnson, was one of the free black landowners in Northampton County.

The MUSTER of m' EDWARD BENNETT's servant's
 HENERY PINKE came in the *London Marchannt* 1619
 JOHN BATE in the *Addam* 1621
 PEETER COLLINS in the *Addam* 1621
 WASSELL WEBLING } in the *James* 1621

ANTONIO a Negro

CHRISTOPHER REYNOLD'S
 LUKE CHAPPMAN } in the *John & Francis* 1622
 EDWARD MAYBANK
 JOHN ATTKINS
 WILLIAM DENUM } in the *Guifte* 1623
 FRANCIS BANK'S
 MARY a Nergro Woman in the *Margrett & John* 1622

CAPT WILLIAM TUCKER his MUSTER

Capt WILLIAM TUCKER: aged: 36: in the *Mary and James*: 1610
 Mrs MARY TUCKER aged: 26: in the *George*: 1623.

ELZABETH TUCKER borne in Virginia in August:

GEORGE TOMSON aged: 17.....

PAULE TOMSON aged: 14..... } in the *George* 1623:

WILLIAM THOMSON — 11

PASCOE CHAMPION aged 23.....} in the *Ellonor* 1621:

STRENGHT SHEERE aged: 23.....

THOMAS EVAND'S aged: 23.....

STEPHEN COLLOWE aged: 23.....} in the *George*: 1623.

ROBART MUNDAY aged: 18.....

MATHEWE ROBINSONN aged: 24 in the *greate hopewell* 1623:

RICHARD APPLETON aged: 19: in the *James* 1622.

JOHN MORRIS aged 24: in the *Bona Nova*: 1619.

MARY MORRIS aged 22: in the *George* 1623

WILLIAM HUTCHINSON aged 21: in the *Diana* 1618

PEETER PORTER aged 20 in the *Tyger* 1621.

WILLIAM CRAWSHAW an Indean Baptised.

ANTONEY Negro: ISABELL Negro: and WILLIAM their Child Baptised

Source: Hotten, ed., *The Original Lists of Persons of Quality*, pp. 241, 244.

October 1629—ACT IX

Although this law did not rule out the possibility that English women would work in the tobacco fields, it did begin the process of creating a distinction between the work that English and African women performed in the colony.

IT is thought fitt that all those that worke in the ground of what qualitie or condition soever, shall pay tithes to the ministers.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:144.

September 17, 1630—Punishment of Hugh Davis

Perhaps Hugh Davis received a whipping and had to acknowledge that he committed fornication with an African woman because the legislators believed that interracial fornication was more sinful. Compare Davis's punishment with that handed out to Robert Sweat in 1640.

Hugh Davis to be soundly whipped, before an assembly of Negroes and others for abusing himself to the dishonor of God and shame of Christians, by defiling his body in lying with a negro; which fault he is to acknowledge next Sabbath day.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:146.

1635—Headright System Expanded to Include Africans

In 1635, Virginians began to claim a headright of fifty acres for each African imported into the colony.

JOHN UPTON, 1650 acs., Warresquoake Co., 7 July 1635, p. 210. About 3 mi. up Pagan point Cr., bounding almost W. from the Cr. into the woods a little Cr. running in by the sd. Land out of the Pagan Pt. Cr. to a great poplar tree. Trans. of 33 pers: Rich. Young, Antho. a Negroe, Mary a Negroe, Florence Richards, Roger Bagnol, Ralph Harwood, Thomas Reeves, Rich. Spackman, Edward Burr, Savage Merrie, Wm. Scott, Rich. Jones, Fr. Savage, Owen Howell, Nich. Bushell, James Parsons, Jon. Parker, Lewis Phillipps, Morgan Roberts, Wm. Davis, John Fitchett, Morgan Roberts, Wm. Davis, John Fitchett, Morgan Evans, Christopher Lewis, Phillipp Jennersly, Eliz. King, Martha Swann, Mary Johnson, Jonas Sadlington, Anth. Tyler, Peter Heyes, Rich. Jackson, Wm. Pincher, Eliz. Larkin.

Source: Nugent, et al., comps., *Cavaliers and Pioneers*, I:25; Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, p. 11.

1640s—Economic Changes in Virginia

The colonists who rushed to plant tobacco prospered during the late 1610s and the 1620s. This time of economic growth—described as Virginia’s “Boom Time” by Edmund S. Morgan—ended in 1630. Overproduction of tobacco in the colony resulted in a decreased price for tobacco in England. The dramatic decline in tobacco prices encouraged some planters to allow their all of their laborers—white and black—to work independently.

While some slaveowners spurred productivity in this labor-short economy by laying on the lash, others offered more generous incentives to servants and slaves. Among the benefits planters extended was the opportunity to labor independently at least a portion of the time, with an understanding that servants and slaves would feed and clothe themselves or at least share the profits of their independent ventures. Such incentives did nothing to challenge the planters’ domination or the system of servitude upon which it rested. Indeed, they strengthened the planters’ hand by allowing them to transfer the burden of subsistence to their laborers, while they concentrated single-mindedly on tobacco.

If many slaveowners welcomed the exchange, gladly shrugging off their responsibilities as masters and mistresses while retaining their prerogatives, many slaves embraced the possibilities implicit in the bargain. Laboring to support themselves meant additional work, to be sure, but it provided a mechanism for them to control a portion of their lives, and it offered an opportunity—however slight—to buy their way out of bondage. The benefits that flowed to slaves from self-subsistence often extended beyond a richer diet and a larger wardrobe. In Virginia, the justices of one county court allowed a miscreant slave the choice of the lash or a fine, which he could pay “out of that hee calls his owne estate.”

The exchange of subsistence for time to labor independently marked the beginnings of the slaves’ economy in the Chesapeake region, an elaborate system of exchange that complemented, overlapped, and sometimes competed with the owners’ economy within the larger system of staple production. Given time to attend to their own affairs in exchange for subsisting themselves, slaves gardened, tended barnyard animals, and hunted and fished on their own. Occasionally, they manufactured small items and sold them to their owners, neighbors, or other slaves.

Such arrangements had a long history in the evolution of plantation societies in the Atlantic world, reaching back to the emergence of the plantation in the Mediterranean and the island off the coast of Africa in the fourteenth century. They were widely practiced in the Caribbean.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 33.

January 1639/40—ACT X

This statute created a legal distinction between white and black men.

ALL persons except negroes to be provided with arms and ammunition or be fined at pleasure of the Governor and Council.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:226.

June 30, 1640—Commission to Organize a Group to Pursue Runaway Blacks

On June 30, 1640 the General Court commissioned John Mattrom and Edward Fleet to organize a group of men to pursue runaway blacks. This group was similar to the patrols authorized by the Assembly in the eighteenth century.

The court hath granted that a commission shall be drawn for *John Mattrom* and *Edward ffleet* authorizing them to levy a party of men, or more if need require, out of the trained band for *Charles river* [York] county with arms and ammunition to go in psuit of certain runaway negroes and to bring them to the governor. *And it is further ordered* that such men as shall be pressed for this expedition shall receive their pay and satisfaction for their pains at the public charge of the counties from whence such negroes are runaway and likewise for any boat or boats that shall be taken for the said service.

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*, p. 468.

July 9, 1640—Punishment for Runaway Servants

On July 9, 1640, members of the General Court decided the punishment for three servants—a Dutchman, a Scotsman, and an African—who ran away from their master as a group. The proceedings reveal an example of interracial cooperation among servants at a time when the colony's leaders were starting to create legal differences between Europeans and Africans. John Punch became the first African to be a slave for life by law in Virginia.

Whereas Hugh Gwyn hath by order from this Board Brought back from *Maryland* three servants formerly run away from the said *Gwyn*, *the court doth therefore order* that the said three servants shall receive the punishment of whipping and to have thirty stripes apiece one called *Victor*, a *dutchman*, the other a *Scotchman* called *James Gregory*, shall first serve out their times with their master according to their Indentures, and one whole year apiece after the time of their service is Expired. By their said Indentures in recompense of his Loss sustained by their absence and after that service to their said master is Expired to serve the colony for three whole years apiece, and that the third

being a negro named *John Punch* shall serve his said master or his assigns for the time of his natural Life here or elsewhere.

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*, p. 466.

October 17, 1640—Punishment for a White Man and a Black Woman Who Committed Fornication

The General Court handed out different punishments to a white man and to a black woman who bore a mulatto child.

Whereas Robert Sweat hath begotten with child a negro woman servant belonging unto Lieutenant Sheppard, the court hath therefore ordered that the said negro woman shall be whipt at the whipping post and the said Sweat shall tomorrow in the forenoon do public penance for his offence at James city church in the time of devine service according to the laws of England in that case pvided.

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*, p. 477; see also Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:552.

March 31, 1641—Suit of John Graweere

The suit of John Graweere reveals that there were greater restrictions on the ownership of personal property by black servants. In addition, Graweere's successful petition to purchase his child indicates another difference between white and black men.

Graweere's decision to use the court to secure his son's freedom indicates that he was one of the many blacks in Virginia who knew how to use the colony's institutions. Ira Berlin notes that "Identifying themselves with the community's most prominent icons and institutions, much as they connected themselves with the community's most prominent men and women, Atlantic creoles [defined as those by experience or choice, as well as by birth became part of a new culture that emerged along the Atlantic coast—in Africa, Europe, or the Americas—beginning in the 16th century] demonstrated a determination not to be excluded from Chesapeake society by intimations that they were libidinous heathens without language, lineage, or culture. Nowhere was this persistent drive for inclusion more evident than in their mastery of the law. Perhaps because of the fragile nature of their social position, creoles were extremely conscious of their rights at law."

Whereas it appeareth to the court that John Graweere being a negro servant unto William Evans was pmitted by his said master to keep hogs and make the best benefit thereof to himself pvided that the said Evans might have half the increase which was accordingly rendered unto him by the said negro and the other half reserved for his own

benefit: And *whereas* the said negro having a young child of a negro woman belonging to Lieut. *Robert Sheppard* which he desired should be made a christian and be taught and exercised in the church of *England*, by reason whereof he the said negro did for his said child purchase its freedom of Lieut. *Sheppard* with the good liking and consent of *Tho: Gooman*'s overseer as by the deposition of the said *Sheppard* and *Evans* appeareth, *the court hath therefore ordered* that the child shall be free from the said *Evans* or his assigns and to be and remain at the disposing and education of the said *Graweere* and the child's godfather who undertaketh to see it brought up in the christian religion as aforesaid.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 42; McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*, p. 477.

March 1642/3—ACT I

This statute enacted the first legal distinction between English and African women. The difference reflects that fact that Virginia's legislators believed that English and African women would play different roles in the colony. Kathleen Brown notes that the members of the General Assembly focused their attention on African women between 1642/3 and 1668 as they created Virginia's system of slavery.

Be it also enacted and confirmed That there be tenn pounds of tob'o. per poll & a bushell of corne per poll paid to the ministers within the severall parishes of the collony for all tithable persons, that is to say, as well for all youths of sixteen years of age as upwards, as also for all negro women at the age of sixteen years.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:242; Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*.

April 18, 1644—Native American Attack

According to Helen C. Rountree, it appears that the Native Americans did not kill any Africans or descendants of Africans during their attack on the English on April 18, 1644. Rountree notes that Opechancanough's followers did take several enslaved Africans as prisoners.

On April 18, 1644, Opechancanough staged the second major attack on the English. Because of the poor survival rate of Virginia records of the 1640s, we know little about the initial assault on the English or its aftermath. By reconstruction, it seems that the Weyanocks, Nansemonds, Pamunkeys, and Chickahominies were involved; the participation of the Rappahannocks and other chiefdoms on the northern neck was questionable. After killing about four hundred English people and taking many prisoners, [including negro slaves], Indian warriors melted away into the woods and attempted no follow-up attack, once again giving the English time to regroup.

Source: Rountree, *Pocahontas's People*, p. 84.

Fall 1644—The “rioutous & rebellious” Activities of Mrs. Wormeley’s Slaves.

The September and October 1644 minutes of the General Court noted that Mrs. Wormeley’s slaves were involved in “rioutous & rebellious” activities. Perhaps these words reflected a fear that the Africans in the colony would join forces with the Native Americans in another attack against the colonists.

Sept 3. 1644 Concerning the rioutous & rebellious conduct of Mrs *Wormleys*
negroes

p 301, 2. also *Octo* 10. 1644 p. 319

Sept 10. 1644 Psons apprehended for rebellion (Phaps Mrs *Wormleys* Servants
Sept

3d) 332

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*, p. 502.

February 1644/5—ACT VIII

African women and their descendants were counted among the tithes in 1644/5.

And because there shall be no scruple or evasion who are and who are not tithable, It is resolved by this Grand Assembly, That all negro men and women, and all other men from the age of 16 to 60 shall be adjudged tithable.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:292.

[February] 27, 1645/6—Deed from Henry Brooks Junior to Nicholas Brooks Senior

A deed between Henry Brooks Junior and Nicholas Brooks Senior on [February] 27, 1645/6 indicates that some residents of York County viewed Africans as slaves for life.

Henry Brooks Junior sold “3 Negroes Viz: two Negroe woem[en] and one childe” to Nicholas Brooks Senior “& his heirs execrs etc for ever.”

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (2) 63, 27 [February] 1645/6.

Last day of February 1645/6—Inventory of the Estate of Lieutenant Thomas Smallcomb

Thomas Smallcomb was one York County resident who had Native American servants. The executors of Smallcomb's estate sold two Indians to Sir William Berkeley for 600 pounds of tobacco, an equal number to John Hammon for 500 pounds of tobacco, and one Native American to Captain Thomas Pettus for 600 pounds of tobacco.

one Indian Gerle three yeares of age or thereabouts praysed at 300 [pounds of tobacco]

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (2) 99, dated "last of February" and 130-131, dated 10 March 1645[6].

December 1647—Mortgage of Thomas Wallace to George Ludlow

Thomas Wallace had an African, an English, and a Native American servant in his household in December 1647. The English boy was the only servant whose surname was noted.

Thomas Wallis of County of Warwick River in Va Doctor of Physick in consideration of 6000 lbs tobo &ca. Due from me sd Thomas to George Ludloe Esqr have by these presents for consideration aforesd Bargained & sold unto sd George and in open market delivered to sd George one Negro by name Sebastiane one English boy named Nathaniell Chambers one Indian woman named Martian one great feather bedd boulster & two pillows marked with L one Redd Rugg & a pair of blankets one lesser fether bed bolster & pillow marked with L one white rugg & one black, To have and to hold the sd Negro English boy and Indian Woman bedds pillows etc unto sd Ludlowe & his excers etc freely peacably etc forever yet nevertheless that the sd Thomas shall pay or cause to be pd to sd George the sd sum of tob in manner & form as followeth that is to say 3000 lbs on the 20th of Nov next & 3000 lbs on 20th of Nov wch shalbe in the yr 1649 then this bill to be void or else to remain in effect. 16 Dec 1647.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (2) 308, 1 December 1647.

Early 1647/8—Term of Servitude for Captain William Taylor's Indian Girl

In early 1647/8 the York County Court decided that Captain William Taylor's Indian girl would be his servant until she reached her eighteenth birthday.

The Ct doth order that Formue a girl brought from the Indians and kept by Capt Willm Taylor shall serve the sd Capt Willm Taylor till she comes to the age of 18 yrs.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (2) 329, 25 January 1647/8.

Early 1647/8—Estate of William Pryor to Captain John Chisman

Captain John Chisman bought eight blacks from the estate of William Pryor in early 1647/8. The description of the persons whom Chisman bought—“6 old Negroes and 2 Negro Children”—indicates that six of the group had been in Virginia for several years. Chisman and other residents of York County also purchased Africans who were transported to Virginia in the 1640s, 1650s, and 1660s.

Capt Thomas Harrison of Ratliffe in County of Midd gent. and Capt Thomas Harrwood of Va Gent. overseers and feofes in trust of estate of Mr Willm Pryor late of Va Gent. for the use of the sd testators daughters Margerrett and Mary Pryor the will dated 21 Jan 1646 & probate granted to sd Harrison & Harrwood by Gov Berkeley 4th Feb 1646 and by like power & virtue of probate taken in England in name of Mr Jasper Clayton Gent. one of the overseers & feofes in trust of sd estate & Capt Harrison under the seale of the sprerogative Ct bearing date 15 April 1647 sold to Capt John Chisman of Va Gent. & his heirs etc 6 old Negroes and 2 Negro Children about the age of 2 yrs old apeece Vizt 4 Negro men called by names Anthony, Francis, Peeter and Domingoe and the 2 Negro women called Kate and Grace the sd Chisman & his heirs etc forever in consideration whereof Chisman in hand pd to sd Harrison & Harrwood for the use of Margerret and Mary the sum of 150 £ Sterl of Lawful money of England. 31 Jan 1647/8.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (2) 338, 25 January 1647/8.

1648—Estimated Population of Virginia

15,000 English; 300 Negro servants

Source: Greene and Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790*, p. 136.

October 1649—ACT II

This act concerning tithes did not mention African women.

WHEREAS it appeareth to severall Grand Assemblies that the lists of tithable persons are very imperfect, and that notwithstandinge the yearly importation of people into the collonie, the number of tithables in the said lists is rather diminished then augmented, which is in great part conceived, by this Assembly, to happen, in that all under the age of sixteen yeeres are exempted from the lists, and that once passing under that age they are seldom or never acknowledged to exceed the same, in respect of the impossibility of, or at least unlikelyhood of produceinge convinceing proofes against them: *Bee it therefore enacted*, for the preventing of the like abuse hereafter through false & imperfect lists, That all male servants imported hereafter into the collony of what age soever they be, shall be brought into the lists and shall be liable to pay country leavyes, *excepting* in this act such as are natives of this collony and such as are imported free, either by their

parents or otherwise, who are exempted from leavies, being under the said age of sixteen years.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:361.

March 1655—Anthony Johnson's Suit to Regain Possession of His Slave

Anthony Johnson moved to Northampton County after he gained his freedom from Edward Bennett. He became a landowner and a slaveowner. In 1655, he turned to the county court to regain possession of John Casor, a slave whom Robert Parker detained.

The deposition of Captain Samuel Goldsmith taken (in open court) 8th of March Sayth, That beinge at the howse of Anthony Johnson Negro (about the beginnige of November last to receive a hogshead of tobacco) a Negro called John Casar came to this Deponent, and told him that hee came into Virginia for seaven or Eight yeares (per Indenture) And that hee had demanded his freedome of his master Anthony Johnson; And further said that Johnson had kept him his servant seaven yeares longer than hee ought, And desired that this deponent would see that hee might have noe wronge, whereupon your Deponent demanded of Anthony Johnson his Indenture, hee answered, hee never sawe any; The said Negro (John Casor) replied, hee came for a certayne time and had an Indenture Anthony Johnson said hee never did see any But that hee had him for his life; Further this deponent saith That mr. Robert Parker and George Parker they knew that the said Negro had an Indenture (in on Mr. Carye hundred on the other side of the Baye) And the said Anthony Johnson did not tell the negro goe free The said John Casor would recover most of his Cowes of him; Then Anthony Johnson (as this deponent did suppose) was in a feare. Upon this his Sonne in lawe, his wife and his 2 sonnes perswaded the said Anthony Johnson to sett the said John Casor free. more saith not Samuel Goldsmith

This daye Anthony Johnson Negro made his complaint to the Court against mr. Robert Parker and declared that hee deteyneth his servant John Casor negro (under pretence that the said Negro is a free man.) The Court seriously consideringe and maturely weighinge the premisses, doe fynde that the said Mr. Robert Parker most unjustly keepeth the said Negro from Anthony Johnson his master as appeareth by the deposition of Captain Samuel Goldsmith and many probable circumstances. It is therefore the Judgment of the Court and ordered That the said John Casor Negro forthwith returne unto the service of his said master Anthony Johnson, And that mr. Robert Parker make payment of all charge in the suit. also Execution.

Source: Northampton County Order Book (1655-1668) f. 10, quoted in Billings, ed., *The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 155-156.

March 1655/6—ACT I. *An Induction to the Acts concerning Indians*

Colonial legislators created a distinction between Native Americans and Africans in this statute.

If the Indians shall bring in any children as gages of their good and quiet intentions to us and amity with us, then the parents of such children shall choose the persons to whom the care of such children shall be intrusted and the country by us their representatives do engage that wee will not use them as slaves, but do their best to bring them up in Christianity, civillity and the knowledge of necessary trades; And on the report of the commissioners of each respective country that those under whose tuition they are, do really intend the bettering of the children in these particulars then a salary shall be allowed to such men as shall deserve and require it.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:396.

1656—Elizabeth Key's Suit for Her Freedom

A mulatto woman named Elizabeth Key sued for her freedom in January 1655/6. She based her petition on the following facts: her father was a white man, she was a Christian, and a contract that her father arranged in her behalf had been violated. Key gained her freedom and married William Greensted in 1656. Key's suit indicates that enslaved Africans and their descendants had the right to sue in court in the years before legislators defined the institution of slavery in Virginia.

The Court doth order that Col. Thomas Speke one of the overseers of the Estate of Col. John Mottrom deceased shall have an Appeale to the Quarter Court next att James City in a Cause depending betweene the said overseers and Elizabeth a Moletto hee the said Col. Speke giving such caution as to Law doth belong.

Wee whose names are underwritten being impannelled upon a Jury to try a difference between Elizabeth pretended Slave to the Estate of Col. John Mottrom deceased and the overseers of the said Estate doe finde that the said Elizabeth ought to be free as by severall oathes might appeare which we desire might be Recorded and that the charges of Court be paid out of the said Estate. [names of the jury omitted]

Memorandum it is Conditioned and agreed by and betwixt Thomas Key on the one part and Humphrey Higginson on the other part [word missing] that the said Thomas Key hath put unto the said Humphrey one Negro Girle by name Elizabeth for and during the [term?] of nine yeares after the date hereof provided that the [said?] Humphrey doe find and allow the said Elizabeth meate drinke [and?] apparrell during the said tearme And also the said Thomas Key that if that if [*sic*] the said Humphrey doe dye before the end of the said time abovespecified that then the said Girl be free from the said Humphrey Higginson and his assignes Allsoe if the said Humphrey Higginson doe goe for England with an Intention to live and remaine there that then hee shall carry [the?] said Girle with him and to pay for her passage and likewise that he put not off[f] the said Girle to any man but to keepe her himselfe In witness whereof I the said Humphrey Higginson. Sealed and

delivered in the presence of us Robert Booth Francis Miryman. 20th January 1655 this writing was Recorded.

Mr. Nicholas Jurnew aged 53 yeares or thereabouts sworne and Examined Sayth That about 16 or 17 yeares past this deponent heard a flying report at Yorke that Elizabeth a Negro Servant to the Estate of Col. John Mottrom deceased was the Childe of Mr. Kaye but the said Mr. Kaye said that a Turke of Capt. Mathewes was Father to the Girle and further this deponent sayth not signed Nicholas Jurnew
20th January 1655 Jurat in Curia [i.e., "sworn in court"]

Anthony Lenton aged 41 yeares or thereabouts sworne and Examined Sayth that about 19 yeares past this deponent was a servant to Mr. Humphrey Higginson and at that time one Elizabeth a Molletto nowe servant to the Estate of Col. John Mottrom deceased was then a servant to the said mr. Higginson and as the Neighbours reported was bought of mr Higginson with the said servant both himself and his Wife intended a voyage for England and at the nine yeares end (as the Neighbours reported) the said Mr Higginson was bound to carry the said servant for England unto the said mr. Kaye, but before the said mr Kaye went his Voyage hee Dyed about Kecotan, and as the Neighbours reported the said mr. Higginson said that at the nine yeares end hee would carry the said Molletto for England and give her a portion and lett her shift for her selfe And it was a Common report amongst the Neighbours that the said Molletto was mr Kays Child begott by him and further this deponent sayth not the marke of Anthony Lenton 20th January 1655
Jurat in Curia

Mrs. Elizabeth Newman aged 80 yeares or thereabouts sworne and examined Sayth that it was a common Fame in Virginia that Elizabeth a Molletto nowe servant to the Estate of Col. John Mottrom deceased was the Daughter of mr. Kay; and the said Kaye was brought to Blunt-point Court and there fined for getting his Negro woman with Childe which said Negroe was the Mother of the said Molletto and the said fine was for getting the Negro with Childe which Childe was the said Elizabeth and further this deponent sayth not the marke of Elizabeth Newman
20th January 1655 Jurat in Curia

John Bayles aged 33 yeares or thereabouts sworne and Examined Sayth That at the House of Col. John Mottrom Black Besse was tearmed to be mr Kayes bastard and John Keye calling her Black Bess mrs. Speke Checked him and said Sirra you must call her Sister for shee is your Sister and the said John Keye did call her Sister and further this deponent Sayth not the marke of John Bayles 20th January 1655 Jurat in Curia

The deposition of Alice Larrett aged 38 yeares or thereabouts Sworne and Examined Sayth that Elizabeth which is at Col. Mottroms is twenty five yeares of age or thereabouts and that I saw her mother goe to bed to her Master many times and that I heard her mother Say that shee was mr. Keyes daughter and further Sayth not the marke of Alice Larrett Sworne before mr. Nicholas Morriss 19th Jan. 1655. 20th January this deposition was Recorded

Anne Clark aged 39 or thereabouts Sworne and Examined Sayth that shee this deponent was present when a Condition was made betweene mr. Humphrey Higginson and mr. Kaye for a servant called Besse a Molletto and this deponents Husband William Reynolds nowe deceased was a witness but whether the said Besse after the Expiration of her time from mr Higginson was to be free from mr Kaye this deponent cannot tell and mr Higginson promised to use her as well as if shee were his own Child and further this deponent Sayth not Signum Ann Clark 20th January 1655. Jurat in Curia

Elizabeth Newman aged 80 yeares or thereabouts Sworne and Examined Sayth that shee this deponent brought Elizabeth a Molletto, Servant to the Estate of Col. John Mottrom deceased to bed of two children and shee layd them both to William Grinsted and further this Deponent Sayth not Elizabeth Newman her marke 20th January 1655 Jurat in Curia

A Report of a Committee from an Assembly Concerning the freedome of Elizabeth Key

It appeareth to us that shee is the daughter of Thomas Key by severall Evidences and by a fine imposed upon the said Thomas for getting her mother with Child of the said Thomas That she hath bin by verdict of a Jury impannelled 20th January 1655 in the County of Northumberland found to be free by severall oathes which the Jury desired might be Recorded That by the Comon Law the Child of a Woman slave begott by a freeman ought to bee free That shee hath bin long since Christened Col. Higginson being her God father and that by report shee is able to give a very good account of her fayth That Thomas Key sould her onely for nine yeares to Col. Higginson with severall conditions to use her more Respectfully than a Comon servant or slave That in case Col. Higginson had gone for England within nine yeares hee was bound to carry her with him and pay her passage and not to dispose of her to any other For these Reasons wee conceive the said Elizabeth ought to bee free and that her last Master should give her Corne and Cloathes and give her satisfaction for the time shee hath served longer than Shee ought to have done. But forasmuch as noe man appeared against the said Elizabeths petition wee thinke not fitt a determinative judgement should passe but that the County or Quarter Court where it shall be next tried to take notice of this to be the sence of the Burgesses of this present Assembly and that unless [torn] shall appear to be executed and reasons [torn] opposite part Judgement by the said Court be given [accordingly?]

Charles Norwood Clerk

Assembly

James Gaylord hath deposed that this is a true copy

James Gaylord

21th July 1656 Jurat in Curia

21th July 1656 This writeing was recorded

Att a Grand Assembly held at James Citty 20th of March 1655 Ordered that the whole business of Elizabeth Key [and?] the report of the Committee thereupon be returned [to the?] County Court where the said Elizabeth Key liveth

This is a true copy from the book of Records of the Order granted the last Assembly
Teste Robert Booth

21th July 1656 This Order of Assembly was Recorded

Upon the petition of George Colclough one of the overseers of Col. Mottrom his Estate that the cause concerning a Negro wench named Black Besse should be heard before the Governor and Councill Whereof in regard of the Order of the late Assembly referring the said cause to the Governor and Councill at least upon Appeale made to them These are therefore in his Highness the Lord Protector his name to will and require the Commissioners of the County of Northumberland to Surcease from any further proceedings on the said Cause and to give notice to the parties interested therein to appear before the Governor at the next Quarter Court on the fourth day for a determination thereof. Given under my hand this 7th of June 1656. Edward Digges 21th 1656 This Writeing was Recorded.

Whereas mr. George Cloclough and mr. William Presly overseers of the Estate of Colonell John Mottrom deceased were Summoned to theis Court at the suite of Elizabeth Kaye both Plaintiffe and Defendant being present and noe cause of action at present appearing The Court doth therefore order that the said Elizabeth Kaye shall be non-suited and that William Grinsted Attorney of the said Elizabeth shall by the tenth of November next pay fifty pounds of tobacco to the said overseers for an non-suite with Court charges else Execution. Whereas the whole business concerning Elizabeth Key by Order of Assembly was Referred to this County Court. According to the Report of a Comittee at an Assembly held at the same time which upon the Records of this County appears, It is the judgement of this Court that the Said Elizabeth Key ought to be free and forthwith to have Corne Cloathes and Satisfaction according to the said Report of the Comittee. Mr. William Thomas dissents from this judgment.

These are to Certifie whome it may concerne that William Greensted and Elizabeth Key intends [*sic*] to be joyned in the Holy Estate of Matrimony. If any one can shew any Lawfull cause why they may not be joyned together lett them Speake or ever after hold their tongues Signum William Greenstead Signum Elizabeth Key
21th July 1656 this Certificate was Published in open Court and is Recorded

I Capt. Richard Wright administrator of the Estate of Col. John Mottrom deceased doe assigne and transfer unto William Greensted a maid servant formerly belonging unto the Estae of the said Col. Mottrom commonly called Elizabeth Key being nowe Wife unto the said Greensted and doe warrant the said Elizabeth and doe bind my Selfe to save here [i.e., her] and the said Greensted from any molestation or trouble that shall or futurely arise from or by any person or persons that shall pretend or claime any title or interest to any manor of service [torn] from the said Elizabeth witness [my ha]nd this 21th of July 1659

Test William Th[omas] Richard Wright
James Aust[en]

Source: Northumberland County Record Books (1652-1658) ff. 66-67, 85; (1658-1660), f. 28; Northumberland County Order Book (1652-1665) ff. 40, 46, 49, quoted in Billings, ed., *The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 165-169; see also Warren M.

Billings, "The Cases of Fernando and Elizabeth Key: A Note on the Status of Blacks in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXX (1973): 467-474.

1657 to 1666—An Increase in the Importation of Africans to York County

Lorena Walsh notes that the records of headrights and York County inventories indicate that residents of York County gained possession of a number of Africans whom they regarded as slaves before Virginia's legislators defined hereditary slavery.

From both headright entries and York County probate inventories, we can identify a surge in the importation of blacks, most of whom were sold upon arrival as hereditary slaves, into the colony between 1657 and 1666; the first Bacon [Nathaniel Bacon] slaves likely arrived during these years.

Source: Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*, p. 27.

October 25, 1657—The Manumission of Mihill Gowen

Christopher Stafford decided to free his black servant, Mihill Gowen, in his will. Stafford's sister, Amy Barnhouse, carried out his wishes in 1657. The widow Barnhouse also freed Mihill Gowen's son, William. She did not free her enslaved woman, who was William's mother.

Bee itt known unto all Christian people that whereas Mihill Gowen Negro of late servant to my Brother Xopher Stafford deced by his last will & Testament bearing Date the 18 of Jan 1654 had his freedom given unto him after the expiration of 4 yeares service unto my uncle Robert Stafford Therefore know all whom itt may concern that I Anne Barnehouse for divers good causes mee hereunto moving doe absolutely quitt & discharge the sd Mihill Gowen from any service & for ever sett him free from any claim of service either by mee or any one my behalf as any part or parcell of my Estate that my be claimed by mee the said Amy Barnhouse my heyres Exers Admrs or Assignes as witness my hand this 25 Oct 1657 Amy (AB) Barnhouse

Bee itt knowne unto all Xcian people that I Ame Barnehouse of Martins hundred widdow for divers good causes & consideracons mee hereunto moving hath given unto Mihill Gowen Negro hee being att this time servant unto Robert Stafford a Male child borne the 25 Aug 1655 of the body of my Negro Prosta being baptised by Mr. Edward Johnson 2 Sept 1655 & named William & I the said Amy Barnhouse doth bind my selfe my heyres Exer Admr & Ass never to trouble or molest the said Mihill Gowin or his sone William or demand any service of the said Mihill or his said sone William In wittnes whereof I have caused this to be made & done I hereunto sett my hand & Seale this present 16 Sept 1655 Amy (AB) Barnhouse

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (3) 16, 26 January 1657/8.

March 1657/8—ACT XLVI. *What Persons are Tithable*

This statute (passed during the Commonwealth period) noted that all imported African women and female Native Americans were tithable unless they were Christians born in the colony or free when their parents imported them into Virginia.

BEE it enacted for the prevention of the greate abuse used by presenting of imperfect lists, that all male servants hereafter imported into this collony of what age soever they be, shall bee brought into the lists and shall be liable to pay countrey levies; and all negroes imported whether male or female, and Indian servants male or female however procured, being sixteen years of age, to be listed and pay leavies as aforesaid; such christians onlie to be excepted as are natives of this countrey, or such as are imported free either by parents or otherwise, who are exempted from levies being under the age of sixteen years.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:454.

March 1659/60—ACT XVI. *An Act for the Dutch and all other Strangers for Tradeing to this Place*

When the Virginia government dropped the export duty of ten shillings per hogshead of tobacco to two shillings, it encouraged colonists to trade tobacco to the Dutch in exchange for slaves. In the 1660s most of the bound laborers in the colony were indentured servants.

WHEREAS the restriction of trade hath appeared to be the greatest impediment to the advance of the estimation and value of our present only commodity tobacco, *Bee it enacted and confirmed*, That the Dutch and all strangers of what Xpian nation soever in amity with the people of England shall have free liberty to trade with us, for all allowable comodities, And receive protection from us to our utmost powers while they are in our jurisdiction, and shall have equall right and justice with our own nation in all courts of judicature, *Provided* they give bond and pay the impost of tenn shillings per hogshead laid upon all tobacco exported to any fforreigne dominions and give bond according to act, *Allwaies provided*, That if the said Dutch or other forreiners shall import any negro slaves, They the said Dutch or others shall, for the tobacco really produced by the sale of the said negro, pay only the impost of two shillings per hogshead, the like being paid by our owne nation.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:540.

1660 to mid 1670s—Virginia Planters Make Arrangements to Buy Africans

In 1660, the English Parliament, aiming to strengthen England's international commerce and to weaken the Dutch rivals, prohibited Dutch ships from trading in the English colonies. Virginia planters had to look elsewhere if they wanted to purchase Africans to labor on their plantations.

From 1660, when Dutch slavers were prohibited from trading in the English colonies, to the mid-1670s, Virginia planters, including Nathaniel Bacon and Lewis Burwell II, either had to make special arrangements for purchasing African workers in the West Indies or else had to buy them from ship captains trading between Barbados or other islands and the mainland.

Source: Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*, p. 54.

March 1660/1—ACT XXII. *English running away with negroes*

This law indicates that some Africans and their descendants were not servants for life. However, if an indentured servant ran away with a black person who was considered a servant for life, the white servant had to serve additional time to compensate a master (or masters) for his/her absence and for the absence of the black individual.

Between 1660/1 and 1680 the legislators worked to place all blacks in a low level on the social hierarchy. The laws enacted during this time period defined this lower status.

BEE itt enacted That in case any English servant shall run away in company with any negroes who are incapable of making satisfaction by addition of time, *Bee it enacted* that the English so running away in company with them shall serve for the time of the said negroes absence as they are to do for their owne by a former act.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:26.

August 1661—Proclamation of Governor Berkeley

Governor Berkeley was concerned about the threat that Quakers presented to political and religious authority in the colony. Berkeley also focused on women whose behavior did not fit their proper social role. In the following proclamation the governor ordered Edmund Chisman, a York County justice of the peace to stop his wife, Mary, and several of his slaves from attending Quaker meetings.

Whereas notwithstanding the Kings most Excellent Majesties gracious pardon of all Quakers for the time before his said proclamacon and the Right Honble Governrs explanacon thereof by both which it appeares that all Quakers are to be conformable to the Law as from publicacon thereof severall mettings have been of the said Quakers in this Countrey especially by women whereuppon his Matjes [Majesty's] said Governr ord that all women who should after publicacon of the said proclamacon and explanacon

continue their said unlawfull meetings & breach their schismaticall and hereticall doctrines & opinions should by their adjoyning magestrate be tendred the oathes of Supremacy & allegiance & the refusees to be Imprisoned according to Law. And it appearing by 2 oathes taken this day in Court that severall Quakers mett the 25th instant in the woods amongst which were Mrs Mary Chisman and 2 or 3 Negroes belonging to hir husband. It is ord that the said Edmond Chisman & his wife have notice of the Governrs said order & that shee shall hereafter offend in the like kind that the said order be put in Effectuall execution against hir, and also that Mr Chisman restreyne his said Negroes & whole family from repairing to the said unlawfull Assemblyes at his perill.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (3) 125, 26 August 1661.

March 1661/2—ACT CII. *Run-aways*

This statute indicates that there were Africans who were not slaves in March 1661/2. The legislators continued to try to discourage white indentured servants from running away with enslaved blacks by increasing the punishment that a white man or woman would receive after their capture. After March 1661/2 a white servant who ran away with a black servant for life was responsible for additional service or a fine if a black person became lost or died while they were away from their master(s).

WHEREAS there are diverse loytering runaways in this country who very often absent themselves from their masters service and sometimes in a long time cannot be found, that losse of the time and the charge in the seeking them often exceeding the value of their labor: *Bee it therefore enacted* that all runaways that shall absent themselves from their said masters service shalbe lyable to make satisfaction by service after the times by custome or indenture is expired (vizt.) double their times of service soe neglected, and if the time of their running away was in the crop or the charge of recovering them extraordinary the court shall lymitt a longer time of service proportionable to the damage the master shall make appeare he hath susteyned, and because the adjudging the time they should serve is often referred untill the time by indenture is expired, when the prooffe of what is due is very uncertaine, *it is enacted* that the master of any runaway that intends to take the benefitt of this act, shall as soone as he hath recovered him carry him to the next commissioner and there declare and prove the time of his absence, and the charge he hath bin at in his recovery, which commissioner thereupon shall grant his certificate, and the court on that certificate passe judgment for the time he shall serve for his absence; and in case any English servant shall run away in company of any negroes who are incapable of making satisfaction by addition of a time, *it is enacted* that the English soe running away in the company with them shall at the time of service to their owne masters expired, serve the masters of the said negroes for their absence soe long as they should have done by this act if they had not beene slaves, every christian in company serving his proportion; and if the negroes be lost or dye in such time of their being run away, the christian servants in company with them shall by proportion among them, either pay fower thousand five hundred pounds of tobacco and caske or fower yeares service for every negroe soe lost or dead.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:116-117.

March 1661/2—ACT CV. *Against trading with servants*

The following statute suggests that white and black servants and apprentices traded with those who lived near their masters.

WHEREAS diverse ill disposed persons doe secretly and covertly track and trade with other mens servants and apprentices who to the greate injury of their masters are thereby induced and encouraged to steale perloyne and imbezell their masters goods, *Bee it therefore enacted* that what person or persons soever shall buy, sell, trade or truck with any servant for any comodity whatsoever without lycense or consent of the said servants master, he or they soe offending against the premisses, shall suffer one months imprisonment without baile or mainprise, give bond with security for his good behaviour, and also forfeite to the master of the said servant fower times the value of the things soe bought, sold, trucked or traded for.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:118-119.

March 1661/2—ACT CXXXVIII. *Concerning Indians*

The legislators decided that Native American and English servants were to serve their masters the same length of time.

And be it further enacted that what Englishman, trader, or other shall bring in any Indians as servants and shall assigne them over to any other, shall not sell them for slaves nor for any longer time than English of the like ages should serve by act of assembly.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:143.

March 1661/2—Freedom for Metappin

Members of the Assembly ruled that Metappin should be free. They noted that he spoke perfect English and wanted to be baptized.

METAPPIN a Powhatan Indian being sold for life time to one Elizabeth Short by the king of Wainoake Indians who had no power to sell him being of another nation, *it is ordered* that the said Indian be free, he speaking perfectly the English tongue and desiring baptism.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:155.

December 1662—ACT XII. *Negro womens children to serve according to the condition of the mother*

As of December 1662, the child of an enslaved mother was also a slave for life. The statute was a dramatic departure from the English tradition in which a child received his or her status from his or her father. Members of the General Assembly also hoped that an increased fine would discourage white men and women from having sexual partners who were African or of African descent.

WHEREAS some doubts have arrisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or ffree, *Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly*, that all children borne in this country shalbe held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother, *And* that if any christian shall committ ffornication with a negro man or woman, hee or shee soe offending shall pay double the ffines imposed by the former act.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:170.

December 1662—ACT XIII. *Women servants whose common employment is working in the ground to be accompted tythable*

In December 1662, legislators placed a tithe on **all** female servants; perhaps this was an attempt to create a distinction between English women who worked in the fields and those who did not, in addition to the distinction between English women who labored in the house and African women.

WHEREAS diverse persons purchase women servants to work in the ground that thereby they may avoyd the payment of levies, *Be it henceforth enacted by the authority aforesaid* that all women servants whose common employment is working in the crop shalbe reputed tythable, and levies paid for them accordingly; and that every master of a family if he give not an accompt of such in his list of tythables shalbe fined as for other concealments.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:170.

September 1663—ACT XVIII. *An act prohibiting servants to go abroad without a lycence*

The colonial legislators hoped to control the movement of all laborers—white servants, black servants, and enslaved blacks—in this statute.

FOR better suppressing the unlawful meetings of servants, *it is thought fitt and enacted by this present grand assembly and the authority thereof* that all masters of ffamilies be enjoyned and take especiall care that their servants doe not depart from their houses on Sundayes or any other dayes without perticuler lycence from them, and that the severall respective counties (as they find cause) to take espetiall care to make such by laws within themselves, as by the act dated the third of December 1662, they are impowred as may cause a further restraint of all unlawfull meetings of servants and punish the offenders.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:195.

September 1667—ACT III. *An act declaring that baptisme of slaves doth not exempt them from bondage*

The passage of this statute indicates that Christianity was important to the concept of English identity. Legislators decided that slaves born in Virginia could not become free if they were baptized, but masters were encouraged to Christianize their enslaved laborers. David Galenson notes “Although this act was intended to encourage masters to have their slaves baptized, its language clearly indicates that at least some planters feared that baptism of a slave might destroy their property rights in the worker. The desire of legislators to stimulate planters’ demand for slaves by guaranteeing that baptism would not free their workers was made explicit in the very title of the parallel law enacted by the Maryland Assembly in 1671: ‘An Act for the Encourageing the Importacon of Negroes and Slaves into this Province.’ The act stated the assembly’s concern and its resolution:

Whereas Severall of the good People of this Province have been discouraged to import into or purchase within this Province any Negroes or other Slaves...upon a mistake and ungrounded apprehension that by becoming Christians they and the Issues of their bodies are actually manumitted and made free from their servitude and bondage be itt declared and Enacted...That where any Negro...Slave being in Servitude or bondage is...or shall become Christian...the same is not...to amount to a manumicon...”

WHEREAS some doubts have risen whether children that are slaves by birth, and by the charity and piety of their owners made pertakers of the blessed sacrament of baptisme, should by vertue of their baptisme be made ffree; *It is enacted and declared by this grand assembly, and the authority thereof*, that the conferring of baptisme doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or ffredome; that diverse masters, ffreed from this doubt, may more carefully endeavour the propagation of christianity by permitting children, though slaves, or those of greater growth if capable to be admitted to that sacrament.

Source: Galenson, “Economic Aspects of the Growth of Slavery,” pp. 271-272; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:260.

September 1668—ACT VII. *Negro women not exempted from tax*

The passage of this law indicates that legislators decided that English women and free black women were to be treated differently. The payment of a tithe was a financial burden and an indication that free black women made a different contribution to the colony based on their agricultural labor. This is the first reference to free blacks in the statutes.

WHEREAS some doubts, have arisen whether negro women set free were still to be accompted tithable according to a former act, *It is declared by this grand assembly* that negro women, though permitted to enjoy their ffredome yet ought not in all respects to be admitted to a full fruition of the exemptions and impunities of the English, and are still lyable to payment of taxes.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:267.

October 1669—ACT I. *An act about the casuall killing of slaves*

Colonial leaders decided that corporal punishment was the only way in which a master could correct a slave since his or her time of service could not be extended. This law represents the loss of legal protection for a slave’s life in Virginia. It also was the first of several laws passed during the last thirty years of the seventeenth century that reduced the personal rights of black men and women.

WHEREAS the only law in force for the punishment of refractory servants resisting their master, mistris or overseer cannot be inflicted upon negroes, nor the obstinacy of many of them by other then violent meanes suppress, *Be it enacted and declared by this grand assembly*, if any slave resist his master (or other by his masters order correcting him) and by the extremity of the correction should chance to die, that his death shall not be accompted ffelony, but the master (or that other person appointed by the master to punish him) be acquit from molestation, since it cannot be presumed that prepensed malice (which alone makes murther ffelony) should induce any man to destroy his owne estate.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:270.

October 1670—ACT IV. *Noe Negroes nor Indians to buy christian servants*

The number of blacks and Native Americans in Tidewater Virginia was small when this act was passed. The legislators knew that access to labor was necessary to succeed.

WHEREAS it hath beene questioned whither Indians or negroes manumitted, or otherwise free, could be capable of purchasing christian servants, *It is enacted* that noe negroe or Indian though baptised and enjoyed their owne ffreedome shall be capable of any such purchase of christians, but yet not debarred from buying any of their owne nation.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:280-281.

October 1670—ACT XII. *What tyme Indians to serve*

This law created an additional distinction between African Americans and Native Americans. It was an attempt to make lifetime servitude the normal condition for all Africans imported into Virginia. The legislators repealed this statute in November 1682.

David Galenson places the act in the context of similar statutes in Barbados and Maryland. He writes: “In 1664, Charles Calvert had found that it was the high price of slaves, rather than any skepticism about their capacity for labor, that prevented him and his fellow planters from being able to guarantee a market for one shipload a year. In 1664, however, the unwillingness of some Chesapeake planters to meet that high price might have resulted from uncertainty about their ability to hold the Africans in servitude for life. No such uncertainty existed in Barbados, the major destination for Africans in English America at the time, where thousands of slaves arrived annually to grow sugar on great plantations. Nearly three decades earlier, in 1636, that colony’s Council had declared that ‘Negroes and Indians, that came here to be sold, should serve for Life, unless a Contract was before made to the contrary,’ and this act appears subsequently to have been enforced without exceptions. Although Maryland’s ‘Act Concerning Negroes & Other Slaves’ . . . gave an assurance of this kind to that colony’s planters in 1664, it was not until 1670 that Virginia’s legislature produced such a guarantee when it declared that ‘all servants not being christians imported into this colony by shipping shalbe slaves for their lives.’ An important part of the answer to the question of why Chesapeake planters hesitated to invest heavily in slaves during the 1660s may be that during that decade they lacked the statutory assurance concerning the security of their investments that their counterparts in Barbados had received thirty years earlier.”

WHEREAS some dispute have arisen whither Indians taken in warr by any other nation, and by that nation that taketh them sold to the English, are servants for life or terme of yeares, *It is resolved and enacted* that all servants not being christians imported into this colony by shipping shalbe slaves for their lives; but what shall come by land shall serve, if boyes or girles, untill thirty yeares of age, if men or women twelve yeares and no longer.

Source: Galenson, “Economic Aspects of the Growth of Slavery,” pp. 272-273; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:283.

1670—Enquiries to the Governor of Virginia from the Lords Commissioners of Foreign Plantations; Answered by Sir William Berkeley in 1671

15. What number of planters, servants and slaves; and how many parishes are there in your plantation?

Answer. We suppose, and I am very sure we do not much miscount, that there is in Virginia above forty thousand persons, men, women, and children, and of which there are two thousand *black slaves*, six thousand *christian servants*, for a short time, the rest are born in the country or have come in to settle and seat, in bettering their condition in a growing country.

16. What number of English, Scots, or Irish have for these seven yeares last past come yearly to plant and inhabite within your government; as also what *blacks* or *slaves* have been brought in within the said time?

Answer. Yearly, we suppose there comes in, of servants, about fifteen hundred, of which, most are English, few Scotch, and fewer Irish, and not above two or three ships of negroes in seven years.

17. What number of people have yearly died, within your plantation and government for these seven years last past, both whites and blacks?

Answer. All new plantations are, for an age or two, unhealthy, 'till they are thoroughly cleared of wood; but unless we have a particular register office, for the denoting of all that died, I cannot give a particular answer to this query, only this I can say, that there is not often unseasoned hands (as we term them) that die now, whereas heretofore not one of five escaped the first year.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:515.

September 1671—ACT IV. *An act providing how negroes belonging to orphants of intestates shall be disposed of*

The legislators noted the financial importance of slaves to an orphan's estate. They decided that the county courts would be responsible for handling the enslaved laborers inherited by an orphan.

WHEREAS in the former act concerning the estates of persons dying intestate, it is provided that sheep, horses, and cattle should be delivered in kind to the orphant, when they came of age, according to the several ages the said cattle were of when the guardian took them into his possession, to which some have desired that negroes may be added; this assembly considering the difficulty of procureing negroes in kind as alsoe the value and hazard of their lives have doubted whither any sufficient men would be found who would engage themselves to deliver negroes of equall ages if the specificall negroes should dye, or become by age or accident unserviceable; *Be it therefore enacted and ordayned by this grand assembly and the authority thereof* that the consideration of this be referred to the county courts who are hereby authorized and impowred either to cause such negroes to be duly apprizd, sold at an outcry, or preserved in kind, as they then find

it most expedient for preservation, improvement or advancement of the estate and interest of such orphans.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:288.

1672—Charter to the Royal African Company

In 1672, the Royal African Company received a charter that gave it a monopoly on the slave trade to the English colonies.

Between 1672 and 1689 the Royal African Company, a chartered trading corporation, had exclusive rights for transporting slaves from Africa to the English colonies. It sent most of its human cargoes to the main West Indian slave markets but beginning in the mid-1670s also sent a few ships direct from Africa to Virginia, engaging local agents to sell the slaves and to collect the payments for a commission.

Source: Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*, p. 54.

1672—Attempts to Restrict the Movement of Slaves

In September 1672, the justices of the peace in Surry County decided that residents needed to enforce the legislation that restricted the movement of slaves. They also wanted masters to dress their enslaved laborers in blue shirts and shifts as a way to identify slaves and to reduce what the magistrates called “theire foolish pride.”

Whereas information hath been given to this Court that the too Careles and inconsiderable Liberty given to Negroes, not only in being p'mitted to mete together upon Satterdayes & Sundayes, whereby they wine opportunity to consult of unlawfull p'jects & combinations to the danger & damage of the neighbours, as well as to their Masters, and Also that the apparrell comonly worne by negroes doth as well Highten their foolish pride as induse them to steale fine Linninge & other ornaments, for the p'vention whereof itt is hereby ord'd & published to the Inhabitants of this county that the Act of Assembly for p'vention of serv'ts going aboard be put in due execution & from hence forth Noe negro shall be allowed to weare any white Linninge, but shall weare blew shirts and shifts that they may be herby discovered if they steale or weare other Linninge, & if the Master of any Negro shall p'tend that blew is not to be had for men & women Negros for their shifts & shirts, caps or neckclothes, then he shall supply that want in course Lockerham or Canvis, & this to be duly observed untill a by law be made to confirme the same.

Source: “Management of Slaves, 1672,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 7 (1899-1900): 314.

September 1672—ACT III. *An act concerning tythables borne in the country*

The legislators decided that each tithe taker was responsible for keeping track of the age of all black, mulatto, and Native American children in their precinct. In addition, each master was to have the birth of a black or a mulatto child registered in his or her parish within one year.

FOR the better discovery of what persons borne in this country are and ought to be accounted tythables, and the ages of the younger better known, *Be it enacted by the governor, counsell and burgesses of this grand assembly and by the authority thereof* that all persons who are appointed by the county courts to take the lyst of tythables, in each county shall take an account of all negro, molatto, and Indian children, within their severall precincts, and the masters and owners of such children are to make appeare upon oath or evidence the ages of them. And that all negro, and molatto children, and slaves that shalbe borne in the country, shall by their respective masters or owners within twelve months after their birth be registred in the parish register with their exact ages, and in default thereof, the said master or owner shall pay levy for them that yeare, and soe yearley till such register be made; *And it is further enacted by the authority aforesaid*, that all negro women borne in this country shall be accompted tythable at sixteene yeares of age.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:296.

September 1672—ACT VIII. *An act for the apprehension and suppression of runaways, negroes and slaves*

The members of the General Assembly hoped to suppress the rebellious activities of slaves throughout the colony. In addition, they wanted to keep servants and Native Americans from joining the slaves in any unlawful activities. They decided that it was legal to wound or kill an enslaved person who resisted arrest.

FORASMUCH as it hath beene manifested to this grand assembly that many negroes have lately beene, and now are out in rebellion in sundry parts of this country, and that noe meanes have yet beene found for the apprehension and suppression of them from whome many mischeifes of very dangerous consequence may arise to the country if either other negroes, Indians or servants should happen to fly forth and joyne with them; for the prevention of which, *be it enacted by the governour, councill and burgesses of this grand assembly, and by the authority thereof*, that if any negroe, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, runaway and shalbe persued by the warrant or hue and crye, it shall and may be lawfull for any person who shall endeavour to take them, upon the resistance of such negroe, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, to kill or wound him or them soe resisting; *Provided alwayes*, and it is the true intent and meaning hereof, that such negroe, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, be named and described in the hue and crye which is alsoe to be signed by the master or owner of the said runaway. And if it happen that such negroe, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life doe dye of any

wound in such their resistance received the master or owner of such shall receive satisfaction from the publique for his negroe, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, soe killed or dyeing of such wounds; and the person who shall kill or wound by virtue of any such hugh and crye any such soe resisting in manner as aforesaid shall not be questioned for the same, he forthwith givinge notice thereof and returning the hue and crye or warrant to the master or owner of him or them soe killed or wounded or to the next justice of peace. *And it is further enacted* by the authority aforesaid that all such negroes and slaves shalbe valued at ffowre thousand five hundred pounds of tobacco and caske a peece, and Indians at three thousand pounds of tobacco and caske a peice, And further if it shall happen that any negroe, molatto, Indians slave or servant for life, in such their resistance to receive any wound whereof they may not happen to dye, but shall lye any considerable tyme sick and disabled, then alsoe the master or owner of the same soe sick or disabled shall receive from the publique a reasonable satisfaction for such damages as they shall make appeare they have susteyned thereby at the county court, who shall thereupon grant the master or owner a certificate to the next assembly of what damages they shall make appeare; *And it is further enacted* that the neighbouring Indians doe and hereby are required and enjoyned to seize and apprehend all runawayes whatsoever that shall happen to come amongst them, and to bring them before some justice of the peace whoe upon the receipt of such servants, slave, or slaves, from the Indians, shall pay unto the said Indians for a recompence twenty armes length of Roanoake or the value thereof in goods as the Indians shall like of, for which the said justice of peace shall receive from the publique two hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco, and the said justice to proceed in conveying the runaway to his master according to the law in such cases already provided; This act to continue in force till the next assembly and noe longer unlesse it be thought fitt to continue.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:299-300.

June 1673—Punishment for Will

The Governor and the Council decided to imprison Will, a runaway slave who belonged to Robert Bryan of Gloucester County. Will confessed that he helped two slaves to escape from jail. The following month the legislators ordered Will to be whipped and returned to his master.

Whereas Will a Runaway Negroe Suspected to have Lett out of Prison a Negroe Condemned the last Court and Confesseth that he did See the Negroe breake Loose out of irons and did Attempt to breake out of the fore Doore of the Prison and that he see a Negroe Breake Open the back doore and Lett the said Negroe out of Prison and further that he hath beene Twice in the Condemned Negroes Company. It is therefore orderd by this Court that the said Negroe be Comitted to the Comon Prison of James Citty till further order & if the sherriffe thinke fitt to take the said Negroe Will along wth him for the better Discovery for finding the said Condemned Negroe, but the sherriffe to keepe him in prison till further order

It is orderd that Will a Negroe Slave to Mr Robt Bryan of Gloster County who the 9th of June Last was Comitted to the sherriffs Custody as A Runaway Rogue and one that Confessed to have Seene the Late Condemned Negroe breake his Irons and Prison and that after he See breaking Prison to have bene Severall times in the said Condemned Negroes Company it is therefore ordrd he Discharge his prison and have to morrow morning A Good and well laid on whipping, and putt into the Constables hands of James Citty who is to Convey him to the Next Constable and Soe from Constable to Constable till he be Delivred to his said master Mr Bryan, And it is further orderd that the said Bryan pay unto ffra: Kirkman high Sherriff of this County One Thousand pound of tobacco and Caske for Charges & fees als ex

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*, pp. 346-347.

June 16, 1675—The Petition of Philip Gowen for his Freedom

Philip Gowen sued for his freedom from his master, John Lucas, in June 1675. Perhaps he was a second son born to Mihill Gowen and Amy Barnhouse's enslaved woman Prosta.

Phillip Gowen negro Suing Mr Jno Lucas to this Court for his freedome It is Orderd that the said Phill Gowen be free from ye Said Mr Lucas his Service and that the Indenture Acknowledg'd in Warwick County County [sic] be Invallid and that ye Said Mr Lucas pay unto ye Gowen three Barrels of Corne att the Cropp According to ye Will of Mrs Amye Boazlye decd wth Costs

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia*, p. 441.

June 1676—ACT I. *An act for carrying on a warre against the barbarous Indians*

In 1676 many Virginians were alarmed by Governor Berkeley's poor leadership and weak response in handling the Indian threat by merely suggesting a series of forts be built along the frontier rather than dispatching troops. Nathaniel Bacon, a member of England's gentry newly arrived in Virginia, became the military leader of a band of Virginians who armed themselves against the Indians in defiance of the governor in the spring of that year. Berkeley responded by unsuccessfully dispatching men to confront Bacon and declared him a rebel.

Until Bacon's death from natural causes on October 26, 1676 he and Governor Berkeley struggled to control Virginia militarily and politically, embroiling Virginians in civil war. After the Assembly enacted many of Bacon's demands, Bacon with five hundred men captured the government and demanded from Berkeley the power to fight the Indians. That was granted on June 25 but later withdrawn. The governor, however, could not

raise loyal troops to assert his authority and was forced to retreat to the Eastern Shore. Berkeley later returned to Jamestown to prepare for Bacon's attack but was forced to return to the Eastern Shore while Bacon burned the capital. Virginians, hesitant to fight one another, continued to vacillate in their support of Berkeley and Bacon in the ever-increasing confusion. Bacon's men, however, now turned to plundering loyalist plantations in Gloucester County and elsewhere. Bacon's sudden death left his men without a strong leader, and in January 1677 Berkeley returned to power and sought reparations for the loyalists.

During the Rebellion the Indians probably suffered the most. Many were killed and a number of their villages were destroyed. In June of 1676 members of the Assembly decided that Native Americans captured during the rebellion would become slaves for life.

And bee it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that all Indians taken in warr be held and accounted slaves dureing life, and if any differences shall arise in cases about plunder or slaves, the cheife commander of the party takeing such slaves or plunder is to be the sole judge thereof to make equall division as hee shall see fit.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:346.

September 1676—Nathaniel Bacon's Loyalty Oath

Nathaniel Bacon issued a loyalty oath in which his supporters pledged that they would leave Virginia before they would submit to the slavery of life in the colony under Governor Berkeley.

Whereas Sir William Berkeley Knight, late Governor of Virginia hath in a most Barbarous and abominable manner exposed and betrayed our lives, and for greediness of sordid Gain did defer our just defence and hinder all the Loyall endeavours of his Majesties faithfull subjects; and further when the Country did raise a sufficient Force for the effectual proceeding against the Indian Enemy, he did, contrary to all Equity and Justice and the tenors of his commission, endeavour to oppose the said Forces by himself and the Assembly sett forth: of which attempts being severall tymes defeated by the Peoples abhorrence of soe Bloody a design he left the country in a small vessell, it being unknown to all People to what parts of the world he did repair, and whereas as our army upon his departure betaking themselves to the care of the Frontiers did march out against the Indians and obtain soe great a victory, as hath in a manner finished all the disaster and almost Resettled the country in a happy Peace, yet notwithstanding Sir Wm. Berkeley with Forces raised in Accomack, did invade the country with acts of hostility, with all intentions to persecute the said Army with these aforesaid reasons, as also having betray'd his Trust to the king by flying from his seate of Judicature, and acting wholly contrary to his comission, We protest against him unanimously as a Traytor and most pernicious Enemy to the Publick, and further we swear that in all places of his Majestyes Colony of Virginia wee will oppose and prosecute him with all our Endeavours by all acts of

hostility as occasion shall present, and further whereas Plotting and wishing in his heart a totall Ruine and Destruction of this Poore colony he hath Endeavoured to set the heart of our Sovereigne against us by false Information and Lyes, requesting forces of his Majestie wherewith to compell and subdue us, hindering, intercepting and preventing all our Remonstrances for Peace, which might have gone home in our Justification, as also hindering of our sending home of agents in the Peoples behalf which was the most humble and earnest request of the People at first, We doe further declare and swear that wee think it absolutely consisting with our allegiance and Loyalty to treat with and discourse with the said Forces and commissioners with all submission to his Majesty. But otherwise if it shall soe prove that notwithstanding all intreaties and offers wee shall make, they shall offer to land by Force, in our owne Defense to fly together as in a common calamity and jointly with the present army now under the command of General Bacon, to stand or fall in the Defense of him and the country in soe just a cause, and in all places to oppose their Proceedings (onely untill such time as his Majesty by our agents shall fully understand the miserable case of the country, and the Justice of our Proceedings) Which most just request if they shall refuse and by force endeavour to enter the country, wee are resolv'd to uphold the country as long as we can and never to absent and joyne with any such army whatever, and lastly in case of utmost extremity rather than submit to any soe miserable a slavery (when none can longer defend themselves, our lives and Liberties) to acquit the colony rather than submitt to soe unheard of Injustice, and this wee al swear in the presence of Almighty God as unfeignedly and freely as ever wee desire of him for happiness to come.

Source: Andrews, ed., *Narratives of the Insurrections 1675-1690*, pp. 136-137.

October 1676—The British Use Treachery to Get the Remainder of Bacon's Army to Surrender

A number of Bacon's followers deserted him in early September 1676. He needed to increase the size of his army and he proclaimed freedom for all servants and slaves who joined him. The rebel's offer is similar to the one that Governor Dunmore made to slaves owned by Patriots in November 1775. The rebel army that seized Jamestown in September 1676 included white indentured servants, recently freed servants, and slaves.

Enslaved men and indentured servants were among the last of Bacon's followers to return home after Berkeley regained control of the colony. The group of holdouts included eighty slaves and twenty white servants. Anthony S. Parent describes the way in which the British fooled the remainder of the rebel army and got them to surrender.

After Bacon's death in late October, the rebel movement declined because of lack of leadership, the opposition's exploitation of the class differences in the movement, and treachery. The original planters' rebellion had not included the freeing of servants and slaves, which would have effectively destroyed Virginia's labor base. The inclusion of servants, freedmen, and slaves in the rebel army had transformed the conflict into one of class struggle, which helped unite the planters in opposition. The rebels were tricked into

submission by the treachery of Thomas Grantham, an English merchant adventurer, who promised freedom in return for surrender. At West Point, Grantham promised the aid of the new rebel general, Laurence Ingram, whom Grantham had known before, to secure the surrender of 300 black and white rebels with “never to be performed promises.” Then Grantham took on a rebel stronghold, three miles away. There he met 400 black and white rebels who were dissatisfied with the surrender at West Point and threatened to shoot or cut him to pieces for betraying them. But by “giving them severall noates under my hand” promising freedom, Grantham convinced all but 100 men, 80 blacks and 20 whites, to return to their homes. He captured the remaining 100 rebels by steering them into an ambush of an armed ship on the York River. After disarming the rebels he returned them to their respective owners. This was the last time blacks and whites would unite in common cause in such numbers in an attempt to change the society they were living in.

Source: Parent, “Either a Fool or a Fury,” pp. 164-165.

February 1676/7

The Royal Commissioners tried to discourage the Assembly from treating Native Americans who were captured during Bacon’s Rebellion as slaves. They did not succeed.

IT is ordered that all such souldiers who either already have taken or hereafter shall take prisoners any of our Indian enemies, or any other Indian plunder, and at the tyme of takeing such Indians or Indian goods then were or shall hereafter be under a lawfull comand from due and full authority, that they reteyne and keepe all such Indian slaves or other Indian goods as they either have taken or hereafter shall take to their owne proper use for their better encouragement to such service.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:404.

Part IV—An Increase in the Restrictions on Slaves and Free Blacks

The plantation revolution came to the Chesapeake with the thunder of cannons and the rattle of sabres. Victory over the small holders, servants, and slaves who composed Nathaniel Bacon’s motley army in 1676 enabled planters to consolidate their control over Chesapeake society. In quick order, they elaborated a slave code that singled out people of African descent as slaves and made their status hereditary. In the years that followed, as the number of European servants declined and white farmers migrated west, the great planters turned to Africa for their workforce. During the last decades of the seventeenth century, the new order began to take shape. The Chesapeake’s economy stumbled into the eighteenth century, but the grandees prospered, as the profits of slave labor filled their pockets. A society with slaves gave way to a slave society around the great estuary.

Although black people grew tobacco as before, the lives of plantation slaves in no way resembled those of the charter generations. White indentured servants might graduate to tenantry or gain small holdings of their own, but black slaves could not. Planters restricted the slaves' access to freedom and stripped slaves of their prerogatives and free blacks of their rights. Rather than participate in a variety of enterprises, slaves labored single-mindedly under the direction of white overseers whose close supervision left little room for initiative or ambition. The slaves' economy withered and with it the robust network of exchanges that had rested upon the slaves' independent production. But even as the great planters installed the new harsh regime, African slaves and their descendants, sometimes in league with remnants of the charter generations, began to reshape black life. In the process, they created a new African-American society.

...

Foreshadowing the transformation of Chesapeake society, during the last quarter of the seventeenth century the linkages among people of color—free and unfree—grew at the expense of connections with white patrons, on one hand, and white servants and free men, on the other. Ties among black people did not need to be invented, as black men and women had always lived and worked in the close proximity, traded among themselves, given security for one another, socialized, shared memories, and exchanged gifts and other intimacies. Tight communities, bound together by blood and marriage and linked by connections of godparentage and guardianships, existed throughout the Chesapeake region.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 109, 46; see also Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*.

1677—Petition of Susannah

Susannah was not able to convince the justices of the peace for Charles City County that she was dependant and therefore free from paying a tithe on herself.

Upon the petition of Susannah a free Negro-Woman that she may be Exempted from payeing Levyes, And Whereas the Worshipful Courte is informed of her strength and ability It is thereupon thought fit that she be not Exempted but pay Levyes.

Source: Charles City County Order Book (1677-1679) p. 216 in Billings, ed., *The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 158.

1678—John Barber's Petition

In contrast to Susannah, Barber convinced the Charles City County magistrates that he should not pay a tithe on his servant woman.

John Barber proved “that his woman servant (presumably English) was rarely employed in the ground ‘unless for the tearing corn[,] housing tob[acc]o or such like.’ The tasks that Barber detailed as those of his servant were seasonal and sporadic, suggesting her occasional presence in corn and tobacco fields during the harvest of each crop.”

Source: Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, p. 121.

1678—Andrew James Secures his Freedom

William Hay, a prominent resident of Charles Parish, married Margery Jolly Griggs in 1655. The bride-to-be entered into a marriage agreement with her third husband in order to protect the estate that her second husband, John Griggs, bequeathed to their son, John, and their daughter, Margery. In addition to outlining the terms under which Hay would protect the inheritance of the two orphans, Hay gave a slave boy named Andrew to his step-son. Andrew and John Griggs grew up together and possibly had a close relationship. In October 1677, Andrew secured a promise from his master that enabled him "to worke for himselfe paying his sd master at the expiracon of sd tyme 2000 lbs sweet sented tobo & caske." In addition, Griggs was not "to hinder sd Andrew from working at his trade of Carpenter" except to plant and tend 3000 corn hills. Andrew James apparently made the most of his opportunity to do work for others who lived nearby. However, Andrew might not have been prompt in doing his work or paying his bills because four planters—Thomas Nutting, Samuel Snignall, John Travillion, and William Wise—received an attachment against the estate of Andrew James to cover the debts he had accumulated and apparently did not pay before he left the Charles Parish and York County area in 1679.

In 1678, Andrew James petitioned the administrator of his former master's estate in order to secure the freedom he had been promised. Members of the court made their decision in February 1678/9.

Whereas Mr John Griggs did by his deed under his hand & seale dated 23 Dec 1673 covenant with Andrew James his Negro that when Griggs death should come sd Negro shoud be a freeman (at his owne dispose & not subject to claime by Griggs heirs) & sd Griggs being deceased & sd Negro by vertue of sd deed peticoning for his freedome it is courts opinion that hee is thereby free & therefore ord that hee be & is hereby dischargd from all manner & service any waies due to the decedts estate de futuro.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (6) 67, 24 February 1678/9; *ibid.*, p. 117, 25 August 1679.

April 1679—ACT I. *An act for the defence of the country against the incursions of the Indian enemy*

This statute reflected the bias against Native Americans in the years after Bacon's Rebellion.

And for the better encouragement and more orderly government of the souldiers, that what Indian prisoners or other plunder shalbe taken in warre, shalbe free purchase to the souldier taking the same.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:440.

1680—Changes in Relationships Between White Indentured Servants and Black Slaves

Most of the slaves who arrived in Virginia after 1680 were transported directly from Africa. At the same time the number of indentured servants who arrived in the colony dropped. Lorena S. Walsh describes the change in the relations between indentured servants and slaves on Nathaniel Bacon's plantation (uncle of the leader of Bacon's Rebellion) from the 1660s to the 1680s.

Immediately upon arrival the Bacon slaves had been set to work raising tobacco and corn on Bacon's home plantation on King's Creek in northern York County or on nearby quarters at Piney and Farlow's Neck. There they likely at first shared dwellings with and worked alongside with indentured servants (most young men) whom Bacon also regularly purchased in the 1660s, 1670s, and 1680s In addition, Native Americans also occasionally were present in the quarters. Bacon had at least two Indian servants, Will, an eight-year-old boy acquired in 1666, and Dick, another boy whose service he purchased in 1689. Interracial work groups would have been common on both the Bacon and the Burwell plantations into the 1680s but less frequent after that. Burwell did continue to buy indentured servants through the early 1690s but probably in diminished numbers. Many fewer white servants immigrated to the York basin after the early 1680s, and those who did were increasingly likely to be skilled artisans who probably did not share accommodations with slaves or work closely with them.

Once the stream of new white servants diminished to a trickle in the mid-1680s and blacks became dominant in the bound labor force, their working conditions began to deteriorate. Colonial courts ruled that slaves had no claim to English workers' customary rights to food of reasonable quantity and quality, adequate clothing and shelter, and a certain amount of rest and leisure. And, across the last half of the century, laws stripped the slaves of any significant freedom for themselves or their children and denied them not only any right to hold property but any security for their persons against whatever brutality any white chose to inflict. Slaves living in isolation commanded scant hedges against their master's ever-growing power. However, groups of slaves who were as numerous as those on the Bacon and Burwell estates and among whom there was an unusual degree of residential and intergenerational continuity surely had some collective resources for resisting adverse changes in plantation custom, at least for a time.

Source: Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*, pp. 31, 32.

June 1680—ACT VII. *An act asserting the time when Negroe Children shall be tythable*

The colonial leaders decided that enslaved children should be counted as tithes (capable of working) at the age of twelve and that Christian servants should be included on a list of tithes at the age of fourteen.

WHEREAS it is deemed too hard and severe that children (as well christians as slaves) imported into this colony should be lyable to taxes before they are capable of working, *Bee it enacted by the kings most excellent majestie by and with the consent of the generall assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority aforesaid*, that all negroe children imported or to be imported into this colony shall within three months after the publication of this law or after their arrivall be brought to the county court, where there age shalbe adjudged of by the justices holding court, and put upon record, which said negroe, or other slave soe brought to court, adjudged and recorded shall not be accompted tythable untill he attaines the age of twelve yeares, any former law, usage, or custome to the contrary notwithstanding. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted*, that noe christian servants imported into this colony shalbe tythable before they attaine the age of fourteene yeares any former law, usage, or custome to the contrary notwithstanding.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:479-480.

June 1680—ACT X. *An act for preventing Negroes Insurrections*

This law represents an attempt to restrict the freedom and personal rights of enslaved persons. The members of the Assembly also decided that a slave who resisted a white individual was to be punished. The statute designated the punishments for three crimes: leaving a plantation without the permission of one's master, raising a hand against a Christian, and resisting capture after running away.

WHEREAS the frequent meeting of considerable numbers of negroe slaves under pretence of feasts and burialls is judged of dangerous consequence; for prevention whereof for the future, *Bee it enacted by the kings most excellent majestie by and with the consent of the generall assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority aforesaid*, that from and after the publication of this law, it shall not be lawfull for any negroe or other slave to carry or arme himselfe with any club, staffe, gunn, sword or any other weapon of defence or offence, nor to goe or depart from of his masters ground without a certificate from his master, mistris or overseer and such permission not to be granted but upon perticuler and necessary occasions; and every negroe or slave soe offending not having a certificate as aforesaid shalbe sent to the next constable, who is hereby enjoyned and required to give the said negroe twenty lashes on his bare back well layd on, and soe sent home to his said master, mistris or overseer. *And it is further enacted by the authority*

aforesaid that if any negroe or other slave shall presume to lift up his hand in opposition against any christian, shall for every such offence, upon due prooffe made thereof by the oath of the party before a magistrate, have and receive thirty lashes on his bare back well laid on. *And it is hereby further enacted by the authority* aforesaid that if any negroe or other slave shall absent himself from his masters service and lye hid and lurking in obscure places, comitting injuries to the inhabitants, and shall resist any person or persons that shalby any lawfull authority be employed to apprehend and take the said negroe, that then in case of such resistance, it shalbe lawfull for such person or persons to kill the said negroe or slave soe lying out and resisting, and that this law be once every six months published at the respective county courts and parish churches within this colony.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:481-482.

1681—Lord Culpepper’s Estimation of Virginia’s Population

70,000 or 80,000 population, of which 15,000 servants, 3,000 blacks

Source: Greene and Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790*, p. 137.

1681—A Case of Miscegenation

County courts used fines and the whip to try to enforce racial separation between the sexes. The slave William charged in this case apparently received additional punishment for thumbing his nose at members of Linhaven Church.

Whereas upon the Information of mr. James Porter minister It hath appeared to this Court that Mary Williamson hath Comitted the filthy sin of fornication with William a negro belonging to William Basnett Squire It is therefore ordered that shee bee fined five hundred pounds of tobacco and Caske for the use of Linhaven parish, for which the said Basnet hath In open Court Ingaged himself etc. security.

Whereas It hath appeared to this Court that William a negro belonging to William Basnett Squire hath Comitted fornication with Mary Williams[on], and hath very arrogantly behaved himself in Linhaven Church in the face of the Congregation, It is therefore ordered that the Sheriff take the said William Into his Custody and give him thirty Lashes on his bare back.

Source: Lower Norfolk County Order Book, 1681-1686, in Billings, ed., *The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 161.

November 1682—ACT I. *An act to repeale a former law making Indians and others ffree*

Two acts passed in November of 1682 joined Native Americans and Africans into one racial category—“negroes and other slaves.”

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that all servants except Turkes and Moores, whilst in amity with his majesty which from and after publication of this act shall be brought or imported into this country, either by sea or land, whether Negroes, Moors, Mollattoes or Indians, who and whose parentage and native country are not christian at the time of their first purchase of such servant by some christian, although afterwards, and before such their importation and bringing into this country, they shall be converted to the christian faith; and all Indians which shall hereafter be sold by our neighbouring Indians, or any other trafiqueing with us as for slaves are hereby adjudged, deemed and taken to be slaves to all intents and purposes, any law, usage or custome to the contrary notwithstanding.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:491-492.

November 1682—ACT II. *An act declaring Indian women servants tithables*

WHEREAS it hath bin doubted whether Indian women servants sold to the English above the age of sixteene yeares be tythable, *Bee it enacted and declared, and it is hereby enacted and declared by the governour, councill and burgesses of this generall assembly and the authority thereof*, that all Indian women are and shall be tythables, and ought to pay levies in like manner as negroe women brought into this country doe, and ought to pay.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:492.

November 1682—ACT III. *An additional act for the better preventing insurrections by Negroes*

This statute placed an additional restriction on the mobility of enslaved persons: slaves were not to gather at a plantation other than that of their master for more than four hours.

WHEREAS a certaine act of assembly held at James Citty the 8th day of June, in the yeare of our Lord 1680, intituled, an act preventing negroes insurrections hath not had its intended effect for want of due notice thereof being taken; *it is enacted by the governour, councill and burgesses of this generall assembly, and by the authority thereof*, that for the better putting the said act in due execution, the church wardens of each parish in this country at the charge of the parish by the first day of January next provide true coppies of this present and the aforesaid act, and make or cause entry thereof to be made in the register book of the said parish, and that the minister or reader of each

parish shall twice every yeare vizt. some one Sunday or Lords day in each of the months of September and March in each parish church or chappell of ease in each parish in the time of divine service, after the reading of the second lesson, read and publish both this present and the aforerecited act under paine such churchwarden minister or reader makeing default, to forfeite each of them six hundred pounds of tobacco, one halfe to the informer and the other halfe to the use of the poore of the said parish. And for the further better preventing such insurrections by negroes or slaves, *Bee it likewise enacted by the authority aforesaid*, that noe master or overseer knowingly permitt or suffer, without the leave or licence of his or their master or overseer, any negroe or slave not properly belonging to him or them, to remaine or be upon his or their plantation above the space of four houres at any one time, contrary to the intent of the aforerecited act upon paine to forfeite, being thereof lawfully convicted, before some one justice of peace within the county where the fact shall be comitted, by the oath of two witnesses at the least, the summe of two hundred pounds of tobacco in cask for each time soe offending to him or them that will sue for the same, for which the said justice is hereby impowered to award judgment and execution.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:492-493.

March 23, 1684/5—Deed of Gift from William Booth to William

William was one of three children born to a white woman named Katherine Jewell and an unknown black father before her marriage to Stephen Pond, a white planter. Jewell bound out her son to William Booth, one of the leading planters in Charles Parish. In this deed of gift Booth conveyed a heifer to William.

Mr Jenings

I would desyer you to Record It as followeth

Whereas William a Mulatto boy sonn of Katharine Jewell is bound to me by a certaine Indenture beareing date the 6th of March 1670[1] for the tearme & time of thirty yeares In Consideration whereof I am to give him his bringing up and Corne & Cloathes at the Expiration of his time and a heifer of a yeare old when he attaines to the Age of fowerteen about which age he is now I doe therefore acknowledge to have marked a pied yeareling with a figure of three under the right Eare having browne Eares & a browne Mussell her & her Increase to run and be for the use and behoofe of the sd Malattoe boy & him onely serveing out his full time according to the sd Indenture otherwise to returne to me & this I doe acknowledge to the Records of York County Given under my hand this 23d March 1684/5 Wm Booth

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (7) 61, 24 March 1684/5.

October 24, 1687—Governor Effingham Reveals a Planned Insurrection by Slaves

The discovery of an insurrection plot on the Northern Neck induced members of the Governor's Council to urge slaveowners to restrict their slaves' mobility on weekends and to ban funerals among their bondpeople. Black Virginians took advantage of funerals to share information and to demonstrate racial solidarity. These large gatherings would continue to provoke suspicion among white leaders throughout the colonial and antebellum periods and even after the end of the Civil War.

His Excellency was pleased this day in Councell to acquaint the Councell that he had even then reced from Mr Secretary Spencer Intelligence of the Discovery of a Negro Plott, formed in the Northern Neck for the Destroying and killing his Majties Subjects the Inhabitants thereof, with a designe of Carrying it through the whole Collony of Virga which being by Gods Providence timely discovered before any part of the designes were put in Execution, and thereby their whole Evill purposes for the present defeated, and Mr Secretary Spencer haveing by his Care Secured some of the Principall Actors & Contrivers, and the Evill & fatall Consequences that might have hapned, being by this Board Seriously considered, Have found fit to Order that the Negro Conspirators now in Custody be either safely Secured untill the next Genll Court, to the Intent they may then be proceeded against according to Law, or if it be found more Necessary for the present Safety of the Country that they be brought to a Speedy Tryall, that then his Excellcy will be pleased to direct a Commission to Mr Secretary Spencer, Col Rich: Lee, and Coll: Isaac Allerton three of this Majties Councell Inhabitants in the Northern Neck to Sitt heare and try according to Law the Negro Conspirators, and to proceed to Sentence of Condemnacion & Execucon, or to Such other punishmts as according to Law they shall be found Guilty off, by such examples of Justice to deterr other Negroes from plotting or Contriveing either the Death wrongs or Injuries of any of this Majties Subjects. And this Board having Considered that the great freedome and Liberty that has beene by many masters given to their Negro Slaves for Walking on Broad on Saterdays and Sundays and permitting them to meete in great Numbers in Making and holding Funeralls for Dead Negroes gives them the Opportunityes under pretention of such publique meetings to Consult and advise for the Carrying on of their Evill & wicked purposes & Contrivances, for prevention whereof for the future, It is by this Board thought fitt that a Proclamacon doe forthwith Issue, requiring a Strickt observance of Severall Laws of this Collony relateing to Negroes, and to require and Comand all Masters of families having any Negro Slaves, not to permitt them to hold or make any Solemnity or Funeralls for any deced Negros.

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, 1:86-87.

November 1687—Proclamation from Governor Effingham

Effingham issued this proclamation in response to “a Negro Plott” that was discovered on the Northern Neck. The governor reminded residents of Virginia about the restrictions placed on the movement of slaves in the June 1680 law entitled *An act for preventing Negroes Insurrections*.

By His Excellency a Proclamacon—

Whereas by the prudent care of the Genll. Assembly a most necessary and good law was thereby made, to deter and prevent the insurrection of Negroe slaves for want of due observance whereof, and by the too frequent remissnesse of Masters of families in not restraining their Negroes from walking and rambling on broad on Satterdayes and Sundayes, by such liberty given them the opportunities of meetings in great tumults, to consentt and advise by all maner of wicked meanes and contrivances to hope by such plottings to putt themselves into a capacity to exende their bloody purposes on their Masters and Mistrisses and by the execution of their sins, blood, plotts and designes to exempt and free themselves from their present slavery which of late yeares has beene too frequently notoriously made manifest threatning the total ruine and subversion of the inhabitants of this his Majties. governmt. if by Gods providence a timely discovery had not beene made of such plotts and designes and to the intent for the future that better care and diver observance may bee had and paid unto that wholesome and necessary law entituled an act preventing Negroes insurrections, I Francis Lord Howard Baron of Effingham his Majties. Leiut. and Governor Genll. of Virginia by and with the consent and advice of the councell of state have thought fitt that for the future noe Negroes slaves bee suffered to carry or arme himselfe with any staffe, clubb, gunn, sword, or other weapon, offensive or defensive, nor presume to depart from off his Master or Mistress grownd without the permission of his Master, Mistress or overseer and that to bee made manifest by certificate under the Master, Mistress or overseer hand, and any Negroe prosumeing otherwise to doe to bee taken and securyed and severly punished according as the before recited law hath directed and appointed and to the intent a strict enquiry bee made unto this good law the Grand Jury men of every respective county are hereby in his Majties. name strictly charged and comanded to make enquiry whether any Master or Mistresses of Negroes slaves bee neglectfull of their parts of the afoemenconed act, as alsoe whether Constables and other officers doe well and truely give correction unto such offending Negroes as shall be brought before them, and alsoe to enquire whether or noe that according to the direction of the said act the same bee published every six monethes att the respective county courts and parish churches within this collony, and if upon the Grand Juries enquiry of the due performance of the aforesaid act that they shall finde whether Master, Mistress or overseer wanting in their parts in the performance of the said act that then they present the same to the intent the offenders may bee pceeded against according to law. Given under my hand and the seale of the colony att Rosegill this fifth day of Nov Anno Dom. 1687. God Save the King Effingham

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (8) 99-100, 24 January 1687/8.

April 26, 1688—Punishment for Sam

At a meeting held on April 26, 1688, the General Court punished Sam, a slave who belonged to Richard Metcalf, for his role in a planned insurrection.

Whereas at a Genll Court held att James Citty Aprill the 26th 1688 Present the honourable his Majties Councill of State It apeard that Sam a Negro Servt to Richard Metcalfe hath several times endeavoured to promote a Negro Insurrecon in this Colony, It is therefore ordered to deter him & others from the like evil practice for time to come, that he be by the Sheriff of James Citty County or his deputy severely whipt att a cart tayle from the prison round about the town & then to the Gallows, and from thence to the prison againe and that hee be conveyed by the sheriff of Westmoreland County to that county & hee is ordered to whip him severely at the next Court to be held for that County, & that hee have a halter about his necke during that time, & afterwards that hee have a strong Iron collar affixed about his neck with four spriggs wch collar he is never to take or gett off nor to goe off his master or masters plantacon during all the time he shall live, and if he shall goe off his said master or masters plantacon or get off his collar then to be hanged.

Vera Copia test,

W Edward Cl Gen Cur.

In Obedience to wch Order we command the sheriff of this county or his deputy sedente curia to give him twenty-nine lashes on the bare back well laid on wch was performed accordingly with a halter about his neck, and the collar put on.

Source: “Punishment For a Negro Rebel,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., X (1901-1902):177-178.

1689—End of the Monopoly of the Royal African Company

The Royal African Company decided to stop protecting its monopoly in the slave trade to the British colonies.

After 1689 the company no longer tried to enforce its monopoly rights, and other English merchants operating as ‘separate traders’ licensed by and paying a tax to the company, as well as less scrupulous ship captains (‘interlopers’) who traded in slaves illegally, joined in the business of transporting Africans to the mainland colonies.

Source: Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter’s Grove*, p. 54.

1690—Proportion of Africans and Their Descendants in the Chesapeake

Lorena S. Walsh notes the proportion of Africans and descendants of Africans in the Chesapeake.

As late as 1690 Africans or their descendants were no more than 7 percent of the total population in Virginia and Maryland, which then numbered about 75,000.

Source: Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*, p. 25.

July 26, 1690—Proclamation Issued by Governor Nicholson

Francis Nicholson's proclamation of July 26, 1690 indicates that masters and mistresses did not always follow the directions in Effingham's 1687 decree. Nicholson reminded Virginians that the 1680 statute entitled *An act for preventing Negroes Insurrections* was to be read in the county courts and the parish churches.

By the Right Honorable their Majties Leiut Governor

Whereas there are divers good lawes made in England & Va restraining the profaining the Sabbath day & agt the wicked sins of cursing, swearing, drunkenesse & debauchery & for the good govermt of this country & amonge the rest of the good & wholesome lawes there are severall acts made for the well ordering of Negroes particularly 1 made at a genll assembly begun June 8, 1680 to prevent the rambling about of Negroes (which must frequently happen on the Sabbath day) & agt Masters of families & overseers that shall entertaine or suffer them to be in their plantacons. And whereas there is an act made that enjoynes the haveing grand juries in every county that all offenders may be presented & a due course taken for their punishmts to deter the like offences for the future. Now to the end that the Sabbath day may be kept holey, & that all prophainnesse & debaucheryes of what sort soever may be discouraged & deterred that the judgmts of God Almighty bee not drawne down upon all heads & that the good & wholesome lawes concerning the same be put in execution & all other lawes for the good govermt of this country, I Francis Nicholson Esq their Majties Leiut Gov. of Va by the advise & consent of the councill doe by this proclamacon in their Majties names will & require all & every the justices of the peace in their severall county cts & stations to take care to present & punish such as are Sabbath breakers & all other prophaine & scandalous livers to put the lawes agt prophainouss in execution, & all other the good lawes for the well ordering this their Majties country. And take especiall care that Grandjuries of the best & most substantiall men in their counties bee duly sworne & a strict charge given them to inquire agt all offences & offenders & to present them to the county cts whoe are to cause all due prosecutions to be had agt offenders & such punishmts & penalties to be inflicted on them as the severall lawes enjoynes & to take care that the act about Negroes be read in all county cts & churches as the lawes enjoynes. Hereof noe person is to faile as they will answer the contrary att their attmost perills. Given under my hand & the seale of the collony July 26, 1690. Fr. Nicholson

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (8) 498-499, 24 September 1690.

April 1691—ACT XVI. *An act for suppressing outlying slaves*

The legislators detailed a systematic plan to gather a force of men to recapture "outlying slaves" in this statute. This document also contains the first legal restriction on the

manumission of slaves. The law required a master to transport an emancipated slave out of the colony within six months. In addition, partners in an interracial marriage could not stay in Virginia more than three months after they wed. Lawmakers did not want white women to bear mulatto children because the free black population would increase. They decided to punish white women who gave birth to mulattos and to require a longer term of servitude (until the age of thirty) for these children than they did for poor orphans or illegitimate white boys (until the age of twenty-one) and girls (until the age of eighteen). Finally, in this law, the General Assembly first used the term “white” as an additional way to legally separate the English and Europeans from Africans and Native Americans.

WHEREAS many times negroes, mulattoes, and other slaves unlawfully absent themselves from their masters and mistresses service, and lie hid and lurk in obscure places killing hoggs and committing other injuries to the inhabitants of this dominion, for remedy whereof for the future, *Be it enacted by their majesties lieutenant governour, councill and burgesses of this present general assembly, and the authoritie thereof, and it is hereby enacted*, that in all such cases upon intelligence of any such negroes, mulattoes, or other slaves lying out, two of their majesties justices of the peace of that county, whereof one to be of the quorum, where such negroes, mulattoes or other slave shall be, shall be impowered and commanded, and are hereby impowered and commanded to issue out their warrants directed to the sherrife of the same county to apprehend such negroes, mulattoes, and other slaves, which said sherriffe is hereby likewise required upon all such occasions to raise such and soe many forces from time to time as he shall think convenient and necessary for the effectual apprehending such negroes, mulattoes and other slaves, and in case any negroes, mulattoes or other slaves or slaves lying out as aforesaid shall resist, runaway, or refuse to deliver and surrender him or themselves to any person or persons that shall be by lawfull authority employed to apprehend and take such negroes, mulattoes or other slaves that in such cases it shall and may be lawfull for such person and persons to kill and distroy such negroes, mulattoes, and other slave or slaves by gunn or any otherwise whatsoever.

Provided that where any negroe or mulattoe slave or slaves shall be killed in pursuance of this act, the owner or owners of such negro or mulatto slave shall be paid for such negro or mulatto slave four thousand pounds of tobacco by the publique. And for prevention of that abominable mixture and spurious issue which hereafter may encrease in this dominion, as well by negroes, mulattoes, and Indians intermarrying with English, or other white women, as by their unlawfull accompanying with one another, *Be it enacted by the authoritie aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted*, that for the time to come, whatsoever English or other white man or woman being free shall intermarry with a negroe, mulatto, or Indian man or woman bond or free shall within three months after such marriage be banished and removed from this dominion forever, and that the justices of each respective countie within this dominion make it their perticular care that this act be put in effectuall execution. *And be it further enacted by the authoritie aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted*, That if any English woman being free shall have a bastard child by any negro or mulatto, she pay the sume of fifteen pounds sterling, within one moneth after such bastard child be born, to the Church wardens of the parish where she shall be delivered of such child, and in default of such payment she shall be taken into the possession of the said Church wardens and disposed of for five yeares, and the said fine

of fifteen pounds, or whatever the woman shall be disposed of for, shall be paid, one third part to their majesties for and towards the support of the government and the contingent charges thereof, and one other third part to the use of the parish where the offence is committed, and the other third part to the informer, and that such bastard child be bound out as a servant by the said Church wardens untill he or she shall attaine the age of thirty yeares, and in case such English woman that shall have such bastard child be a servant, she shall be sold by the said church wardens, (after her time is expired that she ought by law to serve her master) for five yeares, and the money she shall be sold for divided as is before appointed, and the child to serve as aforesaid.

And forasmuch as great inconveniences may happen to this country by the setting of negroes and mulattoes free, by their either entertaining negro slaves from their masters service, or receiveing stolen goods, or being grown old bringing a charge upon the country; for prevention thereof, *Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted*, That no negro or mulatto be after the end of this present session of assembly set free by any person or persons whatsoever, unless such person or persons, their heires, executors or administrators pay for the transportation of such negro or negroes out of the countrey within six moneths after such setting them free, upon penalty of paying of tenn pounds sterling to the Church wardens of the parish where such person shall dwell with, which money, or so much thereof as shall be necessary, the said Church wardens are to cause the said negro or mulatto to be transported out of the countrey, and the remainder of the said money to imploy to the use of the poor of the parish.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:86-88.

April 1692—ACT III. *An act for the more speedy prosecution of slaves committing Capitall Crimes*

This law represents the first time that the members of the General Assembly detailed the procedure for a slave brought to trial for a capital offense. A slave had a trial in a court of oyer and terminer. The literal translation of “oyer and terminer” is “to hear and determine.” Four of a county’s justices of the peace heard the trial and decided the fate of the person charged with a crime. The slave was denied the right to a jury trial that white men and women had. This statute also decreed that enslaved individuals were not permitted to own horses, cattle, and hogs after December 31, 1692.

WHEREAS a speedy prosecution of negroes and other slaves for capital offences is absolutely necessarie, that others being deterred by the condign punishment inflicted on such offenders, may vigorously proceed in their labours and be affrighted to commit the like crimes and offences, and whereas such prosecution has been hitherto obstructed by reason of the charge and delay attending the same.

Be it therefore enacted by their Majesties Lieutenant Governour, Councill and Burgesses of this present Generall Assembly and the authority thereof, and it is hereby enacted, That every negro or other slave which shall after this present session of

Assembly commit or perpetrate any cappitall offence which the law of England requires to be satisfied with the death of the offender or loss of member, after his committing of the said offence, shall be forthwith committed to the common gaol of the county within which such offence shall be committed, there to be safely continued, well laden with irons, and that the sheriff of the said county doe forthwith signifie the same to the governour for the time being, who is desired and impowered to issue out a commission of *oyer* and *terminer* directed to such persons of the said county as he shall think fitt, which persons forthwith after the receipt of the said commission are required and commanded publicly at the courthouse of the said county to cause the offender to be arraigned and indicted, and to take for evidence the confession of the part or the oathes of two witnesses or of one with pregnant circumstances, without the sollemnitie of jury, and the offender being found guilty as aforesaid, to pass judgment as the law of England provides in the like case, and on such judgment to award execution.

And be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted, That all horses, cattle and hoggs marked of any negro or other slaves marke, or by any slave kept, and which shall not by the last day of December next, be converted by the owner of such slave to the use and marke of the said owner, shall be forfeited to the use of the poore of the parish wherein such horse, beast, or hogg shall be kept, seizable by the church wardens thereof.

And be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted, That where it shall happen that any damage shall be hereafter committed by any negro or other slave living at a quarter, where there is noe christian overseer, the same damage shall be recompenced by the owner of such slave to the party injured.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:102-103.

June 1692 to February 1694/5—Status of Mary Walter

In June 1692 Joseph Walter, a free black man, entered a complaint against Mary Bennett “for the unjust detention & withholding a child of the complnt wife from her in slavery.” Walter claimed that Bennett’s previous husband, Isaac Collier, freed his wife, Mary, before she gave birth to their child. The county clerk did not note the fate of the child born to Joseph and Mary Walter.

It appears that the question of Mary Walter’s status—enslaved or free—worked against her in subsequent appearances before the local justices of the peace on November 24, 1693 and February 26, 1693/4. In November 1693 John and Elizabeth Sampson accused Mary Walter of verbal and physical abuse of Elizabeth Sampson. Three months later, unnamed persons told the justices of the peace that Mary Walter was a dangerous person. York County’s magistrates decided that Mary Walter was an enslaved woman and that she was to be sold to someone who would transport her out of the colony. It is possible that Joseph Walter remained in York County after his wife was deported. Walter might have been the man named Joseph Waters who was presented by the grand jury in February 1694/5 for “keeping company with an English woman & constantly lying with her.”

In the diff depending at this ct btwn John Sampson & Eliz his wife plts agt Joseph Walters & Mary his wife defts Negroes in an action of trespass assault & battery wherein it evidently appearing that she sd Mary hath most notoriously & wickedly abused Eliz not only by words but alsoe by blows & offered great violence upon her w/unlawfull wepons continuing her threats of a further revenge upon Eliz whereupon it is ord that the sherr take Mary into his custody & give her 29 lashes on her bare back & from thence to comitt her to close prison until she give sec for her future good behavior during the cts pleasure & have satisfied & pd all costs of suite due to the plt.

There haveing been brought to this ct diverse actions of trespass assault & battery agt Mary Walters a Negroe wife of Joseph Walters in YC whoe pretends herself a free woman & likewise a gennll complaint agt her to be of that wicked & dangerous life & conversation both by her actions & expressions & threats in soe much it is believed & adjudged the issue of her ungoverned life will prove of dangerous consequence if some cause be not speedily taken to prevent her wherefore it is ord that she be well secured in ord to her transportation out of this collony if she cannot prove her freedom & that the sherr present the humble addresses of this ct to his Excell. the Gov for his pleasure to be known therein.

In persuance of an ord of Nov ct last Mary Walters being now brought upon her tryall at this ct to prove her former assertions & pretence of being a free Negro whoe not being in the least capable of maintaining the same but that she formerly was a slave & never otherwise knowne amongst her neighbors she having now neither grounds nor placesable circumstances to prove her imediate condicon to be otherwise then a slave It is therefore ord that the sherr take her into safe custody & secure her in close prisson until an opportunity presents to expose her to saile to such person as will give bond for her exportation out of Va during which time the sherr is ord to take care that she want not suff for her natureall support & that the county charge & other fees & dues which have & hereafter shall arise by her be reimbursd & pd out of the produce of such consideration when sold etc.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (9) 155, 24 August 1692; *ibid.*, p. 173, 26 September 1692; *ibid.*, p. 270, 24 November 1693; *ibid.*, p. 297, 26 February 1693/4; York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (10) 106-107, 25 February 1694/5.

April 14, 1694—Proclamation of Governor Andros

The fact that Andros issued this proclamation indicates that several masters continued to allow their slaves to travel from their plantations and to gather with family members and friends in spite of the restrictions placed on enslaved persons in the June 1680 statute entitled *An act for preventing Negroes Insurrections*.

Whereas the lawes concerning Negroes & other slaves have not had the good effort by them intended for want of being duly executed & particularly one Act of Assembly made

at James City the 8th day of June 1680 Entituled an Act for preventing Negro Insurrections in which it is provided that it shall not be lawful for any Negro or any other slave to carry or arme himselfe with any club, staffe, gun, sword or any other wepon of defense or offense nor to go nor part from his masters ground without certificate from his master mistresse or overseer, & such permission not to be granted but upon particuler & necessary occasions & by one other Act of Assembly made at James City the 10th day of November 1682 Entituled an Additionall Act for the better preventing the insurrection by Negroes It is further provided that both the sd Acts shall be by the minister or reader of each parish read & published twice every year vizt some one Sunday or Lords day in each of the monthes of September & March in each parish church or chappell of ease in each parish in this collony in the time of Devine Service after the reading of the second lesson under the paine & penalty thereon exprest & also that no master or overseer shall at any time Knowingly permitt or suffer without the leave or lysence of his or their master or overseer any Negro or slave not properly belonging to him or them to remaine or be upon his or their plantations above the space of 4 hours contrary to the intent of the before verited Act upon paine or forfeiting as in the sd law mentioned but notwithstanding which through the remissness & lysentiousness of the severall masters mistresses overseers & other persons enjoyed by the sd lawes to performe their severall duties therein diverse Negroes & slaves in sundry parts & countyes in this collony have met congregated & got together which meetings & gatherings together of such Negroes or slaves as aforesd being of a dangerous consequence I Sr Edmund Andross knt: their Maties Lt: & Governor Genll: of Virginia by advice in Councell do by this proclamation in their Maties names will & require that accord. to law, no master mistress or overseer do grant certificate or permitt any Negro or other slave to depart from of their masters ground but upon particular & necessary occasions & such certificate so granted to expresse the place where & limit the time for their goeing & returneing upon such occasions as aforesd & I do further will & require that all & every sherr justice of the peace constables & other officers & all & every other person or persons within this Dominion of Virginia to take spetial care that the lawes concerning Negroes be fully & duly executed as they & every of them shall answere the contrary at their utmost perillls Given under my hand & the seale of the collony this 14th day of April 1694 & in the 6th year of their Maties Raigne E Andros

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (10) 20, 25 June 1694.

May 24, 1694—Presentment of Mary Jewell for Bearing an Illegitimate Child

Mary Jewell was the daughter of Katherine (Jewell) Pond and the sister of William Cattilla. She and a white man named John Berry were the parents of a son named James. Mary Jewell's step-father, Stephen Pond, paid her fine for bearing an illegitimate child. Pond also promised to help support her and her son. James Berry was the first member of the free black family with the surname Berry in Charles Parish, Elizabeth City County, and Warwick County.

John Toomer churchwarden of the lower presincts of Poquoson parish having exhibited his informacon agt Mary Jewell a mollotto for her late comitting the sinn of fornication w/an Englishman named John Berry having a bastard child borne of her body & she ack the same in ct & made oath sd Berry is the father thereof whereupon Stiphen Pond in ct became her sec to the parish for paymt of her fyne of 500 lbs tob accord to law to remit her from her punishmt of whipping & alsoe to save the parish harmless from the charge of keeping sd child which he is ord duly to perform as alsoe to pay sd fyne w/costs als exe.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (9) 341, 24 May 1694.

April 1695—William Cattilla's Petition

William Cattilla, mulatto son of Katherine (Jewell) Pond, successfully petitioned for his freedom from his mistress, Margaret Booth, the widow of William Booth. Cattilla's success indicates that his identity as a free black man was based on social relationships in addition to the colony's laws.

Willm Catillah servant to Mrs Margrett Booth haveing sumonsed his sd mistres to this Court to answer his complainant who saith that whereas he was the son of a free woman & was baptized into the Christian faith haveing honestly & truly served his mistres aforesd to his full age of 24 years praying order for his freedom together with his corne & cloathes accord. to law with costs the same is accordingly granted & the next Court to be confirmed if the dft his sd mistress then faile personally to appear & shew just cause to the contrary.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (10) 137, 6 April 1695.

1697—The Need for a Christian Overseer on Plantations

Thomas Nutting informed the York County Court that William Wise Senior failed to have a Christian overseer on his plantation and that Wise's slave Robin killed one of his hogs.

Mr Thomas Nutting complainant haveing presented his complaint to this Court agt Mr Willm Wise sen dft setting forth that the dft hath placed A Negro man named Robin upon a plantation adjacent to the complainant plantation where hee liveth in Charles Parrish in this County & the year past did keep noe Christian overseer to looke after him by which means he comitted injurys to severall of the neighbors but esppecially to him the complainant &c Wherefore it is ordered that the sherr sumons the dft Willm Wise for his personall appearance at the next Court then & these to answer the same

Thomas Nutting hath Judgmt: granted per nihil dicit agt Willm Wise in an Accon of Dt: for 2000 lbs. of tob. fine for his the sd Wises negro illegall killing & stealing of A hogg

of the plts at a quarter of the sd dfts who kept then & there noe Christian overseer to looke after him which Judmt: is the next Court to be confirmed if he the sd dft then faile to appear & answer the same

Mr Thomas Nutting plt hath Judgmt: granted agt Mr Willm Wise dft in an Accon of Dt for the sume of 300 lbs. of tob. for 1 of the dfts negroes named Robin illegall killing & stealing 1 of the plts hoggs At a quarter of the dfts adjoyning to the plts plantation whoe kept there noe Christian overseer to looke after him which sd sume of 300 lbs. of tob. the deft is ordered to pay to the plt with costs als exec.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (10) 377, 24 March 1696/7; *ibid.*, p. 452, 24 August 1697; *ibid.*, p. 464, 24 September 1697.

1698—The Slave Trade Opened to All British Subjects

The Crown decided to open the slave trade to all of its subjects in 1698.

Beginning in 1698, the slave trade was officially opened to all English subjects, and thereafter shipments direct from Africa to the Chesapeake multiplied By the turn of the century, however, only about 10 percent of the Africans arriving in the Chesapeake came on Royal African Company ships.

Source: Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*, pp. 54, 55.

1699 and 1702—Advice on the Management of Servants and Slaves

Daniel Parke gave his daughter Frances advice about the management of servants and slaves in two letters, the first written in October 1699 and the second in 1702.

Be Calm and Obligeing to all the servants, and when you speak doe it mildly, Even to the poorest slave; if any of the Servants committ small faults that are of no consequence, doe you hide them. If you understand of any great faults they commit, acquaint y'r mother, but do not aggravate the fault.

Be kind and good-natured to all of your servants. It is much better to have them love you than fear you.

Source: *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 20 (1912): 375, 377.

April 1699—ACT XII. *An act for laying an imposition upon servants and slaves imported into this country, towards building the Capitoll*

The legislators hoped that this statute would raise money so that a new Capitol building could be erected in Williamsburg. They did not want to discourage the slave trade. Members of the General Assembly renewed the duty in 1701, 1704, and 1705.

WHEREAS the state house of this his majesties colony and dominion in which the generall assemblyes and general courts have been kept and held hath been unhappily destroyed and burnt downe, and it being absolutely necessary that a capitoll should be built with all expedition, and foreasmuch as a more suitable expedient cannot be found for avoiding the laying a levy upon the poll for the building the same than by laying an imposition upon servants and slaves imported into this his majesties colony and dominion,

Be it enacted by the Governour, Councill and Burgesses of this present generall assembly and the authority thereof, and it is hereby enacted, That from and after the publication of this act the sume of fifteen shillings per poll for every servant not born in England and Wales and twenty shillings for every negro or other slaves which shall be imported into this his majesties colony and dominion shall be from time to time paid and satisfied to his majestie, his heirs and successors for and towards the erecting a building a convenient capitoll for this his majesties colony and dominion and for no nother [*sic*] use, intent or purpose whatsoever, which said sume or sumes shall be paid by the imported or importers of such [blank] and for the better levying and collecting the said duty and impost,

Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted, That from and after the publication thereof no servant or servants, negro or negroes imported into this country shall be landed or put on shoar out of any shipp or vessell before due entry first made with the officer or collector appointed for the customes in such port or place where the same shall be imported, nor before the master of the said shipp or vessell hath made oath to such officer or collector who is hereby impowered and required to administer the same of the number of servants or slaves imported in such shipp or vessell and of the reputed place of the birth of such servant or servants, nor before the duty due and payable for the same shall be fully paid and satisfied to such officer or collector, and that every warrant for the landing of such servants or slaves shall be under the hand and seale of the said officer or collector respectively upon paine that all such servants or slaves as shall be landed or putt on shore contrary to this act or the vallue thereof shall be forfeited and lost and shall be recovered of the importer or proprietor of the same.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:193-194; see also *ibid.*, 3:212-213 (1701); Winfree, comp., *The Laws of Virginia*, p. 22 (1704); and Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:229-235 (1705).

June 1699—A Difference Between Slaves Imported From Africa and Those Born in Virginia

In June 1699 a colonial legislator noted that he saw a difference between slaves imported from Africa slaves who had been born in Virginia. It is possible that Virginians also saw

free persons of color who had been born in the colony in a more favorable light than the slaves who had been transported across the Atlantic or from the Caribbean Islands.

The negroes born in this country are generally baptized and brought up in the Christian religion, but for negroes imported hither, the gross bestiality and rudeness of their manners, the variety and strangeness of their languages, and the weakness and shallowness of their minds, render it in a manner impossible to make any progress in their conversion.

Source: Minutes of the Council, 2 June 1699, Board of Trade of Virginia, vol. liii, quoted in Bruce, *Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, 1:9.

December 14, 1699—The Will of Jane Merry

In December 1699, Mary (Jewell) Cattilla, and her mother Katherine Pond, gave depositions in the York County Court in support of the oral will that they persuaded their neighbor, Jane Merry, to make. The depositions reveal that Mary (Jewell) Cattilla was a part of the social world of white women in Charles Parish.

The Deposicons of Katherine P[o]nd & Mary her daughter Katherine being near six[] years of Age or thereabouts and Mary being thirty years of [] age or thereabout this Deposeth

That Your Depon[en]ts being att the house of Jane Merry about two days before her death being the 16th October 1699 was pswadeing the said Jane Merry to settle her busines & to dispose of what Shee had telling her itt would be a great Satisfaccon to her selfe & ease her friends of a great deal of trouble.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (11) 269-270, 14 December 1699.

August 1701—ACT II. *An act for the more effectuall apprehending an outlying negro who hath committed divers robberyes and offences*

The legislators offered a reward for anyone who killed Billy and punishment for anyone who helped to conceal this enslaved man.

WHEREAS one negro man named Billy, slave to John Tillit, but lately the slave of Thomas Middleton, and formerly of James Bray, gentleman, of James City county, has severall years unlawfully absented himselfe from his masters services, lying out and lurking in obscure places suposed within the countys of James City, York, and New-

Kent, devouring and destroying the stocks and crops, robing the houses of and committing and threatening other injuries to severall of his majestyes good and leige people within this his colony and dominion of Virginia in contempt of the good laws thereof,

Be it therefore enacted by the governour, councell and burgesses of this present generall assembly, and the authority therefor, and it is hereby enacted, That the said negro slave Billy stand and be adjudged by the authority of this present act convicted of unlawfully lying out, lurking and destroying the stocks and crops and comiting robberyes as aforesaid, and that he suffer the paines of death. And for further encouragement in a more speedy and effectual apprehending or destroying the said negro and discovering and punishing his accomplices,

Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted, That whosoever shall kill or destroy the said negro slave Billy and apprehend and deliver him to justice in this colony and dominion, he, she or they shall be paid and allowed for the same by the publick one thousand pounds of tobacco: and that all persons whatsoever within this his majestyes colony and dominion that from and after the publication of this act shall wittingly and willingly entertaine, assist, harbour, conceale, truck or trade with the said negro Billy, and every of them, shall be and by authority of this present act be adjudged guilty of felony and incur the paines, penaltyes and forfeitures lyable by law to be inflicted for felony, any thing in this act or any other act contained to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding. *Provided always,* that if the said negro Billy shall be kiled in pursuance of this act, his master or owner shall be paid by the publick four thousand pounds of tobacco, as is provided by a former act in the like cases.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:210-211.

Part V—Virginia Summarizes the Legislation That Established Slavery

September 1705—The Need for a Definition of Who was a Mulatto

On August 16, 1705 the Council heard the petition of John Bunch and Sarah Slaydon who wanted to marry. The minister of Blissland Parish in New Kent County refused to marry them because Bunch was a mulatto. The Councillors decided to refer the petition to Stevens Thompson, the Attorney General of Virginia, “to report his opinion whether the Petitioners case be within the intent of the Law to prevent Negroes & White Persons intermarrying.” Thompson noted that there was some confusion as to whether or not a mulatto was to be treated the same as a negro in regard to the 1691 law prohibiting the marriage of a white person and a black person.

In October 1705 the statute entitled *An act declaring who shall not bear office in this country* included a definition of who was considered a mulatto in Virginia.

I am of opinion & do conceive that ye sd Act being Penal is Coercive or restrictive no further then the very letter thereof, and being wholly unacquainted with the Appellations

given to ye issue of such mixtures, cannot resolve whether the issue begotton on a White woman by a Mulatto man can properly be called a Mulatto, that name as I conceive being only appropriated to the Child of a Negro man begotten upon a white woman, or by a white man upon a negro woman, and as I am told the issue of a Mulatto by or upon a white Person has another name viz that of, Mustee; wch if so, I conceive it wholly out of the the Letter (tho it may be conjectured to be within ye intent) of the sd act, The which (as abovesd being Penal) is, as I conceive not to be contrued beyond ye letter thereof.

S. Thomson, A G

Upon consideration of which Report, and that the Petitionrs Case is matter of Law, It is therefore ordered that the Petition of the said Bunch and Slayden be referred till next General Court for Mr Attorney to argue the reasons of his opinion before his Excellcy and ye Council.

Source: McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, 3:28, 31.

October 1705—CHAP. IV. *An act declaring who shall not bear office in this country*

The text of this act suggests that a free man of color did hold an office sometime before October of 1705. The statute contains the first definition of a mulatto in Virginia's laws.

BE it enacted by the governor, council and burgesses, of this present general assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That no person whatsoever, already convicted, or which hereafter shall be convicted in her majestys kingdom of England in this or in any other her majestys dominion, colonies, islands, territorys or plantations, or in any other kingdom, dominion or place, belonging to any foreign prince or state whatsoever, of treason, murther, fellony, blasphemy, perjury, forgery or any other crime whatsoever, punishable by the laws of England, this country, or other place wherein he was convicted with the loss of life or member, nor any negro, mulatto or Indian, shall, from and after the publication of this act, bear any office, ecclesiasticall, civill or military, or be in any place of public trust or power, within this her majestys colony and dominion of Virginia, and that if any person convicted as aforesaid, or negro, mulatto or Indian shall presume to take upon him, act in, or exercise any office, ecclesiasticall, civill or military, or any place of publick trust or power, within this colony and dominion, notwithstanding he be thereunto in any manner whatsoever comissionated, appointed, chosen or impowered, and have a pardon for his crime, he shall for such his offence, forfeit and pay five hundred pounds current money, and twenty pounds of like money for every month he continues to act in or exercise such office or place after a recovery made of the said five hundred pounds.

And for clearing all manner of doubts which hereafter may happen to arise upon the construction of this act, or any other act, who shall be accounted a mulatto,

Be it enacted and declared, and it is hereby enacted and declared, That the child of an Indian and the child, grand child, or great grand child, of a negro shall be deemed, accounted, held and taken to be a mulatto.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:250-251, 252.

October 1705—CHAP. VII. *An act concerning Tithables*

It is possible that the decision to exempt free black women from tithes was designed to benefit white men who had such women as servants.

I. *BE it enacted, by the Governor, Council, and Burgesses of this present general assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same,* That all male persons, of the age of sixteen years, and upwards, and all negro, mulatto, and Indian women, of the age of sixteen years, and upwards, not being free, shall be, and are hereby declared to be tithable, or chargeable, for defraying the public, county, and parish charges, in this her majesty's colony and dominion; excepting such only, as the county court, and vestry, for reasons, in charity, made appear to them, shall think fit to excuse.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:258-259.

October 1705—CHAP. XI. *An act for the speedy and easy prosecution of Slaves, committing Capitall Crimes*

This statute continued the practice (begun in 1692) of trying convicted slaves in a court of oyer and terminer.

WHEREAS a speedy prosecution of slaves for capitall crimes is absolutely necessary, and that the same be done without the extraordinary charge usually attending the tryalls of criminalls in the generall court,

Be it enacted, by the Governor, Council and Burgesses of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same, That every slave comitting such offence as by the law ought to be satisfied by the death of the offender, or loss of member, shall be forthwith comitted to the comon gaol of the county within which such offence shall be comitted, there to be safely kept, and that the sheriff of such county, upon such commitment, shall forthwith certify such comitment with the cause thereof to the governor or comander in chief of this her majestys colony and dominion for the time being, who is thereupon desired and impowered to issue out a comission of oyer and terminer, directed to such persons of the county as he shall think fitt, which persons forthwith after the receipt of such comission, are impowered and required to cause the offender to be publicly indicted and arraigned at the court-house of the said county, and to take for evidence the confession of the party or the oath of two credible witnesses, or of one with pregnant circumstances without the solemnity of a jury, and the offender being by them found guilty to pass such judgment upon such offender as the law provides in the like crimes, and on such judgment to award execution.

Provided always, and it is hereby intended, That the master or owner of any slave to be indicted or arraigned by virtue of this act, may appear at the tryall and make what just defence he can for such slave, so that such defence do only relate to matters of fact, and not to any formality in the indictment or other proceedings of the court.

And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted, That when any slave shall be convicted and condemned upon any tryall to be had by virtue of this act, the justices that shall sitt in tryall shall put a valuation in money upon such slave so condemned, and certify such valuation to the next assembly, that the said assembly may be enabled to make a suitable allowance thereupon, to the master or owner of such slave.

And be it further enacted, That all and every other act and acts, and every clause and article thereof heretofore made for so much thereof as relates to the speedy and easy prosecution of slaves comitting capitall crimes, or to any other matter or thing whatsoever, within the purview of this act, is, and are hereby repealed and made void, to all intents and purposes, as if the same had never been made.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:269-270.

October 1705—CHAP. XII. *An act to prevent the clandestine transportation or carrying of persons in debt, servants, and slaves, out of this colony*

This act required the master of any vessel to have the permission of a master or a license in order to transport a servant or slave out of the colony.

II. *And be it also enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted*, That after publication of this act, no master of a ship, sloop, boat or other vessel, shall transport or carry any servant whatsoever, or any negro, mulatto, Indian, or other slave, out of this colony and dominion, without a licence, or pass as aforesaid, or the consent, leave, or permission of the person or persons to whom such servant or slave doth of right belong, upon penalty of forfeiting and paying, in current money, the sum of fifty pounds for every servant, and the sum of one hundred pounds for every slave transported or carried hence, contrary to this act; one moiety to our sovereign lady the Queen, her heirs and successors, for and towards the better support of this government, and the contingent charges thereof; and the other moiety to the party grieved: To be recovered, with costs, in any court of record within this colony and dominion, by action of debt, bill, plaint, or information, wherein no essoin, protection, or wager of law, shall be allowed.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:271.

October 1705—CHAP. XIX. *An act for establishing the General Court, and for regulating and settling the proceedings therein*

This law denied all blacks the right to testify as witnesses in court.

XXXI. That popish recusants convict, negroes, mulattoes and Indian servants, and others, not being christians, shall be deemed and taken to be persons incapable in law, to be witnesses in any cases whatsoever.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:298.

October 1705—CHAP. XXII. *An act declaring the Negro, Mulatto, and Indian slaves within this dominion, to be real estate*

The legislators defined enslaved men, women, and children as real property in this act. See also the 1669 statute entitled *An act about the casual killing of slaves* for another example of masters treating slaves as property.

- I. FOR the better settling and preservation of estates within this dominion,
- II. *Be it enacted, by the governor, council and burgesses of this present general assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same,* That from and after the passing of this act, all negro, mulatto, and Indian slaves, in all courts of judicature, and other places, within this dominion, shall be held, taken, and adjudged, to be real estate (and not chattels;) and shall descend unto the heirs and widows of persons departing this life, according to the manner and custom of land of inheritance, held in fee simple.
- III. *Provided always,* That nothing in this act contained, shall be taken to extend to any merchant or factor, bringing any slaves into this dominion, or having any consignments thereof, unto them, for sale: But that such slaves whilst they remain unsold, in the possession of such merchant, or factor, or of their executors, administrators, or assigns, shall, to all intents and purposes, be taken, held, and adjudged, to be personal estate, in the same condition they should have been in, if this act had never been made.
- IV. *Provided also,* That all such slaves shall be liable to the payment of debts, and may be taken by execution, for that end, as other chattels or personal estate may be.
- V. *Provided also,* That no such slaves shall be liable to be escheated, by reason of the decease of the proprietor of the same, without lawful heirs: But all such slaves shall, in that case, be accounted and go as chattels, and other estate personal.
- VI. *Provided also,* That no person, selling or alienating any such slave shall be obliged to cause such sale or alienation to be recorded, as is required by law to be done, upon the alienation of other real estate: But that the said sale or alienation may be made in the same manner as might have been done before the making of this act.
- VII. *Provided also,* That this act, or any thing therein contained, shall not extend, nor be construed to extend, to give any person, being owner of any slave or slaves, and not seized of other real estate, the right or privilege as a freeholder, meant, mentioned, and intended, by one act of this present session of assembly, intituled, *An act for regulating the elections of Burgesses, for settling their privileges, and for ascertaining their allowances.*
- VIII. *Provided also,* That it shall and may be lawful, for any person, to sue for, and recover, any slave, or damage, for the detainer, trover, or conversion thereof, by action personal, as might have been done if this act had never been made.

IX. *Provided always*, That where the nature of the case shall require it, any writ *De Partitione facienda*, or of dower, may be sued forth and prosecuted, to recover the right and possession of any such slave or slaves.

X. *Provided, and be it enacted*, That when any person dies intestate, leaving several children, in that case all the slaves of such person, (except the widow's dower, which is to be first set apart) shall be inventoried and appraised; and the value thereof shall be equally divided amongst all the said children; and the several proportions, according to such valuation and appraisement, shall be paid by the heir (to whom the said slaves shall descend, by virtue of this act) unto all and every the other said children. And thereupon, it shall and may be lawful for the said other children, and every of them, and their executors or administrators, as the case shall be, to commence and prosecute an action upon the case, at the common law, against such heir, his heirs, executors and administrators, for the recovery of their said several proportions, respectively.

XI. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That if any widow, seised of any such slave or slaves, as aforesaid, as of the dower of her husband, shall send, or voluntarily permit to be sent out of this colony and dominion, such slave or slaves, or any of their increase, without the lawful consent of him or her in reversion, such widow shall forfeit all and every such slave or slaves, and all other the dower which she holds of the endowment of her husband's estate, unto the person or persons that shall have the reversion thereof; any law, usage or custom to the contrary notwithstanding. And if any widow, seized as aforesaid, shall be married to an husband, who shall send, or voluntary permit to be sent out of this colony and dominion, any such slave or slaves, or any of their increase, without the consent of him or her in reversion; in such case, it shall be lawful for him or her in reversion, to enter into, possess and enjoy all the estate which such husband holdeth, in right of his wife's dower, for and during the life of the said husband.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:333-335.

October 1705—CHAP. XXIV. *An act for settling the Militia*

The members of the General Assembly decided that a white overseer in charge of four or more slaves, any imported servant, and all slaves were not to serve in the militia. This act did not restrict the participation of free black men in the militia.

Provided nevertheless, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to give any power or authority to any colonel or chief officer whatsoever, to list any person that shall be, or shall have been of her majesty's council in this colony, or any person that shall be, or shall have been speaker of the house of burgesses, or any person that shall be, or shall have been her majesty's attorney general, or any person that shall be, or shall have been a justice of the peace within this colony, or any person that shall have born any military commission within this colony as high as the commission of captain, or any minister, or the clerk of the council for the time being, or the clerk of the general court for the time being, or any county court clerk during his being such, or any parish clerk or school-master during his being such, or any overseer that hath four or more slaves under

his care, or any constable during his being such, or any miller who hath a mill in keeping, or any servant by importation, or any slave, but that all and every such person or persons be exempted from serving either in horse or foot. Any thing in this act heretofore to the contrary notwithstanding.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:336.

October 1705—CHAP. XLIX. *An act concerning Servants and Slaves*

This statute included a definition of who would become a slave upon entering Virginia and repeated previous restrictions placed upon enslaved persons in addition to new constaints. The law contained some modifications on the punishments placed on white women who bore a mulatto child and white individuals who married a person of color in 1691. The legislators made it clear that Christianity was not the path to freedom for a slave.

IV. *And also be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That all servants imported and brought into this country, by sea or land, who were not christians in their native country, (except Turks and Moors in amity with her majesty, and others that can make due proof their being free in England, or any other christian country, before they were shipped, in order to transportation hither) shall be accounted and be slaves, and as such be here bought and sold notwithstanding a conversion to christianity afterwards.

V. *And be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That if any person or persons shall hereafter import into this colony, and here sell as a slave, any person or persons that shall have been a freeman in any christian country, island, or plantation, such importer and seller as aforesaid, shall forfeit and pay, to the party from who the said freeman shall recover his freedom, double the sum for which the said freeman was sold. To be recovered, in any court of record within this colony, according to the course of the common law, wherein the defendant shall not be admitted to plead in bar, any act or statute for limitation of actions.

VI. *Provided always,* That a slave's being in England, shall not be sufficient to discharge him of his slavery, without other proof of his being manumitted there.

XI. *And for a further christian care and usage of all christian servants, Be it also enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That no negros, mulattos, or Indians, although christians, or Jews, Moors, Mahometans, or other infidels, shall, at any time, purchase any christian servant, nor any other, except of their own complexion, or such as are declared slaves by this act: And if any negro, mulatto, or Indian, Jew, Moor, Mahometan, or other infidel, or such as are declared slaves by this act, shall, notwithstanding, purchase any christian white servant, the said servant shall, *ipso facto*, become free and acquit from any service then due, and shall be so held, deemed, and taken: And if any person, having such christian servant, shall intermarry with any such negro, mulatto, or Indian, Jew, Moor, Mahometan, or other infidel, every christian white

servant of every such person so intermarrying, shall, *ipso facto*, become free and acquit from any service then due to such master or mistress so intermarrying, as aforesaid.

XV. *And also be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That no person whatsoever shall, buy, sell, or receive of, to, or from, any servant, or slave, any coin or commodity whatsoever, without the leave, licence, or consent of the master or owner of the said servant, or slave: And if any person shall, contrary hereunto, without the leave or licence aforesaid, deal with any servant, or slave, he or she so offending, shall be imprisoned one calender month, without bail or main-prize; and then, also continue in prison, until he or she shall find good security, in the sum of ten pounds current money of Virginia, for the good behaviour for one year following; wherein, a second offence shall be a breach of the bond; and moreover shall forfeit and pay four times the value of the things so bought, sold, or received, to the master or owner of such servant, or slave: To be recovered, with costs, by action upon the case, in any court of record in this her majesty's colony and dominion, wherein no essoin, protection, or wager of law, or other than one imparlance, shall be allowed.

XVI. *Provided always, and be it enacted,* That when any person or persons convict [*sic*] for dealing with a servant, or slave, contrary to this act, shall not immediately give good and sufficient security for his or her good behaviour, as aforesaid: then in such case, the court shall order thirty-nine lashes, well laid on, upon the bare back of such offender, at the common whipping-post of the county, and the said offender to be thence discharged of giving such bond and security.

XVIII. And if any woman servant shall have a bastard child by a negro, or mulatto, over and above the years service due to her master or owner, she shall immediately, upon the expiration of her time to her then present master or owner, pay down to the church-wardens of the parish wherein such child shall be born, for the use of the said parish, fifteen pounds current money of Virginia, or be by them sold for five years, to the use aforesaid: And if a free christian white woman shall have such bastard child, by a negro, or mulatto, for every such offence, she shall, within one month after her delivery of such bastard child, pay to the church-wardens for the time being, of the parish wherein such child shall be born, for the use of the said parish fifteen pounds current money of Virginia, or be by them sold for five years to the use aforesaid: And in both the said cases, the church-wardens shall bind the said child to be a servant, until it shall be of thirty one years of age.

XIX. And for a further prevention of that abominable mixture and spurious issue, which hereafter may increase in this her majesty's colony and dominion, as well by English, and other white men and women intermarrying with negroes or mulattos, as by their unlawful coition with them, *Be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That whatsoever English, or other white man or woman, being free, shall intermarry with a negro or mulatto man or woman, bond or free, shall, by judgment of the county court, be committed to prison, and there remain, during the space of six months, without bail or mainprize; and shall forfeit and pay ten pounds current money of Virginia, to the use of the parish, as aforesaid.

XX. *And be it further enacted,* That no minister of the church of England, or other minister, or person whatsoever, within this colony and dominion, shall hereafter wittingly

presume to marry a white man with a negro or mulatto woman; or to marry a white woman with a negro or mulatto man, upon pain of forfeiting and paying, for every such marriage the sum of ten thousand pounds of tobacco; one half to our sovereign lady the Queen, her heirs and successors, for and towards the support of the government, and the contingent charges thereof; and the other half to the informer; To be recovered, with costs, by action of debt, bill, plaint, or information, in any court of record within this her majesty's colony and dominion, wherein no essoin, protection, or wager of law, shall be allowed.

XXIII. And for encouragement of all persons to take up runaways, *Be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted*, That for the taking up of every servant, or slave, if ten miles, or above, from the house or quarter where such servant, or slave was kept, there shall be allowed by the public, as a reward to the taker-up, two hundred pounds of tobacco; and if above five miles, and under ten, one hundred pounds of tobacco: Which said several rewards of two hundred, and one hundred pounds of tobacco, shall also be paid in the county where such taker-up shall reside, and shall be again levied by the public upon the master or owner of such runaway, for re-imburement of the public, every justice of the peace before whom such runaway shall be brought, upon the taking up, shall mention the proper-name and sur-name of the taker-up, and the county of his or her residence, together with the time and place of taking up the said runaway; and shall also mention the name of the said runaway, and the proper-name and sur-name of the master or owner of such runaway, and the county of his or her residence, together with the distance of miles, in the said justice's judgment, from the place of taking up the said runaway, to the house or quarter where such runaway was kept.

XXIV. *Provided*, That when any negro, or other runaway, that doth not speak English, and cannot, or through obstinacy will not, declare the name of his or her masters or owner, that then it shall be sufficient for the said justice to certify the same, instead of the name of such runaway, and the proper name and sur-name of his or her master or owner, and the county of his or her residence and distance of miles, as aforesaid; and in such case, shall, by his warrant, order the said runaway to be conveyed to the public gaol, of this country, there to be continued prisoner until the master or owner shall be known; who, upon paying the charges of the imprisonment, or giving caution to the prison-keeper for the same, together with the reward of two hundred or one hundred pounds of tobacco, as the case shall be, shall have the said runaway restored.

XXV. And further, the said justice of the peace, when such runaway shall be brought before him, shall, by his warrant commit the said runaway to the next constable, and therein also order him to give the said runaway so many lashes as the said justice shall think fit, not exceeding the number of thirty-nine; and then to be conveyed from constable to constable, until the said runaway shall be carried home, or to the country gaol, as aforesaid, every constable through whose hands the said runaway shall pass, giving a receipt at the delivery; and every constable failing to execute such warrant according to the tenor thereof, or refusing to give such receipt, shall forfeit and pay two hundred pounds of tobacco to the church-wardens of the parish wherein such failure shall be, for the use of the poor of the said parish: To be recovered, with costs, by action of debt, in any court of record in this her majesty's colony and dominion, wherein no essoin, protection or wager of law, shall be allowed. And such corporal punishment shall not

deprive the master or owner of such runaway of the other satisfaction here in this act appointed to be made upon such servant's running away.

XXIX. *And be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That if any constable, or sheriff, into whose hands a runaway servant or slave shall be committed, by virtue of this act, shall suffer such runaway to escape, the said constable or sheriff shall be liable to the action of the party agrieved, for recovery of his damages, at the common law with costs.

XXXII. *And also be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That no master, mistress, or overseer of a family, shall knowingly permit any slave, not belonging to him or her, to be and remain upon his or her plantation, above four hours at any one time, without the leave of such slave's master, mistress, or overseer, on penalty of one hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco to the informer; cognizable by a justice of the peace of the county wherein such offence shall be committed.

XXXIV. And if any slave resist his master, or owner, or other person, by his or her order, correcting such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction, it shall not be accounted felony; but the master, owner, and every such other person so giving correction, shall be free and acquit of all punishment and accusation for the same, as if such incident had never happened: And also, if any negro, mulatto, or Indian, bond or free, shall at any time, lift his or her hand, in opposition against any christian, not being negro, mulatto, or Indian, he or she so offending shall, for every such offence, proved by the oath of the party, receive on his or her bare back, thirty lashes, well laid on; cognizable by a justice of the peace for that county wherein such offence shall be committed.

XXXV. *And also be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That no slave go armed with gun, sword, club, staff, or other weapon, nor go from off the plantation and seat of land where such slave shall be appointed to live, without a certificate of leave in writing, for so doing, from his or her master, mistress, or overseer: And if any slave shall be found offending herein, it shall be lawful for any person or persons to apprehend and deliver such slave to the next constable or head-borough, who is hereby enjoined and required, without further order or warrant, to give such slave twenty lashes on his or her bare back well laid on, and so send him or her home: And all horses, cattle, and hogs, now belonging, or that hereafter shall belong to any slave, or of any slaves mark in this her majesty's colony and dominion, shall be seised and sold by the church-wardens of the parish, wherein such horses, cattle, or hogs shall be, and the profit thereof applied to the use of the poor of the said parish: And also, if any damage shall be hereafter committed by any slave living at a quarter where there is no christian overseer, the master or owner of such slave shall be liable to action for the trespass and damage, as if the same had been done by him or herself.

XXXVI. *And also it is hereby enacted and declared,* That baptism of slaves doth not exempt them from bondage; and that all children shall be bond or free, according to the condition of their mothers, and the particular direction of this act.

XXXVII. And whereas, many times, slaves run away and lie out, hid or lurking in swamps, woods, and other obscure places, killing hogs, and committing other injuries to the inhabitants of this her majesty's colony and dominion, *Be it therefore enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That in all such cases, upon intelligence given of any slaves lying out, as aforesaid, any two justices (*Quorum unus*) of the peace of the county wherein such slave is supposed to lurk or do mischief, shall be and are empowered and required to issue proclamation against all such slaves, reciting their names, and owners names, if they are known, and thereby requiring them, and every of them, forthwith to surrender themselves; and also empowering the sheriff of the said county, to take such power with him, as he shall think fit and necessary, for the effectual apprehending such out-lying slave or slaves, and go in search of them: Which proclamation shall be published on a Sabbath day, at the door of every church and chapel, in the said county, by the parish clerk, or reader, of the church, immediately after divine worship: And in case any slave, against whom proclamation hath been thus issued, and once published at any church or chapel, as aforesaid, stay out, and do not immediately return home, it shall be lawful for any person or persons whatsoever, to kill and destroy such slaves by such ways and means as he, she, or they shall think fit, without accusation or impeachment of any crime for the same: And if any slave, that hath run away and lain out as aforesaid, shall be apprehended by the sheriff, or any other person, upon the application of the owner of the said slave, it shall and may be lawful for the county court, to order such punishment to the said slave, either by dismembering, or any other way, not touching his life, as they in their discretion shall think fit, for the reclaiming any such incorrigible slave, and terrifying others from the like practices.

XXXVIII. *Provided Always, and it is further enacted,* That for every slave killed, in pursuance of this act, or put to death by law, the master or owner of such slave shall be paid by the public:

XXXIX. And to the end, the true value of every slave killed, or put to death, as aforesaid, may be the better known; and by that means, the assembly the better enabled to make a suitable allowance thereupon, *Be it enacted,* That upon application of the master or owner of any such slave, to the court appointed for proof of public claims, the said court shall value the slave in money, and the clerk of the court shall return a certificate thereof to the assembly, with the rest of the public claims.

XL. And for the better putting this act in due execution, and that no servants or slaves may have pretense of ignorance hereof, *Be it also enacted,* That the church-wardens of each parish in this her majesty's colony and dominion, at the charge of the parish, shall provide a true copy of this act, and cause entry thereof to be made in the register book of each parish respectively; and that the parish clerk, or reader of each parish, shall, on the first sermon Sundays in September and March, annually, after sermon or divine service is ended, at the door of every church and chapel in their parish, publish the same; and the sheriff of each county shall, at the next court held for the county, after the last day of February, yearly, publish this act, at the door of the courthouse: And every sheriff making default herein, shall forfeit and pay six hundred pounds of tobacco; one half to her majesty, her heirs, and successors, for and towards the support of the government; and the other half to the informer. And every parish clerk, or reader, making default herein, shall, for each time so offending, forfeit and pay six hundred pounds of tobacco; one half whereof to be to the informer; and the other half to the poor

of the parish, wherein such omission shall be: To be recovered, with costs, by action of debt, bill, plaint, or information, in any court of record in this her majesty's colony and dominion, wherein no essoin, protection, or wager of law, shall be allowed.

XLI. *And be it further enacted*, That all and every other act and acts, and every clause and article thereof, heretofore made, for so much thereof as relates to servants and slaves, or to any other matter or thing whatsoever, within the purview of this act, is and are hereby repealed, and made void, to all intents and purposes, as if the same had never been made.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:447-462.

Part VI—Conclusion

Edmund S. Morgan provides one of the classic explanations for the development of slavery in seventeenth-century Virginia. In the following excerpts, Morgan discusses the transition from indentured servitude to slavery, which he describes as a virtually seamless shift in the labor force.

Slavery is a mode of compulsion that has often prevailed where land is abundant, and Virginians had been drifting toward it from the time when they first found something profitable to work at. Servitude in Virginia's tobacco fields approached closer to slavery than anything known at the time in England. Men served longer, were subjected to more rigorous punishments, were traded about as commodities already in the 1620s.

That Virginia's labor barons of the 1620s or her land and labor barons of the 1660s and 1670s did not transform their servants into slaves was probably not owing to any moral squeamishness or to any failure to perceive the advantages of doing so. Although slavery did not exist in England, Englishmen were not so unfamiliar with it that they had to be told what it was. They knew that the Spaniards' gold and silver were dug by slave labor, and they themselves had even toyed with temporary "slavery" as a punishment for crime in the sixteenth century. But for Virginians to have pressed their servants or their indigent neighbors into slavery might have been, initially at least, more perilous than exploiting them in the ways that eventuated in the plundering parties of Bacon's Rebellion. Slavery, once established, offered incomparable advantages in keeping labor docile, but the transformation of free men into slaves would have been a tricky business. It would have had to proceed by stages, each carefully calculated to stop short of provoking rebellion. And if successful it would have reduced, if it did not end, the flow of potential slaves from England and Europe. Moreover, it would have required a conscious, deliberate, public decision. It would have had to be done, even if in stages, by action of the assembly, and the English government would have had to approve it. If it had been possible for the men at the top in Virginia to arrive at such a decision or series of decisions, the home government would almost certainly have vetoed the move, for fear of a rebellion or of an exodus from the colony that would prove costly to the crown's tobacco revenues.

But to establish slavery in Virginia it was not necessary to enslave anyone. Virginians had only to buy men who were already enslaved, after the initial risks of the

transformation had been sustained by others elsewhere. They converted to slavery simply by buying slaves instead of servants. The process seems so simple, the advantages of slave labor so obvious, and their system of production and attitude toward workers so receptive that it seems surprising they did not convert sooner. African slaves were present in Virginia, as we have seen, almost from the beginning (probably the first known Negroes to arrive, in 1619, were slaves). The courts clearly recognized property in men and women and their unborn progeny at least as early as the 1640s, and there was no law to prevent any planter from bringing in as many as he wished. Why, then, did Virginians not furnish themselves with slaves as soon as they began to grow tobacco? Why did they wait so long?

The answer lies in the fact that slave labor, in spite of its seeming superiority, was actually not as advantageous as indentured labor during the first half of the century. Because of the high mortality among immigrants to Virginia, there could be no great advantage in owning a man for a lifetime rather than a period of years, especially since a slave cost roughly twice as much as an indentured servant. If the chances of a man's dying during his first five years in Virginia were better than fifty-fifty--and it seems apparent that they were--and if English servants could be made to work as hard as slaves, English servants for a five-year term were the better buy.

...

Virginia had developed her plantation system without slaves, and slavery introduced no novelties to methods of production. Though no seventeenth-century plantation had a work force as large as that owned by some eighteenth-century planters, the mode of operation was the same. The seventeenth-century plantation already had its separate quartering house or houses for the servants. Their labor was already supervised in groups of eight or ten by an overseer. They were already subject to "correction" by the whip. They were already often underfed and underclothed. Their masters already lived in fear of their rebelling. But no servant rebellion in Virginia ever got off the ground.

The plantation system operated by servants worked. It made many Virginians rich and England's merchants and kings richer. But it had one insuperable disadvantage. Every year it poured a host of new freemen into a society where the opportunities for advancement were limited. The freedmen were Virginia's dangerous men. They erupted in 1676 in the largest ever rebellion known in any American colony before the Revolution, and in 1682 they carried even the plant-cutting rebellion further than any servant rebellion had ever gone. The substitution of slaves for servants gradually eased and eventually ended the threat that the freedmen posed: as the annual number of imported servants dropped, so did the numbers of men turning free.

The planters who bought slaves instead of servants did not do so with any apparent consciousness of the social stability to be gained thereby. Indeed, insofar as Virginians expressed themselves on the subject of slavery, they feared that it would magnify the danger of insurrection in the colony. They often blamed and pitied themselves for taking into their families men and women who had every reason to hate them. William Byrd told the Earl of August in July 1736, that "in case there should arise a Man of desperate courage amongst us, exasperated by a desperate fortune, he might with more advantage than Cataline kindle a Servile War," and make Virginia's

broad rivers run with blood. But the danger never materialized. From time to time the planters were alarmed by the discovery of a conspiracy among the slaves; but, as had happened earlier when servants plotted rebellion, some conspirator always leaked the plan in time to spoil it. No white person was killed in a slave rebellion in colonial Virginia. Slaves proved, in fact, less dangerous than free or semi-free laborers. They had none of the rising expectations that have so often prompted rebellion in human history. They were not armed and did not have to be armed. They were without hope and did not have to be given hope. William Byrd himself probably did not take the danger from them seriously. Only seven months before his letter to August, he assured Peter Beckford of Jamaica that "our negroes are not so numerous or so enterprizing as to give us any apprehension or uneasiness."

With slavery Virginians could exceed all their previous efforts to maximize productivity. In the first half of the century, as they sought to bring stability to their volatile society, they had identified work as wealth, time as money, but there were limits to the amount of both work and time that could be extracted from a servant. There was no limit to the work or time that a master could command from his slaves, beyond his need to allow them enough for eating and sleeping to enable them to keep working. Even on that he might skimp. Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, accounted a humane man, made it a policy to give his slaves less food than they needed and required them to fill out their diet by keeping chickens and by working Sundays in small gardens attached to their cabins. Their cabins, too, he made them build and repair on Sundays. Carter's uncle Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, made his slaves buy part of their own clothes out of the proceeds of what they grew in their gardens.

Demographically, too, the conversion to slavery enhanced Virginia's capacity for maximum productivity. Earlier the heavy concentration in the population of men of working age had been achieved by the small number of women and children among the immigrants and by the heavy mortality. But with women outliving men, the segment of women and their children grew; and as mortality declined the segment of men beyond working age grew. There was, in other words, an increase in the non-productive proportion of the population. Slavery made possible the restoration and maintenance of a highly productive population. Masters had no hesitation about putting slave women to work in the tobacco fields, although servant women were not normally so employed. And they probably made slave children start work earlier than free children did. There was no need to keep them from work for purposes of education. Nor was it necessary to divert productive energy to the support of ministers for spiritual guidance to them and their parents. The slave population could thus be more productive than a free population with the same age and sex structure would have been. It could also be more reproductive than a freed population that grew mainly from the importation of servants, because slave traders generally carried about two women for every three men, a larger proportion of women by far than had been the case with servants. Slave women while employed in tobacco could still raise children and thus contribute to the growth of the productive population. Moreover, the children became the property of the master. Thus slaves offered the planter a way of disposing his profits that combined the advantages of cattle and of servants, and these had always been the most attractive investments in Virginia.

The only obvious disadvantage that slavery presented to Virginia masters was a simple one: slaves had no incentive to work. The difference, however, between the

incentive of a slave and that of a servant bound for a term of years was not great. The servant had already received his reward in the form of the ocean passage which he, unlike the slave, had been so eager to make that he was willing to bind his labor for a term of years for it. Having received his payment in advance, he could not be compelled by threats of withholding it. Virginia masters had accordingly been obliged to make freer use of the lash than had been common in England. Before they obtained slaves, they had already had practice in extracting work from the unwilling. Yet there was a difference. If a servant failed to perform consistently or ran away, if he damaged his master's property either by omission or commission, the master could get the courts to extend the term of servitude. That recourse was not open to the slaveowner. If the servant had received his reward in advance, the slave had received the ultimate punishment in advance: his term had already been extended.

Masters therefore needed some substitute for the extended term, some sanction to protect themselves against the stubbornness of those whom conventional "correction" did not reach. . . . One way might have been to offer rewards, to hold out the carrot rather than the stick. A few masters tried this in the early years, as we have seen, offering slaves freedom in return for working hard for a few years, or assigning them plots of land and allowing them time to grow tobacco or corn crops for themselves. But to offer rewards of this kind was to lose the whole advantage of slavery. In the end, Virginians had to face the fact that masters of slaves must inflict pain at a higher level than masters of servants. Slaves could not be made to work for fear of losing liberty, so they had to be made to fear for their lives. Not that any master wanted to lose his slave by killing him, but in order to get an equal or greater amount of work, it was necessary to beat slaves harder than servants, so hard, in fact, that there was a much larger chance of killing them than had been the case with servants.

Source: Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, pp. 296-298, 308-312.

Allan Kulikoff, a professor of history at Northern Illinois University, is one of the foremost social historians of colonial Virginia and Maryland. In his best-known work, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*, Kulikoff builds on the exhaustive research of his dissertation on Prince George's County in Maryland to present the most detailed statistical portrait available of the Chesapeake's colonial-era society. As the work of a Marxist historian, Kulikoff's book is most concerned with describing and analyzing the emerging class structure of the early Chesapeake. *Tobacco and Slaves* does, however, also include a detailed consideration of the advent of slavery and the initial development of the basic institutions of Afro-American life. While criticized from numerous quarters, Kulikoff's appraisal of the economics behind the spread of slavery in Virginia and Maryland, as well as his chronology of the stages of the evolution of Afro-American population, ethnicity, family life, culture and religion, remain the standards for Chesapeake studies. The following selections include Kulikoff's summaries of his conclusions regarding the shift from indentured servants to slaves during the seventeenth century.

The Great Transformation: From Servants to Slaves

The dominance of small planters in Chesapeake society began to disintegrate in the 1680s because the economic base that had supported their ascendancy crumbled. Ordinary planters had relied upon the labor of servants and freedmen to increase their income, but fewer servants came to the region in the 1680s and 1690s, and the servant trade nearly disappeared after 1700. Ex-servants had accumulated capital to set up their own farms when tobacco prices were high, but planters often made no profit in the decades between 1680 and 1720, and the rate of social mobility therefore greatly diminished.

The decline of the servant trade transformed the labor system of the region in two ways. It forced planters to substitute African slaves for white servants, and it permitted the whole white population to reproduce itself. Planters sought to retain a white labor force, but they eventually replaced indentured servants with black slaves, and by 1700 slaves produced much of the region's tobacco. As the number of servants and other white immigrants declined and the children of earlier immigrants reached maturity, the proportion of native-born whites in the population rose. Native whites married at young ages and had enough children to ensure a naturally increasing population.

The transformation of the Chesapeake labor force from one dominated by immigrant planters and white servants to one operated by planters and their black slaves revolutionized the social relations of production. Political conflict between groups of whites diminished because there were fewer servants and ex-servants in the population, and even poor whites sought to become slaveholders and thereby exploit the labor of people they considered inferior. At the same time, however, the probability that poorer whites would advance economically decreased because they did not have sufficient capital to purchase a slave. By the early eighteenth century, an indigenous group of slaveholders who inherited wealth and place had replaced the relatively egalitarian social order of mid-seventeenth-century society with a hierarchical society.

The adoption of slave labor resulted from a series of related economic and demographic events that stretched from the 1660s through the early decades of the eighteenth century. A decline in English birthrates during the second third of the seventeenth century, combined with rising real wages, had by the 1680s substantially reduced the number of men at risk to come to the New World. The new colonies of Pennsylvania and South Carolina, moreover, offered enticing opportunities. To attract their share of the diminished group of migrants, the Chesapeake colonies needed to offer opportunities for advancement that could compete with these new settlements.

But severe depression in the tobacco economy at the end of the seventeenth century decreased relative opportunities in the Chesapeake colonies. Prices for the plant dipped below a penny a pound during the 1680s and stayed nearly that low during most years until 1715. Unable to absorb declining prices by increased output per hand, planters could not make a profit until markets improved. Since Europeans were unwilling to increase their consumption of tobacco even at these low prices and frequent wars raised the consumer's cost far above farm prices, exports did not rise. These conditions did not bode well for immigrants, who frequently decided they had better chances elsewhere. The proportion of British immigrants who came to the Chesapeake colonies, in fact, declined from a high of over two-fifths in the 1670s to just over a third by the 1690s.

Chesapeake planters, however, still wanted servants, and some of them still had capital to purchase labor. The long depression hit some planters more severely than others. Farmers who grew tobacco on marginal land found they could no longer compete and substituted grains and livestock farming for tobacco. But planters who lived on more fertile lands, especially those who moved to new frontiers, often succeeded in improving their condition despite the general depression. These relatively prosperous families, unlike less fortunate farmers, could afford to buy servants.

These Chesapeake planters failed to entice a sufficient number of Englishmen to meet their needs by coming to their depressed region. From 1680 to 1699 only about thirty thousand whites migrated to Maryland and Virginia, about four-fifths the rate of the previous three decades. Since the number of households had greatly increased, the number of white laborers that planters could command drastically declined. The number of servants and bachelors per household head in Middlesex County, Virginia, plummeted from five in 1668 to just one by 1687. There were two servants for each household in York County in the 1660s, fewer than two servants for every ten plantations by the 1690s, and during the same years the number of servants available to southern Maryland planters declined from six to fewer than two for every four households.

Immigrant servants worked on tobacco plantations during their term, but many of them left the region after they were freed, and others established households and competed for scarce white labor themselves. About half the men who finished a term of service in Charles County, Maryland, during the 1690s left the county in search of employment, and more than three-quarters of those who stayed lived precariously as laborers or tenants. In total, only nine thousand migrants stayed in the Chesapeake colonies during the 1680s, and more people left the area than migrated to it during the 1690s.

The decline of the servant trade transformed the labor force of the Chesapeake region. Planters preferred to employ English-speaking white servants rather than foreign whites or black slaves, but as the Chesapeake population rose and the number of men desiring white labor increased they employed more and more alien workers. When the relative supply of servants began to decline in the 1670s and 1680s and they could no longer procure white English men, they turned first to English women, and when the supply of English women ran low, they purchased Irish men.

Once planters had exhausted the supply of white laborers, they turned reluctantly to African slaves. The slave trade to the Chesapeake colonies began slowly in the third quarter of the seventeenth century. In 1660 no more than seventeen hundred blacks lived in Maryland and Virginia, and by 1680 their numbers had increased to about four thousand. During the 1660s and 1670s most forced black migrants arrived in small groups from the West Indies, but about three thousand black people, including many Africans, were forced into slavery in the region between 1674 and 1695. Since the supply of servants had declined, these few blacks made up an ever-increasing proportion of unfree workers in the region in the late 1670s and 1680s. Only during the second half of the 1690s—two decades after the servant trade began to diminish—did planters buy substantial numbers of black slaves. They enslaved about three thousand Africans, as many as had arrived in the previous twenty years between 1695 and 1700.

The racial composition of the Chesapeake labor force changed gradually during the last third of the seventeenth century, but by 1700 most unfree laborers were black.

The transition occurred first in the wealthy sweet-scented tobacco counties along the York River and then spread northward on the western shore of the bay to areas that produced less profitable Orinoco tobaccos. Only a third of the unfree workers on plantations in York County were black during the 1670s but the reduction in the number of servants available to county planters in the 1680s led them to procure nearly all the Africans who came into the region. As a result, four-fifths of the unfree workers on York plantations were black by the 1680s, and slaves accounted for nineteen of every twenty unfree laborers in the county during the 1690s. Planters who lived in Middlesex County, Virginia, which grew sweet-scented tobacco but was settled after York, and those who resided on Maryland's lower Western Shore, a poorer Orinoco area, began to invest in slave labor a few years later. Only one in three unfree workers in these two areas was black in the 1680s, despite the declining number of servants available to planters. Nonetheless, from two-thirds to three-quarters of all unfree workers were slaves by the 1690s and early 1700s.

Although planters clung to their preference for white servants over slaves for much of the late seventeenth century, they became reconciled, and even enthusiastic, about black labor by the early eighteenth century. When the supply of servants began to diminish during the 1670s and 1680s, the price of white men increased, both absolutely and relative to the price of full field hands. Planters in southern Maryland could buy three white men for the price of a single prime-age black male field hand in the early 1670s, but the same slaves was worth only two servants by the end of the decade. This pattern strongly suggests that planters wanted servants more than slaves, for if they had believed that slaves were more profitable, the relative price of servants would have diminished. The ratio of servant to slave prices rose, however, over the 1690s and early 1700s and again reached nearly three servants per slave by the 1710s, despite the near-total disappearance of servants. By that time, planters had learned that slaves could be as productive as whites and sought them avidly every time a slave ship arrived.

The decline of white servitude and the adoption of slavery transformed the family economy of white farmers. A short review of the argument suggests how slavery and family economy were linked. For most of the seventeenth century, planters began their Chesapeake careers as servants and established households and bought land and their own servants after the completion of their term. As the number of immigrants declined, the proportion of native-born adults in the white population rose. These natives, unlike their immigrant parents, began adulthood unencumbered by indentured service and often received inheritances from their parents. They therefore married at a young age and accumulated property more rapidly than did their immigrant forebears.

These changes in the economic prospects of white families could not occur until the white population *as a whole* had achieved natural increase, and natural increase could not begin until native-born men and women dominated the adult population of the region. The number of native-born adults apparently surpassed the number of immigrants sometime in the 1690s in most of the Chesapeake region. In Charles County, Maryland, the proportion of native-born white men rose from about a third in 1690 to three-fifths in 1705; and a similar pattern could be found in Middlesex County, where about three-quarters of the entire white population (adults and children) in 1699 had been born in the county.

The increase in the proportion of native-born white adults accentuated the importance of the daughters of immigrants in determining the rate of population growth. These native women had larger families because they married, on average, before age twenty, or eight years younger than their mothers' generation. Despite these youthful marriages, native-born women were still likely to bear only two more children in their lifetime than immigrants did because only half of them lived through their childbearing years. Many of their children died before they reached adulthood. Still, the early marriages of first-generation women did lead to substantial natural increase, and rather than children replacing only three-fifths of the population, as had been the case with immigrants, the native-born women reproduced more than sufficiently to replace their parents.

In the 1690s and 1700s, a large group of native-born women began bearing children, and these births (combined with the growing percentage of native adults) finally tipped the balance from natural decline to natural increase in much of the region. The earlier an area had been settled, the earlier this baby boom appeared: it began by the early 1690s in York County, Virginia, which had been settled in the 1620s; in southern Maryland, where settlement started in the 1640s, the boom began in the late 1690s; and on the Eastern Shore, settled after 1660, the boom began in the early 1700s. There was no surge of births in Middlesex County, where *falciparum* malaria, the most deadly form of the disease, hit with particular virulence in the 1680s and 1690s, but even there the number of births nearly equaled the number of deaths.

Planter adoption of slave labor and white natural increase together created new social relations of production on Chesapeake tobacco farms. Even if seventeenth-century planters believed that the white servants and hired hands they employed were poor men who deserved little respect, they knew that many of them would eventually become independent tobacco farmers themselves and therefore kept discipline within tight bounds. Two kinds of plantations replaced these master-servant enterprises once slavery was established. The vast majority of planters owned family farms and commanded the labor of their children, a slave or two, and an occasional white hired hand. A minority of white men, who owned the preponderance of slaves, operated large enterprises with many slaves. They hired white youths from nearby smaller plantations to act as overseers and instructed them to discipline slaves harshly if they dared to overstep the bounds of white authority.

Although most white freedmen enjoyed similar opportunities for much of the seventeenth century, subject only to the vagaries of the economy, the great costs that slaves entailed placed a premium on inheritance as a means of wealth accumulation. Native-born children of substantial planters enjoyed a great advantage over all other whites, for they could count upon receiving numerous slaves on their marriage or on the death of their fathers. Poorer men, in contrast, had to build upon small investment and received little or no help from parents.

The Legacy of the Seventeenth Century

The social order of the seventeenth century had a very ambiguous impact upon Chesapeake developments in the eighteenth century. The openness, opportunities, and freedom white men enjoyed during the middle decades of the century never returned,

even in frontier areas, and the homogeneity of the population was forever severed after Africans poured into the region in the 1690s. Conflict among whites eventually diminished as most whites scrambled to ensure the security of their property. Eighteenth-century social relations of production developed from the slave labor system: a class and caste society, where the ownership of slaves determined the standing of whites and where black people were a subservient class of slaves, replaced the conflict ridden free white labor system.

Nonetheless, the social ideals of the founders of the colonies reappeared in the context of slavery. Planters adapted to their slaves the negative imagery English gentlemen used to describe poor whites, and they embellished that rhetoric with racist ideas. Chesapeake gentlemen, moreover, imposed patriarchal family structures upon their wives and children and demanded deference from yeomen and poor whites. The hierarchical social order the Virginia Company and the Calverts wanted to establish developed, ironically, within an alien system of slavery they could not have foreseen.

Source: Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, pp. 37-44.

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APRIL 18, 1644—Native American Attack

According to Helen C. Rountree, it appears that the Native Americans did not kill any Africans or descendants of Africans during their attack on the English on April 18, 1644. Rountree notes that Opechancanough's followers did take several enslaved Africans as prisoners.

On April 18, 1644, Opechancanough staged the second major attack on the English. Because of the poor survival rate of Virginia records of the 1640s, we know little about the initial assault on the English or its aftermath. By reconstruction, it seems that the Weyanocks, Nansemonds, Pamunkeys, and Chickahominies were involved; the participation of the Rappahannocks and other chiefdoms on the northern neck was questionable. After killing about four hundred English people and taking many prisoners, [including negro slaves], Indian warriors melted away into the woods and attempted no follow-up attack, once again giving the English time to regroup.

Source: Rountree, *Pocahontas's People*, p. 84.

March 1655/6—ACT I. *An Induction to the Acts concerning Indians*

Colonial legislators created a distinction between Native Americans and Africans in this statute.

If the Indians shall bring in any children as gages of their good and quiet intentions to us and amity with us, then the parents of such children shall choose the persons to whom the care of such children shall be intrusted and the countrey by us their representatives do engage that wee will not use them as slaves, but do their best to bring them up in Christianity, civillity and the knowledge of necessary trades; And on the report of the commissioners of each respective country that those under whose tuition they are, do really intend the bettering of the children in these particulars then a salary shall be allowed to such men as shall deserve and require it.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1:396.

March 1661/2—ACT CXXXVIII. *Concerning Indians*

The legislators decided that Native American and English servants were to serve their masters the same length of time.

And be it further enacted that what Englishman, trader, or other shall bring in any Indians as servants and shall assigne them over to any other, shall not sell them for slaves nor for any longer time than English of the like ages should serve by act of assembly.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:143.

March 1661/2—Freedom for Metappin

Members of the Assembly ruled that Metappin should be free. They noted that he spoke perfect English and wanted to be baptized.

METAPPIN a Powhatan Indian being sold for life time to one Elizabeth Short by the king of Wainoake Indians who had no power to sell him being of another nation, *it is ordered* that the said Indian be free, he speaking perfectly the English tongue and desiring baptism.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:155.

October 1670—ACT IV. *Noe Negroes nor Indians to buy christian servants*

The number of blacks and Native Americans in Tidewater Virginia was small when this act was passed. The legislators knew that access to labor was necessary to succeed.

WHEREAS it hath beene questioned whither Indians or negroes manumited, or otherwise free, could be capable of purchasing christian servants, *It is enacted* that noe negroe or Indian though baptised and enjoyned their owne ffreedome shall be capable of any such purchase of christians, but yet not debarred from buying any of their owne nation.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:280-281.

October 1670—ACT XII. *What tyme Indians to serve*

This law created an additional distinction between African Americans and Native Americans. It was an attempt to make lifetime servitude the normal condition for all Africans imported into Virginia. The legislators repealed this statute in November 1682.

David Galenson places the act in the context of similar statutes in Barbados and Maryland. He writes: “In 1664, Charles Calvert had found that it was the high price of slaves, rather than any skepticism about their capacity for labor, that prevented him and his fellow planters from being able to guarantee a market for one shipload a year. In 1664, however, the unwillingness of some Chesapeake planters to meet that high price might have resulted from uncertainty about their ability to hold the Africans in servitude for life. No such uncertainty existed in Barbados, the major destination for Africans in English America at the time, where thousands of slaves arrived annually to grow sugar on great plantations. Nearly three decades earlier, in 1636, that colony’s Council had declared that ‘Negroes and Indians, that came here to be sold, should serve for Life, unless a Contract was before made to the contrary,’ and this act appears subsequently to have been enforced without exceptions. Although Maryland’s ‘Act Concerning Negroes & Other Slaves’ . . . gave an assurance of this kind to that colony’s planters in 1664, it was not until 1670 that Virginia’s legislature produced such a guarantee when it declared that ‘all servants not being christians imported into this colony by shipping shalbe slaves for their lives.’ An important part of the answer to the question of why Chesapeake planters hesitated to invest heavily in slaves during the 1660s may be that during that decade they lacked the statutory assurance concerning the security of their investments that their counterparts in Barbados had received thirty years earlier.”

WHEREAS some dispute have arisen whither Indians taken in warr by any other nation, and by that nation that taketh them sold to the English, are servants for life or terme of yeares, *It is resolved and enacted* that all servants not being christians imported into this colony by shipping shalbe slaves for their lives; but what shall come by land shall serve, if boyes or girles, untill thirty yeares of age, if men or women twelve yeares and no longer.

Source: Galenson, “Economic Aspects of the Growth of Slavery,” pp. 272-273; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:283.

September 1672—ACT VIII. *An act for the apprehension and suppression of runaways, negroes and slaves*

The members of the General Assembly hoped to suppress the rebellious activities of slaves throughout the colony. In addition, they wanted to keep servants and Native Americans from joining the slaves in any unlawful activities. They decided that it was legal to wound or kill an enslaved person who resisted arrest.

FORASMUCH as it hath beene manifested to this grand assembly that many negroes have lately beene, and now are out in rebellion in sundry parts of this country, and that noe meanes have yet beene found for the apprehension and suppression of them from whome many mischeifes of very dangerous consequence may arise to the country if either other negroes, Indians or servants should happen to fly forth and joyne with them; for the prevention of which, *be it enacted by the governour, councill and burgesses of this grand assembly, and by the authority thereof*, that if any negroe, molatto, Indian

slave, or servant for life, runaway and shalbe persued by the warrant or hue and crye, it shall and may be lawfull for any person who shall endeavour to take them, upon the resistance of such negroe, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, to kill or wound him or them soe resisting; *Provided alwayes*, and it is the true intent and meaning hereof, that such negroe, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, be named and described in the hue and crye which is alsoe to be signed by the master or owner of the said runaway. And if it happen that such negroe, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life doe dye of any wound in such their resistance received the master or owner of such shall receive satisfaction from the publique for his negroe, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life, soe killed or dyeing of such wounds; and the person who shall kill or wound by virtue of any such hugh and crye any such soe resisting in manner as aforesaid shall not be questioned for the same, he forthwith givinge notice thereof and returning the hue and crye or warrant to the master or owner of him or them soe killed or wounded or to the next justice of peace. *And it is further enacted* by the authority aforesaid that all such negroes and slaves shalbe valued at ffwore thousand five hundred pounds of tobacco and caske a peece, and Indians at three thousand pounds of tobacco and caske a peice, And further if it shall happen that any negroe, molatto, Indians slave or servant for life, in such their resistance to receive any wound whereof they may not happen to dye, but shall lye any considerable tyme sick and disabled, then alsoe the master or owner of the same soe sick or disabled shall receive from the publique a reasonable satisfaction for such damages as they shall make appeare they have susteyned thereby at the county court, who shall thereupon grant the master or owner a certificate to the next assembly of what damages they shall make appeare; *And it is further enacted* that the neighbouring Indians doe and hereby are required and enjoyned to seize and apprehend all runawayes whatsoever that shall happen to come amongst them, and to bring them before some justice of the peace whoe upon the receipt of such servants, slave, or slaves, from the Indians, shall pay unto the said Indians for a recompence twenty armes length of Roanoake or the value thereof in goods as the Indians shall like of, for which the said justice of peace shall receive from the publique two hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco, and the said justice to proceed in conveying the runaway to his master according to the law in such cases already provided; This act to continue in force till the next assembly and noe longer unlesse it be thought fitt to continue.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:299-300.

June 1676—ACT I. *An act for carrying on a warre against the barbarous Indians*

In 1676 many Virginians were alarmed by Governor Berkeley's poor leadership and weak response in handling the Indian threat by merely suggesting a series of forts be built along the frontier rather than dispatching troops. Nathaniel Bacon, a member of England's gentry newly arrived in Virginia, became the military leader of a band of Virginians who armed themselves against the Indians in defiance of the governor in the spring of that year. Berkeley responded by unsuccessfully dispatching men to confront Bacon and declared him a rebel.

Until Bacon's death from natural causes on October 26, 1676 he and Governor Berkeley struggled to control Virginia militarily and politically, embroiling Virginians in civil war. After the Assembly enacted many of Bacon's demands, Bacon with five hundred men captured the government and demanded from Berkeley the power to fight the Indians. That was granted on June 25 but later withdrawn. The governor, however, could not raise loyal troops to assert his authority and was forced to retreat to the Eastern Shore. Berkeley later returned to Jamestown to prepare for Bacon's attack but was forced to return to the Eastern Shore while Bacon burned the capital. Virginians, hesitant to fight one another, continued to vacillate in their support of Berkeley and Bacon in the ever-increasing confusion. Bacon's men, however, now turned to plundering loyalist plantations in Gloucester County and elsewhere. Bacon's sudden death left his men without a strong leader, and in January 1677 Berkeley returned to power and sought reparations for the loyalists.

During the Rebellion the Indians probably suffered the most. Many were killed and a number of their villages were destroyed. In June of 1676 members of the Assembly decided that Native Americans captured during the rebellion would become slaves for life.

And bee it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that all Indians taken in warr be held and accounted slaves dureing life, and if any differences shall arise in cases about plunder or slaves, the cheife commander of the party takeing such slaves or plunder is to be the sole judge thereof to make equall division as hee shall see fit.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:346.

April 1679—ACT I. *An act for the defence of the country against the incursions of the Indian enemy*

This statute reflected the bias against Native Americans in the years after Bacon's Rebellion.

And for the better encouragement and more orderly government of the souldiers, that what Indian prisoners or other plunder shalbe taken in warre, shalbe free purchase to the souldier taking the same.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:440.

November 1682—ACT I. *An act to repeale a former law making Indians and others ffree*

Two acts passed in November of 1682 joined Native Americans and Africans into one racial category—"negroes and other slaves."

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that all servants except Turkes and Moores, whilst in amity with his majesty which from and after publication of this act shall be brought or imported into this country, either by sea or land, whether Negroes, Moors, Mollattoes or Indians, who and whose parentage and native country are not christian at the time of their first purchase of such servant by some christian, although afterwards, and before such their importation and bringing into this country, they shall be converted to the christian faith; and all Indians which shall hereafter be sold by our neighbouring Indians, or any other trafiqueing with us as for slaves are hereby adjudged, deemed and taken to be slaves to all intents and purposes, any law, usage or custome to the contrary notwithstanding.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:491-492.

November 1682—ACT II. *An act declaring Indian women servants tithables*

WHEREAS it hath bin doubted whether Indian women servants sold to the English above the age of sixteene yeares be tythable, *Be it enacted and declared, and it is hereby enacted and declared by the governour, councill and burgesses of this generall assembly and the authority thereof*, that all Indian women are and shall be tythables, and ought to pay levies in like manner as negroe women brought into this country doe, and ought to pay.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:492.

October 1705—CHAP. VII. *An act concerning Tithables*

It is possible that the decision to exempt free black women from tithes was designed to benefit white men who had such women as servants.

I. *BE it enacted, by the Governor, Council, and Burgesses of this present general assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same*, That all male persons, of the age of sixteen years, and upwards, and all negro, mulatto, and Indian women, of the age of sixteen years, and upwards, not being free, shall be, and are hereby declared to be tithable, or chargeable, for defraying the public, county, and parish charges, in this her majesty's colony and dominion; excepting such only, as the county court, and vestry, for reasons, in charity, made appear to them, shall think fit to excuse.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:258-259.

October 1705—CHAP. XXII. *An act declaring the Negro, Mulatto, and Indian slaves within this dominion, to be real estate*

The legislators defined enslaved men, women, and children as real property in this act. See also the 1669 statute entitled *An act about the casual killing of slaves* for another example of masters treating slaves as property.

- I. FOR the better settling and preservation of estates within this dominion,
- II. *Be it enacted, by the governor, council and burgesses of this present general assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same,* That from and after the passing of this act, all negro, mulatto, and Indian slaves, in all courts of judicature, and other places, within this dominion, shall be held, taken, and adjudged, to be real estate (and not chattels;) and shall descend unto the heirs and widows of persons departing this life, according to the manner and custom of land of inheritance, held in fee simple.
- III. *Provided always,* That nothing in this act contained, shall be taken to extend to any merchant or factor, bringing any slaves into this dominion, or having any consignments thereof, unto them, for sale: But that such slaves whilst they remain unsold, in the possession of such merchant, or factor, or of their executors, administrators, or assigns, shall, to all intents and purposes, be taken, held, and adjudged, to be personal estate, in the same condition they should have been in, if this act had never been made.
- IV. *Provided also,* That all such slaves shall be liable to the payment of debts, and may be taken by execution, for that end, as other chattels or personal estate may be.
- V. *Provided also,* That no such slaves shall be liable to be escheated, by reason of the decease of the proprietor of the same, without lawful heirs: But all such slaves shall, in that case, be accounted and go as chattels, and other estate personal.
- VI. *Provided also,* That no person, selling or alienating any such slave shall be obliged to cause such sale or alienation to be recorded, as is required by law to be done, upon the alienation of other real estate: But that the said sale or alienation may be made in the same manner as might have been done before the making of this act.
- VII. *Provided also,* That this act, or any thing therein contained, shall not extend, nor be construed to extend, to give any person, being owner of any slave or slaves, and not seized of other real estate, the right or privilege as a freeholder, meant, mentioned, and intended, by one act of this present session of assembly, intituled, *An act for regulating the elections of Burgesses, for settling their privileges, and for ascertaining their allowances.*
- VIII. *Provided also,* That it shall and may be lawful, for any person, to sue for, and recover, any slave, or damage, for the detainer, trover, or conversion thereof, by action personal, as might have been done if this act had never been made.
- IX. *Provided always,* That where the nature of the case shall require it, any writ *De Partitione facienda*, or of dower, may be sued forth and prosecuted, to recover the right and possession of any such slave or slaves.
- X. *Provided, and be it enacted,* That when any person dies intestate, leaving several children, in that case all the slaves of such person, (except the widow's dower, which is to be first set apart) shall be inventoried and appraised; and the value thereof shall be equally divided amongst all the said children; and the several proportions, according to such valuation and appraisement, shall be paid by the heir (to whom the said slaves shall descend, by virtue of this act) unto all and every the other said children. And thereupon, it shall and may be lawful for the said other children, and every of them, and their executors or administrators, as the case shall be, to commence and prosecute an

action upon the case, at the common law, against such heir, his heirs, executors and administrators, for the recovery of their said several proportions, respectively.

XI. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That if any widow, seised of any such slave or slaves, as aforesaid, as of the dower of her husband, shall send, or voluntarily permit to be sent out of this colony and dominion, such slave or slaves, or any of their increase, without the lawful consent of him or her in reversion, such widow shall forfeit all and every such slave or slaves, and all other the dower which she holds of the endowment of her husband's estate, unto the person or persons that shall have the reversion thereof; any law, usage or custom to the contrary notwithstanding. And if any widow, seized as aforesaid, shall be married to an husband, who shall send, or voluntary permit to be sent out of this colony and dominion, any such slave or slaves, or any of their increase, without the consent of him or her in reversion; in such case, it shall be lawful for him or her in reversion, to enter into, possess and enjoy all the estate which such husband holdeth, in right of his wife's dower, for and during the life of the said husband.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:333-335.

October 1705—CHAP. XXIV. *An act for settling the Militia*

The members of the General Assembly decided that a white overseer in charge of four or more slaves, any imported servant, and all slaves were not to serve in the militia. This act did not restrict the participation of free black men in the militia.

Provided nevertheless, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to give any power or authority to any colonel or chief officer whatsoever, to list any person that shall be, or shall have been of her majesty's council in this colony, or any person that shall be, or shall have been speaker of the house of burgesses, or any person that shall be, or shall have been her majesty's attorney general, or any person that shall be, or shall have been a justice of the peace within this colony, or any person that shall have born any military commission within this colony as high as the commission of captain, or any minister, or the clerk of the council for the time being, or the clerk of the general court for the time being, or any county court clerk during his being such, or any parish clerk or school-master during his being such, or any overseer that hath four or more slaves under his care, or any constable during his being such, or any miller who hath a mill in keeping, or any servant by importation, or any slave, but that all and every such person or persons be exempted from serving either in horse or foot. Any thing in this act heretofore to the contrary notwithstanding.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:336.

Part VI—Conclusion

Edmund S. Morgan provides one of the classic explanations for the development of slavery in seventeenth-century Virginia. In the following excerpts, Morgan discusses the transition from indentured servitude to slavery, which he describes as a virtually seamless shift in the labor force.

Slavery is a mode of compulsion that has often prevailed where land is abundant, and Virginians had been drifting toward it from the time when they first found something profitable to work at. Servitude in Virginia's tobacco fields approached closer to slavery than anything known at the time in England. Men served longer, were subjected to more rigorous punishments, were traded about as commodities already in the 1620s.

That Virginia's labor barons of the 1620s or her land and labor barons of the 1660s and 1670s did not transform their servants into slaves was probably not owing to any moral squeamishness or to any failure to perceive the advantages of doing so. Although slavery did not exist in England, Englishmen were not so unfamiliar with it that they had to be told what it was. They knew that the Spaniards' gold and silver were dug by slave labor, and they themselves had even toyed with temporary "slavery" as a punishment for crime in the sixteenth century. But for Virginians to have pressed their servants or their indigent neighbors into slavery might have been, initially at least, more perilous than exploiting them in the ways that eventuated in the plundering parties of Bacon's Rebellion. Slavery, once established, offered incomparable advantages in keeping labor docile, but the transformation of free men into slaves would have been a tricky business. It would have had to proceed by stages, each carefully calculated to stop short of provoking rebellion. And if successful it would have reduced, if it did not end, the flow of potential slaves from England and Europe. Moreover, it would have required a conscious, deliberate, public decision. It would have had to be done, even if in stages, by action of the assembly, and the English government would have had to approve it. If it had been possible for the men at the top in Virginia to arrive at such a decision or series of decisions, the home government would almost certainly have vetoed the move, for fear of a rebellion or of an exodus from the colony that would prove costly to the crown's tobacco revenues.

But to establish slavery in Virginia it was not necessary to enslave anyone. Virginians had only to buy men who were already enslaved, after the initial risks of the transformation had been sustained by others elsewhere. They converted to slavery simply by buying slaves instead of servants. The process seems so simple, the advantages of slave labor so obvious, and their system of production and attitude toward workers so receptive that it seems surprising they did not convert sooner. African slaves were present in Virginia, as we have seen, almost from the beginning (probably the first known Negroes to arrive, in 1619, were slaves). The courts clearly recognized property in men and women and their unborn progeny at least as early as the 1640s, and there was no law to prevent any planter from bringing in as many as he wished. Why, then, did Virginians not furnish themselves with slaves as soon as they began to grow tobacco? Why did they wait so long?

The answer lies in the fact that slave labor, in spite of its seeming superiority, was actually not as advantageous as indentured labor during the first half of the century. Because of the high mortality among immigrants to Virginia, there could be no great advantage in owning a man for a lifetime rather than a period of years, especially since a

slave cost roughly twice as much as an indentured servant. If the chances of a man's dying during his first five years in Virginia were better than fifty-fifty--and it seems apparent that they were--and if English servants could be made to work as hard as slaves, English servants for a five-year term were the better buy.

...

Virginia had developed her plantation system without slaves, and slavery introduced no novelties to methods of production. Though no seventeenth-century plantation had a work force as large as that owned by some eighteenth-century planters, the mode of operation was the same. The seventeenth-century plantation already had its separate quartering house or houses for the servants. Their labor was already supervised in groups of eight or ten by an overseer. They were already subject to "correction" by the whip. They were already often underfed and underclothed. Their masters already lived in fear of their rebelling. But no servant rebellion in Virginia ever got off the ground.

The plantation system operated by servants worked. It made many Virginians rich and England's merchants and kings richer. But it had one insuperable disadvantage. Every year it poured a host of new freemen into a society where the opportunities for advancement were limited. The freedmen were Virginia's dangerous men. They erupted in 1676 in the largest ever rebellion known in any American colony before the Revolution, and in 1682 they carried even the plant-cutting rebellion further than any servant rebellion had ever gone. The substitution of slaves for servants gradually eased and eventually ended the threat that the freedmen posed: as the annual number of imported servants dropped, so did the numbers of men turning free.

The planters who bought slaves instead of servants did not do so with any apparent consciousness of the social stability to be gained thereby. Indeed, insofar as Virginians expressed themselves on the subject of slavery, they feared that it would magnify the danger of insurrection in the colony. They often blamed and pitied themselves for taking into their families men and women who had every reason to hate them. William Byrd told the Earl of August in July 1736, that "in case there should arise a Man of desperate courage amongst us, exasperated by a desperate fortune, he might with more advantage than Cataline kindle a Servile War," and make Virginia's broad rivers run with blood. But the danger never materialized. From time to time the planters were alarmed by the discovery of a conspiracy among the slaves; but, as had happened earlier when servants plotted rebellion, some conspirator always leaked the plan in time to spoil it. No white person was killed in a slave rebellion in colonial Virginia. Slaves proved, in fact, less dangerous than free or semi-free laborers. They had none of the rising expectations that have so often prompted rebellion in human history. They were not armed and did not have to be armed. They were without hope and did not have to be given hope. William Byrd himself probably did not take the danger from them seriously. Only seven months before his letter to August, he assured Peter Beckford of Jamaica that "our negroes are not so numerous or so enterprizing as to give us any apprehension or uneasiness."

With slavery Virginians could exceed all their previous efforts to maximize productivity. In the first half of the century, as they sought to bring stability to their volatile society, they had identified work as wealth, time as money, but there were limits

to the amount of both work and time that could be extracted from a servant. There was no limit to the work or time that a master could command from his slaves, beyond his need to allow them enough for eating and sleeping to enable them to keep working. Even on that he might skimp. Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, accounted a humane man, made it a policy to give his slaves less food than they needed and required them to fill out their diet by keeping chickens and by working Sundays in small gardens attached to their cabins. Their cabins, too, he made them build and repair on Sundays. Carter's uncle Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, made his slaves buy part of their own clothes out of the proceeds of what they grew in their gardens.

Demographically, too, the conversion to slavery enhanced Virginia's capacity for maximum productivity. Earlier the heavy concentration in the population of men of working age had been achieved by the small number of women and children among the immigrants and by the heavy mortality. But with women outliving men, the segment of women and their children grew; and as mortality declined the segment of men beyond working age grew. There was, in other words, an increase in the non-productive proportion of the population. Slavery made possible the restoration and maintenance of a highly productive population. Masters had no hesitation about putting slave women to work in the tobacco fields, although servant women were not normally so employed. And they probably made slave children start work earlier than free children did. There was no need to keep them from work for purposes of education. Nor was it necessary to divert productive energy to the support of ministers for spiritual guidance to them and their parents. The slave population could thus be more productive than a free population with the same age and sex structure would have been. It could also be more reproductive than a freed population that grew mainly from the importation of servants, because slave traders generally carried about two women for every three men, a larger proportion of women by far than had been the case with servants. Slave women while employed in tobacco could still raise children and thus contribute to the growth of the productive population. Moreover, the children became the property of the master. Thus slaves offered the planter a way of disposing his profits that combined the advantages of cattle and of servants, and these had always been the most attractive investments in Virginia.

The only obvious disadvantage that slavery presented to Virginia masters was a simple one: slaves had no incentive to work. The difference, however, between the incentive of a slave and that of a servant bound for a term of years was not great. The servant had already received his reward in the form of the ocean passage which he, unlike the slave, had been so eager to make that he was willing to bind his labor for a term of years for it. Having received his payment in advance, he could not be compelled by threats of withholding it. Virginia masters had accordingly been obliged to make freer use of the lash than had been common in England. Before they obtained slaves, they had already had practice in extracting work from the unwilling. Yet there was a difference. If a servant failed to perform consistently or ran away, if he damaged his master's property either by omission or commission, the master could get the courts to extend the term of servitude. That recourse was not open to the slaveowner. If the servant had received his reward in advance, the slave had received the ultimate punishment in advance: his term had already been extended.

Masters therefore needed some substitute for the extended term, some sanction to protect themselves against the stubbornness of those whom conventional "correction" did

not reach. . . . One way might have been to offer rewards, to hold out the carrot rather than the stick. A few masters tried this in the early years, as we have seen, offering slaves freedom in return for working hard for a few years, or assigning them plots of land and allowing them time to grow tobacco or corn crops for themselves. But to offer rewards of this kind was to lose the whole advantage of slavery. In the end, Virginians had to face the fact that masters of slaves must inflict pain at a higher level than masters of servants. Slaves could not be made to work for fear of losing liberty, so they had to be made to fear for their lives. Not that any master wanted to lose his slave by killing him, but in order to get an equal or greater amount of work, it was necessary to beat slaves harder than servants, so hard, in fact, that there was a much larger chance of killing them than had been the case with servants.

Source: Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, pp. 296-298, 308-312.

Allan Kulikoff, a professor of history at Northern Illinois University, is one of the foremost social historians of colonial Virginia and Maryland. In his best-known work, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*, Kulikoff builds on the exhaustive research of his dissertation on Prince George's County in Maryland to present the most detailed statistical portrait available of the Chesapeake's colonial-era society. As the work of a Marxist historian, Kulikoff's book is most concerned with describing and analyzing the emerging class structure of the early Chesapeake. *Tobacco and Slaves* does, however, also include a detailed consideration of the advent of slavery and the initial development of the basic institutions of Afro-American life. While criticized from numerous quarters, Kulikoff's appraisal of the economics behind the spread of slavery in Virginia and Maryland, as well as his chronology of the stages of the evolution of Afro-American population, ethnicity, family life, culture and religion, remain the standards for Chesapeake studies. The following selections include Kulikoff's summaries of his conclusions regarding the shift from indentured servants to slaves during the seventeenth century.

The Great Transformation: From Servants to Slaves

The dominance of small planters in Chesapeake society began to disintegrate in the 1680s because the economic base that had supported their ascendancy crumbled. Ordinary planters had relied upon the labor of servants and freedmen to increase their income, but fewer servants came to the region in the 1680s and 1690s, and the servant trade nearly disappeared after 1700. Ex-servants had accumulated capital to set up their own farms when tobacco prices were high, but planters often made no profit in the decades between 1680 and 1720, and the rate of social mobility therefore greatly diminished.

The decline of the servant trade transformed the labor system of the region in two ways. It forced planters to substitute African slaves for white servants, and it permitted the whole white population to reproduce itself. Planters sought to retain a white labor force, but they eventually replaced indentured servants with black slaves, and by 1700 slaves produced much of the region's tobacco. As the number of servants and other white immigrants declined and the children of earlier immigrants reached maturity, the

proportion of native-born whites in the population rose. Native whites married at young ages and had enough children to ensure a naturally increasing population.

The transformation of the Chesapeake labor force from one dominated by immigrant planters and white servants to one operated by planters and their black slaves revolutionized the social relations of production. Political conflict between groups of whites diminished because there were fewer servants and ex-servants in the population, and even poor whites sought to become slaveholders and thereby exploit the labor of people they considered inferior. At the same time, however, the probability that poorer whites would advance economically decreased because they did not have sufficient capital to purchase a slave. By the early eighteenth century, an indigenous group of slaveholders who inherited wealth and place had replaced the relatively egalitarian social order of mid-seventeenth-century society with a hierarchical society.

The adoption of slave labor resulted from a series of related economic and demographic events that stretched from the 1660s through the early decades of the eighteenth century. A decline in English birthrates during the second third of the seventeenth century, combined with rising real wages, had by the 1680s substantially reduced the number of men at risk to come to the New World. The new colonies of Pennsylvania and South Carolina, moreover, offered enticing opportunities. To attract their share of the diminished group of migrants, the Chesapeake colonies needed to offer opportunities for advancement that could compete with these new settlements.

But severe depression in the tobacco economy at the end of the seventeenth century decreased relative opportunities in the Chesapeake colonies. Prices for the plant dipped below a penny a pound during the 1680s and stayed nearly that low during most years until 1715. Unable to absorb declining prices by increased output per hand, planters could not make a profit until markets improved. Since Europeans were unwilling to increase their consumption of tobacco even at these low prices and frequent wars raised the consumer's cost far above farm prices, exports did not rise. These conditions did not bode well for immigrants, who frequently decided they had better chances elsewhere. The proportion of British immigrants who came to the Chesapeake colonies, in fact, declined from a high of over two-fifths in the 1670s to just over a third by the 1690s.

Chesapeake planters, however, still wanted servants, and some of them still had capital to purchase labor. The long depression hit some planters more severely than others. Farmers who grew tobacco on marginal land found they could no longer compete and substituted grains and livestock farming for tobacco. But planters who lived on more fertile lands, especially those who moved to new frontiers, often succeeded in improving their condition despite the general depression. These relatively prosperous families, unlike less fortunate farmers, could afford to buy servants.

These Chesapeake planters failed to entice a sufficient number of Englishmen to meet their needs by coming to their depressed region. From 1680 to 1699 only about thirty thousand whites migrated to Maryland and Virginia, about four-fifths the rate of the previous three decades. Since the number of households had greatly increased, the number of white laborers that planters could command drastically declined. The number of servants and bachelors per household head in Middlesex County, Virginia, plummeted from five in 1668 to just one by 1687. There were two servants for each household in York County in the 1660s, fewer than two servants for every ten plantations by the

1690s, and during the same years the number of servants available to southern Maryland planters declined from six to fewer than two for every four households.

Immigrant servants worked on tobacco plantations during their term, but many of them left the region after they were freed, and others established households and competed for scarce white labor themselves. About half the men who finished a term of service in Charles County, Maryland, during the 1690s left the county in search of employment, and more than three-quarters of those who stayed lived precariously as laborers or tenants. In total, only nine thousand migrants stayed in the Chesapeake colonies during the 1680s, and more people left the area than migrated to it during the 1690s.

The decline of the servant trade transformed the labor force of the Chesapeake region. Planters preferred to employ English-speaking white servants rather than foreign whites or black slaves, but as the Chesapeake population rose and the number of men desiring white labor increased they employed more and more alien workers. When the relative supply of servants began to decline in the 1670s and 1680s and they could no longer procure white English men, they turned first to English women, and when the supply of English women ran low, they purchased Irish men.

Once planters had exhausted the supply of white laborers, they turned reluctantly to African slaves. The slave trade to the Chesapeake colonies began slowly in the third quarter of the seventeenth century. In 1660 no more than seventeen hundred blacks lived in Maryland and Virginia, and by 1680 their numbers had increased to about four thousand. During the 1660s and 1670s most forced black migrants arrived in small groups from the West Indies, but about three thousand black people, including many Africans, were forced into slavery in the region between 1674 and 1695. Since the supply of servants had declined, these few blacks made up an ever-increasing proportion of unfree workers in the region in the late 1670s and 1680s. Only during the second half of the 1690s—two decades after the servant trade began to diminish—did planters buy substantial numbers of black slaves. They enslaved about three thousand Africans, as many as had arrived in the previous twenty years between 1695 and 1700.

The racial composition of the Chesapeake labor force changed gradually during the last third of the seventeenth century, but by 1700 most unfree laborers were black. The transition occurred first in the wealthy sweet-scented tobacco counties along the York River and then spread northward on the western shore of the bay to areas that produced less profitable Orinoco tobaccos. Only a third of the unfree workers on plantations in York County were black during the 1670s but the reduction in the number of servants available to county planters in the 1680s led them to procure nearly all the Africans who came into the region. As a result, four-fifths of the unfree workers on York plantations were black by the 1680s, and slaves accounted for nineteen of every twenty unfree laborers in the county during the 1690s. Planters who lived in Middlesex County, Virginia, which grew sweet-scented tobacco but was settled after York, and those who resided on Maryland's lower Western Shore, a poorer Orinoco area, began to invest in slave labor a few years later. Only one in three unfree workers in these two areas was black in the 1680s, despite the declining number of servants available to planters. Nonetheless, from two-thirds to three-quarters of all unfree workers were slaves by the 1690s and early 1700s.

Although planters clung to their preference for white servants over slaves for much of the late seventeenth century, they became reconciled, and even enthusiastic, about black labor by the early eighteenth century. When the supply of servants began to diminish during the 1670s and 1680s, the price of white men increased, both absolutely and relative to the price of full field hands. Planters in southern Maryland could buy three white men for the price of a single prime-age black male field hand in the early 1670s, but the same slaves was worth only two servants by the end of the decade. This pattern strongly suggests that planters wanted servants more than slaves, for if they had believed that slaves were more profitable, the relative price of servants would have diminished. The ratio of servant to slave prices rose, however, over the 1690s and early 1700s and again reached nearly three servants per slave by the 1710s, despite the near-total disappearance of servants. By that time, planters had learned that slaves could be as productive as whites and sought them avidly every time a slave ship arrived.

The decline of white servitude and the adoption of slavery transformed the family economy of white farmers. A short review of the argument suggests how slavery and family economy were linked. For most of the seventeenth century, planters began their Chesapeake careers as servants and established households and bought land and their own servants after the completion of their term. As the number of immigrants declined, the proportion of native-born adults in the white population rose. These natives, unlike their immigrant parents, began adulthood unencumbered by indentured service and often received inheritances from their parents. They therefore married at a young age and accumulated property more rapidly than did their immigrant forebears.

These changes in the economic prospects of white families could not occur until the white population *as a whole* had achieved natural increase, and natural increase could not begin until native-born men and women dominated the adult population of the region. The number of native-born adults apparently surpassed the number of immigrants sometime in the 1690s in most of the Chesapeake region. In Charles County, Maryland, the proportion of native-born white men rose from about a third in 1690 to three-fifths in 1705; and a similar pattern could be found in Middlesex County, where about three-quarters of the entire white population (adults and children) in 1699 had been born in the county.

The increase in the proportion of native-born white adults accentuated the importance of the daughters of immigrants in determining the rate of population growth. These native women had larger families because they married, on average, before age twenty, or eight years younger than their mothers' generation. Despite these youthful marriages, native-born women were still likely to bear only two more children in their lifetime than immigrants did because only half of them lived through their childbearing years. Many of their children died before they reached adulthood. Still, the early marriages of first-generation women did lead to substantial natural increase, and rather than children replacing only three-fifths of the population, as had been the case with immigrants, the native-born women reproduced more than sufficiently to replace their parents.

In the 1690s and 1700s, a large group of native-born women began bearing children, and these births (combined with the growing percentage of native adults) finally tipped the balance from natural decline to natural increase in much of the region. The earlier an area had been settled, the earlier this baby boom appeared: it began by the early

1690s in York County, Virginia, which had been settled in the 1620s; in southern Maryland, where settlement started in the 1640s, the boom began in the late 1690s; and on the Eastern Shore, settled after 1660, the boom began in the early 1700s. There was no surge of births in Middlesex County, where falciparum malaria, the most deadly form of the disease, hit with particular virulence in the 1680s and 1690s, but even there the number of births nearly equaled the number of deaths.

Planter adoption of slave labor and white natural increase together created new social relations of production on Chesapeake tobacco farms. Even if seventeenth-century planters believed that the white servants and hired hands they employed were poor men who deserved little respect, they knew that many of them would eventually become independent tobacco farmers themselves and therefore kept discipline within tight bounds. Two kinds of plantations replaced these master-servant enterprises once slavery was established. The vast majority of planters owned family farms and commanded the labor of their children, a slave or two, and an occasional white hired hand. A minority of white men, who owned the preponderance of slaves, operated large enterprises with many slaves. They hired white youths from nearby smaller plantations to act as overseers and instructed them to discipline slaves harshly if they dared to overstep the bounds of white authority.

Although most white freedmen enjoyed similar opportunities for much of the seventeenth century, subject only to the vagaries of the economy, the great costs that slaves entailed placed a premium on inheritance as a means of wealth accumulation. Native-born children of substantial planters enjoyed a great advantage over all other whites, for they could count upon receiving numerous slaves on their marriage or on the death of their fathers. Poorer men, in contrast, had to build upon small investment and received little or no help from parents.

The Legacy of the Seventeenth Century

The social order of the seventeenth century had a very ambiguous impact upon Chesapeake developments in the eighteenth century. The openness, opportunities, and freedom white men enjoyed during the middle decades of the century never returned, even in frontier areas, and the homogeneity of the population was forever severed after Africans poured into the region in the 1690s. Conflict among whites eventually diminished as most whites scrambled to ensure the security of their property. Eighteenth-century social relations of production developed from the slave labor system: a class and caste society, where the ownership of slaves determined the standing of whites and where black people were a subservient class of slaves, replaced the conflict ridden free white labor system.

Nonetheless, the social ideals of the founders of the colonies reappeared in the context of slavery. Planters adapted to their slaves the negative imagery English gentlemen used to describe poor whites, and they embellished that rhetoric with racist ideas. Chesapeake gentlemen, moreover, imposed patriarchal family structures upon their wives and children and demanded deference from yeomen and poor whites. The hierarchical social order the Virginia Company and the Calverts wanted to establish developed, ironically, within an alien system of slavery they could not have foreseen.

Source: Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, pp. 37-44.

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AMERICAN DIVERSITY: CRUCIBLE OF CULTURES

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- May 3, 1775—Governor Dunmore’s Responds to the House of Burgesses
- May 4, 1775—Slave Unrest Continues in Williamsburg
- June 14, 1775—Five Men Discuss the Gunpowder Incident with the Burgesses
- June 16, 1775—Letter to Alexander Purdie
- June 19, 1775—The Burgesses Address Governor Dunmore
- 1775—Phillis Wheatley Praises George Washington and Freedom
- 1775—British General Thomas Gage Uses the Slave Metaphor to Complain about the Treatment of Prisoners

1775—The Enlistment of Blacks During the Revolutionary War

November 16, 1775—Dunmore’s Proclamation

November 30, 1775 and December 9, 1775—Virginians Use the Newspaper to Discourage Slaves From Joining Dunmore

December 1775—ACT VII. *An ordinance for establishing a mode of punishment for the enemies to America in this colony*

1775—Lund Washington’s Response to Dunmore’s Proclamation

December 3, 1775—Letter from William Roscow Wilson Curle to the Elizabeth City County-Hampton Town Committee of Safety

December 5, 1775—Colonel William Woodford Describes the Battle of Great Bridge

December 13 and 14, 1775—Delegates to the Fourth Virginia Convention Offer to Pardon Slaves Who Abandon Dunmore

December 26, 1775—George Washington on Governor Dunmore

1775 to 1776—The Experiences of “Lord Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment”

Part VI—Independence and Enslavement

March 29, 1776—Letter from “An American” to Alexander Purdie

April 24, 1776—A Public Letter of Instructions from the Freeholders of James City County to Robert Carter Nicholas and William Norvell, Delegates to the Fifth Virginia Convention

May 15, 1776—The Virginia Resolves

May to June 1776—Slavery and the First Clause of the Virginia Declaration of Rights.

1776—Samuel Hopkins's *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*

1776—Thomas Jefferson Rebukes King George III over Slavery

Part I—Introduction

During the first half of the eighteenth century, Virginia legislators imposed increasingly harsh restrictions on enslaved laborers, and further abridged many of the civic rights previously accorded free blacks. Opportunities for black people to escape slavery all but disappeared, and some whites hoped to reduce those who were free to a lowly status equivalent to slavery. Slave owners attempted to strip the over 50,000 Africans transported to Virginia between 1700 and 1760 of their cultural identities, at the same time putting most to work at repetitious and backbreaking agricultural labor. They often used the newly arrived African's ignorance of English and their frequent passive and occasionally violent resistance to enslavement as excuses for imposing harsher plantation discipline and more stringent work rules. Justices of the peace applied a separate criminal code to cases involving blacks, and handed down harsher punishments. Informal plantation custom defined minimum levels of provisioning and work requirements. However, the only effective restraint on owners' total power over their human property was their self-interest.

Part II—Virginia's Legislators Tighten Restrictions on Slaves and Free Blacks

1700 to 1730—Estimated Population of the Chesapeake Colonies (in Thousands)

Year	Maryland	Virginia	Total	Total	Total
			Whites	Blacks	Population
1700	34.1	64.0	85.2	12.9	98.1
1710	43.9	79.7	101.3	22.4	123.7
1720	57.8	100.8	128.0	30.6	158.6
1730	81.8	142.8	171.4	53.2	224.6

Source: McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, p. 136.

October 1710—ACT XVI. *An act to set free Will, a Negro belonging to Robert Ruffin*

When Alexander Spotswood arrived in Virginia in 1710, the colony was in a depression. A number of Virginians were troubled by the growing number of slaves in the colony and an insurrection that had been prevented that spring. These two concerns were connected. Planters relied on a greater number of slaves in order to increase the amount of tobacco raised on their plantations. The increased production resulted in lower prices for tobacco. Several members of the General Assembly hoped to prohibit the importation of enslaved

laborers into the colony so as to improve tobacco prices and to decrease the possibility of a slave revolt.

Spotswood learned of the details of the slave insurrection that Salvadore, a Native American slave, an African-American slave named Scipio, and others planned for three counties along the James River—Surry, Isle of Wight, and James City—on Easter Sunday 1710. Will, a slave who belonged to Robert Ruffin, informed his master about the revolt and thwarted the plans. Deciding to make an example of Salvadore and Scipio, the Council had them beheaded, drawn, and quartered. Next, their bodies were put on view in the counties where they had hoped to lead slaves in revolt against the white planters. Residents of and visitors to Williamsburg could view Salvadore's head on a picket. The Burgesses decided to manumit Will and move him to the Northern Neck, thus indicating that it was possible for a slave to gain freedom through actions that supported the slave society.

WHEREAS a Negro Slave, named *Will*, belonging to Robert Ruffin, of the county of Surry, was signally serviceable in discovering a conspiracy of diverse negroes in the said county, for levying war in this colony, for a reward of his fidelity and for encouragement of such services,

Be it enacted, by the Lieutenant-Governor, Council and Burgesses, of this Generall Assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same, That the said Negro Will, is and shall be forever hereafter free from his slavery, and shall be esteemed, deemed and taken, and is hereby declared to be a free man, and shall enjoy and have all the liberties, priviledges and immunitys of or to a free negro belonging, and shall inhabit, continue and be within this colony and dominion of Virginia, if he think fit to continue therein.

And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That the sum of forty pounds sterling be paid and satisfied to the said Robert Ruffin for the price of the said negro Will, made free as above said.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:537-538.

October 26, 1710—First Speech of Governor Spotswood to the House of Burgesses

The governor addressed the colonists' fears about a slave insurrection in this speech. Spotswood suggested that the legislators pass a bill to prevent meetings of slaves.

I Would Willingly Whisper to You The Strength of Your Country and The State of Your Militia; Which on The foot it Now Stands is so Imaginary A Defence, That we Cannot too Cautiously Conceal it from our Neighbourns and our Slaves, nor too Earnestly Pray That Neither The Lust of Dominion, nor the Desire of freedom May Stir those people to any attempts The Latter Sort (I mean our Negro's) by Their Dayly Encrease Seem to be The Most Dangerous; And the Tryals of Last *Aprill* Court may shew that we

are not to Depend on Either their Stupidity, or that Babel of Languages among 'em; freedom Wears a Cap which Can Without a Tongue, Call Together all Those who Long to Shake of the fetters of Slavery and as Such an Insurrection would surely be attended with Most Dreadfull Consequences so I Think we Cannot be too Early in providing Against it, both by putting our Selves in a better posture of Defence and by Making a Law to prevent The Consultations of Those Negroes.

Source: McIlwaine et al., eds., *Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1703-1712*, p. 240.

October 25, to December 9, 1710—An Act for laying a Duty on Liquors and Slaves

The Burgesses debated a bill to prevent slaves from holding meetings and owning firearms. The legislators amended the bill and postponed their decision to a later session. This group passed the legislation in 1711, but the Council tabled the bill. The Burgesses wanted to reduce the perceived threat from slaves by reducing the number of Africans imported into the colony. Spotswood's instructions prevented him from assenting to a bill that prohibited the slave trade. As a result, members of the assembly decided to increase the duty from twenty shillings on each slave imported to the colony to £5 on all slaves except infants who were duty free.

Thad Tate notes: "The principal strategem which the leaders of the colony evolved for discouraging too rapid an increase in the number of slaves was an import duty on African slaves that could be disguised as a revenue measure. The long series of laws which enacted these duties began as early as 1699, and, for the first few years, were honestly intended to raise funds, rather than discourage trade. The initial act, for example, levied a charge of twenty shillings for each Negro imported specifically for the construction of the new Capitol at Williamsburg. With one renewal this duty continued in force until late 1703. After a three month interval in early 1704 during which no duty was in effect, the impost was revived in April, 1704. From then until 1718 some form of duty was in force without an important break. The tendency to make the duties prohibitory in character also began to appear, for during these years the amount climbed as high as £5 per Negro."

The references to subsequent acts follow the citation for the legislation excerpted below.

Forasmuch as the late Impositions upon liquors and slaves imported into this Colony and Dominion have proved very usefull and advantageous, and that no better Expedient can be found to lessen the Levy by the Poll or defray the Charge of any Publick Design that Impositions of that nature...

...And Be it further Enacted That the sume of Five hundred pounds [*sic* £5] shall be paid for every Negro or other slave which, after the said Tenth day of December, shall be Imported or brought into this Colony and Dominion from any port or place whatsoever by the Importer or Importers of the same.

Source: Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, pp. 17-18; Winfree, comp., *The Laws of Virginia*, pp. 47, 50, 51; see also Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:482 (1710) and Winfree, comp., *The Laws of Virginia*, pp. 67 (1712), 130 (1714).

November 27, 1710—Governor Spotswood Protests a Bill to Place a Duty on Liquors and Slaves

On November 27, 1710, the governor issued his protest against the bill. However, Spotswood did accept it, and it remained in effect until 1714. He benefitted from the fact that a portion of the revenue was allocated to finish construction of the home for the governor. Four years later the assembly designated £200 out of the duty on slaves and liquors for the construction of a brick magazine for the storage of powder.

Wherefore give me Leave to Tell you That I fear The high Duty Intended on Negro slaves May be Interpreted as a prohibition of That Trade Which her Majesty is graciously pleased to Countenance, as you may perceive by such her Royal Instructions which I now send you; and I hope it may not be yet too Late for you to make Some amendments That may shew you bear a Just Deference to her Majestys Most Gracious Recommendations. and The Distinction you Make in the aforesaid bill between *Virginia* and *British* owners, is not to be Justified by any Parallel Instance in *Great Brittain*; where a *Virginian* pays no higher Dutys Than a Native of That Kingdom and both persons Enjoy Equally The same priviledges in all points. Besides her Majesty has been pleased Expressly to Declare That one of ye Reasons for Repealing a Late Law, was Because by a Clause Therein The Owners of Vessels of The Kingdom of *Great Brittain* Were to pay more Than The *Virginia* Owners.

Source: McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1703-1712*, p. 281.

September 1715—Governor Spotswood Pardons Two York County Slaves

In September 1715, five of York County's justices of the peace tried three slaves on the charge of burglary: Harry, a mulatto, who belonged to Mary Read of Yorkhampton Parish; Sam who belonged to William Buckner; and Guy, the property of ordinary keeper Edward Powers. The men admitted that they broke into the house of Richard Cary on September 10, 1715 and stole "224 ounces of silver coined money of the value of 70 pounds Currnt money of Va Ten guinea peices of gold of the value of 13 pds Currnt money of Virga & one pair of linnen sheets of the value of 40 shills." After admitting their guilt they "did thereupon put themselves upon our mercy." After reviewing the case, Spotswood decided to pardon Sam and Guy. The justices valued Harry at £40 and ordered him to be executed.

Know ye therefore that we moved with compassion & hoping that the punishment of one of the most notorious offender will be a sufficient example, & terror to the others, of our special grace, certain knowledge, & meer motion have pardoned, remitted & released & by these presents for us, our heirs & successors do pardon remitt & release to the sd Sam & Guy late slaves of the sd Wm Buckner & Edward Powers or by what other name or names or addition of name or names the sd Sam & Guy or either of them are called or known, the burglary & felony aforesd.

Source: York County Deeds, Orders, and Wills (14) 453, September 19, 1715.

1720s and 1730s—Changes in the Way in Which Virginia’s Planters Treated Their Slaves

The number of Africans imported to Virginia increased in the eighteenth century. The Old Dominion gained almost 8,000 African slaves between 1700 and 1710. For a short time, the Chesapeake, not Jamaica, was the most profitable slave market in British America. During the 1730s Virginia’s planters saw an average of over 2,000 Africans arrive on slave ships. Sometimes the number of forced immigrants increased to more than 4,000 in a year.

It is known that some Virginians had viewed African slaves in a different light than the enslaved labors born in the colony since the late seventeenth century. Planters devised harsher methods to deal with the African slaves during the first half of the eighteenth century. In the following passage Ira Berlin examines the measures that Virginians used to control their African slaves.

The trek across Africa and the Middle Passage left slaves not just physically weak but also mentally drained. Planters were determined to break the spirit of the new arrivals even further, by stripping Africans of ties to their homeland. Among the first objects of the planters’ assault were the names Africans carried to the New World, and with them the lineage which structured much of African life. Writing to his overseer from his plantation on the Rappahannock River in 1727, Robert “King” Carter, perhaps the richest of the Chesapeake’s new grandees, explained the process by which he initiated Africans into their American captivity. “I name’d them here & by their names we can always know what sizes they are of & I am sure we repeated them so often to them that every one knew their names & would readily answer to them.” Carter then forwarded his slaves to a satellite plantation or “quarter,” where his overseer repeated the process, taking “care that the negros both men & women I sent...always go by ye names we gave them.” In the months that followed, the drill continued, with Carter again joining in the process of stripping the newly arrived Africans of the signature of their identity and inheritance. For the most part, Carter designated his new slaves with a variety of common English diminutive and classical appellations, denying them access to the integrative path that “Antonio a Negro” had taken when he transformed himself into Anthony Johnson. The names given African slaves embodied the distance between the experience of the plantation generations and that of the charter generations. There would be no Anthony Johnsons on Carter’s plantation.

The loss of their names was only the first of the numerous indignities newly arrived Africans suffered at the hands of Chesapeake planters. Generally, planter placed little trust in Africans, with their strange tongues and alien customs. They condemned the new arrivals for the “gross bestiality and rudeness of their manners, the variety and

strangeness of their minds.” Whenever possible, planters put the newly arrived African slaves to work at the most repetitive and backbreaking tasks in some upland quarter, denying them access to positions of skill that Atlantic creoles frequently enjoyed. Planters made but scant attempt to see that the new arrivals had adequate food, clothing, or shelter, because the open slave trade made “new Negroes” cheap, and the disease environment in which they were set to work inflated their mortality rate no matter how well they were tended. Residing in sex-segregated barracks, African slaves lived a lonely existence, without families or ties of kin, and often separated by language from supervisors and co-workers alike. Rude frontier conditions made these largely male compounds desolate, unhealthy places that narrowed the vision of their residents. The physical separation denied the new arrivals the opportunity to integrate themselves into the mainstream of Chesapeake society, and prevented them from finding a well-placed patron and enjoying the company of men and women of equal rank, as their predecessors had done. The planter’s strategy of stripping away all ties upon which the enslaved persona rested—name, village, clan, household, and family—and leaving slaves totally dependent upon their owners was nearly successful.

The ability of slaves to move unimpeded through the countryside had sustained the Carter generations’ broad view of the world, and had allowed them to interact openly with planters and servants, Europeans and Indians. Their wide social networks promoted a sense of self-confidence, even arrogance, which planters were determined to curb. In 1705 and 1723 new laws required slaves to carry a pass when they left the estate of their owner even for the most routine business and denied them the right to meet in groups of more than four, and then only for brief periods of time. Even more novel than the legislation itself was the determination of planter-controlled courts to enforce it, as county courts fined those planters who allowed their slaves “to goe abroad.”

But restrictions on movement were only one small indicator of the narrowing of slaves’ lives. Whereas members of the charter generations had slept and eaten under the same roof and had worked in the same fields as their owners, the new arrivals lived in a world apart. Even the ties between black slaves and white servants atrophied, as blacks sank deeper into slavery while whites rose in aspiration if not in fact. The strivings of white servants necessitated their distinguishing themselves from African slaves, who were the recipients of harsh treatment that whites laborers would no longer accept. No matter how low the status of white servants, their pale skin distinguished them from society’s designated mudsill, and this small difference became the foundation upon which the entire social order rested. Nothing could be further from the “drinking and carrousing” that had brought black slaves and white servants together for long bouts of interracial conviviality than the physical and verbal isolation that confronted newly arrived Africans. Whiteness and blackness took on new meanings.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 112-114; see also pp. 109-111.

May 9, to June 20, 1723—An Act for laying a Duty on Liquors and Slaves

The Burgesses noted their decision to reinstitute a duty on liquors and slaves in order to raise additional money to support the militia. They wanted a strong militia to protect the

colonists against the threat of slave conspiracies and attacks from Indians. British merchants protested against the duty and persuaded the King to repeal the 1723 law and all other attempts on the part of the assembly to pass a duty during the next nine years.

Thad Tate notes: “By a change of tactics that made a five percent *ad valorem* duty payable by the prospective buyer rather than by the importer the General Assembly broke the deadlock in 1732. Thereafter and until the outbreak of the Revolution an *ad valorem* duty on slaves was in effect in Virginia, except for six months in 1751. The five percent rate of 1732 was gradually increased, until it stood at twenty percent during the French and Indian War.”

We, your Majesties most Loial and dutiful Subjects, the Burgesses now assembled in Virginia, having Seriously considered the present State of this your Majesty’s great and Ancient Colony and Dominion, And the dangers it is exposed and liable to by the present unarmed Condition of Our Militia, as well in regard to the vast Numbers of Negro Slaves which are daily imported and increased among us as, also, from the Neighboring Indians and others which may possible become our Enemies, And being the more awakened hereto by some late discovered Conspiracies among these Slaves wholly to destroy Your Majesties good Subjects Inhabiting here, and having also taken into Our Consideration the Several Ways and means to provide against these Mischiefs, And in Order thereto having Endeavoured to find out proper Methods to defray the Extraordinary Charge requisite sufficiently to Support us against those and other dangers which may and do often attend this Colony, And having by many years Experience found that the only Method easy to be born here in raising Funds is by laying Duties on Liquors and Slaves imported, By which Duties we have been Enabled with Chearfulness not only to defray the Expence of building a House of our Governor, A Noble Structure for the Supream Court of Justice, A Magazine for the Arms and Ammunition of our Country, And a public Goal for Debtors and Criminals, But also to perform many Necessary Services for the Safety and Defence of Our Lives and of this your Majesties Great Dominon, And these Funds being now exhausted, and we, considering it is our Duty to the utmost of our Power fully to provide for the Safety of your Majesties Subjects and Dominion here, Do in all humility beseech your Majesty, That in Order to lessen the Levy by the Poll and to provide Arms and Ammunition for the Poorer Sort of Inhabitants, Your Majesties good Subjects here, And in Order to Support and defray such other necessary Expences as shall by the General Assembly be thought proper for the Defence and Service of this Colony, It may be Enacted,...

...And Be it further Enacted That the Sum of Forty Shillings be paid for every Negro or other Slave which after the said First day of April shall be imported or brought into this Colony and Dominion from any port or place whatsoever by the Importer or Importers of the Same.

...And be it further Enacted That this Act shall continue and be in Force for Three Years from the said First day of April and no longer.

Source: Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, p. 18; Winfree, comp., *The Laws of Virginia*, pp. 237-238, 241, 246. See also *ibid.*, pp. 285, 290, 291 (1727/8); Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 4:135 (1723); *ibid.*, p. 182 (1727); *ibid.*, pp. 317-322

(1732); *ibid.*, p. 394 (1734); *ibid.*, pp. 469-473 (1738); *ibid.*, 5:92-93 (1740); *ibid.*, 6:217-221 (1752).

May 9, to June 20, 1723—An Act for the Transportation of Dick and other Negro Slaves

In 1722 and 1723 two groups of slaves were tried in the General Court for “unlawfully assembling meeting and Congregating themselves with other Slaves and Communicating contriving and Conspiring among themselves and with the said other Slaves to kill murder & destroy very many of the leige Subjects of our said Lord the King.” Sam, a slave belonging to the estate of Nathaniel Burwell, was one of the slaves involved in the alleged plot against whites. There was not enough evidence to convict the slaves; however, the legislators decided to transport them out of the colony when they learned that several of the slaves imprisoned in the Public Gaol threatened the lives of two residents of Middlesex County.

Whereas very great and eminent Dangers have of late threatened his Majesties Subjects in this Colony from the frequent disorderly Meetings of great Numbers of Slaves in a riotous and tumultous manner, who by reason of their Secret Plotting and confederating among themselves could not be convicted by such Evidence as the Laws now in force require,

And Whereas divers of the Ringleaders of them are now in the Custody of the Law, upon the Information of Sundry other Slaves, for conspiring and contriving to rise up in Arms and to kill and destroy Several Persons in the County of Middlesex and elsewhere in the Colony of Virginia, And for threatening the lives of other people concerned in the discovery of their wicked designs, For preventing the dangers which might possibly happen if the Said Slaves Should be discharge out of the Custody and Suffered to go at large,

Be it Enacted by the Lieutenant Governor, Council, and Burgesses of this present General Assembly, And it is hereby Enacted by the Authority of the Same, That the several Slaves hereafter mentioned, having been concerned in the Said Conspiracy, (That is to Say) Dick, a Negro Slave of Mathew Kemp, Gentleman, Tom, otherwise called Bambeo Tom, Slave of Thomas Smith, Gentleman, Sanco, Isaac, and Jeffery, Slaves of Armistead Churchil, Gentleman, Robin, Slave of John Rhodes, planter, Sam, a Negro Slave of Elizabeth Burwell, Widdow of Nathaniel Burwell, Gentleman, deceased, And Sam, a Negro Slave of Elizabeth Richardson, Widdow, be transported to the Island of Barbadoes, Jamaica, or some other Island in the West Indies, to be there Sold for Slaves during the Term of their respective Lives, and that if after such transportation, they the said Dick, Tom, otherwise called Bambeo Tom, Sanco, Isaac, Jeffery, Robin, Sam, and Sam, or either of them, shall return into this Colony of Virginia, he and they so returning shall suffer the paine of Death,

Provided always, That if such Slave so transported shall be brought back into this Colony against his Consent, That then and in such Case, It shall and may be lawful for the Governor or Commander in Chief of this Dominion for the Time being to grant his Majesties pardon to such Slave for his Offence of returning after such transportation, Under the Condition of being again transported out of this Colony.

And Be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, And it is hereby Enacted, That

Archibald Blair and William Robertson of Williamsburgh, Gentlemen, be authorized and impowered to cause the said Dick, Tom, alias Bambeo Tom, Sanco, Isaac, Jeffery, Robin, Sam, and Sam to be transported to the said Islands of Barbadoes, Jamaica, or some other Island in the West Indies, And to that End to agree with such Master and Masters of any ship or Vessel as they, the said Archibald Blair and William Robertson, shall think fit for carrying the said Slaves to the said Islands, or to some or one of them, and to send and consign the said Slaves to such person or persons as they, the said Archibald Blair and William Robertson, shall think proper, and that they, the said Archibald Blair and William Robertson, their Executors, and Administrators shall render an Account of the Net proceeds, arising by the Sale and Sales of the said Slaves, and of Each of them to the General Assembly of this Dominion when they shall be thereto required.

And Be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, And it is hereby Enacted, That there shall be paid to the Several Masters or Owners of the said Slaves for the Loss they may sustain by reason of such transportation the following Sums, That is to Say, to the said Mathew Kemp for the said Slave Dick Forty pounds, To the said Thomas Smith for the said Slave Tom, alias Bambo Tom, Thirty Five pounds, To the said Armistead Churchil for the said Slaves Sanco Twenty Pounds, Isaac Thirty pounds, and Jeffery Thirty pounds, to the said John Rhoads for the said Slave Robin Fifty pounds, To the said Elizabeth Burwell for the said Slave Sam Forty pounds, And to the said Elizabeth Richardson for the said Slave Sam Forty pounds, And the Governor or Commander in Chief of this Dominion is hereby impowered and desired to issue his Warrant on the Treasurer of Virginia for the payment of the said several Sums of Money to the Several respective Owners of the said Slaves.

Source: Winfree, comp., *The Laws of Virginia*, pp. 257-259.

May 1723—ACT II. *An Act for settling and better Regulation of the Militia*

In May 1723, Governor Drysdale addressed the Burgesses on the recent slave insurrection. He noted that deficiencies in the colony's laws made it impossible to convict the slaves. Drysdale stated "The Surest Method to prevent any fatal Consequences that may arise from their wicked Designs is to put your Militia in a better posture of defence than at present they seem to be." In the following statute the legislators excluded free black men and Indians from the militia in order to reduce the potential for armed resistance from the growing free black population.

V. *Provided always*, That such free Negros, Mulattos, or Indians, as are capable, may be listed and employed as drummers or trumpeters: And that upon any invasion, insurrection, or rebellion, all free Negros, Mulattos, or Indians, shall be obliged to attend and march with the militia, and to do the duty of pioneers, or such other servile labour as they shall be directed to perform.

VI. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That if an exempted overseer, or miller, or any free Negro, Mulatto, or Indian, other than as before excepted, shall presume to appear at any muster whatsoever, the party so offending, shall for every such offence, forfeit and pay one hundred pounds of tobacco, and shall immediately give

security to the said commanding officer, for payment of the same: Which fine or fines shall be disposed of in such manner, and to such uses as the other fines herein after-mentioned. And each person failing to pay, or give security, as aforesaid, shall, by order of the said commanding officer, be tied neck and heels, and so remain for any time not exceeding twenty minutes.

Source: McIlwaine, et al., *Journals of the House of Burgesses, 1712-1726*, p. 360; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 4:118-120. See also *ibid.*, pp. 197-204 (1727); *ibid.*, p. 323 (1732); *ibid.*, p. 394 (1734); and *ibid.*, 6:112-114 (1748).

May 1723—ACT IV. *An Act directing the trial of Slaves, committing capital crimes; and for the more effectual punishing conspiracies and insurrections of them; and for the better government of Negros, Mulattos, and Indians, bond or free*

The legislators listened to the speech of Governor Drysdale and the fears of Virginias about slave rebellions and the growing free black population. They wrote a statute that imposed new restrictions on the colony’s enslaved blacks and took away the few privileges that free men of color enjoyed. The law imposed a ban on all assemblies of slaves that were not licensed by masters, prohibited all blacks—free and enslaved—and Native Americans from providing testimony against white persons in court, imposed punishment if a black person provided false testimony, and withdrew the privilege of benefit of clergy for a slave convicted of plotting or attempting a rebellion. Punishments for runaway slaves became harsher and included dismemberment. The law required a master to prove that a slave had performed “meritorius service” in order to manumit the said slave.

The colonial leaders placed a financial burden on the free black population when they decided that free women of color over the age of sixteen were tithable (as they had been between 1668 and 1705). In addition, the wife of a free black or a Native American man was tithable. The only free black men allowed to own guns were those who lived on the frontier and who needed guns for protection. The legislators decided that all free children of color were to serve longer terms of servitude than did white children.

The legislators made this statute an instrument to maintain social control and stability. They required churchwardens to read it in April and October of each year and to enter a copy in each parish register. The sheriff of each county had to post the law at the courthouse in June or July.

Ira Berlin notes that Virginia’s “social order required raw power to sustain it; and during the early years of the eighteenth century, planters mobilized the apparatus of coercion in the service of their new regime. In the previous century, maimings, brandings, and beatings had occurred commonly, but the level of violence increased dramatically as planters transformed the society with slaves into a slave society. Chesapeake slaves faced the pillory, whipping post, and gallows far more frequently and in far larger numbers than ever before. Even as planters employed the rod, the lash, the branding iron,

and the first with increased regularity, they invented new punishments that would humiliate and demoralize as well as correct.”

I. WHEREAS the laws now in force, for the better ordering and governing of slaves, and for the speedy trial of such of them as commit capital crimes, are found insufficient to restrain their tumultuous and unlawful meetings, or to punish the secret plots and conspiracies carried on amongst them, and known only to such, as by the laws now established, are not accounted legal evidence: And it being found necessary, that some further provision be made, for detecting and punishing all such dangerous combinations for the future,

II. *Be it enacted, by the Lieutenant-Governor, Council, and Burgesses, of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same,* That if any number of negros, or other slaves, exceeding five, shall at any time hereafter consult, advise, or conspire, to rebel or make insurrection, or shall plot or conspire the murder of any person or persons whatsoever, every such consulting, plotting, or conspiring, shall be adjudged and deemed felony; and the slave or slaves convicted thereof, in manner herein after directed, shall suffer death, and be utterly excluded the benefit of clergy, and of all laws made concerning the same.

III. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That every slave committing such offence, as, by the laws, ought to be punished with death, or loss of member, shall be forthwith committed to the common goal of the county, within which the said offence shall be committed, there to be safely kept; and that the sheriff of such county, upon such commitment, shall forthwith certify the same, with the cause thereof, to the Governor or Commander in Chief of this His Majesty's Colony and Dominion, for the time being, who is thereupon desired and impowered to issue a commission of Oyer and Terminer, to such persons as he shall think fit: Which persons, forthwith after the receipt of such commission, are impowered and required to cause the offender to be publicly arraigned and tried, at the court-house of the said county, and to take for evidence, the confession of the offender, the oath of one or more credible witnesses, or such testimony of Negros, Mulattos, or Indians, bond or free, with pregnant circumstances, as to them shall seem convincing, without the solemnity of a jury: And the offender being by them found guilty, to pass such judgment upon such offender, as the law directs, for the like crimes; and on such judgment, to award execution.

IV. And to the end, such Negros, Mulattos, or Indians, not being christians, as shall hereafter be produced as evidences, on the trial of any slave for capital crimes, may be under the greater obligation to declare the truth, *Be it enacted,* That where any such Negro, Mulatto, or Indian, shall upon due proof made, or pregnant circumstances appearing before any county court within this colony, be found to have given a false testimony, every such offender shall, without further trial, be ordered by the said court to have one ear nailed to the pillory, and there to stand for the space of one hour, and then the said ear to be cut off; and thereafter, the other ear nailed in like manner, and cut off, at the expiration of one other hour; and moreover, to order every such offender thirty-nine lashes, well laid on, on his or her bare back, at the common whipping-post.

V. *And be it further enacted,* That at every such trial of slaves committing capital offences, the person who shall be first named in the commission, sitting on such trial, shall, before the examination of every Negro, Mulatto, or Indian, not being a christain,

charge such evidence to declare the truth; which charge shall be in the words following, viz:

‘YOU are brought hither as a witness; and, by the direction of the law, I am to tell you, before you give your evidence, that you must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and that if it be found hereafter, that you tell a lie, and give false testimony in this matter, you must, for so doing, have both your ears nailed to the pillory, and cut off, and receive thirty-nine lashes on your bare back, well laid on, at the common whipping-post.’

VI. *Provided always, and it is hereby intended*, That the master or owner of any slave, to be arraigned and tried, by virtue of this act, may appear at the trial, and make what just defence he can for such slave, so that such defence do not relate to any formality in the proceedings on the trial.

VII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted*, That when any slave shall be convicted, by virtue of this act, the commissioners that shall sit on trial, shall put a valuation in money, upon such slave so convicted, and certify such valuation to the next assembly, that the said assembly may be enabled to make a suitable allowance thereupon to the master or owner of such slave.

VIII. And whereas many inconveniences have arisen, by the meetings of great numbers of negroes and other slaves: For the prevention thereof, *Be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted*, That from henceforth no meetings of negroes, or other slaves, be allowed, on any pretence whatsoever, (except as is hereafter excepted.) And that every master, owner, or overseer of any plantation, who shall, knowingly or willingly, permit any such meetings, or suffer more than five negroes or slaves, other than the negroes or slaves belonging to his, her, or their plantations or quarters, to be and remain upon any plantation or quarter, at any one time, shall forfeit and pay the sum of five shillings, or fifty pounds of tobacco, for each negro or slave, over and above such number, that shall at any time hereafter so unlawfully meet or assemble, on his, her, or their plantation, to the informer: To be recovered, with costs, before any justice of the peace of the county where such offence shall be committed.

IX. *Provided always*, That nothing herein contained, shall be construed to restrain the negroes, or other slaves, belonging to one and the same owner, and seated at distinct quarters or plantations, to meet, by the license of such owner, or his or her overseer, at any of the quarters or plantations to such owner belonging; nor to restrain the meeting of any number of slaves, on their owner’s or overseer’s business, at any public mill, so as such meeting be not in the night, or on a Sunday; nor to restrain their meeting on any other lawful occasion, by the licence, in writing, of their master, mistress, or overseers; nor to prohibit any slaves repairing to and meeting at church to attend divine service, on the lord’s day, or at any other time set apart by lawful authority, for public worship: But that all and every such meetings, shall be accounted lawful meetings; any thing in this act contained to the contrary thereof notwithstanding.

X. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That if any white person, free negro, mulatto, or Indian, shall at any time hereafter be found in company with any such slaves, at any such unlawful meetings, as aforesaid, or harbor or entertain any negro, or other slave whatsoever, without the consent of their owners, he, she, or they, so

offending, upon being thereof lawfully convicted, shall forfeit and pay the sum of fifteen shillings, or one hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco, to the informer: To be recovered, with costs, before any justice of the peace; and upon failure to make present payment, shall have and receive, on his, her, or their bare backs, for every such offence, twenty lashes, well laid on. And every negro, mulatto, or indian slave, who shall come or assemble to such unlawful meetings, shall, upon information thereof made to any justice of the peace of the county where such offence shall be committed, for every such offence, have and receive, on his or her bare back, any number of lashes, not exceeding thirty-nine.

XI. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That every justice of the peace of any county wherein such unlawful meetings shall happen, upon his own knowledge, or upon information thereof to him made, within ten days after such offence committed, shall forthwith issue his warrant to apprehend all such persons, who so met or assembled, and cause such offenders to be brought before him, or some other justice of the peace of the said county:—And that every such justice, who shall fail in his duty herein, shall forfeit and pay the sum of fifty shillings, or five hundred pounds of tobacco, for every such offence.

XII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That every sheriff, under-sheriff, or constable, who, upon his or their own knowledge, or upon information thereof to him or them made, of any such unlawful meetings, as aforesaid, shall fail forthwith to endeavour to suppress and disperse the same, and to carry the offenders before some justice of the peace, in order for the said offenders to receive due punishment, the sheriff, for every offence by him committed, shall forfeit and pay the sum of fifty shillings, or five hundred pounds of tobacco: Both which several fines, of fifty shillings, or five hundred pounds of tobacco, herein before-mentioned, shall be to the informer; and may be recovered, with costs, in any court or courts of record within this colony and dominion, by action of debt, bill, plaint or information, wherein no essoin, protection, or wager of law, shall be allowed, or any more than one imparlance. And the under sheriff, or constable, failing to perform his or their duty herein, for every offence by him or them committed, shall forfeit and pay twenty shillings, or two hundred pounds of tobacco, to the informer: To be recovered, with costs, before any justice of the peace of the county where such offence shall be committed.

XIII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That if any negro, mulatto, or Indian slave, shall at any time hereafter presume to come and be upon the plantation of any person or persons whatsoever, without the leave or consent, in writing, or his or her master, owner, or overseer, and without the consent and approbation of the owner or overseer of such plantation, it shall and may be lawful to and for the master, owner, or overseer of any such plantation or quarter, to correct and give such slave or slaves ten lashes, well laid on, on his or her bare back, for every such offence.

XIV. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That no negro, mulatto, or Indian whatsoever; (except as is hereafter excepted,) shall hereafter presume to keep, or carry any gun, powder, shot, or any club, or other weapon whatsoever, offensive or defensive; but that every gun, and all powder and shot, and every such club or weapon. as aforesaid, found or taken in the hands, custody, or possession of any such negro, mulatto, or Indian, shall be taken away; and upon due proof thereof made, before any justice of the peace of the county where such offence shall be committed, be forfeited

to the seisor and informer, and moreover, every such negro, mulatto, or Indian, in whose hands, custody, or possession, the same shall be found, shall, by order of the said justice, have and receive any number of lashes, not exceeding thirty-nine, well laid on, on his or her bare back, for every such offence.

XV. *Provided nevertheless*, That every free negro, mulatto, or indian, being a house-keeper, or listed in the militia, may be permitted to keep one gun, powder, and shot; and that those who are not house-keepers, nor listed in the militia aforesaid, who are now possessed of any gun, powder, shot, or any weapon, offensive or defensive, may sell and dispose thereof, at any time before the last day of October next ensuing. And that all negros, mullattos, or indians, bond or free, living at any frontier plantation, be permitted to keep and use guns, powder, and shot, or other weapons, offensive or defensive; having first obtained a licence for the same, from some justice of the peace of the county wherein such plantations lie; the said licence to be had and obtained, upon the application of such free negros, mullattos, or indians, or of the owner or owners of such as are slaves; any thing herein contained to the contrary thereof, in any wise, notwithstanding.

XVI. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That if in dispersing of any unlawful assemblies, pursuit of rebels or conspirators, or seizing the arms and ammunition of such as are prohibited by this act, to keep the same, any slave shall happen to be killed or destroyed, the court of the county where such slave shall be killed, upon application of the owner of such slave, and due proof thereof made, shall put a valuation in money, upon such slave so killed, and certify such valuation to the next session of assembly, that the said assembly may be enabled to make a suitable allowance thereupon to the master or owner of such slave,

XVII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That no negro, mulatto, or indian slaves, shall be set free, upon any pretence whatsoever, except for some meritorious services, to be adjudged and allowed by the governor and council, for the time being, and a licence thereupon first had and obtained.—And that, where any slave shall be set free by his master or owner, otherwise than is herein before directed, it shall and may be lawful for the churchwardens of the parish, wherein such negro, mulatto, or indian, shall reside for the space of one month, next after his or her being set free, and they are hereby authorized and required, to take up, and sell the said negro, mulatto, or indian, as slaves, at the next court held for the said county, by public outcry; and that the monies arising by such sale, shall be applied to the use of the said parish, by the vestry thereof.

XVIII. And forasmuch, as the act passed in the fourth year of the reign of her late Majesty Queen Anne, intituled, *An act concerning servants and slaves*, whereby power is given to the county court, to order the dismembring of incorrigible runaways and other slaves, hath not had the intended effect, by reason of some misconstructions of the powers thereby granted, *Be it enacted*, That where any slaves shall hereafter be found notoriously guilty of going abroad in the night, or running away, and lying out, and cannot be reclaimed from such disorderly courses, by the common methods of punishment, it shall and may be lawful, to and for the court of the county, upon complaint and proof thereof to them made, by the owner of such slave, to order and direct every such slave to be punished, by dismembring, or any other way, not touching life, as the said county court shall think fit.

XIX. And, for preventing all doubts which may arise, upon the construction of this, or any other act of assembly of this colony, touching the death of slaves under correction, or lawful punishment, *Be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That if any slave shall happen to die by means of such dismembering, by order of the county court, or for or by reason of any stroke or blow given, during his or her correction; by his or her owner, for any offence by such slave committed, or for or by reason of any accidental blow whatsoever, given by such owner; no person concerned in such dismembering correction, or accidental homicide, shall undergo any prosecution or punishment for the same; unless upon examination before the county court, it shall be proved, by the oath of one lawful and credible witness, at the least, that such slave was killed wilfully, maliciously, or designedly; neither shall any person whatsoever, who shall be indicted for the murder of any slave, and upon trial, shall be found guilty only of manslaughter, incur any forfeiture or punishment for such offence or misfortune.

XX. *Provided always*, That nothing herein contained, shall be construed, deemed, or taken, to defeat or barr the action of any person or persons, whose slave or slaves shall happen to be killed by any other person whatsoever, or whose slaves shall happen to die thro' the negligence of any surgeon, or other person, undertaking the dismembering or cure of such slave, liable to such punishment by this act: But that all and every owner or owners of such slave or slaves, shall and may bring his or her action, for recovery of damages for such slave or slaves so killed or dying, as if this act had never been made.

XXI. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That all free negros, mullattos, or indians, (except tributary indians to this government) male and female, above the age of sixteen years, and all wives of such negros, mullattos, or indians, (except before excepted) shall be deemed and accounted tithables; any law, custom, or usage, to the contrary, in any wise, notwithstanding.

XXII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That where any female mullatto, or indian, by law obliged to serve 'till the age of thirty or thirty-one years, shall during the time of her servitude, have any child born of her body, every such child shall serve the master or mistress of such mullatto or indian, until it shall attain the same age the mother of such child was obliged by law to serve unto.

XXIII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted and declared*, That no free negro, mullatto, or indian whatsoever, shall hereafter have any vote at the election of burgesses, or any other election whatsoever.

XXIV. *And be it further enacted*, That the churchwardens of each parish, within this his Majesty's colony and dominion, at the charge of their parish, shall provide a true copy of this act, and cause entry thereof to be made in the register book of each parish; and shall, on some Sunday in the months of April and October, yearly, after divine service ended, at the door of every church and chapel in their parish, publicly read the same. And the sheriff of each county shall, at the court held for the county, in the months of June or July, yearly, publish this act, at the door of the courthouse of the said county. And every churchwarden and sheriff making default herein, shall, for each time so offending, forfeit and pay five hundred pounds of tobacco, to the informer: To be recovered, with costs, by action of debt, in any court or courts of record within this colony and dominion. And the minister or reader making default herein, shall, for each time so offending, forfeit and pay two hundred pounds of tobacco, to the informer: To be

recovered, with costs, before any justice of the peace of the county wherein such default shall happen.

XXV. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted,* That the act of assembly, made in the fourth year of the reign of our late sovereign lady Queen Anne, intituled, An act for the speedy and easy prosecution of Slaves committing capital crimes, be from henceforth repealed and made void, to all intents, constructions, and purposes.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 115; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 4:126-134. See also *ibid.*, 6:40-42 (1748) and *ibid.*, 7:519-520 (1762).

1723—Response of Richard West, the Lords Commissioners' Legal Council

Kathleen Brown summarizes Richard West's reaction to the 1723 statute that placed numerous restrictions on Virginia's slave and free black populations.

Although all of these laws departed from English legal precedent to some degree, the disenfranchisement of free men under the clause, "No free negro, mulatto or indian shall vote at any election," constituted the 1723 Assembly's boldest legal innovation. Reviewing the law soon after its passage, the Lords Commissioners' legal council Richard West found the abridgment of rights unacceptable. "Altho I agree that Slaves are to be treated in such a manner as the proprietors of them (having a regard to their number) may think necessary for their security," wrote West, "Yet I cannot see why one *freeman* should be used worse than another meerly upon account of his Complexion."

West's main objection to the clause concerned the potential injustice to free men of the propertyholding class. "To vote at Elections of Officers...is incident to every freeman who is possessed of a Certain proportion of property," insisted West. "When severall Negroes have merited their Freedom and obtained it and by their industry have acquired that proportion of property so that the above mentioned incedentall Rights of liberty are actually vested in them," West argued, there was no legal ground for excluding them from political rights.

West's articulation of this objection revealed the degree to which Virginia's planters had departed from English tradition to embrace race, rather than class, as the mainspring of social control. In a strongly worded statement, West condemned the statute:

For my own part I am perswaded that it cannot be just by a generall Law without any allegation of Crime or other demerit whatsoever to strip all free persons of black Complexion (some of whom may perhaps be of Considerable substance) from those Rights which are so justly valuable to every Freeman.

The Lords Commissioners failed to take immediate action upon West's arguments, however, and, in the absence of any dissent in Virginia, the law remained unchallenged for another twelve years.

Source: Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, pp. 219-220.

1724—Questionnaire of Edmund Gibson

Slave owners in colonial Virginia had mixed feelings about introducing Christianity to their slaves: many feared that the egalitarian message of the Bible would make their workers unruly; others were indifferent to the spiritual needs of African-Americans; still others saw to it that their slaves received religious instruction. Slaves' reaction to Christianity also varied. Many were baptized and instructed in the Anglican way; others were unmoved by the formality of the Anglican church or unable to reconcile the Christian message with slavery.

Edmund Gibson, the Bishop of London, took an active role in the Anglican Church's missionary efforts. One of the inquiries in his 1724 questionnaire to Virginia clergy was "Are there any Infidels, bond or free, within your Parish; and what means are used for their conversion?" Only one or two ministers who responded to the questionnaire told Gibson that they did not try to convert the slaves owned by their parishoners.

John Warden of Lawns Creek, Surry County: "some masters will have their slaves baptised and others will not, by reason that they will not be sureties for them in Baptism. If the slaves live not afar off, they come to Church and Chappel."

Bartholomew Yates, Middlesex County: "some few [slaves] that have been born here when of teachable disposition and their Masters allowing them time to come to me, upon instruction and examination, have been publicly baptised and also some children of such who have had baptism some also every Sunday attend at Church."

John Cargill, Southwark Parish, Surry County: "As to the negro Slaves there are some of their Masters on whom I do prevail to have them baptised and taught, but not many."

Alexander Scott, Stafford County: "the Children of [Negro Slaves] and those of them that can speak and understand the English Language we instruct and baptise if permitted by their Masters."

James Blair, Bruton Parish: "I encourage the baptising & catechising of such of them as understand English [older children, adults?], and exhort their Masters to bring them to Church and baptise the infant slaves when the Master or mistress become sureties."

Source: Perry, *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church*, 1:261-318.

May 1726—ACT IV. *An Act for amending the Act concerning Servants and Slaves; and for the further preventing the clandestine transportation of Persons out of this Colony*

The legislators amended the provisions for taking up runaway slaves who would not or could not state the name of their owner. A runaway who would not provide a master's name was to be held for two months in the jail in the county in which he or she was captured. If an owner did not claim a slave within two months, the enslaved person was to be taken to the Public Goal in Williamsburg. The public gaoler could hire out these slaves with the permission of the General Court or the nearest county court. The money from any hired slave would be used to pay for the costs of imprisonment.

III. *Be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor, Council, and Burgesses, of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same,* That from and after the publication of this act, all and every negro, or other person, who shall be taken up, and brought before any justice of the peace, and cannot speak English, or through obstinacy, will not declare the name of his or her owner, such justice shall, in such case, and he is hereby required, by warrant under his hand, to commit the said negro, slave, or runaway, to the goal of the county wherein he or she shall be taken up; any former act, usage, or custom, to the contrary, in any wise, notwithstanding.

IV. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That the sheriff, or under-sheriff of the county, to whose custody the said runaway shall be committed, shall forthwith cause notice in writing of such commitment, to be set upon the courthouse door of the said county, and there continued, during the space of two months; in which notice, a full description of such runaway, and his cloathing, shall be particularly set down; and shall cause a copy of such notice to be sent to the clerk or reader of each church or chapel within his county: Every which said clerk or reader is hereby required to make publication thereof, by setting up the same in some open and convenient place near the said church or chapel, on every Lord's day, during the space of two months from the date thereof. And every sheriff failing to give such notice as herein is directed, shall forfeit and pay five hundred pounds of tobacco. And every clerk or reader failing to publish such notice as is before directed, shall for every such offence, forfeit and pay two hundred pounds of tobacco: Which said several forfeitures shall and may be recovered, with costs, in any court or courts of record in this dominion, by action of debt, bill, plaint, or information; where no essoin, privilege, or protection, shall be allowed: The one moiety whereof shall go to our sovereign lord the king, his heirs and successors, for and towards the better support of this government, and the contingent charges thereof; and the other moiety to the person who shall sue for the same.

V. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That if within the space of two months, the owner of any such negro, slave, or runaway, cannot be known, or doth not claim the same, that the sheriff of the said county, to whose custody such runaway shall be committed, shall cause the said runaway to be delivered to the next constable, to be by him conveyed to the next constable, and so from constable to constable, to the public goal of this colony, after such manner, and to receive such punishment, as in the said first recited act, is mentioned and directed.

VIII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That when any negro, or runaway, as aforesaid, shall be delivered to the keeper of the public goal of this country, by virtue of this act, and his master or owner cannot be known, it shall and may be lawful for the keeper of the said goal, upon his application to the general court, or the

nearest county court to the said goal, with the consent of either of the said courts, to let the said negro or runaway to hire to any person or persons whom they shall approve of; for such sum or sums of money, or quantity of tobacco, and for such term or time as they shall direct; and that out of the money or tobacco arising by such hire, all fees relating to the taking up, imprisonment, and conveying to goal, and charges of maintaining such negro or runaway, shall be first paid and discharged, and the overplus (if any shall be) disposed of, as such court or courts (who shall order the said negro or runaway to be let out to hire) shall direct.

IX. *Provided always*, That when the owner of such runaway shall demand the same, the person to whom such negro or runaway shall be let out to hire, shall forthwith deliver the same into custody of the keeper of the public goal; and shall then also pay the hire, in proportion to the time the said runaway hath served: And the keeper of the said goal shall deliver the said runaway to his master or owner, he or she paying down all fees and charges of taking up, imprisonment, conveying to goal, and maintaining such runaway, in case the hire received for the service of the said runaway be not sufficient to satisfy the same.

X. *Provided also*, That when the keeper of the said public goal shall, by the direction of such court or courts, as aforesaid, let out any such negro or runaway to hire to any person or persons whatsoever, the said keeper shall, at the time of his delivery, cause a strong iron collar to be put on the neck of such negro or runaway, with the letters (P. G.) stamped thereon; and that thereafter, the said keeper shall not be answerable for any escape of the said negro or runaway.

XII. *Be it enacted*, That from and after the publication of this act, the fees and allowances of the said sheriffs and goalers, be as follow, that is to say: For the commitment of every such negro, or runaway, to any county goal, the sheriff shall be paid for his fee, the sum of one shilling, current money, or ten pounds of tobacco; and for the keeping and maintaining him or her in goal for every twenty-four hours, the sum of six pence, or five pounds of tobacco; and for his or her releasement, one shilling, or ten pounds of tobacco:—And that the keeper of the public goal, for the commitment of every such negro or runaway, shall be paid the sum of two shillings, current money, or twenty pounds of tobacco; and for his or her keeping and maintaining in goal, for every twenty-four hours, the sum of six pence of like money, or five pounds of tobacco; and for his or her releasement, the sum of two shillings of like money, or twenty pounds of tobacco, and no more. And if any sheriff, in any county of this dominion, or the keeper of the public goal, shall demand and take any greater fee or allowance, than is hereby before appointed and allowed, for the services and maintenance aforesaid, or any of them, he or they so offending, shall, for every such offence, forfeit and pay to the party aggrieved, the sum of twenty shillings; and shall also refund and pay back to such party, all and every sum of money or tobacco which such sheriff or goaler shall receive and take, over and above the fees and allowances herein before appointed: Which said forfeiture of twenty shillings, shall and may be recovered before any justice of the peace of the county where such offence shall be committed.

XVI. *And be it further enacted*, That where any such negro or runaway shall be committed to the public goal of the country, by virtue of this act, whose owners cannot be

known, as aforesaid, and shall happen to die there; in such case, all charges of the taking up, keeping, and maintaining the said negro or runaway in goal, and all other charges relating thereto, shall be defraied by the public.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 4:168-173. See also *ibid.*, 6:44-48.

February 1727—ACT XI. *An Act to explain and amend the Act, For declaring the Negro, Mulatto, and Indian Slaves, within this Dominion, to be Real Estate; and part of one other Act, intituled, An Act for the distribution of Intestates Estates, declaring Widows Rights to their deceased Husbands Estates; and for securing Orphans Estates*

This act clarified several provisions in the 1705 statute that declared slaves to be real estate. A widow had nine months to renounce her husband's will if she was not satisfied with her legacy. Also, a widow would receive her dower in her husband's slaves after she gave up her claim to the rest of his estate.

I. WHEREAS the act, made in the fourth year of the reign of the late queen Anne, declaring the Negro, Mulatto, and Indian Slaves, within this Dominion, to be Real Estate, hath been found by experience very beneficial for the preservation and improvement of estates in this colony, yet many mischiefs have arisen, from the various constructions, and contrary judgments and opinions, which have been made and given thereupon, whereby many people have been involved in law suits and controversies, which are still like to increase: For remedy whereof, and to the end, the said act may be fully and clearly explained and amended,

XI. And whereas, the true design of the said act, and the policy thereof, was and is, to preserve slaves for the use and benefit of such persons to whom lands and tenements shall descend, be given, or devised, for the better improvement of the same; which cannot be done, according to the custom and method of improving estates in this colony, without slaves; and therefore it may be very advantageous to estates, to establish a method for settling slaves, and their increase, so as they may go and descend with lands and tenements: to which end,

XII. *Be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That it shall and may be lawful for any person or persons whatsoever, by deed executed in his or their life times, or by his or their last will and testament, wherein any lands and tenements shall hereafter be settled, conveyed, or devised, in fee tail, or for life or lives, to settle, convey, or devise any slave or slaves; and in such deed or last will, to declare that such slave or slaves, and their increase, so long as any of them shall be living, shall descend, pass, and go, as part of the freehold to such person or persons to whom such lands and tenements shall be so conveyed or devised, and to whom the same shall from time to time descend and come; and such declaration shall be good and effectual in law, to annex such slave or slaves to the freehold and inheritance of such lands and tenements, and they, and their increase, so long as any of them shall be living, shall descend, pass, and go, in possession, reversion, and remainder, with such lands and tenements: Or where any person shall, by his deed executed in his life time, or by his last will and testament in writing, settle, convey, or

devise any lands and tenements in fee tail, or for life or lives; and shall, in the same deed or will, settle, convey, or devise any slave or slaves, with the same limitation or limitations with which such lands and tenements shall be so settled, conveyed, and devised, such limitation or limitations shall amount to a declaration of the intent of the party settling, conveying, or devising the same, that the same should be annexed to such lands and tenements, and shall descend, pass, and go therewith, from time to time, as aforesaid.

XIII. And where any person or persons now are, or hereafter shall be, seised of lands or tenements in fee tail, it shall and may be lawful for such person or persons, by deed executed in his or their life times, or by his or their last will and testament, to annex to the same lands and tenements, all or any slave or slaves which such tenant in tail shall during such his estate, purchase, acquire, or be possessed of; and to declare, that such slave or slaves, and their increase, so long as any of them shall be living, shall descend, pass, and go, in possession, reversion, or remainder, as part of the freehold, under the like limitation or limitations with which such lands and tenements are or have been settled, conveyed, or devised: And such declaration shall be as effectual to annex the said slave or slaves, and their increase, to such lands and tenements, as if the same had been settled, conveyed, or devised, by the same deed or will, whereby the estate in the said lands and tenements was at first made and created.

XIV. But forasmuch as the greatest part of the visible estates of the inhabitants of this colony, doth generally consist of slaves, and it may happen in future time, after several descents of slaves so annexed to lands, as aforesaid, that many people may not be acquainted with such settlements, and so creditors may be deceived and hindered in the recovery of just debts: And moreover, to bind the property of slaves, so as they may not be liable to the payment of debts, must lessen, and in process of time, may destroy the credit of the country.

XV. *It is hereby provided and enacted*, That notwithstanding any slave or slaves shall be annexed, as aforesaid, to any lands and tenements settled, conveyed, or devised, in fee tail in possession or remainder, as aforesaid, such slave, or slaves, or their increase, shall be liable to be taken in execution, and sold for the satisfying and paying the just debts of the tenant in tail, for the time being. And such sale shall be good and effectual against him or her, and his or her issue, and all other persons whatsoever, claiming under such settlement.

XVI. *Provided nevertheless*, That if any person shall be hereafter possessed of any slave or slaves, in right of his wife, which shall be so annexed to lands, as aforesaid, such slave or slaves shall not be liable to be taken in execution, and sold for the satisfying any debt of such husband, so as to bar the wife of any right which she may claim under any settlement, made in pursuance of this act, after his death

XXI. *Be it further declared and enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That when any widow shall not be satisfied with the provision made for her by her husband's will, it shall and may be lawful for such widow, within nine months after her husband's death, before the court where such will shall be proved, or by deed executed in the presence of two or more witnesses, to declare, that she will not accept, receive, or take the legacy or legacies to her given and bequeathed, or any part thereof, and will renounce all benefit and advantage which she might claim by such last will: And after such declaration, to

demand and recover her dower of all the slaves whereof her husband died possessed; which she shall enjoy during her natural life: And after her death, or other determination of that estate, the same shall go to the person or persons in whom the property thereof would have vested, in case the dower had not been demanded: And moreover, such widow shall have such share of the personal estate of her husband, as by the said act is directed. But if such declaration be not made within the time before limited, she shall be forever barr'd to claim any other part of her husband's estate, than shall be given or bequeathed by such last will.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 4:222-228; see also *ibid.*, 4:281-287.

June 28, 1729—James Blair to Edmund Gibson

The Bishop of London, Edmund Gibson, learned that ministers tended to concentrate their attention on the bond laborers born in Virginia or those individuals who were imported to the colony at a young age. James Blair's June 28, 1729 letter to Gibson indicates the process that an adult slave went through before he or she was baptized.

Your Lo'ps Letter concerning the Instruction of the Negroes has had this good effect, that it has put several Masters and Mistresses upon the Instruction of them. And the Negroes themselves in our Neighbourhood are very desirous to become Christians; and in order to it come and give an Account of the Lords prayer, and the Creed and ten Commandments, and so are baptized and frequent the Church; and the Negro children are now commonly baptized. I doubt not some of the Negroes are sincere Converts; but the far greater part of them little mind the serious part, only are in hopes that they shall meet with so much the more respect, and that some time or other Christianity will help them to their freedom. But I hope their very coming to church will in time infuse into them some better principles than they have had.

Source: James Blair to the Bishop of London in Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, pp. 73-74.

June 1729—Letter of Governor Gooch

Gooch apprised his superiors of the efforts of a group of slaves to form a runaway colony in the mountains of western Virginia. Although they were captured, these slaves briefly succeeded in taking advantage of the movement of westward settlement. The governor also informed colonial authorities that he had purchased and freed an elderly slave in return for disclosure of his treatment for venereal disease. Gooch sought to justify his expenditure by underscoring that the remedy would ultimately contribute to the viability of slavery by curing affected slaves.

Sometime after my Last a number of Negroes, about fifteen, belonging to a new Plantation on the head of James River formed a Design to withdraw from their Master

and to fix themselves in the fastnesses of the neighbouring Mountains: They had found means to get in their possession some Arms & Ammunition, and they took along with them some provisions, their Cloaths, bedding and working Tools; but the Gentleman to whom they belonged with a Party of Men made such a diligent pursuit after them that he soon found them out in their new Settlement, a very obscure place among the Mountains, where they had already begun to clear the Ground, and obliged them after exchanging a shot or two by which one of the Slaves was wounded, to surrender and return back, and so prevented for this time a design which might have proved dangerous to this Country, as is that of the Negroes in Jamaica to the Inhabitants of that Island, Tho' this attempt has happily been defeated, it ought nevertheless to awaken in us some effectual measures for preventing the like hereafter, it being certain that a very small number of Negroes once settled in those Parts, would very soon be encreas'd by the Accession of other Runaways and prove dangerous Neighbours to our Frontier Inhabitants. To prevent this and many other mischiefs I am training and exercising the Militia in the several Counties as the best means to deter our Slaves from endeavouring to make their Escape, and to suppress them if they should.

...

What I have to add I hope will not be unacceptable, since 'tis to inform your Lordships that upon the Bruit of many wonderful Cures performed by a Negro Slave in the most inveterate Venereal Distempers, I thought it might be of use to mankind, if by any fair Method I could prevail upon him to discover to me the Means by which such Cures were effected, which the Negro had for many years practiced in this Country, but kept as a most profound Secrett; as the Fellow is very old, my endeavours were quicken'd lest the Secrett should dye with him: therefore I immediately sent for him, and by good words and a promise of setting him free, he has made an ample discovery of the whole, which is not other than a Decoction of the Root and Barks I have sent over to a Phisitian, that the Colledge may have the opportunity what effect it will have in England; and I flatter myself, by the Ingenuity of the Learned in that Profession, it may be reduced into a better draught than he makes of it, which they tell me is nauseous enough. the difference of Climate may probably cause a difference in its operation; but there is not room to doubt of its being a certain Remedy here, and of singular use among the Negroe's who are frequently tainted with that Disease, (for I made a tryal of the things by the hands of a Surgeon here, before I purchased his freedom, the whole charge of which costs the Government about L60 ster) and is well worth the Price that has been paid for it, since we know how to cure Slaves without the aid of Mercury, who were often ruined by the unskillfulness of the Practitioners this Country affords. At the worst my Lords I hope it will be deemed a laudable Attempt, and be an encouragement for one of Dr. Ratcliffe's travelling Phisitians to take a tour into this part of the World, where there are many valuable discoveries to be made, not to be mett with in France or Italy.

Source: Letter of William Gooch reprinted in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 28 (1920): 299-300, 306.

1730s—Changes in the Slave Population in Virginia

Ira Berlin discusses the transformations that took place in Virginia's slave population during the 1730s as the number of forced immigrants from Africa increased.

The transformation sped forward with increasing velocity in the 1730s. During that decade, the number of forced immigrants averaged over 2,000 per year and sometimes rose to twice that number, as slaves replaced indentured servants not only on large plantations but on smaller units as well. Men and women with filed teeth, plaited hair, and ritual scarification (which slaveowners called “country markings” or “negro markings”) were everywhere to be seen. Their music—particularly their drums—filled the air with sounds that frightened European and European-American settlers, and their pots, pipes, and other material effects left a distinctive mark on the landscape. An Anglican missionary stationed in Delaware found “difficulty of conversing with the Majority of Negroes themselves,” because they have “a language peculiar to themselves, a wild and confused medley of Negro and corrupt English, which makes them very unintelligible except to those who have conversed with them for many years.” The language of black America turned from the creole lingua franca of the Atlantic world to the languages of the African interior—most probably various dialects of Igbo. Whereas Atlantic creoles had beaten on the door of the established churches to gain a modicum of recognition, the new arrivals showed neither interest in nor knowledge of Christianity. Their religious practices—probably polytheistic although sometimes Islamic—were dismissed as idolatry and devil worship by the established clergy, who placed them outside the pale of civilization as most white men and women understood it. Europeans and European-Americans found the manner in which the new arrivals spoke, prayed, married, and buried their dead to be foreign in ways the charter generations were not. Africa had come to the Chesapeake.

The Africanization of slavery marked a sharp deterioration in the conditions of slave life. With an eye for a quick profit, Chesapeake planters imported males and females disproportionately, at a ratio of more than two to one, and by the end of the seventeenth century this sharply skewed sex ratio manifested itself in the plantation population. Such a sexual imbalance made it difficult for the newly arrived to establish families, let alone maintain the deep lineages that had framed so much of their African life. Since planters employed slave women much as they used slave men—dividing the labor force by age and physical ability but rarely by sex—the special needs of women during pregnancy went unaddressed, and this neglect undermined the ability of the slave population to reproduce itself. Moreover, just as direct importation drove birth rates down, it pushed mortality rates up, for the transatlantic journey left transplanted Africans vulnerable to New World diseases. As long as the main source of slaves was the African trade, fertility remained low and mortality high in the Chesapeake. Whereas Anthony and Mary Johnson, like other members of the charter generations, had lived to see their grandchildren, few of the newly arrived Africans would reproduce themselves. Indeed, within a year of their arrival, one-quarter of all “new Negroes,” as they were called, would be dead.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 110-112.

July 20, 1730—James Blair to Edmund Gibson

Blair commented on the knowledge that some Williamsburg-area slaves had of the catechism.

There is a very great number of Negroes lately instructed in the Church-catechism; at least in the Lords prayer, the Apostles Creed and the ten Commandments, and baptized, and great numbers of them frequent the Church. Some allege it makes them prouder, and inspires them with thoughts of freedom; but I take this to be rather a common prejudice than anything else.

Source: James Blair to the Bishop of London in Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, p. 74.

May 28, 1731—Governor Gooch to Edmund Gibson

Gooch informed the Bishop of London about the unrest in Virginia the previous year. The unrest grew out of a rumor that former Governor Spotswood had brought an order from the Crown that would free all Christian slaves. Members of the militia imprisoned the suspected leaders and helped to restore order. However, six weeks later, about 200 enslaved laborers from Norfolk and Princess Anne counties gathered at church and elected officers to lead a rebellion. The four leaders were arrested and executed.

The governor also discussed a court case that involved Mary Aggy, an enslaved woman owned by Ann Marot Sullivant of Williamsburg. The York County Court found Mary Aggy guilty of stealing from her master and sentenced her to hang. When the justices asked her “why sentence of death should not pass agt her for the felony whereof she is found guilty, she thereupon prayed the benefit of the Statute made in the third and fourth years of King William and Queen Mary to her to be allowed; Whereupon the Court being in doubt what Judgmt to render in the premises It is considered that the Indictment agt the prisoner at the Bar, and all the proceedings therein be adjourned into and certified to the Honble the General Court, to the end such Judmt may be given therein, as to the Judges of the sd Court shall seem meet and that in the meantime the prisoner be remanded back to the Goal.” Gooch became interested in her case and entered an application for benefit of clergy for Mary Aggy.

The News in the Papers concerning the Negroes was only from common Report, for my Letters were lost in the Gooch frigate which sailed hence in September last, and have not since been heard of. Numbers of these poor Creatures were taken up in all parts of the Country for their unlawful Meetings and Examined, but no discovery could be made of any formed Design of their Rising, only loose Discourses that an order from His Majesty was brought in by Mr Spotswood to sett all those slaves free that were

Christians, and that the order was Suppressed. A Notion, in their Circumstances, sufficient to incite them to Rebellion, were they Masters of a more peaceable Disposition than generally they have: who the first Author of this Report was, I could never learn, and the wickedness of it will not give me leave to Guess. However, keeping the Militia to their Duty, by Imprisonment and severe whipping of the most Suspected, this Disturbance was very soon Quashed, and until about six weeks afterwards we were easy; when in the Countys of Norfolk & Princess Anne, the Negros, about two hundred of them, had the assurance to assemble on a Sunday whilst the People were at Church, and to chuse from among themselves officers to Command their intended Insurrection, which was to have been put in Execution very soon after; But this Plot being happily discovered, the Ringleaders were brought to a Tryal and four of them, on clear Evidence Convicted, were Executed. By this means they are again very Quiet and Submissive, and I hope convinced that their best way is to rest contented with their condition. But as we could not be too much on our Guard against such desperate Combinations, I ordered the Militia to carry their Arms to Church on Sundays, lest, the same mutinous Spirit returning, they should be siezed by these poor wretches; and this they continued to do for some time, but soon weary of well doing, it is now intirely dropt. What your Lordship observes is of some Masters very true, they use their Negros no better than their Cattle, and I can see no help for it: tho' far the greater Number, having kind masters, live much better than our poor labouring Men in England.

If I am not mistaken, and many others who think as I do are not in the wrong, the following story will Suprize your Lordship, to whose great judgment I submit myself. But before I tell it, I must acquaint your Lordship that our Courts of Justice are, first the General Court, held twice a year, in April & October, in which I and the council sitt judges. Then the County Courts held in each County every Moneth, in which the Justices of the respective Countys are the Judges. In these last Courts by a special Commission of Oyer and Terminer directed to the Justices, all Negros Accused of criminal matters are tried; and by a Law of the Country, not by Jurys, but according to Evidence, the Bench, by putting the Question, finds them guilty or not Guilty.

In one of these Courts, in January last, a Negro woman Slave was tried for stealing; and as I knew her to be a Christian (for not long before she had, upon some pretence, I forget what, sued for her Freedom in the General Court, where she was examined touching her Faith of which she have a tolerable account) I desired a Lawyer to attend to the Tryal, and in case she was found Guilty to inform the Justices that notwithstanding she was a Slave, it was my opinion, as a christian, she was Intitled to the benefit of the Clergy; upon which after some little debate, for it was never Inquired into before, the Question was put, and the judges were divided, so it was agreed to be deferr'd until another and a fuller Court. When a report was made to me of their Proceedings, and fearing it might go against her if I left to be determined there, I advised with our ablest Lawyers, and from the county court had it Adjourned into the General Court, resolving to have this Matter argued in the most public manner by our best Lawyers, as a thing of great consequence, by which all the courts in the country for the future should govern themselves, and not doubting but it would be carried in favour of the Christian though a black one; But when the Day of hearing came, notwithstanding four out of five of the Gentlemen learned in the Law, of which number the King's Attorney General was one, gave it as their opinion, supported by proper Arguments, that she had a Right to plead the

benefit of that statute, when I put the Question, we were divided here too, six and six; and now it rests to be determined by the opinion of the Sollicitor & Attorney General in England, which I shall send for as soon as our lawyers have drawn up a State of the Case as they have directions to do, with the sense of the Laws of this Country, and political reasons for and against it. But I can assure your Lordship that there is no Law against it, if there is, I think it ought to be repealed: and for political reasons, they are of equal force against white as black People being Christians. I shant trouble your Lordship with particulars, but thought it my Duty to acquaint your Lordship with it, not knowing whether M^r Commissary will do so or not, who was one of the judges.

Source: York County Orders and Wills (17) 113, (November 7, 1730), 114 (November 16, 1730), 123-124 (November 28, 1730); *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 32 (1924): 322-325.

Part III—Planters Intensify the Work of Slaves and Legislators Continue to Restrict the Actions of Slaves and Free Blacks

Confined to the plantation, African slaves faced a new harsh work regimen as planters escalated the demands they placed on those who worked the tobacco fields. With the decline of white servitude, slaves could no longer take refuge in the standards established for English servants. During the eighteenth century, slaves worked more days and longer hours, under closer supervision and with greater regimentation, than servants ever had in the seventeenth. Although the process of production changed but little during the first third of the eighteenth century, slaveholders reduced the number of holidays to three: Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. Saturday became a full workday, and many slaves worked Sunday as well. Planters shortened or eliminated the slaves' mid-day break. In many places, planters extended the workday into the evening, requiring that slaves grind corn and chop wood for their masters on their own time. Winter, previously a slack season, became filled with an array of tasks, including grubbing stumps, cleaning pastures, and repairing buildings. Shorter winter days did not save slaves from the new regimen, as some planters required that they work at night, often by firelight.

Although they worked harder and longer than had English servants, African slaves rarely received equivalent food, shelter, and medical attention. The customary rights accorded English workers lost their meaning as the field force became increasingly African. Slaves might protest, but their appeals stopped at the plantation's borders. Whereas slaveholders in the seventeenth century had petitioned the courts to discipline unruly slaves, in the eighteenth century they assumed near sovereignty over their plantations. The masters' authority was rarely questioned, and, unlike white servants, African slaves had no court of last resort.

...

As planters consolidated their power, they no longer looked at themselves as mere patrons of their slaves and other subordinates, whose favors might be extended in return

for loyalty and labor. From their new place atop Chesapeake society, planters began to spin out a vision of social relations that emphasized deference and authority. The creation of the plantation regime transformed patronage into paternalism, and a new sense of mastership emerged. The weight of tending numerous dependents reshaped the planter's self-image as the metaphorical fathers, whose benevolence could elevate those who accepted their rule and whose harsh retribution would humble those who challenged it. "I must take care to keep all my people to their Duty, to see all the Springs in motion and make everyone draw his equal Share to carry the Machine forward," wrote William Byrd in 1726. The vision of themselves as prime movers, fathers writ large, became the foundation of the planters' world.

The growth of the paternalist ideology meant many things for slaves, but its first meaning was work. Regimented labor was all-encompassing. During the seventeenth century, few planters had owned more than one or two laborers, and most had worked in the field alongside their slaves and servants in a manner that necessarily promoted close interactions. African importation and the general increase in the size of holdings permitted planters—along with their wives and children—to withdraw from the fields. They hired overseers to supervise their slaves and sometimes employed stewards to supervise their overseers, dividing their workforce by age, sex, and ability. There were few economies of scale in tobacco culture, and planters – believing close supervision increased production—kept work units small by dividing their holdings into "quarters." But the small units rarely meant slaves worked alongside their owners. To squeeze more labor from their workers, planters also reorganized their workforce into squads or gangs, often placing agile young workers at the head of each gang. Rather than work at their own pace, slaves found their toil subject to minute inspection, as planters or their minions monitored the numerous tasks that tobacco cultivation necessitated. The demands placed on slaves to work longer and harder grew steadily throughout the eighteenth century as planters—particularly in the older, settled areas—encountered diminishing yields and rising production costs. Slaves suffered as planters prospered from the increased productivity, and the size of slave-grown crops far exceeded those previously brought to market.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 116-117, 118-119.

May 1732—ACT VII. *An Act for settling some doubts and differences of opinion, in relation to the benefit of Clergy; for allowing the same to Women; and taking away of Reading; and to disable certain Persons, therein mentioned, to be Witnesses*

This statute extended the privilege of benefit of clergy to women and, with some limitations, to slaves. At the same time, the legislation placed a further restriction on **all** people of color—a black or Native American, whether free or enslaved, could only provide testimony in the case of a slave accused of a capital offense.

IV. And whereas a question hath lately arisen, touching the right of negros, to the benefit of clergy: For the determination thereof, *Be it further enacted*, That when any negro, mulatto, or Indian whatsoever, shall be convicted of any offence within the benefit

of clergy, judgment of death shall not be given against him or her, upon such conviction; but he or she, shall be burnt in the hand in open court, by the jailor, and suffer such other corporal punishment, as the court shall think fit to inflict; except where such negro, mulatto, or Indian shall be convicted of manslaughter, or the felonious breaking and entering in the day-time any house, and taking from thence any goods or chattels whatsoever, to the value of five shillings sterling; and where he or she hath once had the benefit of this act; and in those cases, such negro, mulatto, or Indian, shall suffer death, and be excluded from the benefit of this act.

V. And whereas negros, mulattos, and Indians, have lately been frequently allowed to give testimony as lawful witnesses in the general court, and other courts of this colony, when they have professed themselves to be christians, and been able to give some account of the principles of the christian religion: But forasmuch as they are people of such base and corrupt natures, that the credit of their testimony cannot be certainly depended upon, and some juries have altogether rejected their evidence, and others have given full credit thereto: For preventing the mischiefs that may possibly happen by admitting such precarious evidence,

VI. *Be it further enacted*, That no negro, mulatto, or indian, either a slave or free, shall hereafter be admitted in any court of this colony, to be sworn as a witness, or give evidence in any cause whatsoever, except upon the trial of a slave, for a capital offence; in which case they shall be allowed to give evidence, in the manner directed by one act of assembly, made in the ninth year of the reign of the late king George, intituled, An Act directing the trial of Slaves committing Capital Crimes; and for the more effectual punishing Conspiracies and Insurrections of them; and for the better government of Negros, Mulattos, and Indians, bond or free.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 4:326-327.

May 18, 1736—Governor Gooch Responds to the Lords Commissioners

After a belated review of Richard West's objections to the restrictions placed on free blacks in 1723, the Lords Commissioners asked Gooch for an explanation of the legislation. Kathleen Brown discusses Gooch's reply in the following selection.

Gooch explained that "free Negroes and Mulattoes were much suspected" to have been involved in the 1722 conspiracy, noting that this "will for ever be the case." He admitted, however, that "there could be no legal Proof, so as to Convict them." Instead, he found justification for the law in the presumptions of free black people to equality with white freemen:

Such was the Insolence of the Free Negroes at that time, that the next Assembly thought it necessary, not only to make the meetings of slaves very Penal, but to fix a perpetual Brand upon Free Negroes and Mulattos by excluding them from that great Priviledge of a Freeman.

He also observed a central assumption of the legal restrictions, that free blacks and mulattoes “always did, and ever will adhere to and favour the slaves.”

Gooch then offered a stunning summary of white attitudes toward free black people in which class, illegitimate birth, and the taint of slavery all factored in their inferior status:

[The] design, which I must think a good one, [is] to make the free Negros sensible that a distinction ought to be made between their offspring and the Descendants of an Englishman, with whom they never were to be accounted Equal. This, I confess, may seem to carry an air of Severity to such as are unacquainted with the Nature of Negros, and the Pride of a manumitted slave, who looks on himself immediately on his acquiring his freedom to be as good a man as the best of his Neighbours, but especially if he is descended of a white Father or Mother, lett them be of what mean Condition soever; and as most of them are the Bastards of some of the worst of our imported servants and convicts, it seems no ways Impolitick, as such for discouraging that kind of Copulation, as to preserve a decent Distinction between them and their Betters, to leave this mark on them, until time and Education has changed the Indication of their spurious Extraction, and made some Alteration in their morals.

Source: Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*, p. 221.

July 17, 1736—William Byrd II to the Earl of Egmont

Byrd II informed the Earl of Egmont that he supported an end to the importation of slaves into Virginia. Byrd’s reasons for his decision include the negative influence of slavery on whites and the possibility of slave uprisings. The tone of this letter is in contrast to the letter Byrd wrote to the Earl of Arrery in 1726 that appears in the “Daily Life” section of this resource book.

Byrd II did not mention that he owned enough slaves to tend the fields on his plantation, and did not need to import additional laborers. Byrd II left the majority of his estate to his son, William Byrd III, when he died in August 1744. Entries that Byrd III made in his 1757-1758 Memorandum Book indicate that he had 605 slaves: seventy slaves at Westover, 272 at Roanoke, and 263 at the Falls Plantation.

Your Lord’s opinion concerning Rum and Negros is certainly very just, and your excludeing both of them from Your Colony of Georgia will be very happy

I wish my Lord we could be blest with the same Prohibition. They import so many Negros hither, that I fear this Colony will some time or other be confirmd by the Name of New Guinea. I am sensible of many bad consequences of multiplying these Ethiopians amongst us. They blow up the pride, and ruin the Industry of our White People, who seing a Rank of poor Creatures below them, detest work for fear it should make them look like Slaves. Then that poverty which will ever attend upon Idleness,

disposes them as much to pilfer as it dos the Portuguese, who account it much more like a Gentleman to steal, than to dirty their hands with Labour of any kind.

Another unhappy Effect of Many Negros is the necessity of being severe. Numbers make them insolent, and then foul Means must do what fair will not. We have however nothing like the Inhumanity here that is practiced in the Islands, and God forbid we ever shoud. But these base Tempers require to be rid with a tort Rein, or they will be apt to throw their Rider. Yet even this is terrible to a good naturd Man, who must submit to be either a Fool or a Fury. And this will be more our unhappy case, the more Negros are increast amongst us.

But these private mischeifs are nothing if compard to the publick danger. We have already at least 10,000 Men of these descendants of Ham fit to bear Arms, and their Numbers increase every day as well by birth as Importation. And in case there shoud arise a Man of desperate courage amongst us, exasperated by a desperate fortune, he might with more advantage than Cataline kindle a Servile War. Such a man might be dreadfully mischeivous before any opposition could be formd against him, and tinge our Rivers as wide as they are with blood, besides the Calamity which woud be brought upon us by such an Attempt, it woud cost our Mother Country many a fair Million to make us as profitable as we are at present.

It were therefore worth the consideration of a British Parliament, My Lord, to put an end to this unchristian Traffick of makeing Merchandize of Our Fellow Creatures. At least the farther Importation of them in Our Colonys shoud be prohibited lest they prove as troublesome and dangerous everywhere, as they have been lately in Jamaica, where besides a vast expence of Mony, they have cost the lives of many of his Majesty's Subjects. We have mountains in Virginia too, to which they may retire as safely, and do as much mischeif as they do in Jamaica. All these matters duly considerd, I wonder the Legislature will Indulge a few ravenous Traders to the danger of the Publick safety, and such Traders as woud freely sell their Fathers, their Elder Brothers, and even the Wives of their bosomes, if they coud black their faces and get anything by them.

Source: William Byrd III Memorandum Book, 1757-1758 (CWF Microfilm M-97); Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4:131-132.

November 1738—ACT II. *An Act, for the better Regulation of the Militia*

Governor Gooch's August 1736 address to the Burgesses reflects the uneasiness that lingered in Virginia after the 1730 slave unrest and rebellion. Gooch told the Burgesses that he believed that the militia needed to have stronger regulations. More stringent rules would "render it more powerful for Preventing Insurrections of Slaves; and also, the making of some Provision for the Ease of poor House-keepers, who are unable to purchase Arms for themselves. Such a Bill deserves your Attention, when so many Negros are brought into the Country; and I earnestly offer it to your Consideration." The November 1738 statute established a system of slave patrols.

VIII. And further, it shall and may be lawful, for the chief officer of the militia, in every county, to order all persons listed therein, to go armed to their respective parish churches; and some time before the tenth of June yearly, to appoint an officer, and four men, of the militia, at such times and seasons as he shall think proper, to patrol, and visit all negro quarters, and other places suspected of entertaining unlawful assemblies of slaves, servants, or other disorderly persons. And such patrollers shall have full power and authority, to take up any such slaves, servants, or disorderly persons, so as aforesaid unlawfully assembled, or any other, strolling about from one plantation to another, without a pass from his or her master, mistress, or overseer, and to carry them before the next justice of the peace; who is to order every such slave, servant, stroller, or other disorderly person, as aforesaid, to receive any number of lashes, not exceeding twenty, on his or her bare back, well laid on: And in case one company of patrollers shall not be sufficient, to order more companies, consisting of the same number. And such patrollers shall be exempted from attendance at private musters, and from the payment of all public, county, and parish levies, for their own persons, for those years in which they shall be employed in that service.

Source: McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1727-1740*, p. 243; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 5:16-17, 19, 22-23. See also McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, 4:383, 470-471 (Gooch's proclamation of October 29, 1736—"A Proclamation for the more effectual putting in Execution the Laws concerning the Militia: And for preventing the unlawful Concourse of Negroes, and other slaves").

1740 to 1750—Estimated Population of the Chesapeake Colonies (in Thousands)					
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Year	Maryland	Virginia	Total	Total	Total
			Whites	Blacks	Population
1740	116.1	180.4	212.5	84.0	296.5
1750	141.1	236.7	227.2	150.6	377.8

Source: McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, p. 136.

October 1748—ACT XIV. <i>An Act concerning Servants, and Slaves</i>

The colonial leaders consolidated all of the eighteenth-century legislation that focused on runaway servants and slaves in this statute. They included a new requirement—the keeper of the Public Gaol had to place an advertisement that described a runaway slave (and his or her clothes) in the <i>Virginia Gazette</i> . The legislators also proscribed

punishment for a white person who purchased goods from a slave without the permission of his or her master.

The King disallowed this statute in 1752.

X. And that no person whatsoever shall buy, sell, or receive of, to or from any servant, or slave, any coin or commodity whatsoever, without the leave or consent of the master or owner of such servant, or slave: And if any person shall presume to deal with any servant, or slave, without such leave or consent, he or she so offending, shall be imprisoned one calendar month, without bail or mainprize, and then remain in prison, until he or she give sufficient security, in the sum of ten pounds current money, for the good behaviour for one year following, wherein a second offence shall be a breach of the bond; and moreover, such offender shall forfeit and pay four times the value of the thing so bought, sold, or received, to the master or owner of such servant, or slave; to be recovered with costs by action upon the case, in any county court of this dominion: And when any person, convict as aforesaid, shall not immediately give such security, for the good behavior, the court shall order thirty nine lashes, well laid on, upon the bare back of such offender, at the common whipping post, and he or she to be thereupon discharged of giving such bond and security.

XIV. And to encourage all persons to take up runaways, *Be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That for every runaway servant, or slave, taken up ten miles, or more, from his or her usual place of abode, the taker up shall be entitled to a reward of two hundred pounds of tobacco; but if under ten, and above five miles, one hundred pounds of tobacco; which shall be paid by the public, in the county where such taker up resides, and be levied by the public upon the master or owner of the runaway: But the taker up shall forthwith bring such runaway before a justice of peace, of the county where he or she shall be taken, to be examined; and if thereupon such servant, or slave, appears to be run away, the justice shall grant the taker up a certificate reciting his or her proper name and surname, the county of his or her residence, the name of the runaway, the proper name and surname of his or her owner, and the county wherein he or she resides, the time and place when and where the runaway was taken, and the distance of miles, in the judgment of the justice, from the house or quarter where the runaway was usually kept; and such justice shall also issue his warrant to the next constable, requiring him to receive such runaway, and give him or her such a number of lashes as the said justice shall think fit to direct, not exceeding thirty nine, and then him or her to convey and deliver to the next constable, and so from constable to constable, until the runaway be delivered to his or her owner or overseer: And every constable to whom such runaway and warrant shall be produced, shall execute the same, and give a receipt upon delivery of the runaway to him, under penalty of forfeiting and paying two hundred pounds of tobacco, to the churchwardens of the parish wherein such constable lives, recoverable with costs, by action of debt, in any county court, to the use of such parish: But the corporal punishment, herein before directed to be given to runaways, shall not deprive the master or owner of any servant, from the satisfaction by this act required to be made by servants for running away.

XV. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That every negroe, or other person, taken up and brought before a justice of peace, and who cannot, or will not, declare the name of his or her owner, shall be committed to the goal of the county where taken, by warrant under the hand of such justice; and the sheriff or goaler, to whose custody such runaway shall be committed, shall forthwith cause notice thereof, and a description of such runaway, and his or her cloathing, to be publickly affixed at the door of the court-house, and there continued two months, if no owner appears within that time: and shall also send a copy thereof to the clerk or reader of every church within his county, to be by him published, and affixed in some open and convenient place near his church, every Sunday during two months after the date thereof, unless the owner appear sooner, under penalty of five hundred pounds of tobacco, on every sheriff or goaler, and two hundred pounds of tobacco on every clerk or reader failing, one moiety to the king, his heirs and successors, for the better support of this government and the contingent charges thereof, the other moiety to the informer, recoverable with costs, by action of debt, or information, in any county court: But such runaway shall be delivered to his or her owner when demanded, he or she satisfying the sheriff's fees, and also two hundred pounds of tobacco, or twenty shillings for the taking up: And that if within two months after such commitment, no owner appears or claims, the sheriff shall deliver such runaway to the next constable, to be conveyed from one constable to another, 'til brought to the public goal of this colony, and delivered to the keeper thereof, by such warrant, and to receive such punishment as is herein before directed; and the said keeper is hereby required to receive such runaway into his safe custody, and give a receipt, and shall also publish advertisement, and a description of the person and cloaths, in the Virginia Gazette, and continue the same three months, if no owner appears; and it shall be lawful for the said keeper, upon application to the nearest county court to the said goal, with consent of the said court, to let such runaway to hire, to any person by them approved of, for money or tobacco, and for such term as shall be by them directed, and out of the hire arising thereby, all charges for taking up, imprisonment, conveying to goal, maintaining, and releasing such runaway, shall be first paid, and the overplus disposed of as such court shall direct; but the said keeper shall cause a strong iron collar, with the letters P. G. stamped thereon, to be put on the neck of every runaway so hired out, at the time of delivering him or her to the person hiring, which shall indemnify him from any escape afterwards: and for every runaway so hired out, the keeper of the said public goal shall be allowed one fee for commitment, and the same for releasement, and no more: and if any such runaway shall happen to die in goal, the reward for taking up, and all other fees incident, shall be defrayed by the public. *Provided always,* That when the owner of such runaway shall demand him or her, the person of whom he or she was hired shall forthwith deliver the same, in to the custody of the keeper of the public goal, and shall then also pay the hire, in proportion to the time the runaway hath served; and if that be not sufficient to satisfy all charges, the owner paying down the residue, shall have him or her delivered.

XVI. But whereas the continuance of runaway slaves some time in the public goal, may induce dishonest persons to pretend themselves owners, and thereby obtain possession to the prejudice of the true owner, *Be it therefore enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That before any such slave shall be delivered by the keeper of the public goal, the person claiming such slave, shall first apply to the court of the county where he

resides, and make proof of his having lost a slave, answering the description published by the said keeper in the Gazette, and obtain certificate thereof, and also there give security to answer all damages if it shall thereafter appear, that the slave he shall thereupon receive from the said keeper, doth really belong to some other person: And on producing such certificate to the keeper aforesaid, and making oath before the mayor, or some other magistrate of Williamsburg, that the slave who shall be there present, is his, or the slave of _____ for whom he appears, it shall be lawful for the said keeper, to deliver the slave so described and sworn to, and not otherwise.

XVII. And if no owner shall appear to claim such runaway, the county court shall, after the charges aforesaid are paid and satisfied, cause such runaway to be sold at public auction, by the sheriff, and the money arising by the sale shall be paid to the treasurer of this colony, and applied by him for the use of the public; but in case the owner shall, at any time afterwards, prove his property in the said runaway, the said treasurer shall repay him or her, the money so received, and be allowed the same in his account.

XX. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That every sheriff, constable, or other officer, charged with conducting runaways, shall be, and is hereby empowered to impress men and horses, where necessary, for the safe conveying the person or persons wherewith he stands charged: And if such officer shall suffer such runaway to escape, he shall be liable to the party grieved, for recovery of damages and costs, at the common law.

XXI. And that the keeper of the public goal may demand and take, for the commitment of every runaway, two shillings current money, or twenty pounds of tobacco, and the same for releasement, and for every twenty four hours keeping him or her in goal, six pence or five pounds of tobacco, and no more: And if he, or any sheriff, or goaler, shall demand and take any other or greater fee, than is, or shall be by law allowed for runaways, he or they so offending shall, for every such offence, forfeit and pay twenty shillings to the party grieved, and shall also refund and pay back all money or tobacco received over and above the legal fees, recoverable with costs before any justice of peace, of the county where such offence shall be committed.

XXVII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That this act shall commence and be in force from and immediately after the tenth day of June, which shall be in the year of our lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty one.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 5:547-548, 550, 552-558.

October 1748—ACT XXXVIII. *An Act directing the trial of Slaves committing capital crimes; and for the more effectual punishing conspiracies and insurrections of them; and for the better government of negroes, mulattoes, and Indians, bond or free*

This act represents the second time that the legislators consolidated legislation concerning slaves and free blacks in the eighteenth century. They focused their attention on slaves who prepared medicines without the permission of their masters. The colonial

leaders also increased the penalty for blacks who provided false testimony and decided to allow a free black to testify against any person of color if the witness was a Christian.

III. And whereas many negroes, under pretence of practising physic, have prepared and exhibited poisonous medicines, by which many persons have been murdered, and others have languished under long and tedious indispositions, and it will be difficult to detect such pernicious and dangerous practices, if they should be permitted to exhibit any sort of medicine, *Be it therefore further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That if any negroe, or other slave, shall prepare, exhibit, or administer any medicine whatsoever, he, or she so offending, shall be adjudged guilty of felony, and suffer death without benefit of clergy.

IV. *Provided always,* That if it shall appear to the court before which such slave shall be tried, that the medicine was not prepared, exhibited, or administered, with an ill intent, nor attended with any bad consequences, such slave shall have the benefit of clergy.

V. *Provided also,* That nothing herein contained shall be construed to extend to any slave or slaves administering medicines, by his, or her master's or mistress's order, in his, or her family, or the family of another, with the mutual consent of the owner of such slave, and the master or mistress of such family.

VII. *Provided always,* That if at such trial the court be divided in opinion, whether the accused be guilty, or not guilty, in that case, he, she, or they, shall be acquitted. *Provided also,* That when judgment of death shall be passed upon any such offender, there shall be ten days, at least, between the time of passing judgment, and the day of execution, except in cases of conspiracy, insurrection, or rebellion.

IX. And to the end such negroes, mulattoes, or Indians, not being christians, as shall be produced as evidences, on the trial of any slave for a capital crime, may be under the greater obligation to declare the truth, *It is hereby further enacted,* That where any such negroe, mulattoe, or Indian, shall be found, upon due proof made, or pregnant circumstances appearing to any county court of this colony, to have given a false testimony, every such offender shall, without further trial, be ordered by the said court to have one ear nailed to the pillory, and there to stand for the space of one hour, and then the said ear to be cut off, and thereafter the other ear nailed in like manner, and cut off at the expiration of one other hour, and moreover, to receive thirty nine lashes on his, or her bare back, well laid on, at the public whipping post; and at every such trial of slaves for capital offences, the person first named in the commission, then sitting, shall, before the examination of any negro, mulattoe, or Indian, not being a christian, charge such evidence to declare the truth; which charge shall be in the words following, *to wit.*

You are brought hither as a witness, and by the direction of the law I am to tell you, before you give your evidence, that you must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and that if it be found hereafter, that you tell a lie, and give false testimony in this matter, you must for so doing, have both your ears nailed to the pillory, and cut off, and receive thirty nine lashes on your bare back, well laid on, at the common whipping post.

XI. And for preventing the mischiefs that may happen by the corrupt and precarious evidence of negroes, mulattoes, and indians, if they should be admitted as lawful witnesses in courts of justice, *It is hereby further enacted*, That no negroe, mulattoe, or indian, whether a slave, or free, shall be admitted in any court of record, or before any magistrate of this colony, to be sworn as a witness, or give evidence in any cause whatsoever, except upon the trial of a slave for a capital offence.

XII. *Provided nevertheless*, That any free negroe, mulattoe, or Indian, being a christian, shall be admitted in any court, or before a justice of peace, to be sworn as a witness, and give evidence, against or between any other negroes, mulattoes, or indians, slave or free, in any cause, civil or criminal.

XVI. And that every justice of peace within this colony, upon his own knowledge of such unlawful meeting, or information thereof to him made, within ten days after, shall forthwith issue his warrant, to apprehend the persons so met, or assembled, and cause them to be brought before himself, or any other justice of his county, to be dealt with as this act directs; and every justice failing herein, shall forfeit and pay fifty shillings, or five hundred pounds of tobacco, for every such failure; and every sheriff who shall fail, upon knowledge, or information of such meeting, to endeavour to suppress the same, and bring the offenders before some justice of peace, to receive due punishment, shall be liable to the like penalty of fifty shillings, or five hundred pounds of tobacco; both which penalties shall be to the informer, and recoverable with costs, by action of debt, in any county court; and every under sheriff, or constable, who, upon knowledge, or information of such meeting, shall fail to perform his duty in suppressing the same, and apprehending the persons so assembled, shall forfeit and pay two hundred pounds of tobacco for every such failure, to the informer, recoverable with costs, before any justice of the county wherein such failure shall be.

XVIII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That no slave shall go from the plantation, or seat of land whereon he, or she, is appointed to live, without a certificate of leave, in writing, from his or her owner, or overseer, or by their express order

XXI. And whereas many times slaves run away, and lie out hid, and lurking in swamps, woods, and other obscure places, killing hogs, and committing other injuries, to the inhabitants of this colony, *Be it therefore further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That in all such cases, upon intelligence given of any slave's lying out, as aforesaid, any two justices of the peace, one being the *quorum*, of the county wherein such slave is supposed to lurk, or do mischief, shall be, and are impowered and required, to issue proclamation against all such slaves, reciting their names, and owners names, if known, and thereby requiring them, and every of them forthwith to surrender themselves; and also impowering the sheriff of the said county, to take such power with him, as he shall think fit, and necessary, for the effectual apprehending such out-lying slave, or slaves, and go in search of them: Which proclamation shall be published on two sabbath days, at the door of every church in the said county, by the clerk, or reader, immediately after divine service; and in case any slave, against whom proclamation hath been thus issued,

and twice published at any church, as aforesaid, stay out, and do not immediately return home, it shall be lawful for any person, or persons whatsoever, to kill and destroy such slaves, by any ways or means, without accusation, or impeachment of any crime for the same.

XXII. And that if any slave shall happen to be killed, in executing such proclamation, as aforesaid, or in dispersing unlawful assemblies, pursuit of rebels, or conspirators, or seizing the arms, or ammunition, of such as by this act are prohibited to keep the same, the court of the county where such slave shall be so killed, upon application of the owner, and due proof before them made, shall value the slave so killed, and certify such valuation to the next session of Assembly, that a suitable allowance may be made to the owner.

XXIII. And that where any slave shall happen to die, by reason of any stroke, or blow given, during his, or her correction, by his, or her owner, or by reason of any accidental blow whatsoever, given by such owner, no person concerned in such correction, or accidental homicide, shall be liable to any prosecution, or punishment for the same, unless upon examination before the county court, it shall be proved, by the oath of at least one lawful and credible witness, that such slave was killed wilfully, maliciously, or designedly; and no person indicted for murder of a slave, and upon trial found guilty of manslaughter only, shall incur any forfeiture, or punishment, for such offence, or misfortune.

XXIV. And that where any slave shall be notoriously guilty of going abroad in the night, or running away, and laying out, and cannot be reclaimed from such disorderly courses, by the common methods of punishment, it shall be lawful for the county court, upon complaint, and proof thereof to them made, by the owner of such slave, to order and direct such punishment, by dismembering, or any other way, not touching life, as such court shall think fit: And if such slave shall die by means of such dismembering, no forfeiture, or punishment, shall be thereby incurred.

XXVIII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That this act shall commence and be in force from and immediately after the tenth day of June, which shall be in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty one.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 5:104-112.

1749—The Reverend William Willie to Dr. Cartwright of the Associates of Dr. Bray

The Reverend William Willie was the rector of Albemarle parish from 1738 until his death in 1776. He also served as the acting commissary of the Bishop of London after the death of James Horrocks in 1771. Willie's letter reflects his concerns over the spiritual welfare of his parishioners' slaves.

...As for the Negro Children, them I baptize after the Congregation is dismiss'd (that I may give no offence). . . .

I take some pains to compare their State and Condition, in their native Country, with that here, in the clearest Terms I can; & determine in favour of the latter; their

perpetual Bondage I likewise put the best face upon. —But you know, Sir, that he who loses his Liberty, loses half his Virtue. Some time ago I brought back to the Church two Anabaptists; & last Winter I baptiz'd one man and two women, who had been brought up Quakers. I am, Sir, a true and strict son of the Church of England; but I should think myself much happier in convincing an Infidel, or reclaiming one notorious Sinner, than in reconciling to our Church all the Sectaries in the Christian World.

I make no doubt, but that the Distribution and Reading of these books and tracts from the Society will be attended with the Divine Blessing. This I can say, that those I have given, with what I say upon giving, have had that happy Effect, as to encrease the number of Communicants at several of the Churches in my Parish (and there are four) from thirty (the number that us'd to be, when I came into the Parish) to one hundred and twenty, and one hundred and thirty at a time. And that God will be pleas'd to give a Blessing to the good Work, we are all engaged in, of promoting true Religion and Piety in the World, is the Hearty Prayer of him who is, with humble Duty to the Society,

Source: Library of Congress, Dawson Papers, Miscellaneous Manuscripts.

1750s—Masters and Slaves Struggle to Define Work Routines

During the first half of the eighteenth century slaves pushed their masters to acknowledge the work routines that had been customary for enslaved men and women at the end of the seventeenth century.

Initially, slaves secured some substantial gains. Slaves stabilized the workday, which planters had stretched substantially beyond what had been customary during the early years of the eighteenth century, and began the process of rolling back the number of hours they were expected to labor. The planters' effort to counter their trend by lengthening the number of hours spent in the fields or speeding the pace of labor elicited immediate protests—sometimes in the form of shoddy work, broken tools, or increased truancy. “The Negroes are very unwilling to give up the principles they were allowed in Wingfield's time,” reported the manager of a Virginia estate upon the appointment of a new overseer. Slaves conspired to frustrate the new man, and finally determined to have him “turned off.” When the manager dismissed their complaints, they sent a delegation directly to the master, so that eventually all conceded that the new man had to go. Such small victories gave slaves a bit more control over their lives, and chastened those who desired to increase plantation productivity.

During the middle years of the eighteenth century, slaves recovered some of the prerogatives that members of the charter generations had taken for granted. The free Sunday had become an entitlement rather than a privilege, so almost all Chesapeake slaves had Sundays to themselves. According to a historian of eighteenth-century Chesapeake agriculture, “slaves had converted that practice into a right that could not be violated arbitrarily.” Occasionally, slaves enjoyed part of Saturday as well. When owners impinged upon the slaves' free days, they generally compensated them in time or money.

Still, planters resisted, refusing to surrender the very essence of slavery's value. To prevent slaves from elevating customary practices into entitlements and from manufacturing yet additional rights, slaveholders sought to confine the slaves' economy. They were especially adamant about the independent trading, as they understood how the slaves' entry into the marketplace enlarged their understanding of the value of their own labor and sharpened their appreciation of the planter's usurpation. Moreover, planters were not above countering with new demands of their own—for example, requiring slaves to process as well as grow tobacco and to manufacture candles and other necessities for the Great House. The maturation of tobacco culture did not end the contrast between master and slave; it only moved the struggle to new ground.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 133-134.

1750s—Plantation Reorganization and Urbanization

Ira Berlin discusses changes in plantation organization, the growth of an artisan class, urbanization, and slave hiring in the following selections from his book entitled *Many Thousands Gone*.

The new terrain was defined by three related changes in Chesapeake society during the middle years of the eighteenth century: the declining productivity of the older tobacco regions, the rise of small grain production, and the growth of towns. Each of these set in motion a series of other changes—the reorganization of plantations, the growth of an artisan class, and the spread of slave hiring—that sometimes strengthened the slaves' hand at the expense of their owners and sometimes strengthened the owners' hand at the expense of the slaves. Whatever the balance of power, the struggle between masters and slaves—the continual renegotiation and contestation of the terms of life and labor—both sped the transition of African to creole and opened new avenues of resistance.

The same crisis that drove planters to the fresh tobacco lands of the piedmont also encouraged them to experiment with other crops. In many parts of the Chesapeake, tobacco—the universal staple in the seventeenth century—gave way to mixed cultivation that combined tobacco with a variety of small grains, corn, forest products, and livestock. The most dynamic element in the mix was wheat, which became increasingly attractive as a series of European crop failures swelled demand for American foodstuffs. During the 1720s planters—particularly those in the marginal tobacco areas—turned from tobacco to cereal production. In some parts of the Chesapeake region, most notably the eastern shore of Maryland and Virginia, planters eliminated tobacco from their repertoire altogether. As demand for rye, oats, and especially wheat spiraled upward throughout the Atlantic world, changes in the character of the Chesapeake's economy that had begun in a few marginal tobacco areas during the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century became general. On the eve of the American Revolution, the value of cereal production exceeded that of tobacco in many parts of the region.

The cultivation of wheat and other small grains transformed the nature of agricultural labor and, with it, slavery. Whereas tobacco farming required season-long

labor, cereal agriculture employed workers steadily only during planting and harvesting. Laborers had little to do with the crop the remainder of the year. They were hardly idle, however, as grain cultivation also required a large, diverse, and skilled labor force to transport the grain, market it, store it, mill it, and reship it as bulk grain, flour, or bread. The wagons in which were shipped and the draft animals that pulled the wagons all required maintenance. the presence of draft animals and other stock, in turn, produced new tasks, as their hides could be tanned and fashioned into harnesses, bridles, saddles, and shoes. Plantations dedicated to grain production not only fielded corps of wagoners but also blacksmiths, saddlers, harness makers, tanners, and shoemakers. Artisans also found employment in flour mills, iron foundries, weaving houses, and other nonagricultural ventures.

...

Changes in the structure of the labor force resonated outside of the plantation. Although many of the new enterprises that employed slave artisans were incorporated into plantation life, particularly on the great estates, others were located in towns. The Chesapeake, for the first time, developed a cadre of cities. Older administrative centers like Annapolis and Williamsburg became home—or, sometimes, a second home—to an increasingly affluent planter class. The newer cities depended on commerce to sustain them. The first of these, Norfolk on the western shore of the Chesapeake and Chestertown on the eastern shore, were centers of the grain trade, as were upstart towns like Alexandria and Baltimore. With urbanization and the concomitant growth of manufacturing, the demand for artisans and laborers outstripped the number of available white men, many of whom saw opportunities in westward migration. The requirements of urban employers drew additional slaves into the urban atmosphere.

The need for urban labor also created a market for hirelings, and the advent of mixed agriculture with its peculiar seasonal rhythms encouraged rural slaveholders to rent their slaves during slack time. Unlike those confined to the plantation, hired slaves generally worked independently, outside the direction of an owner or overseer. Control over their time also allowed hired slaves expanded opportunities to pursue their own interests. Some hired themselves to do odd jobs, earning cash or receiving payment for “overwork.” The general acceptance of jobbing opened the door for slaves to travel freely, live on their own, and enjoy a measure of independence not possible in the rural plantation regime.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 134-135, 136; see also “1782 to 1810—Slaves for Hire in Elizabeth City County” in the American Paradox section.

March 20, 1752—Letter from “Philo-Bombastia”

The unidentified author of this letter advocated the end of slavery in Virginia, a position that differed from that of most Virginians in the eighteenth century.

Thus I have shewn you that *extensive* Toleration, which is destin'd to make us wiser than our Mother County,—which will make *England* a Land of Slavery in Comparison of *Virginia* for Liberty.—Liberty!—O charming Liberty! Sing *Io Triumph* to Liberty. Do not, pray Gentlemen, put such a Disgrace upon the Goddess, as to make her come in at the Back-door, and then banish her behind the *Mountain-Springs, which send forth irriguous Streams from the Foot of the American Alps*, as my Precursor so *sublimely* proposes. No, let the Fore-door be thrown open to welcome her and her Attendant Anarchy, and her Votaries of all Sorts;—make the Capes wider if possible, that their Entrance may be render'd as august as can be imagined, and a Fig for such narrow Limits as the Lands of *Mississippi*;—let them revel from the *Atlantic* Ocean to the *Pacific*, and that you may be true Worshippers of Liberty make your Negroes as free as yourselves. Then shall you be delivered from *useless Lumber* and *publick Nuisances*,—Then shall you out-do *Philadelphia* for *Variety of Peculiarities*, and grow as rich as *Pennsylvania* herself, without planting that sovereign Weed, which was never yet planted in *Pennsylvania*.

It is therefore humbly submitted to the Legislature, *whether the passing an Act to admit all Persons of all Nations and Opinions, from all Parts of the World, to be naturalized and tolerated, and to enjoy any Office in Church, or State, throughout the Colony of Virginia, and to set all Slaves free in this Country of Liberty*, would not be for the publick Utility?—'Tis probable some Petitions may be presented for this Purpose, and this is only intended to introduce them.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, March 20, 1752.

April 10, 1752—The Speech of “Peter Limits” to the Speaker of the House of Burgesses

“Peter Limits” reflected the belief of some Virginians when he noted that slavery was evil and that the institution had a bad influence on owners. This unidentified author did not call for an end to slavery as “Philo-Bombastia” did.

I AGREE with Mr. *Telltruthia* in his Reasoning on the Negroes, and Sectaries. They are each of them, separately, Disease enough in any Government; but together, would invigorate, and complete the Malignity of each other. Slaves are very capable, in Case of War with a foreign Enemy, of being excited to revolt against their Masters; of which Instances both ancient, and modern, if necessary, might be produced: They occasion Habits of Pride, and Cruelty in their Owners; so that we seem to want nothing, but religious Differences, and the mad Freaks of Enthusiasm, to divide us, to sharpen our Spirits, to throw us into Confusion, to make us fall on, and tear one another to Pieces with a most savage Fury; and finally to render us an easy Prey to any rival Power, who shall either think us a Prize, or a fit Object to exercise their Resentment.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, April 10, 1752.

November 1753—ACT VII. *An Act for the better government of servants and slaves*

This statute is similar to the 1748 legislation that King George II disallowed in 1752. The colonial leaders also clarified the terms of an indenture for Christian servants.

I. *BE it enacted, by the Lieutenant-Governor, Council, and Burgesses, of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same,* That all servants, except convicts, imported into this colony without indenture, if they be christians, of christian parentage, and above nineteen years of age, shall serve but five years; and if they be under nineteen, 'til they become twenty four years of age and no longer: but every such servant, under nineteen, shall be brought, within six months after his, or her importation, before the court of the county where the master lives, and his, or her age adjudged by the court, otherwise shall be a servant no longer than the accustomed five years, although under age of nineteen; and the age of such servant, so adjudged and recorded, shall be accounted his, or her true age, in respect to the time of service.

XIII. That if any woman servant shall be delivered of a bastard child, within the time of her service aforesaid, *Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same,* That in recompense of the loss and trouble occasioned her master or mistress thereby, she shall, for every such offence, serve her said master or owner one whole year after her time, by indenture, custom, and former order of court shall be expired, or pay her said master or owner, one thousand pounds of tobacco, and the reputed father, if free, shall give security to the church-wardens of the parish where the child shall be to maintain the child, and keep the parish indemnified, or be compelled thereto by order of the county court, upon the said church-wardens complaint: But if a servant, he shall make satisfaction to the parish for keeping the said child, after his time by indenture, custom, or order of court, to his then present master or owner shall be expired, or be compelled thereto by the order of the county court, upon complaint of the church-wardens of the said parish for the time being: And if any woman servant shall be got with child by her master, neither the said master, nor his executors, administrators, nor assigns, shall have any claim of service against her, for, or by reason of such child, but she shall, when her time due to her said master, by indenture, custom, or order of court, shall be expired, be sold by the church wardens for the time being, of the parish wherein such child shall be born, for one year, or pay one thousand pounds of tobacco; and the said one thousand pounds of tobacco, or whatever she shall be sold for, shall be employed by the vestry, to the use of the said parish. And if any woman servant shall have a bastard child by a negroe or mulattoe, over and above the year's service due her master or owner, she shall immediately upon the expiration of her time, to her then present master, or owner, pay down to the church-wardens of the parish wherein such child shall be born, for the use of the said parish, fifteen pounds current money of Virginia, or be by them sold for five years to the use aforesaid; and if a free christian white woman shall have such bastard child by a negroe, or mulattoe, for every such offence, she shall, within one month after her delivery of such bastard child, pay to the church-wardens for the time being, of the parish wherein such child shall be born, for the use of the said parish, fifteen pounds current money of Virginia, or be by them sold for

five years to the use aforesaid; and in both the said cases, the church-wardens shall bind the said child to be a servant until it shall be of thirty one years of age.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 6:356-369. See also *ibid.*, 8:135-137 (1765).

February 1754—ACT II. *An Act for amending the act, intituled, An act for the better regulation of the militia.*

This statute required the slave patrol to visit, at least once a month, all slave quarters and other places where enslaved persons might gather.

I. FOR establishing a better method of appointing patrollers, and for declaring their duty, *Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor, Council, and Burgesses, of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same*, That it shall and may be lawful for the chief officer of the militia, residing in every county, and he is hereby required, some time before the tenth of June yearly, to appoint an officer, and so many men of the militia as to him shall appear to be necessary, not exceeding four, once in every month, or oftener if thereunto required by such chief officer, to patrol and visit all negro quarters, and other places suspected of entertaining unlawful assemblies of slaves, servants, or other disorderly persons, and such patrollers shall have power and authority to take up any such slaves, servants, or disorderly persons, as aforesaid, unlawfully assembled, or any other strolling about from one plantation to another, without a pass from his or her master, mistress, or overseer, and to carry them before the next justice of the peace, who if he shall see cause, is to order every such slave, servant, stroller, or other disorderly person as aforesaid, to receive any number of lashes, not exceeding twenty, on his or her bare back well laid on: And in case one company of patrollers shall not be sufficient, to order more companies for the same service: And after every patrol the officer of each party, shall return to the captain of the company whereunto he belongs, a report in writing, upon oath, (which oath such captain is hereby empowered to administer) of the names of those of his party who are upon duty, and of the proceedings in such patrol; and each captain shall once in every month, deliver such patrol returns to the county lieutenant, or chief commanding officer resident in his county, by whom they shall be certified and delivered to the next court martial; and if they shall adjudge the patrollers to have performed their duty according to law, the chief officer shall certify the same to the county court, who upon such certificate, are hereby empowered and required, at the laying of their county levy, to allow to, and levy for every one of the patrollers, ten pounds of tobacco for every twenty four hours they shall so patrole; and moreover such patrollers shall be exempt from attendance at private musters, and from the payment of public, county, and parish levies for their own persons, for those years in which they shall be employed in that service.

II. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That if the chief officer of the militia, residing in any county, shall fail to appoint patrollers, according to the directions of this act, such officer shall forfeit and pay the sum of five pounds; and every person appointed to patrol in pursuance of this act, failing to do his duty therein, shall pay the sum of five shillings for every failure, which fines shall be laid by the court martial of

the county, and shall be collected, levied, accounted for, and appropriated, as by an act of Assembly made in the twelfth year of the reign of his present majesty, intituled, An act for the better regulation of the militia, is directed for the fines imposed by the said act.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 6:421-422.

August 1755—ACT II. *An Act for the better regulating and training the Militia*

In this statute the city of Williamsburg and the borough of Norfolk gained the authority to establish a slave patrol. There is no evidence that Williamsburg had a slave patrol until July 1772.

IV. *Provided always*, That nothing herein contained shall be construed to compel any persons hereafter mentioned, to muster, that is to say, such as are members of the council, speaker of the house of Burgesses, receiver general, auditor, secretary, attorney general, clerk of the council, clerk of the secretary's office, ministers of the church of England, the president, masters or professors, and students of William and Mary college, the mayor, recorder, and Aldermen of the city of Williamsburg, and borough of Norfolk, the keeper of the public goal, any person being *bona fide*, an overseer over four servants or slaves, and actually residing on the plantation where they work, and receiving a share of the crop or wages, for his care and pains, in looking after such servants and slaves: Any miller having the charge and keeping of any mill, and founders, keepers, or other persons employed in or about any copper, iron or lead mine, who are all hereby exempted, from being inlisted, or any way concerned in the militia, during the time they shall continue in any such station or capacity.

XXVII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That if the chief officer of the militia in any county shall fail to appoint patrollers, according to the directions of this act, such officer shall forfeit and pay the sum of five pounds, and every person appoint to patrol, in pursuance of this act, failing to do his duty therein, shall pay the sum of five shillings for every failure; which fines shall be laid by the court martial of the county, and shall be collected, levied, accounted for, and appropriated, as is herein before directed, for the collecting, levying, accounting for, and appropriating, the several fines and penalties herein before laid: And in like manner the chief officer of the militia, in the aforesaid city of Williamsburg, or borough of Norfolk, shall appoint all the persons of their militia, to patrol within the said city and borough, or within half a mile of the limits thereof by turns, in such numbers, and at such times, as they shall think necessary; which officers and patrollers shall be subject to the same fines and penalties, and to be recovered and appropriated in the same manner, as is herein before directed, in the case of patrollers in the counties.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 6:530-533, 538-539, 541-544; see *ibid.*, 8:195-197 (1766).

March 30, 1757—Peter Fontaine to Moses Fontaine

In this letter to his brother Moses, Peter Fontaine, the rector of Westover Parish, discusses the fact that Virginians wanted to blame someone for slavery.

Like Adam we are all apt to shift off the blame from ourselves and lay it upon others, how justly in our case you may judge. The negroes are enslaved by the negroes themselves before they are purchased by the masters of the ships who bring them here. It is to be sure at our choice whether we buy them or not, so this then is our crime, folly, or whatever you will please to call it. But, our Assembly, foreseeing the ill consequences of importing such numbers amongst us, hath often attempted to lay a duty upon them which would amount to a prohibition, such as ten or twenty pounds a head, but no Governor dare pass such a law, having instructions to the contrary from the Board of Trade at home, By this means they are forced upon us, whether we will or will not. This plainly shows the African Company hath the advantage of the colonies, and may do as it pleases with the Ministry.

Indeed, since we have been exhausted of our little stock of cash by the war, the importation has stopped; our poverty then is our best security. There is no more picking for their ravenous jaws upon bare bones, but should we begin to thrive they will be at the same again. All our taxes are now laid upon slaves and on Shippers of tobacco, which they wink at while we are in danger of being torn from them, but we durst not do it in time of peace, it being looked upon as the highest presumption to lay any burden upon trade. This is our part of the grievance, but to live in Virginia without slaves is morally impossible. Before our troubles you could not hire a servant or slave for love or money, so that unless robust enough to cut wood, to go to mill, to work at the hoe, etc. you must starve, or board in some family where they both fleece and half starve you. There is no set price upon corn, wheat and provisions, so they take advantage of the necessities of strangers, who are thus obliged to purchase some slaves and land. This of course draws us all into the original sin and curse of the country of purchasing slaves, and this is the reason we have no merchants, traders, or artificers of any sort but what become planters in a short time.

A common laborer, white or black, if you can be so much favored as to hire one, is a shilling sterling or fifteen pence currency per day; a bungling carpenter two shillings or two shillings and six pence per day; besides diet and lodging. That is, for a lazy fellow to get wood and water, £ 19, 16. 3. current per annum; add to this seven or eight pounds more and you have a slave for life.

Source: Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, 4:142-143.

January 1759—George Washington Gains Possession of Slaves in York County

When George Washington married the widow Martha Custis in 1759, he gained control of the slaves that her first husband, Daniel Parke Custis, had on his York County plantation (and other plantations in Virginia). The following inventory of Custis'

property in York County indicates that he made his fortune by exploiting slave labor (as did Washington and other members of Virginia's gentry). The Custis slaves accounted for over three-quarters of the value of their master's York County estate.

226.	2 Sows and two Barrows 36/ 20 Shoats and Pigs 60/	4.16.
227.	6 Calves 48/. 15 Steers £30	32.8.
228.	24 Cows £30.12. 1 Bull 20/. 15 young Cattle £12	52.12.
229.	2 Sows and 5 Shoats 31/. 15 Steers £30	31.11.
230.	21 Cows £33.12 2 Bulls 40/. 23 young Cattle £20	55.12.
231.	12 Steers £24.19 Cows £30.8s	54.8
232.	13 young Cattle £9/15s. 2 Bulls 40/	11.15
233.	40 Calves £15. 10 draught Steers \$20	35.
234.	13 Steers £26.30 young Cattle £19.110.	45.10.
235.	25 Cows £41.5 1 Bull 20/. 8 Steers £16	58.5.
236.	13 young Cattle 10.8. 46 Cows & Steers £73.12	84.
237.	1 Bull 20/. 8 Steers £16. 19 Cows & Steers £30.8	47.8.
238.	2 Bulls 40/. 4 young Cattle \$3.12.	5.12.
239.	1 Cart & Furniture £11. 1 large grindste 12/	11.12.
240.	A parcel of old Iron & Harrows 40/. 9 large Hogs	13.14.
241.	4 Sows, 1 boar £4. 20 young hogs £10	14.
242.	10 Shoats 50/. 12 Pigs 12/	3.2
243.	1 Cart harness & 3 horses £15. 1 horse £7	22.
244.	1 young bay horse £20. 1 pr. Stilliards 6/	20.6
245.	3 Currying Knives 20/. 3 butter pots 9/	1.9
246.	7 Cyder Ggds 20/. 300 Barls Corn @ 6/ £90	91.
247.	2 doz. Milk pans 15/. 1 mill spindle & horns 20/	1.15
248.	a parcel of Carpenters Toos £7.10. Iron Wedgs 12	8.2.
249.	A Sett of Cart wheel hoops 12/. 2 brd hoes 6/	.8.
250.	24 M 6d Nails £4.16. a parcel old Nails 15/	<u>5.11.</u>
		£712.6.

Old Johny £ 15	Evelin 15	Alice 40
Ockney 40	Sall 16	Hannah 40
Joe 60	Moll 50	Tom 20
Cupid 50	Pegg 50	Lydia 26
young Ned 50	Caesar 25	Grace & Chd 50
Crispin 40	Lucy 15	Old Nanny 25
Peter 40	Amey 10	Betty 40
Danl Twine 10	Roger 25	Eulin & Chd Phil 50
Ned 50	Arlington 35	Acre 40
Old Captain 15	Grace 40	Hannah 25
Isaac 50	Old Chance 20	Sukey 25
Old Jager 15	Orange 40	Doll 15
Eugene 45	Miller Jemmy 60	Alice 16
Mill Betty 50	Jupiter 50	Daphne & Chd Jemy 55
Frank & Chd Judith 50	Tobey 40	Pegg 25

Jack 35	Sam 50	Danl 20
Ockney 23	York 50	Nelly 15
Moll & Chd Brunswk 50	Mucon 50	George 30
Fanny 40	Peter 70	Betty 35
Dinah & Chd Jenny 50	Will 50	Daphne 25
Beck 50	Bachus 40	Fabbey 45
Cornelia 40	Be (?) 50	Ned 35
Arber 15	Ph (?) 40	
Patt 15	Arlington 5	
John Blair Junr }		Negroes £2501.
Matthew Shields } Appraisers		{ Total £3213.6
William Graves }		

Source: Fields, comp., *“Worthy Partner”*, pp. 72-73.

1760 to 1780—Estimated Population of the Chesapeake Colonies (in Thousands)					
Year	Maryland	Virginia	Total Whites	Total Blacks	Total Population
1760	162.3	339.7	312.4	189.6	502.0
1770	202.6	447.0	398.2	251.4	649.6
1780	248.0	538.0	482.4	303.6	786.0

Source: McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, p. 136.

1750s—Masters and Slaves Struggle to Define Work Routines					
During the first half of the eighteenth century slaves pushed their masters to acknowledge the work routines that had been customary for enslaved men and women at the end of the seventeenth century.					

Initially, slaves secured some substantial gains. Slaves stabilized the workday, which planters had stretched substantially beyond what had been customary during the early years of the eighteenth century, and began the process of rolling back the number of hours they were expected to labor. The planters' effort to counter their trend by lengthening the number of hours spent in the fields or speeding the pace of labor elicited immediate protests—sometimes in the form of shoddy work, broken tools, or increased truancy. “The Negroes are very unwilling to give up the principles they were allowed in Wingfield’s time,” reported the manager of a Virginia estate upon the appointment of a new overseer. Slaves conspired to frustrate the new man, and finally determined to have

him “turned off.” When the manager dismissed their complaints, they sent a delegation directly to the master, so that eventually all conceded that the new man had to go. Such small victories gave slaves a bit more control over their lives, and chastened those who desired to increase plantation productivity.

During the middle years of the eighteenth century, slaves recovered some of the prerogatives that members of the charter generations had taken for granted. The free Sunday had become an entitlement rather than a privilege, so almost all Chesapeake slaves had Sundays to themselves. According to a historian of eighteenth-century Chesapeake agriculture, “slaves had converted that practice into a right that could not be violated arbitrarily.” Occasionally, slaves enjoyed part of Saturday as well. When owners impinged upon the slaves’ free days, they generally compensated them in time or money.

Still, planters resisted, refusing to surrender the very essence of slavery’s value. To prevent slaves from elevating customary practices into entitlements and from manufacturing yet additional rights, slaveholders sought to confine the slaves’ economy. They were especially adamant about the independent trading, as they understood how the slaves’ entry into the marketplace enlarged their understanding of the value of their own labor and sharpened their appreciation of the planter’s usurpation. Moreover, planters were not above countering with new demands of their own—for example, requiring slaves to process as well as grow tobacco and to manufacture candles and other necessities for the Great House. The maturation of tobacco culture did not end the contrast between master and slave; it only moved the struggle to new ground.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 133-134.

1750s—Plantation Reorganization and Urbanization

Ira Berlin discusses changes in plantation organization, the growth of an artisan class, urbanization, and slave hiring in the following selections from his book entitled *Many Thousands Gone*.

The new terrain was defined by three related changes in Chesapeake society during the middle years of the eighteenth century: the declining productivity of the older tobacco regions, the rise of small grain production, and the growth of towns. Each of these set in motion a series of other changes—the reorganization of plantations, the growth of an artisan class, and the spread of slave hiring—that sometimes strengthened the slaves’ hand at the expense of their owners and sometimes strengthened the owners’ hand at the expense of the slaves. Whatever the balance of power, the struggle between masters and slaves—the continual renegotiation and contestation of the terms of life and labor—both sped the transition of African to creole and opened new avenues of resistance.

The same crisis that drove planters to the fresh tobacco lands of the piedmont also encouraged them to experiment with other crops. In many parts of the Chesapeake, tobacco—the universal staple in the seventeenth century—gave way to mixed cultivation that combined tobacco with a variety of small grains, corn, forest products, and livestock.

The most dynamic element in the mix was wheat, which became increasingly attractive as a series of European crop failures swelled demand for American foodstuffs. During the 1720s planters—particularly those in the marginal tobacco areas—turned from tobacco to cereal production. In some parts of the Chesapeake region, most notably the eastern shore of Maryland and Virginia, planters eliminated tobacco from their repertoire altogether. As demand for rye, oats, and especially wheat spiraled upward throughout the Atlantic world, changes in the character of the Chesapeake's economy that had begun in a few marginal tobacco areas during the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century became general. On the eve of the American Revolution, the value of cereal production exceeded that of tobacco in many parts of the region.

The cultivation of wheat and other small grains transformed the nature of agricultural labor and, with it, slavery. Whereas tobacco farming required season-long labor, cereal agriculture employed workers steadily only during planting and harvesting. Laborers had little to do with the crop the remainder of the year. They were hardly idle, however, as grain cultivation also required a large, diverse, and skilled labor force to transport the grain, market it, store it, mill it, and reship it as bulk grain, flour, or bread. The wagons in which were shipped and the draft animals that pulled the wagons all required maintenance. the presence of draft animals and other stock, in turn, produced new tasks, as their hides could be tanned and fashioned into harnesses, bridles, saddles, and shoes. Plantations dedicated to grain production not only fielded corps of wagoners but also blacksmiths, saddlers, harness makers, tanners, and shoemakers. Artisans also found employment in flour mills, iron foundries, weaving houses, and other nonagricultural ventures.

...

Changes in the structure of the labor force resonated outside of the plantation. Although many of the new enterprises that employed slave artisans were incorporated into plantation life, particularly on the great estates, others were located in towns. The Chesapeake, for the first time, developed a cadre of cities. Older administrative centers like Annapolis and Williamsburg became home—or, sometimes, a second home—to an increasingly affluent planter class. The newer cities depended on commerce to sustain them. The first of these, Norfolk on the western shore of the Chesapeake and Chestertown on the eastern shore, were centers of the grain trade, as were upstart towns like Alexandria and Baltimore. With urbanization and the concomitant growth of manufacturing, the demand for artisans and laborers outstripped the number of available white men, many of whom saw opportunities in westward migration. The requirements of urban employers drew additional slaves into the urban atmosphere.

The need for urban labor also created a market for hirelings, and the advent of mixed agriculture with its peculiar seasonal rhythms encouraged rural slaveholders to rent their slaves during slack time. Unlike those confined to the plantation, hired slaves generally worked independently, outside the direction of an owner or overseer. Control over their time also allowed hired slaves expanded opportunities to pursue their own interests. Some hired themselves to do odd jobs, earning cash or receiving payment for “overwork.” The general acceptance of jobbing opened the door for slaves to travel

freely, live on their own, and enjoy a measure of independence not possible in the rural plantation regime.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 134-135, 136; see also “1782 to 1810—Slaves for Hire in Elizabeth City County” in the American Paradox section.

1760 to 1770—Letters from Virginia Ministers to the Associates of Dr. Bray

In letters to the Associates of Dr. Bray, four ministers—James Marye Junior, Alexander Rhonnald, Jonathan Boucher, and Thomas Baker—discuss the challenges and successes of their work to Christianize slaves.

1760—The Reverend James Marye Junior of Orange County: “I have great Quantities of Negroes in my Parish, who all bring their Children to be baptised, & many of the Adults likewise are desirous of Baptism, which I perform after Divine Service.”

1762—The Reverend Alexander Rhonnald of Elizabeth River Parish, Norfolk County: “They use Me with the most invidious Terms of Ill nature for my pains, & because I baptise more Negroes than other Brethren here & instruct them, from the Pulpit, out of common road, & encourage the Good among them to come to the Communion, after a due Sense of the matter, I am vilified & branded by such as a Negro Parson.”

1762—The Reverend Jonathan Boucher of King George County: “I have baptiz'd upwards of 100 Negro Children, & betwixt 30 & 40 Adults in less than 6 months that I have been here.”

April 28, 1764—The Reverend Jonathan Boucher: “I have employ'd a very sensible, well-dispos'd Negro belonging to a Gentleman who lives about a Mile from Me, to endeavour at instructing his poor fellow Slaves in Reading & some of the first Principles of Religion, with which, I have taken Care, that He should not be totally unacquainted. Saturday's & Sunday's Afternoons He employs to this Purpose; and He has, I believe, at this Time betwixt Twenty & Thirty who constantly attend Him. And that He maybe the better qualified for his Office, I oblige Him to visit me two or three Times every Week, when either Myself or Some young Gentlemen who live with Me, as Pupils, give Him Lessons: and Once at least in every month He brings his Scholars before Me that I may examine what Progress They have made... I find Them in Books, & endeavour too to encourage the industrious by allotting Them some small Rewards for Extraordinary Diligence, as well as to their Master.”

March 9, 1767—The Reverend Jonathan Boucher: “The Box of Books You shipp'd for Me in 1765, came into Potomac, & by that Means were difficultly heard of or come at. Yet, at length, I received Them all safe, & agreeable to your List: for which I again return You & The Associates my sincerest Thanks. I have already distributed many of

Them amongst the poor Slaves who are very numerous in this Parish. In many of my former letters I have told You of the Difficulties Ministers are under to reconcile the Owners of Slaves to their being instructed....The Method I take I hope They will think is not misapplying it: I generally find out an old Negro, or a conscientious Overseer, able to read, to whom I give Books, with an Injunction to Them to instruct such & such Slaves in their respective Neighbourhoods. This, I own, coinsides not exactly with your Plans; but as I am convinc'd it is the only practicable Method of accomplishing the End You have in View, in parishes where there are no Towns, I hope You will excuse Me for presuming to Judge for You.”

1770—The Reverend Thomas Baker of Kingston Glebe, Gloucester County: “Many masters are not only averse to learning their Slave to read, but...I've heard some of them say (& blessed be God convinced some of them of their Error) That since we got to baptizing them they are become insolent & Idle, Runaways &c.; that they were never so till Baptism came in Fashion amongst 'em. However never a Sunday passes, but I have many at both my Churches, Infant & adult Negroes too. I've baptiz'd some upwards of 60 Years old, who have with Tears runing down their Cheeks, repeated the Lord's Prayer & Creed, & behav'd in such a Manner as would have pleas'd you & every good Christian.”

Source: Van Horne, ed., *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery*, pp. 149, 182, 196, 206, 255, 289.

September 30, 1762—The Reverend William Yates and Robert Carter Nicholas to the Reverend John Waring

The Associates of Dr. Thomas Bray decided to establish a school for black children, free and enslaved, in Williamsburg in 1760. Two years later, the Reverend William Yates and Robert Carter Nicholas report on the Bray School to the Reverend John Waring. They also enclose a list of the school's regulations and students on September 30, 1762.

The Bray School was not the first school for black children in Williamsburg. On December 22, 1743, the Reverend William Dawson wrote England in order to get a copy of school rules “which, with some little Alteration, will suit a Negro School in our Metropolis, when we shall have the Pleasure of seeing One established.” In 1750, Dawson told the Bishop of London that “There are three such schools in my parish, these I sometimes visit.” Four years later, Elizabeth Wyatt charged Reverend Dawson's estate the sum of £1.6 for teaching his slave girl, Jenny, for one year.

Sir,

Agreeable to your Request, we send you inclosed a List of the Negro Children now at the School under our Direction in this City, with an Account of their Ages as nearly as they can be judged of; but it is not in our Power to determine exactly. The Dates of their Admission into the School are various, some of them having been there ever since it was first opened & others admitted just as Vacancies have happened. The Mistress has not been so exact as to keep any Account of the Times of the Entrance, so

that it is impossible for us to give the desired Satisfaction in this Point. You may from hence easily judge how difficult it must be for us to inform you particularly of the Progress each Child has made. We can only say in general that at a late Visitation of the School we were pretty much pleased with the Scholars' Performances, as they rather exceeded our Expectations. The Children, we believe, have all been regularly baptized; indeed we think it is a pretty general Practice all over Virginia for Negro Parents to have their Children christened, where they live tolerably convenient to the Church or Minister, & some Times a great Number of Adults are baptized together in different Parts of the Country. We would not have you think, from what was wrote to you last Fall, that we had the least Inclination to discourage so good & pious an Institution; we were indeed & still are apprised of many Difficulties, which we shall have to struggle with, & were willing to prepare you for a Disappointment, in Case the Undertaking should not answer your Expectations. From the small View we have had of the Associates' extensive Charity, we flatter ourselves that we see the Situation of our poor Slaves, with Request to their spiritual Concerns, with the same piteous Eyes that they do, & should think ourselves extremely fortunate if any Endeavours of ours could contribute towards their Happiness. You no Doubt are already apprised that the Slaves in this & the neighbouring Colonies are the chief Instruments of Labour & we fear that they are treated by too many of their Owners as so many Beasts of Burthen, so little do they consider them as entitled to any of the Privileges of human Nature; & indeed many Owners of Slaves, 'tho they may view them in a different Light & treat them with a great Degree of Tenderness, concern themselves very little or not at all with their Morals, much less do they trouble themselves with their religious Concerns, so far from it, that we don't think ourselves the lest uncharitable in saying that we fear the Negroes are often corrupted & rendered more abandoned by the ill Examples that are set them by many white People in the Country & no inconsiderable Number of these themselves Masters of Slaves. This Observation may be justified by a Comparison of new Negroes when they are first imported with those who have resided amongst us for some Years; for 'tho' the former, no Doubt, bring with them vicious Inclinations & a Number of ill Customs, yet we may venture to say that they contract new Vices, which they were Strangers to in their native Country. From this cursory View of the Situation of our Slaves, you may easily judge how extremely difficult it would be, if not morally impossible, to work any Thing like a thorough Reformation amongst them, unless some of their Masters & the Generality of white People were first reformed, we had almost said new moulded. We would not have it infered from hence that we intend any particular pointed Reflections upon the People of the Country; on the contrary we believe them as good as their Neighbours & think they are much of the same Complexion as the Inhabitants of other Countries. And 'tho' we almost despair of an entire Reformation, yet we have our Hopes that a Scheme like yours properly conducted, if it could meet with due Encouragement, might have a good Effect. We find that many People in this City, upon the first opening of your School, were well enough inclined towards it &, if the Fund allotted was sufficient, we believe that double the Number of Scholars might easily be procured; but at the same Time we fear that many People who have sent or would send their little Negroes to School, would not do it upon the principles which they ought; we mean purely with a View to have them instructed in the Principles of Religion, & enabled to instruct their Fellow Slaves at Home. Some People we fear send their Children more to keep them out of Mischief,

others to improve them in Hopes of their being made a little more sensible, that they may be more handy & useful in their Families; We form this Opinion from observing that several, who put their Negroes to School, have taken them Home again so soon as they began to read, but before they had received any real Benefit or it could be supposed that they were made acquainted with the Principles of Christianity. This is one great Impediment which we are apprehensive will obstruct the Success of our Endeavours. We shall strive to guard against it, 'tho' 'twill be with great Difficulty that we shall be able to accomplish our Purpose. Few People have more Negroes than they can employ, & 'tho', when they are very young & useless, they may be willing to send them to School, yet when they grow up a little & become able to tend their Owners Children or do any other little Offices in their Families, they chuse & will take them Home. Another Difficulty which arises on the Part of the Owners is that an Opinion prevails amongst many of them, that it might be dangerous & impolitick to enlarge the Understandings of the Negroes, as they would probably by this Means become more impatient of their Slavery & at some future Day be more likely to rebel; they urge farther from Experience, that it is generally observable that the most sensible of our Slaves are the most wicked & ungovernable; these Observations, we think, are illy founded when used as Objections to your Scheme, which is by no Means calculated to instruct the Slaves in dangerous Principles, but on the contrary has a probable & direct Tendency to reform their Manners; & by making them good Christians they would necessarily become better Servants. We shall not fail endeavouring to remove Scruples of this & every other Sort, but finding they have taken deep Root in many Minds, we are apprehensive of great Difficulties in overcoming them. There is still one greater Discouragement which we fear we shall labour under. 'Tho' the Owners of the Negro Children should cheerfully close with our Proposals & submit them entirely to our Government; 'tho' the Mistress of the School should be ever so diligent in her Duty, & 'tho' the Scholars should make as great a Progress as could be wished, yet we fear that, notwithstanding all our Endeavours to prevent it, any good Impressions which may be made on the Children's Minds at School will be easily effaced by their mixing with other Slaves, who are mostly abandoned to every Kind of Wickedness. If evil Communications have a general Tendency to corrupt good Manners, the Observation is never more likely to be verified than in Instances of this Sort, where the very Parents of the Children will probably much oftner, from their Intimacy, set them bad Examples than any others. Notwithstanding these & many other Difficulties, which the narrow Limits of a Letter will not permit us to particularize, stare us fully in the Face, we are resolved not to be discouraged; but hope, by the Blessing of God upon your Charity & our Endeavours, that the Undertaking will greatly prosper. The late Reverent Mr. Dawson & Mr. Hunter, we believe, had it in their Intention to form Rules for the better Government of the School but were prevented by Death; we have hitherto contented ourselves with permitting the Mistress to carry on the School in the Way it was begun; but, being sensible that Nothing of the Sort can be properly conducted without certain uniform Regulations, by which all Parties concerned may know how to govern themselves, we have drawn up such a Set of Rules as appear to us properly adapted & send you a Copy of them inclosed for your & the rest of the Associates' Approbation & should be glad to know your Sentiments; we shall be willing to add or diminish any Thing as you may advise. We probably shall have Occation for a few Testaments Psalters & spelling Books & perhaps a Number of Mr. Bacon's Sermons, recommending the Instruction of Negroes

in the Christian Faith, properly dispersed over the Country might have a good Influence. We would not put you to the Expeuce of any other Books at present. We will not conclude without offering our best Respects to you & the rest of the worthy Associates; Believe us, Sir, we cannot enough admire a Set of Gentlemen, who at the same Time that they are employed in exercising every Act of Benevolence at Home, have so far enlarged their Charity as to extend it to the most distant Colonies. We are, Sir, with the greatest Exteem Your most obedient humble Servants

William Yates
Ro. C. Nicholas

[The Associates in London] Agreed that 25 Spelling Books 25 Psalters 20 Testaments & 25 Bacons Sermons be Sent for the Use of the Negroe School at Williamsburgh.

List of Negro Children at the Bray School

[Williamsburg, 30 September 1762]

A List of Negro Children at the School established by the Associates of the late Reverend Doctor Bray in the City of Williamsburg, Mrs. Anne Wager, School Mistress.

Names of the Children	their Ages as nearly as can be judged of	Owners Names
1 John	8 Years	Mrs. Davenport
2 Anne	6	Ditto
3 Dick	3	Mr. George
Davenport		
4 London	7	Mrs. Campbell
5 Aggy	6	Ditto
6 Shropshire	6	Ditto
7 Aberdeen	5	Mr. Alexr. Craig
8 Mary	7	Mr. Thomas Everard
9 Harry	5	Ditto
10 George	8	Mr. Gilmer
11 Bristol	7	Ditto
12 Mary Anne	7	a free Negro
13 Aggy	7	Peyton Randolph
Esqr.		
14 Roger	7	Ditto
15 Mary	8	Mr. Thomas Hornsby
16 Rippon	3	Mr. Anthony Hay
17 Robert	6	John Randolph Esqr.
18 Lucy	5	Ditto
19 Elizabeth	10	Mrs. Dawson
20 George	6	Dr. James Carter
21 Locust	8	Mrs. Armistead

22 Sarah	7	Mrs. Page
23 Hannah	7	Ro: C: Nicholas
24 Mary Jones		a free Negro
25 John	7	John Blair Esqr.
26 Jane	9	Ditto
27 Doll	7	Ditto
28 Elisha Jones		free
29 John	3	Mr. Hugh Orr
30 Phoebe	3	Mr. Wm. Trebell
Williamsburgh 30 th .	September 1762	

Bray School Regulations

The Associates of the late Reverend Doctor Bray, residing in England, having established Schools in several of the Northern Colonies for the Education of Negroes in the Principles of the Christian Religion, teaching them to read & at the same Time rendering the Females more useful to their Owners by instructing them in sewing knitting &c; encouraged by the Success of these their pious Endeavours & being sollicitous to make this Kind of Charity as extensive as possible, they some Time ago came to a Resolution of establishing a School in the City of Williamsburg for the same Purpose & have thought fit to recommend it to the immediate Care & Government of the Reverend Mr. William Yates & Mr. Robert Carter Nicholas; who have chearfully undertaken the Trust reposed in them & hope that all good Christians will cooperate with them in their Endeavours to promote the Success of so laudable & pious an Institution.

The Associates having engaged in so many Works of this Kind, which will require a very considerable Sum of Money to defray the Expence of, have limited the Number of Scholars to thirty, but as there may be many more Negro Children in this City, equally objects of such a Charity, The Trustees will thankfully accept of any Contributions, which may be offered, towards augmenting the Number & thereby rendering the Scheme more generally beneficial. If the Scholars should increase, so as to make it necessary, they propose to employ another Mistress; And, for the Satisfaction of their Benefactors, they will be at all Times ready to give an Account of their Proceedings.

The Trustees, for the better Government of the School & to render it more truly beneficial, have thought fit to establish certain Regulations, relating as well to the Owners of Slaves as to the Teacher or Mistress, which they are resolved to have strictly observed & put in Execution, unless they should at any Time hereafter be induced by good Reasons to alter or relax them.

With Respect to the Owners

The School being at present full with the Number of Scholars proposed to be educated at the Expence of the Associates, such Masters or Mistresses, who may incline hereafter to send their Negro Children to the School, are desired to signify the same to the

Trustees as they would choose hereafter that all Vacancies should be filled up by an equal Number from each Family as near as may be.

As it will [be] needless & by no Means answer the Design of the Institution for the Children to be put to School & taken away in a short Time before they have received any real Benefit from it, Every Owner, before a Negro Child is admitted into the School, must consent that such Child shall continue there for the Space of three Years at least, if the School should be so long continued.

A decent Appearance of the Scholars, especially when they go to Church, being very likely to make a favourable Impression, All Owners of Children sent to this School must take Care that they be properly cloathed & kept in a cleanly Manner; & if it should be agreeable, the Trustees would propose that the Children should wear one uniform Dress, by which they might be distinguished & it is concieved that this Method would be attended with very little additional Expence.

The Owners must send their Negro Children regularly, & constantly at the Hours of Schooling; must comply with all Orders relating to them & freely submit them to be chastized for the Faults without quarrelling or coming to School on such Occasions; must by no Means encourage or wink at the Children's Faults nor discourage the Teacher in the Performance of her Duty; but if there be any just Grounds of Complaint, they must lay them before the Trustees & Acquiesce in their Determination; the Trustees engaging on their Part to act with the Strictest Justice & Impartiality & that they will, to the utmost of their Power, endeavour to redress every just Grievance.

It is not doubted but that the Owners themselves will give the Children, when at Home, good Examples of a sober & religious Behaviour, but them must moreover take Care, as much as in them lies, that they are not corrupted by the Wickedness & ill Examples of their Servants & other Slaves, must frequently catechize the Children at Home & second the Endeavours of the Teacher by inculcating in them the most useful & salutary Principles of Christianity.

Rules to be observed by the Tutoress or Mistress, (who is preferred to a Master, as the Scholars will consist of Children of both Sexes.)

She shall take no Scholars but what are approved of by the Trustees & She shall attend the School at seven O Clock in the Winter half of the Year & at six in the Summer half Year in the Morning & keep her Scholars diligently to their Business during the Hours of schooling, suffering none to be absent at any Time, but when they are sick or have some other reasonable Excuse.

She shall teach her Scholars the true Spelling of Words, make them mind their Stops & endeavour to bring them to pronounce & read distinctly.

She shall make it her principal Care to teach them to read the Bible, to instruct them in the Principles of the Christian Religion according to the Doctrine of the Church of England, shall explain the Church Catechism to them by some good Exposition, which, together with the Catechism, they shall publicly repeat in Church, or elsewhere, so often as the Trustees shall require & shall be frequently examined in School as to their Improvements of every Sort.

She shall teach them those Doctrines & Principles of Religion, which are in their Nature most useful in the Course of private Life, especially such as concern Faith & good Manners.

She shall conduct them from her School House, where they are all to be first assembled, in a decent & orderly Manner to Church, so often as divine Service is there performed & before it begins, & instruct & oblige them to behave in a proper Manner, kneeling or standing as the Rubrick directs, & to join in the public Service with & regularly to repeat after the Minister in all Places where the People are so directed & in such a Manner as not to disturb the rest of the Congregation. She shall take Care that the Scholars, so soon as they are able to use them, do carry their Bibles & Prayer Books to Church with them, & that they may be prevented from spending the Lord's Day profanely or idly, she shall give her Scholars some Task out of the most useful Parts of Scripture, to be learnt on each Lord's Day, according to their Capacities, & shall require a strict Performance of it every Monday Morning.

She shall use proper Prayers in her School every Morning & Evening & teach the Scholars to do the same at Home, devoutly on their Knees, & also teach them to say Grace before & after their Victuals, explaining to them the Design & Meaning of it.

She shall take Particular Care of the Manners & Behaviour of her Scholars & by all proper Methods discourage Idleness & suppress the Beginnings of Vice, such as lying, cursing, swearing, profaning the Lord's Day, obscene Discourse, stealing &c., putting them often in Mind & obliging them to get by Heart such Parts of the Holy Scriptures, where these Things are forbid & where Christians are commanded to be faithful & obedient to their Masters, to be diligent in their Business, & quiet & peaceable to all Men.

She shall teach her female Scholars knitting sewing & such other Things as may be useful to their Owners & she shall be particularly watchful that her Scholars, between the School Hours, do not commit any Irregularities nor fall into any indecent Diversions.

Lastly, She shall take Care that her Scholars keep themselves clean & neat in their Cloaths & that they in all Things set a good Example to other Negroes.

Source: Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, p. 76; Van Horne, ed., *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery*, pp. 184-191.

Part IV—Modifications in the Restrictions on Slaves and Free Blacks

In the third quarter of the eighteenth century cracks in the slave system became apparent. Some prominent Virginians increasingly questioned the morality of the slave trade and sought to bring it to an end, even as they continued to profit from the ever more intense labor they extracted from reluctant bondsmen and women. A few whites began to question the institution of slavery itself, but while some might advocate an end to further importations, almost none could envision an end to the existing slave system (documents relating to attempts to end the slave trade are included in the section on the Capitol). As a rising generation of native-born African Americans began to predominate among enslaved laborers in the tidewater, a new culture emerged that sustained plantation communities and individuals in new ways at the same time that greater familiarity with white language and customs and with the local countryside afforded new economic opportunities and new modes of resistance.

The cracks in the system became fissures when the colonists' disputes with Britain escalated from polemics and protests to armed conflict. White Virginians who took up arms to prevent their perceived enslavement by the British government had also to violently suppress the numerous enslaved within the colony who embraced Revolutionary equalitarian ideals all too literally. Securing liberty from Britain, they quickly found, required vigorously denying freedom to the enslaved Africans and African Americans upon whose coerced labor and social subordination their economic prosperity and social structure continued to depend.

October 1765—ACT XXIV. *An act to prevent the practice of selling persons as slaves that are not so, and for other purposes therein mentioned*

The legislators decided to impose a fine of £50 on anyone who tried to sell a mulatto servant as a slave. In addition, they ruled that children born to mulatto servants would serve the same term of indenture (boys to age twenty-one and girls to age eighteen) as white children born to white servants did.

I. WHEREAS it is represented to this present General Assembly that divers ill disposed persons have of late years been guilty of selling and disposing of mulattoes and others as slaves, who by the laws of this colony are subject to a service only of thirty one years, after which they become free: *Be it therefore enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor, Council and Burgesses of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same*, that if any person or persons shall hereafter sell as a slave within this colony, or carry or cause to be carried out thereof and sell as a slave, any such mulatto, or other servant, knowing him or her so to be, every such offender shall forfeit and pay the sum of fifty pounds to the purchaser of such servant or servants, over and

above the money actually paid by such purchaser for the same; and moreover such offender shall be liable to the penalty of twenty pounds to any person who will inform or sue for the same, and may be recovered, with costs, by action of debt or information, in any court of record within this colony. And if any person shall be a second time convicted of selling the same servant as a slave, he, she, or they, so offending, shall forfeit the residue of the time of service due from such servant, who shall thereupon be bound out, by order of the court of the county where the matter shall be tried, to serve to the age of twenty one years, in the same manner as is by law directed for the binding out orphan children; but if such servant shall at the time of such trial have attained the age of twenty one years, he shall be, and he is hereby declared to be free.

III. And whereas by one act of assembly made in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of his late majesty, entitled An act for the better government of servants and slaves, it is amongst other things enacted that if any woman servant shall have a bastard child by a negro or mulatto, or if any free christian white woman shall have such bastard child by a negro or mulatto, in both cases, besides the punishment inflicted on the mother of such bastard, the church-wardens shall bind the said child to be a servant until it shall be thirty-one years of age, which is an unreasonable severity towards such children: *Be it therefore enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That from and after the passing of this act the church-wardens shall bind out such bastard children already born, and not yet bound out, or which shall hereafter be born, either of white women servants or of free christian white women, to serve, the males to the age of twenty-one years, and the females to the age of eighteen years only, and no longer; any thing in the said in part recited act to the contrary thereof, in any wise, notwithstanding.

IV. *And be it further enacted,* That the children hereafter to be born of mulatto women during the time of their service, who are obliged by law to serve to the age of thirty-one years, shall serve the master or mistress of such mulatto woman, the males to the age of twenty one, and the females to the age of eighteen years only, and no longer; any former law, custom, or usage, to the contrary thereof, in any wise, notwithstanding.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 8:133-135.

October 1765—ACT XXVI. *An act for amending the act entitled An act directing the trial of slaves committing capital crimes; and for the more effectual punishing conspiracies and insurrections of them; and for the better government of negroes, mulattoes, and indians, bond or free*

This statute enabled the governor to issue a permanent commission of oyer and terminer to four or more of the justices of the peace in each county. They also decided that a slave convicted of manslaughter of another enslaved person could plead benefit of clergy.

I. . . . *And it be enacted, by the Lieutenant-Governour, Council, and Burgesses, of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same,* That from and after the commencement of this act the governour or commander in chief of this colony for the time being is desired and empowered to issue commissions of oyer

and terminer directed to the justices of each county respectively, empowering them from time to time to try, condemn, and execute, or otherwise punish or acquit, all slaves committing capital crimes within their county; and when any commission for constituting justices of the peace shall thereafter issue, a general commission of oyer and terminer for the purposes aforesaid shall be sent therewith, and directed to the same persons: And such justices, or any four or more of them (one being of the quorum) having taken the usual oaths to his majesty's person and government, and subscribed the same, and repeated and subscribed the test, and having also taken an oath well and truly to execute the office of justices of oyer and terminer, according to such commission, without favour, affection, or partiality, shall have power, and they are hereby required, to meet at the court-house of their county, at any time when there shall be occasion, for the trial of any slave or slaves committing any offence which by carrying into execution any judgment by them given on such trial.

II. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That when any slave or slaves shall at any time hereafter be committed to any county gaol by precept from a justice of the peace for any criminal offence, such justice shall forthwith issue his warrant to the sheriff of the county, requiring him to summon the justices to meet at their court-house on a certain day to be in such warrant appointed, to hold a court for the trial of such criminal or criminals; on which day, or at such other time as shall be appointed, in case a court shall not then be held, the said justices, or any four or more of them (one being of the quorum) shall cause the offender or offenders to be publickly arraigned and tried, without the solemnity of a jury, upon such evidence, in like manner, and subject to the several regulations in the herein before recited act directed and required, where the same is not hereby altered.

III. *Provided always, and be it further enacted,* That where any slave shall be convicted of manslaughter for killing a slave, such offender shall be allowed the benefit of clergy.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 8:137-139.

November 1765—List of the Children at the Bray School in Williamsburg

Robert Carter Nicholas enclosed a list of the children at the Bray School in a letter to the Reverend John Waring.

List of Negro Children who are at the Charity School in Williamsburg November 1765

	[# of children]
Mrs. Campbell's Young & Mary	2
Mrs. Davenport's William	1
Mr. Hay's Jerry	1
Doctor Carter's Nanny	1
Mr Blair's John, Dolly, Elizabeth, Catherine, Fanny, Isaac & Johanna	7
Mrs. Burwell's Joseph & Davy	2

Mrs. Prentis's Molly	1
Colo. Johnson's Squire	1
Colo. Chiswell's Edmund & Johnny	2
Mr. Charlton's Nancy & Davy	2
Mrs. Grymes's Phillis	1
Mrs. Orr's Pat & Jack, James & Sal	4
Mr. Thompson's Charles	1
Mr. Brown's Elizabeth	1
Mr. Thompson's Betty	1
Matt. Ashby's Harry & John	2
Mrs. Vobe's Sal	1
Mr. Waters's Sylvia	1
Mr. Randolph's Roger and Sam	2
in all	34

Source: Van Horne, ed., *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery*, pp. 241-242.

December 23, 1765—George Mason on Slavery as a “troublesom Estate”

In the introduction to his "Scheme for Replevying Goods and Distress for Rent," addressed to George William Fairfax and George Washington, Mason expressed his uneasiness about the effect of slavery on Virginia. In arguing that the legislature should do more to promote tenancy, he asserted that slavery discouraged white settlers from immigrating to Virginia and coarsened the "morals and manners" of those who already lived in the colony. This is Mason's first known allusion to the negative effects of slavery. Mason apparently came face to face with the troublesomeness of his own slaves when two or more of them were executed late in 1767 for their involvement in murdering several overseers by poisoning.

The Policy of encouraging the Importation of free People & discouraging that of Slaves has never been duly considered in this Colony, or we shou'd not at this Day see one Half of our best Lands in most Parts of the Country remain unsettled, & the other cultivated with Slaves; not to mention the ill Effect such a Practice has upon the Morals and Manners of our People: one of the first Signs of the Decay, & perhaps the primary Cause of the Destruction of the most flourishing Government that ever existed was the Introduction of great Numbers of Slaves--an Evil very pathetically described by the Roman Historians--but 'tis not the present Intention to expose our Weakness by examining this Subject too freely.

That the Custom of leasing Lands is more beneficial to the Community than that of setling them with Slaves is a Maxim that will hardly be denied in any free Country; tho' it may not be attended with so much imediate Profit to the Land-holder: in Proportion as it is more useful to the Public, the Invitations from the Legislature to pursue it shou'd be stronger:—no Means seem so natural as securing the Payment of Rents in an easy & effectual Manner: the little Trouble and Risque attending this Species of Property may be

considered as an Equivalent to the greater Profit arising from the Labour of Slaves, or any other precarious & troublesom Estate. . . .

Source: *The Papers of George Mason*, 1:61-62.

July 2, 1766—George Washington Sells a Runaway Slave Named Tom to the West Indies

Although by all accounts George Washington was a humane master who tried not to separate slave families and who developed an increasing antipathy toward the institution of slavery over the course of his life, he had little tolerance for rebellious slaves. In 1766, he wrote the letter transcribed below, asking Captain Joseph Thompson to sell a slave named Tom to the West Indies in return for molasses, rum, fruit, sweetmeats, and spirits. Similarly, in 1772, he sold a slave named Will Shag, who had run away several times and had beaten an overseer, to Port-au-Prince for molasses.

Sir, Mount Vernon July 2d 1766.

With this Letter comes a Negro (Tom) which I beg favour of you to sell, in any of the Islands you may go to, for whatever he will fetch, & bring me in return for him

One Hhd of best Molasses

One Ditto of best Rum

One Barrl of Lymes—if good & Cheap

One Pot of Tamarinds--contg about 10 lbs.

Two small Do of mixed Sweetmeats--abt 5 lb. each

And the residue, much or little, in good old Spirits

That this Fellow is both a Rogue & Runaway (tho. he was by no means remarkable for the former, and never practised the latter till of late) I shall not pretend to deny--But that he is exceeding healthy, strong, and good at the Hoe, the whole neighbourhood can testifie & particularly Mr Johnson and his Son, who have both had him under them as foreman of the gang; which gives me reason to hope he may, with your good management, sell well, if kept clean & trim'd up a little when offerd to Sale.

I shall very chearfully allow you the customary Commissions on this affair, and must beg the favour of you (least he should attempt his escape) to keep him handcuffd till you get to Sea--or in the Bay--after which I doubt not but you may make him very useful to you.

I wish you a pleasant and prosperous Passage, and a safe & speedy return, being
Sir, Yr Very Hble Servt
Go: Washington

Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Abbot and Twohig, et al., Colonial Series, 7:453-454.

July 22, 1766—Nathaniel Littleton Savage to John Norton

Nathaniel Littleton Savage complains about the deleterious effects of slavery on slaveowners and their families in this letter to John Norton, an English merchant who had lived in Yorktown. He worries in particular about the legacy of violence and extravagance that his children will inherit as slaveholders.

Judge then if our situation is much mended. the only Recipe that can be prescribed, at this junction, is Frugality & Industry, which is a Potion scarcely to be swallowed by Virginians, brought up from their Cradles, in Idleness, Luxury, & Extravagancy, depending on their Myriads of Slaves, that Bane, (if not Curse) of this Country; how happy are you, to have had it in your power to Rid yourself of that bond of trouble, which is Inseperable from a Virginia Estate, and place your posterity beyond the reach of such wretched examples; had it been in my power, to have sold my whole Estate (as I have part of it, a distant one, which fell to me since I saw you, for Four thousand pounds, which now would scarcely fetch two thirds of the Money) while Bills keep up & the people lost their senses should have almost doubled my Fortune, & rendered my Life easy & free from those perplexing cares, which I have at the thoughts of leaving my Children, in a country where they must make Whipping Negroes their chief employ, suppose Mr. Cary, has informed you, that he had sold me your Dwelling House, out houses & Lotts (which are now occupied by Mr. J. Ambler) for L 600 Sterling, to be paid, on your making a Title.

Source: Brock Collection, Huntington Library.

March 19, 1767—Arthur Lee's *Address on Slavery*

On March 19, 1767, Rind's *Virginia Gazette* published an open letter by Dr. Arthur Lee in which he addressed the House of Burgesses on the subject of slavery. Lee, the sixth son of Thomas and Hannah (Ludwell) Lee of Westmoreland County, had returned to Virginia the previous year after completing his medical degree at the University of Edinburgh and two years of advanced study at the University of Leyden. He was living in Williamsburg when he penned his address.

In his address, Lee argued for the abolition of slavery, setting forth arguments he had honed in his *Essay in Vindication of the Continental Colonies of America* (London, 1764). Because there are few extant issues of Rind's *Virginia Gazette* for 1767, it is impossible to gauge accurately the response that Lee's address received from the supporters of slavery. It is known, however, that Rind refused to publish the second part of Lee's address, which focused on the retrieval of specie.

Less than two weeks after the publication of Lee's address, Henry Lee of Leesylvania proposed a bill in the House of Burgesses to place an additional duty on imported slaves. It passed in amended form the next month. Arthur Lee did not publish further on the issue of slavery, but Quaker abolitionist Anthony Benezet subsequently gave Lee's

address wide circulation in the colonies through an abridged edition devoid of Lee's predictions of violent slave rebellion.

The following extracts are from Lee's original essay. The brackets indicate material omitted from Benezet's edition.

To Mr. Rind

Sir—

Permit me, in your paper, to address the members of our Assembly, on two points, in which the publick interest is very dearly concern'd.

The Abolition of Slavery & Retrieval of Specie, in this Colony, are the Subjects, on which I would bespeak their Attention. . . .

Long and serious Reflection upon the nature & Consequences of Slavery, has Convinced me, that it is a Violation both of Justice and Religion; that it is dangerous to the safety of the Community in which it prevails; that it is destructive to the growth of arts & Sciences; and lastly, that it produces a numerous & very fatal train of Vices, both in the Slave, and in his Master.—To prove these assertions, shall be the purpose of the following essay. . . .

. . . The British Merchants obtain [slaves] from Africa by violence, artifice & treachery, with a few trinkets to prompt those unfortunate & detestable people to enslave one another by force or Strategem. Purchase them indeed they may, under the authority of an act of British Parliament. An act entailing upon the Africans, with whom we were not at war, and over whom a British Parliament could not of right assume even a shadow of authority, the dreadful curse of perpetual slavery upon them and their children forever. There cannot be in nature, there is not in all of history, an instance in which every right of men is more flagrantly violated. The laws of the Antients never authorized the making slaves but of those nations whom they had conquer'd; yet they were Heathens and we are Christians. They were misled by a false and monstrous religion, divested of humanity, by a horrible & Barbarous worship; we are directed by the unerring precepts of the revealed religion we possess, enlightened by its wisdom, and humanized by its benevolence. Before then were gods deformed with passions, and horrible for every cruelty & Vice; before us is that incomparable pattern of Meekness, Charity, love, and justice to mankind, which so transcendently distinguished the founder of Christianity and his ever amiable doctrines. Reader—remember that the corner stone of your religion is to do unto others as you wou'd they shou'd do unto you; ask then your own Heart, whether it would not abhor anyone, as the most outrageous violator of this & every other principle of right, Justice & humanity, who should make a slave of you and your Posterity forever. Remember that God knoweth the heart. Lay not this flattering unction to your Soul, that it is the custom of the Country, that you found it so, that not your will, but your Necessity consents; Ah think, how little such an excuse will avail you in that awfull day, when your Saviour shall pronounce judgment upon you for breaking a law too plain to be misunderstood, too sacred to be violated. If we say that we are Christians, yet act more inhumanly and unjustly than Heathens, with what dreadfull justice must this Sentence of our blessed Saviour fall upon us: Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the

Kingdom of Heaven⁵; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Think a moment how much your temporal, your eternal welfare, depends upon the abolition of a practice, which deforms the Image of your God; tramples on his reveal'd will, infringes the most Sacred rights, and violates humanity.

Enough I hope has been said to prove that slavery is in violation of justice and religion. That it is dangerous to the safety of the State in which it prevails, may be as safely asserted.

What one's own experience hath not taught, that of others must decide. From whence does history derive its utility. For being, when truly written, a faithful record of the transactions of mankind, and the consequences that flow'd from them; we are thence furnished with the means of judging what will be the probable effect of transactions similar among ourselves. We learn then from history, that Slavery, wherever encouraged, has sooner or later been productive of very dangerous commotions. I will not trouble my reader here with quotations in support of this assertion, but content myself with referring those, who may be dubious of its truth, to the histories of Athens, Lacedaemon, Rome, and Spain. [And that this observation may bear its full weight, let me beg that it be remember'd these states were remarkable for being the most warlike in the world; the bravest and best trained to discipline and arms.

That we are not such is but too obvious. Yet it does not appear that the slaves in those Communities, were so numerous as they are in ours. Demosthenes during his orphanage, had been defrauded of a large fortune; and in his oration for retrieving it enumerates 52 Slaves. Tacitus, in mentioning a roman Nobleman, who was assassinated by one of his Slaves; records the whole number amounting to 400, to have suffered Death for that crime. From these facts we may conclude, that the proportion of slaves among the antients was not so great as with us; and as, notwithstanding this, the freemen, tho' infinitely better armed and disciplined than we are, were yet brought to the very brink of ruin by the insurrections of their Slaves; what powerful reasons have not we, to fear event more fatal consequences from the greater prevalence of Slavery among us.] How long how bloody and destructive, was the contest between the Moorish slaves and the native Spaniards, and after almost deluges of blood had been shed, the Spaniards obtain'd nothing more, than driving them into the mountains; [from whence they remain themselves subjected to perpetual inroads.] Less bloody indeed, though not less alarming, have been the insurrections in Jamaica; and to imagine that we shall be forever exempted from this Calamity, which experience teaches us to be inseparable from slavery, so encouraged, is an infatuation as astonishing, as it will be surely fatal. [On us, or on our posterity, the inevitable blow, must, one day, fall; and probably with the most irresistible vengeance the longer it is protracted. Since time, as it adds strength and experience to the slaves, will sink us into perfect security and indolence, which debillitating our minds, and enervating our bodies, will render us an easy conquest to the feeblest foe. Unarm'd already and undisciplined, with our Militia laws contemned, neglected or perverted, we are like the wretch at the feast; with a drawn sword depending over his head by a Single hair; yet we flatter ourselves, in opposition to the force of reason and conviction of experience, that the danger is not imminent.

⁵Mathew Chap 7 v. 21

To prosecute this Subject farther, at present, would I perceive Mr. Rind, engross too much of your paper, and most likely disgust the reader, I must therefore take leave to defer what remains to the next week. Happy shall I be if my poor attempts should prompt more able Heads to think and write upon a Subject, of such lasting import to the welfare of the Community. Strongly, I confess, am I attached to the positions here laid down, because they are formed upon long and serious deliberation; Yet I am open to that conviction, which truth ever operates on minds unsexed by Interest, and uninflamed by passion.

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servant

PHILANTHROPOS

Source: MacMaster, "Arthur Lee's 'Address on Slavery,'" pp. 141-157.

[February 16, 1769]—Robert Carter Nicholas to the Reverend John Waring

Robert Carter Nicholas included a list of the boys and girls who were Anne Wager's pupils in a letter to Reverend Waring

List of Negro Children

Negroes now at School. [16 Feb. 1769]

	[# of children]
Mrs. Prisca. Dawson's Grace	1
Mr R. C. Nicholas's Sarah	1
Mr. President Blair's Catherine, Nancy, Johanna & Clara Bee	4
Mr. Hay's Jerry, Joseph, Dick	3
Mrs. Chiswell's Jack	1
Mrs. Campbell's Mary, Sally, Sukey	3
Mrs. Speaker's Sam	1
Mrs. Vobe's Jack	1
John & Mary Ashby . . free	2
Mr. Ayscough's Sally	1
The College. Adam, Fanny	2
The Commissary's Charlotte	1
Mrs. Blaikley's Jenny, Jack	2
Hon. Robt. Carter's Dennis	1
Mr. Hornsby's Nancy, Judy, Ratchel	3
Mr. Cocke's Mourning	1
Mr. Davenport's Matt, Harry	2

Source: Van Horne, ed., *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery*, pp. 277-278.

November 1769—ACT XIX. *An act to amend the Act, intituled an Act to amend the Act for the better government of Servants and Slaves*

The legislators decided that a slave man could be castrated only if he was found guilty of raping or attempting to rape a white woman. The restrictions that they placed on the participation of slaves in the economy indicates that a number of enslaved persons traded as did free persons.

Philip Schwarz notes that few black men were charged with the rape of a white woman in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. The small number of rapes is evidence that the legislators responded to white fears of black male sexuality when they wrote this statute.

I. . . . *Be it therefore enacted, by the Governor, Council, and Burgesses, of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That it shall not be lawful for any county court to order and direct castration of any slave, except such slave shall be convicted of an attempt to ravish a white woman, in which case they may inflict such punishment; any thing in the said recited act, to the contrary, notwithstanding.*

V. *Provided also, That if the owner or overseer of such runaway shall be an inhabitant of the county where such runaway is taken up, the taker up shall, in that case, convey and deliver him or her to the owner or overseer as aforesaid, and shall not be at liberty to carry such runaway to the gaol of the county, as is before directed.*

VI. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That before any runaway shall be delivered out of custody of the sheriff or gaoler, the person claiming such runaway shall pay down the reward aforesaid, for taking up, and the charge of advertising, with the fees for keeping and maintaining the runaway, as the same are now settled by law; and every sheriff or gaoler receiving the reward aforesaid for taking up, and refusing or neglecting to pay the same, the taker-up may recover the same, with costs, by warrant, before a single justice, where the reward shall not exceed twenty-five shillings or where the reward shall exceed that sum, then by petition or action, as the case may require, in any court of record within this colony.*

VIII. *And whereas many owners of slaves, in consideration of stipulated wages to be paid by such slaves, licence them to go at large, and to trade as freemen, which is found to be a great encouragement to the commission of thefts and other evil practices by such slaves, in order to enable them to fulfil their agreements with their masters or owners: For prevention whereof, Be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That from and after the commencement of this act, if any master or owner of a slave shall licence such slave to go at large, and trade as a freeman as aforesaid, the master or owner shall forfeit and pay the sum of ten pounds current money, for the use of the poor of that parish where such slave shall be found going at large, and trading as aforesaid, to be recovered by the churchwardens by action of debt, in any court of record within this dominion. And if after conviction such slave shall be found so going at large, and*

trading, the master or owner shall again be liable to the like penalty, to be recovered and applied as aforesaid, and so as often after conviction as such slave shall be found so going at large, and trading.

Source: Schwarz, *Twice Condemned*, pp. 71-72, 82-84, 149-164; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 8:358-361.

November 1769—ACT. XXXVII. *An act for exempting free negro, mulatto, and Indian women, from the payment of levies*

In May 1769, free black men petitioned to have their wives and daughters exempted from the payment of tithes. The approval of their petition in November of the same year lifted a financial burden from the free black residents of Virginia. Documents related to this statute are included in the section on the Capitol in this resource book.

I. WHEREAS by an act of the general assembly passed in the twenty second year of the reign of his late majesty George the second, intituled An act concerning tithables, it is among other things enacted, that all free negro, mulatto, and Indian women, of the age of sixteen years, except Indians tributary to this government, and all wives of free negroes, mulattoes, and Indians, except as is before excepted, should be, and are thereby declared tithables, and chargeable for defraying the public, county, and parish levies, of this colony and dominion, which is found very burthensome to such negroes, mulattoes, and Indians, and is moreover derogatory of the rights of free-born subjects: For remedy whereof, *Be it enacted, by the Governor, Council, and Burgesses, of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same*, That from and after the ninth day of June next, all free negro, mulatto, and Indian women, and all wives, other than slaves, of free negroes, mulattoes, and Indians, shall be, and are hereby exempted from being listed as tithables, and from the payment of any public, county, or parish levies.

II. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That so much of the said recited act as declares free negro, mulatto, and Indian women, to be chargeable with public, county, and parish levies, shall be, and the same is hereby repealed.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 8:396.

April 5, 1770—Williamsburg Considers the Establishment of a Night Watch

The Williamsburg area experienced some unrest in the first part of 1770. The February 8, 1770 issue of the *Maryland Gazette* and the February 15, 1770 edition of the *New York Journal or General Advertiser* included accounts of trouble with slaves in York, James City, and Hanover counties. It is possible that the robberies noted in the April 5, 1770 issue of Purdie and Dixon's newspaper were part of the unrest reported in the two other papers.

On Monday night Mr. John Carter's store, in the most publick part of the main street of this city, was broke open and robbed of sundry goods; and some time before Mr. Joseph Scrivener's store, likewise on the main street, was robbed of a considerable sum of money, by the thieves entering at his cellar window and getting up through a trap door. We hear likewise of several smokehouses having been stripped of their useful contents, by undermining, &c. So many robberies, one might imagine, would put our rulers in mind to fall upon some scheme to prevent them; and we humbly conceive that a set of watchmen, under proper regulations, would answer that desirable end, who might likewise be of infinite service in the case of fire. Many of the inhabitants, we are well assured, are ready and willing to contribute largely to the support of such an useful institution, whenever it is adopted, which cannot be too soon.

Source: Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, p. 113; *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., April 5, 1770.

1772—The Somerset Decision

Although less familiar to most Americans than the Dred Scott decision of 1857, the Somerset decision of 1772 similarly considered the issue of a slave's status when he was transported beyond his residence by his owner. Unlike Dred Scott, Somerset was a victory for the enslaved plaintiff, who was a former resident of Virginia. Although the finding in the case was quite narrow, abolitionists interpreted it as an attack on the legitimacy of slavery. News of the decision, including erroneous summaries published in the *Virginia Gazette*, reached the colonies and prompted some slaves to escape or demand their freedom.

In 1749, a slaver brought the man who would soon be named James Somerset from Africa to Virginia, where he was purchased by Charles Stewart, a Scottish merchant who lived in Norfolk. Stewart and Somerset later relocated to Massachusetts, where Stewart was a customs officer. In 1769, Stewart traveled to England on business, and Somerset accompanied him as a personal servant. Two years later, Somerset escaped, but Stewart tracked him down and placed him on a ship bound for Jamaica so that he could be sold. Abolitionist Granville Sharp and others intervened on Somerset's behalf, and he was released on a writ of habeas corpus.

Legal historian William M. Wiecek provides a useful introduction to the Somerset case and its importance to the development of antislavery thought in England and America.

Americans, for better or worse, are a peculiarly legalistic people. Moral or ideological pressures alone, divorced from secular legal considerations, would not have accounted for the potency of antislavery in the United States. But slavery was, among other things, a legal institution, and attacks on its legitimacy were especially congenial to the American temperament. Abolitionists struck one of their most telling blows when they asserted that slavery had been established in America in violation of natural law, the common law, and the constitutional order of the British colonies.

The documentary bases of this legal attack were threefold: the Declaration of Independence, the constitutive documents of the American states and nation, and Somerset v. Stewart (1772), a decision handed down by William Murray, Lord Mansfield, Chief Justice of King's Bench, the highest common-law court in England. Read strictly and technically, the holding of Somerset was limited to two points: a master could not seize a slave in England and detain him preparatory to sending him out of the realm to be sold; and habeas corpus was available to the slave to forestall such seizure, deportation, and sale. But Mansfield's decision, as reported by the young English lawyer Capel Lofft, contained utterances that imbued the holding with a much broader significance. As interpreted by American abolitionists and others, Somerset seemed to be a declaration that slavery was incompatible with natural law and that, in the Anglo-American world, it could legitimately exist only if established by what Mansfield ambiguously termed "positive law."

Many contemporaries understood Somerset to have abolished slavery in England; a few thought it challenged slavery in the colonies as well. Mansfield's utterance had a plangent quality, suggesting that slavery was of dubious legitimacy everywhere. Though Mansfield later disavowed the broad implications imputed to Somerset, the decision took on a life of its own and entered the mainstream of American constitutional discourse. It furnished abolitionists with some of the most potent doctrinal weapons in their arsenal; even slave-state jurists at first accepted its antislavery premises and then later worked out a justification of slavery, as it were, around or in spite of Somerset. The case therefore became a cloud hanging over the legitimacy of slavery in America, a result that would have surprised Mansfield. . . .

In spite of the restricted scope of the holding, and the efforts of Mansfield and others to emphasize how narrow it was and to foreclose more liberating possibilities that appeared in the interstices of Mansfield's ideas, Somerset burst the confines of its author's judgment. This occurred chiefly for two reasons. First, the judgment itself, discharging a black alleged to be a slave by a writ of habeas corpus, struck a telling blow at slavery. The mere fact that habeas corpus was available to any black to test the legitimacy of his putative master's claim to him was in itself an extension of the scope of the Great Writ and a threat to the security of slavery in England. Second, Mansfield's statements justifying the result had implications for the imperial relation, for conflict of laws, and for the future of natural law that Mansfield probably did not foresee, and that the defenders of slavery later had cause to regret.

Source: Wiecek, *The Sources of Antislavery Constitutionalism in America*, pp. 20-21, 28-29, 33, 40. See also Chapter 9, "The Case of James Sommersett, a Negro," in A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process: The Colonial Period*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 333-355.

February 1772—ACT IX. *An act for amending the acts concerning the trials and outlawries of slaves*

This statute enabled a slave who was convicted of breaking and entering a house at night to plead benefit of clergy.

I. WHEREAS it hath been doubted whether slaves convicted of breaking and entering houses in the night time, without stealing goods or chattels from thence, are entitled to the benefit of clergy: For explaining the law in this point, *Be it enacted, by the Governor, Council, and Burgesses, of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same*, That a slave who shall break any house in the night time, shall not be excluded from clergy, unless the said breaking, in the case of a freeman, would be a burglary.

II. *And be it further enacted*, That from and after the passing of this act, sentence of death shall in no case be passed upon any slave, unless four of the court, before whom such slave is arraigned and tried, being a majority, shall concur in their opinion of his or her guilt; any law, custom, or usage, to the contrary thereof, notwithstanding.

III. And whereas doubts have arisen, and various opinions have prevailed, touching the proper constructions of part of an act of assembly, made in the twenty-second year of the reign of his late majesty, directing the method of proceeding against outlying slaves, and in what manner they shall be paid for by the public, when killed or destroyed, in pursuance of the said act: For removing such doubts, and that the said act may hereafter receive one uniform interpretation, *Be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That no justice or justices of the peace of this colony shall, by virtue of the said act, issue a proclamation against any slave, authorizing any person to kill or destroy such slave, unless it shall appear to the satisfaction of such justice or justices that such slave is outlying and doing mischief; and if any slave shall thereafter be killed or destroyed, by virtue of any proclamation, issued contrary to this act, the owner or proprietor of such slave shall not be paid for such slave by the publick; any thing in the said recited act to the contrary, or seeming to the contrary, in any wise, notwithstanding.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 8:522-523.

July 16, 1772—Establishment of a Watch in Williamsburg

Williamsburg's municipal officials did not establish a watch until July 1772, even though the August 1755 *Act for the better regulating and training the Militia* gave them the authority to do so. The city leaders decided that the members of the watch would patrol from 10 pm to daylight each night.

The next mention of the Williamsburg slave patrol is in the 1776 York County levy. The justices included the following charge: "Allowed patrollers for 269 times on Duty as per List at ¼ [£] 17.18.6." It is likely that the entry referred to 269 individuals who had served on a patrol for a total of sixty-eight patrols (if four men were sent out on each patrol). If four men served on a watch every night, the charge to York County for the several patrols in 1776 would have been greater. A minimum of sixty-eight patrols in one year at a time when the militia regulations required a minimum of twelve patrols in a calendar year suggests that the residents of Williamsburg believed that they needed a patrol in 1776.

LAST Saturday, at a Court of Common Hall, a bye law was passed for constituting a WATCH, to consist of four sober and discreet People, who are to patrol the Streets of this City from ten o'clock every Night until Daylight the next Morning, to cry the Hours, and use their best Endeavours to preserve Peace and good Order, by apprehending and bringing to Justice all disorderly People, Slaves, as well as others. They are likewise to have the Care of the FIRE ENGINES, and to be ready, in Cases of Accidents by Fire, to give their Assistance towards extinguishing the same. For which Services each Person is to receive a Salary of thirty Pounds a Year.

This Regulation, it is hoped, may prove extremely beneficial, not only to this City, but to the Neighbourhood in general. But as much will depend on those to be employed as Watchmen, such only as will answer the above Description (to which must be added Honesty and Diligence) need apply; and they are to give in their Names, with the necessary Certificates, to the Mayor, to be laid before the Common Hall to be held on the first Tuesday in next Month, when the Watch will be appointed.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., July 16, 1772.

February 2, 1774—Robert Pleasants to Anthony Benezet

In this letter, Pleasants, a Quaker the President of the Virginia Abolition Society, discusses the fact that the other twelve colonies were also faced with the problem of how to end slavery, with Benezet, a resident of Philadelphia.

I think the Phisition has handled the subject of Slavery in a masterly manner, altho I suppose he may have very little reason to expect to share with his antagonist the thanks of the Affrican Company, but let that be as it may, he will receive what I expect will be more agreeable to him, the approbation of Judicious sencible men. I highly approved and sincerely wish the several petitions to the King and Parliament may have the desired effect, but I fear there is not virtue and resolution sufficient to forgo or withstand a present (tho false and imaginary) interest in the continuation of a wicked and destructive Trade. I have sent one of the papers containing the address and advice to those Mercht., to the Printer, and doubt not they will shortly appear in our *Gazette* and as it seems the attempts of our Assembly to prohibit the further Importation of Slaves by an imposition of high Dutys, has been frustrated (as I find is the case in N. york) does thou not think that Acts of the Colonys making all free after a certain term of Servitude like other foreigners taking place at a future period so as that all concerned in the Trade might have notice of such law, would not be (when accompanied with pertinent reasons) more effectually to put an end to it, and be more likely to be approved by the King and Council than a prohibition by Duties for I have been told our Governor (and its not unlikely others also) has instructions to pass no such laws. I just drop this hint for thy consideration.

Source: Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4:161.

June 30, 1774—News of the Somerset Decision Reaches Virginia Slaves

This advertisement in the June 30, 1774 issue of Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette* makes clear that news of the Somerset decision reached Virginia slaves.

Augusta, June 18, 1774

Run away the 16th Instant, from the Subscriber, a Negro Man named BACCHUS, about 30 Years of Age, five Feet six or seven Inches high, strong and well made; had on, and took with him, two white *Russia* Drill Coats, one turned up with blue, the other quite plain and new, with white figured Metal Buttons, blue Plush Breeches, a fine Cloth Pompadour Waistcoat, two or three thin or Summer Jackets, sundry Pairs of white Thread Stockings, five or six white Shirts, two of them pretty fine, neat Shoes, Silver Buckles, a fine Hat cut and cocked in the Macaroni Figure, a double-milled Drab Great Coat, and sundry other Wearing Apparel. He formerly belonged to Doctor *George Pitt, of Williamsburg*, and I imagine is gone there under Pretence of my sending him upon Business, as I have frequently heretofore done; he is a cunning, artful, sensible Fellow, and very capable of forging a Tale to impose on the Unwary, is well acquainted with the lower Parts of the Country, having constantly rode with me for some Years past, and has been used to waiting from his Infancy. He was seen a few Days before he went off with a Purse of Dollars, and had just before changed a five Pound Bill; most, or all of which, I suppose he must have robbed me off, which he might easily have done, I having trusted him much after what I thought had proved his Fidelity. He will probably endeavour to pass for a Freeman by the Name of *John Christian*, and attempt to get on Board some Vessel bound for *Great Britain*, from the Knowledge he has of the late Determination of *Somerset's* Case. Whoever takes up the said Slave shall have 5 l. Reward, on his Delivery to GABRIEL JONES.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., June 30, 1774.

June 1774—The Prince George County Resolves Call for an End to the Slave Trade

In 1774, the residents of Prince George County and the members of the Virginia Association passed resolutions that called for the end of the slave trade. The Prince George County resolution passed in June of that year.

At a General Meeting of the Freeholders and Inhabitants of Prince George's County, Virginia, the following Resolves were proposed and unanimously agreed to

Resolved, That the African Trade is injurious to this Colony, obstructs the population of it by freemen, prevents manufacturers and other useful emigrants from Europe from settling amongst us, and occasions an annual increase of the balance of trade against this Colony

At a very full Meeting of Delegates from the different Counties in the Colony and Dominion of Virginia, begun in Williamsburg the first day of August, in the year of our

Lord 1774, and continued by several adjournments to Saturday, the 6th of the same month, the following Association was unanimously resolved upon and agreed to:

2d. We will neither ourselves import, nor purchase any slave or slaves imported by any other person, after the first day of November next, either from Africa, the West Indies, or any other place.

Source: Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4:161-162.

July 18, 1774—The Fairfax County Resolves Call for an End to the Slave Trade

The Fairfax County Resolves were drafted by George Mason and George Washington at Mount Vernon for the July 18, 1774 meeting of the Fairfax County committee, which convened to formulate a response to the Boston Port Bill. The seventeenth resolve addressed the slave trade. Washington brought the resolves first to Williamsburg, where he attended the special August meeting of the House of Burgesses, and then to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, where the Resolves were transformed into the Continental Association of October 20, 1774.

17. RESOLVED that it is the Opinion of this Meeting, that during our present Difficulties and Distress, no Slaves ought to be imported into any of the British Colonies on this Continent; and we take this Opportunity of declaring our most earnest Wishes to see an entire Stop for ever put to such a wicked cruel and unnatural trade.

Source: *The Papers of George Mason*, ed. Rutland, 1:207.

1774—Thomas Jefferson Accuses Great Britain of Trying to Reduce the Colonies to Slavery

Before the Virginia Convention met in 1774, Jefferson prepared a series of resolutions to serve as a guide for the delegates to the First Continental Congress, who would be formulating an address to the king. Jefferson became ill and could not attend the convention, but some of his friends printed his paper as *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*. Among other things, Jefferson criticized King George III for refusing to accept the Virginia legislature's attempt to limit the slave trade by adopting a prohibitive tariff on imports. In the excerpt below, Jefferson accused Parliament of trying to reduce the colonies to slavery.

That thus have we hastened thro' the reigns which preceded his majesty's, during which the violation of our rights were less alarming, because repeated at more distant intervals, than that rapid and bold succession of injuries which is likely to distinguish the present from all other periods of American history. Scarcely have our minds been able to

emerge from the astonishment into which one stroke of parliamentary thunder has involved us, before another more heavy and more alarming is fallen on us. Single acts of tyranny may be ascribed to the accidental opinion of a day; but a series of oppressions, begun at a distinguished period, and pursued unalterably thro' every change of ministers, too plainly prove a deliberate, systematical plan of reducing us to slavery.

Source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Boyd, et al., 1:125.

1774—List of Slaves Owned by Thomas Jefferson

When Thomas Jefferson criticized King George III for rejecting the Virginia legislature's attempt to limit the slave trade, he was the owner of approximately 187 slaves. Jefferson inherited many of his enslaved laborers and a number of his slave women were mothers of young children. Jefferson did not need to purchase slaves imported into Virginia in order to have a labor force to work on his plantations.

Jefferson wrote the following list of slaves on January 14, 1774.

A Roll of the proper Slaves of Thomas Jefferson. Jan. 14. 1774.

Monticello.

*Goliah.
*Hercules.
+Jupiter. 1743.

*Gill.
*Fanny
+Ned. 1760.
Suckey 1765.
Frankey. 1767.
Gill. 1769.

*Quash
*Nell.
*Bella. 1757.
*Charles. 1760.
Jenny. 1768.

*Betty

-Juno
*Toby junr. 1753.
-Luna. 1758.

Monticello.

+George
+Ursula.
George.
Bagwell
Archy. 1773

+Frank 1757.
+Bett. 1759
+Scilla. 1762.

*Cate. about 1747.

Hannah 1770

Rachel. 1773

- * denotes a labourer in the ground.
- + denotes a titheable person following some other occupation
- denotes a person discharged from labor on acct of age or infirmity.

Lego.
me

*Harry.

*Will.

*Leah.

Lucy. 1773

Shadwell.

* Moll.

Phill. Dec. 1768.

Phyllis. 1771.

- Milly. 1760.

Dilcy. 1764.

Will. Mar. 1768.

Betty (Patt's daur)

- Toby.

Slaves conveyed by my mother to

under the power given her in my
father's will as an indemnification
for the debts I had paid for her.

Lego.

***Caesar.**

Shadwell.

* Sall.

+ Lucinda. 1761.

Simon. 1765.

Cyrus. Nov. 1772.

* Squire.

* Belinda.

* Hal. 1760.

Charlotte. Mar. 1768.

Minerva. Sep. 1771.

Sarah. Dec. 1772.

A Roll of the slaves of John Wayles which were allotted to T.J. in right of his wife on a
division of the estate Jan. 14. 1774.

Tradesmen

+ Sanco. Elkhill Carpenters

+ Abram. Guinea

+ Billy boy Poplar Forest Smiths

+ Barnaby. 1760. Guinea

+ Phill. Guinea Shoemaker

+ King Judith's creek

+ Jim Hubbard. Elk hill Watermen

+ Peter. Crank's

Judith's creek or Dun-lora

- Peg.

* Judy

Hannah. Octob. 1771.

Tamar. June. 1773

* Jupiter

- Phyllis

Shandy. Aug. 1768

Sam. July. 1770.

Phyllis. Nov. 1772

Poplar Forest.

- * Guinea Will.
- * Betty
 - Hall. Sep. 1767.
 - Dilcy. Mar. 1769
 - Suckey. May. 1771

Wingo's.

- * John. 1753
- * Davy. 1755.
- + Mary. 1753
- * Doll. 1757.
- * Charles.

Crank's.

- * Emanuel.
- * Patt
 - Prince. 1769
 - Isabel. 1770.
 - Peter. 1772.
 - Sam. 1772.

- Lucy.
- Jack.

Byrd or Elk-hill.

- * Sue.
- + Robin. 1757.
- * Phoebe. 1759.
 - Betty. 1762.
 - Joe. 1764.
 - Patty. 1766.
 - Sanco. 1768.
 - Nanny. 1771.
 - Sue. 1773.
- * Nan.
- * Frank.
 - Gamey. 1764.
 - Natt. 1766.
 - Joan. 1768.
 - Armistead. 1771.
 - Natia. 1773.
- + York.
- * Mima.
 - Beck. 1771.
- * Tomo.
- * Rose.
- * Turpin.
- * Jack
- * Patt Kennon.

Elk-hill contind

- Sam.
- * Polydore
- * Suckey.
- Mary. 1773.

Indian Camp.

- * Londy.
- * Sarah.
- * Ned.
- * Amey.
- * Isabel.
 - Lewis.
 - Sarah. 1764.
 - Peg.
- * Phoebe
 - Frank. Jan. 1764
 - Betty. Aug. 1767.
 - Lucy. July. 1769.
- * Sam
- * Dinah.
- * Jack.
- * Aggy.
 - Sam. Feb. 1762.
 - Judy. 1764.
 - Dinah. 1766.
 - Solomon. 1769.

Tom. 1767.
Jeffery. 1769.

- * Branford.
- * Jenny.

continued.

Indian camp contind.

- * Will.
- * Judy.
Jemmy.
York. 1764.
- * Abby. She is said to have been older than
Samey & York probably born abt 53.
Jesse. Nov. 1772. Abby's son.
- * Ambrose.
- * Hannah.
Harry. 1770.
Nanny. 1772.

Angola.
* Cate.
* Cuffey.
* Stephen.
Sall. 1764.
Phill. 1766.
Daniel. 1772.

- * Sam.
- * Nancy.

Guinea.
+ Betty Hemings.
Nancy. 1761.
Jemmy. 1765.
Thenia. 1767.
Crittta. 1769.

continued.

Guinea contind.

- Peter. Aug. 1770.
- Sally. 1773.
- Daniel (grandson) 1772.
- + Aggy.
Jenny. 1764.
Dick. 1767.
- * Sall.
Aggy. 1769.
Jemmy. 1771.

Bridge quarter.

- * Will.
- * Betty.

- * Tom.
- * Isabel.

Liggon's.
* Peter.
* Hannah.
Betty. 1772.

Forest.

- + Martin. 1756.
Bob. 1762.

Dinah. 1761.
Billy Warny. 1763.

- * Lucy.
- + Suck

+ Old Jenny

* Mingo.

* Tom Shackelford.

Source: Betts, ed., *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book*, pp. 5-9.

Part V—Enslaved Virginians and the Impending Revolution

Spring and Summer 1775—Reaction to the Gunpowder Incident

In his article, "Rebel Against Rebel': Enslaved Virginians and the Coming of the American Revolution," Woody Holton places the revolutionary actions of Virginia's slaves and patriots in the context of a tradition of black resistance to bondage. He emphasizes that Lord Dunmore's seizure of gunpowder from the magazine in Williamsburg's on April 21, 1775 took place when communities throughout the colony, including Williamsburg, were abuzz with rumors of slave insurrection. Holton stresses that there were more reports of potential slave uprisings in the third week of April 1775 than in any period in the colony's history. In subsequent days, Dunmore threatened to free the colony's slaves and use them against patriot militiamen. In Williamsburg, nightly slave patrols were doubled, and Benjamin Waller remarked that the governor had lost "the Confidence of the People not so much for having taken the Powder as for the declaration he made of raising and freeing the Slaves." That summer a record number of slaves were brought before the county courts for criminal trials.

For more than six months after the battles of Lexington and Concord, the fighting between British and patriot troops was confined to the northern colonies. Then on 26 October 1775, a squadron of British naval vessels attacked the town of Hampton, Virginia. The Revolutionary War had come to the South. The battle of Hampton resulted partly from the actions of a "small mulatto man" named Joseph Harris. Only four months earlier, Harris had been a resident of Hampton and the property of another Hamptonian, Henry King, whom he served as a pilot on the Chesapeake Bay. Harris, it was said, was "well-acquainted with many creeks on the *Eastern Shore*, at *York*, *James River*, and *Nansemond*, and many others." All in all, he was "a very useful person."

Harris's knowledge gave him an opportunity to gain his freedom. On 8 June 1775, Virginia's last royal governor, John Murray, fourth earl of Dunmore, fearing an attack from the increasingly belligerent patriots, fled Williamsburg and took refuge on HMS *Fowey*. There he set about assembling a small squadron to fight the patriots. To accomplish his designs he needed people who knew the bay, so when Harris slipped off one night in July and presented himself to the skipper of the *Fowey*, he was welcomed and immediately put to work as a pilot. When the *Fowey* left the Chesapeake a short time later, Harris transferred to a tender called the *Liberty*.

On the night of 2 September 1775, a hurricane swept through Tidewater Virginia and drove the *Liberty* ashore near Hampton. On board Harris's vessel when it went

aground was Matthew Squire, captain of the *Liberty's* mother ship, the *Otter*. Harris obtained a canoe from a slave, and he and Squire managed to get across Hampton Roads to the *Otter*, which was anchored off Norfolk. Their escape was fortunate because white leaders had threatened to execute slaves like Harris who fled to the British. Meanwhile, the beached *Liberty* fell into the hands of the rebels, who helped themselves to the sails and other equipment (including seven swivel guns) and then set the boat ablaze. The *Liberty* "was burnt by the people thereabouts," the *Virginia Gazette* reported, "in return for [Squire's] harbouring gentlemen's negroes, and suffering his sailors to steal poultry, hogs, &c." Captain Squire was furious. He demanded that Hampton at least return the *Liberty's* stores. The rebel committee that ruled the town said it would be happy to comply with the captain's request—as soon as Squire returned Harris and other black crewmen to their former owners. This Squire refused to do, prompting a patriot newspaper to note with sarcasm the "singular ATTACHMENT AND LOYALTY to his sovereign" of Squire's "Ethiopian director."

Eventually deciding that the contest could not be resolved peacefully, Squire attacked Hampton on 26 October with six small craft. The little squadron came under deadly long arms fire. Some nine blacks and other British sailors were killed, and Squire had to retreat. One of his vessels, the *Hawke*, went aground, and its crew was captured. The white prisoners, including Joseph Wilson, an indentured servant who had escaped from George Washington, were "treated with great humanity," a patriot newspaper reported. The black crewmen were "tried for their lives."

The engagement at Hampton was the first battle of the Revolutionary War south of Massachusetts. Just as the earlier fighting in New England had helped poison relations between Britain and all the rebel colonies, so the battle of Hampton helped embitter white Virginians against their king. Thomas Jefferson reported that the armed confrontation had "raised our country into a perfect phrensy." The story of the battle would have been very different if Joseph Harris had not made his dash for freedom. Perhaps Hampton whites would never have come into conflict with Captain Squire at all.

Harris was but one of thousands of enslaved Virginians who found opportunity within the breach that opened between loyalist and patriot whites in 1775. A majority of those who reached British lines ended up worse off than before. Many were killed in battle, and hundreds died of disease. Others were recaptured and subjected to worse working conditions than before, in Chiswell's Mines, which supplied rebel soldiers with lead, or on sugar plantations in the West Indies. In the single year 1776, however, 400 former slaves sailed away from Virginia to freedom. The aspirations and actions of enslaved Virginians during the American Revolution have been ably chronicled by several scholars. Now that the struggle for black freedom during the revolutionary era is coming into focus, we can begin to assess its effect on white Virginians. One result of the slaves' struggle was political: In seeking their own freedom, black Virginians indirectly helped motivate white Virginians to declare independence from Britain.

In August 1774 most white Virginians were angry at Parliament for adopting the acts they called Intolerable. These colonists, however, were content to express their outrage by cutting off trade with Britain. It was a long way from the boycott of 1774 to the revolution of 1776. What happened during the crucial year 1775 to convert mere

boycotters into revolutionaries? Some of the factors that turned white Virginians against Britain were geographically or temporally remote; the colonies were incensed that the British army had invaded far-off Massachusetts, and they feared that the king's troops might invade Virginia as well. A third source of the white Virginians' anger was not remote at all; they were irate at Governor Dunmore for first threatening to ally with enslaved Virginians and, then, later, actually doing so.

Neither Dunmore's threat in April 1775 to emancipate Virginia's slaves nor his offer of freedom in November of that year to patriots' bondspeople who joined his army would have carried much significance if black Virginians had remained entirely passive during the revolutionary crisis. But slaves were not passive. Perhaps a thousand of them took advantage of Dunmore's offer of emancipation in November 1775. Even before the governor published his proclamation, however, scores of slaves had joined his little army or undertaken their own resistance to white rule. Even earlier, before Dunmore first threatened to offer freedom to the slaves, bondspeople in different parts of Virginia had gathered to discuss how to take advantage of the growing rift among whites. And the opposition of 1774 and 1775 was only the culmination of a tradition of black resistance that was as old as Virginia slavery itself.

...

In the fall of 1775, Dunmore gave white Virginians additional reasons to hate him and the government he represented. On 15 November at Kemp's Landing south of Norfolk, his outnumbered force, made up largely of former slaves, defeated 170 members of the Princess Anne County militia. Several militiamen were killed, and the rest were put to flight. The patriot commander, Joseph Hutchings, was captured by one of his own former bondsmen. Kemp's Landing persuaded Dunmore that fugitive slaves could be valuable allies indeed. The governor "was so elated with this Victory," John Page, vice-chairman of the Committee of Safety, reported that he immediately published his famous emancipation proclamation. About 1,000 slaves escaped their owners and joined Dunmore. Enlisted in an "Ethiopian Regiment" and wearing uniforms that pointed up the hypocrisy of liberty-seeking patriots by proclaiming "Liberty to Slaves," former bondsmen soon made up the major part of the loyalist troops. In order to glimpse the psychological effect of emancipation on the people who reached Dunmore, it may be sufficient to notice the case of a man whites called Yellow Peter. He escaped one day in 1775 or 1776 and was later seen "in Governor Dunmore's regiment with a musquet on his back and a sword by his side." He had changed his name to Captain Peter.

Although Dunmore apparently meant to limit his offer of emancipation to able-bodied men (he addressed it to servants and slaves "able and willing to bear Arms"), half of those who joined him and survived the war were women and children. Among them was Francis Rice's slave, Mary. One night in spring 1776, Mary, a resident of Hampton, snatched up her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter Phillis and made a dash for the British lines. The two got in safely, lived through the Revolution, and settled afterward in Nova Scotia.

Still, for the 99 percent of slaves who did not escape to Dunmore, his emancipation proclamation was in many ways a disappointment. During summer 1775, many Virginians anticipated that the British government might make the abolition of

slavery a goal of the war. Instead, Dunmore offered freedom only to individuals and formed a conventional army to pursue the limited strategy of taking and holding ground. Even as Dunmore's decision to fight a traditional war destroyed the hopes of many black Virginians, it emboldened whites. To them, a black regiment in the British army was a frightening thing indeed, but it was nothing like a British promise of general emancipation. By August 1776, patriots forced Dunmore's vastly outnumbered army to retreat to New York City.

The relief that white Virginians experienced when Dunmore chose to fight a conventional war did not diminish their anger at him for allying with slaves. As early as May 1775, free subjects had begun literally to demonize their governor. In November, when he published his declaration of emancipation, this process intensified. Citizens denounced Dunmore's "Diabolical scheme" and all "his infernal tribe." "Our devil of a Governor goes on at a Devil of a rate indeed," Benjamin Harrison commented after reading the Virginia news.

The deterioration in white Virginians' affection for Dunmore was not the only political result of his proclamation. Thomas Jefferson spoke for other white Americans when he stated in the Declaration of Independence that Dunmore's emancipation proclamation was a major cause of the Revolution. Throughout Virginia, observers noted that the governor's pronouncement turned neutrals and even loyalists into patriots. "The inhabitants of this Colony are deeply alarmed at this infernal Scheme," Philip Fithian recorded in his journal as he passed through the Virginia backcountry in late November. "It seems to quicken all in Revolution to overpower him at any Risk." Richard Henry Lee told Catherine Macauley that "Lord Dunmores unparalleled conduct in Virginia has, a few Scotch excepted, united every Man in that large Colony." Archibald Cary agreed. "The Proclamation from Lord D[unmore], has had a most extensive good consequence," he wrote; white "Men of all ranks resent the pointing a dagger to their Throats, through the hands of their Slaves." Cary noted that by endangering loyalists as well as patriots, Dunmore's decision converted many of the former into the latter.

These patriot writers' comments on the governor's declaration may have reflected some measure of wishful thinking about its effect on undecided and loyalist whites, but Dunmore's pronouncement did transform many neutrals and loyalists into patriots. It even pushed two members of the colony's powerful executive council, Robert "Councilor" Carter and William Byrd III, from the loyalist to the patriot camp. During summer 1775, Byrd had offered to lead British troops. Both he and Carter, however, became patriots after Dunmore confirmed his alliance with black Virginians. Byrd then tendered his services to the patriot forces.

Some of William Byrd's fellow conservatives initially believed that as soon as Dunmore's superiors in London learned about his emancipation proclamation, they would repudiate it and recall him. At the end of 1775, Landon Carter assured his diary that it was "not to be doubted" that Dunmore would soon receive "some missive commission to Silence all his iniquities both male and female." (This was yet another reference to Dunmore's alleged miscegenation.) But the winter of 1775-76 came and went with no evidence that anyone at Whitehall objected to Dunmore's decision to offer freedom to the slaves.

...

Although the effect of Dunmore's cooperation with slaves on white Virginians' decision to declare independence is often mentioned by scholars who write about the Revolution, it is generally underestimated. One reason for this minimization is that students of the origins of the Revolution often do not mention enslaved Virginians until November 1775, when Dunmore issued his famous emancipation proclamation. Actually, as several social historians have shown, the governor's declaration culminated a process that had begun much earlier. Slaves had always resisted their condition. In 1774, while Dunmore was still one of the colony's most popular governors, enslaved Virginians began conspiring to exploit the opportunities presented to them by the imperial crisis. The following April, as rumors of the planning of a wide-ranging insurrection circulated, a group of slaves literally knocked on the governor's door and offered to cast their lots with his. And slaves kept knocking all through the summer and into the fall. Andrew Estave's fifteen-year-old bondswoman presented herself at the governor's palace early in the summer, after Dunmore had taken refuge on a British warship. She was recaptured, but other slaves did reach the earl and served him as sailors, raiders, and soldiers. It was not until after the series of black initiatives culminating in the victory at Kemp's Landing on 15 November that Dunmore officially offered freedom to the slaves. The slaves' insurgency played an important role in persuading Dunmore to ally with them--and thus in prodding white Virginians farther along the road to independence.

If black Virginians really did help push whites into independence, how does that change our understanding of the Revolution in Virginia? At least to some extent, we must agree with an anonymous resident of Williamsburg who assessed the situation in November 1775, shortly after Dunmore published his emancipation proclamation. "Whoever considers well the meaning of the word Rebel," he wrote, "will discover that the author of the Proclamation is now himself in actual rebellion, having armed our slaves against us, and having excited them to insurrection." In modern terms, this author might have said that white Virginians' struggle against Dunmore and his Ethiopian Regiment was not a revolution but a counterrevolution.

The war in Virginia pitted two classes, slave owners and slaves, against each other. At least in this one aspect of Virginia's multifaceted revolutionary experience, therefore, Virginia fits the Progressive historians' interpretation of the Revolution as a dual conflict over both home rule and who would rule at home. For years students of the origins of the American Revolution in Virginia, taking as an article of faith the "relative docility of the poorer farmers" in that colony, found almost no value in the Progressives' hypothesis that class conflict helped cause the Revolution. More recently, the assumption that small farmers were tractable has been challenged. And if enslaved Virginians are considered a class—which surely they must be—then there certainly was class conflict in Virginia during the prerevolutionary period, and that antagonism did help bring on the American Revolution. In fact, judging from the frenzied white reaction to Dunmore's decision to forge an alliance with black Virginians, it may be that Virginia was the colony in which class conflict gave the biggest push to the movement for independence.

Source: Holton, "Rebel Against Rebel," pp. 157-161, 182-187, 189-192.

April 1775—Slaves Create Disturbances in Williamsburg

In an April 21, 1775 letter to George Washington, Edmund Pendleton made reference to agitation among Williamsburg slaves. He indicated that the unrest would delay Peyton Randolph's departure for the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. The disturbances, which took place at the time of the powder magazine incident, were not reported in the *Virginia Gazette*.

I have as yet heard nothing From the Speaker fixing the time of our setting out, indeed from some disturbances in the City, by the *Slaves*, I doubt whether he will go—I purpose however to set off at all events Wednesday morning the 3d & shall be glad to meet you at upper Malbrough Thursday night. My Complts to Mrs Washington and the young pair. I am Dr Sr Yr mo. humble Servt
Edmd Pendleton

Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Abbot and Twohig, et al., Colonial Series, 10:340.

April 21, 1775—Address of the Williamsburg Municipal Common Hall to Governor Dunmore

In the following excerpt, Williamsburg's municipal leaders express their concern about potential slave unrest in the days after the Gunpowder Incident.

We further beg to inform your excellency, that from various reports at present prevailing in different parts of the country, we have too much reason to believe that some wicked and designing persons have instilled the most diabolical notions into the heads of our slaves, and that, therefore, the utmost attention to our internal security is become the more necessary.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Pinkney, ed., April 20, 1775.

May 1, 1775—Governor Dunmore to Lord Dartmouth

In this letter, Dunmore reveals his plans to arm his slaves and any others who would be willing to join him. The governor notes that he would free all enslaved persons who left their masters.

Some of the families have removed from here to avoid the scene that is expected. I have been obliged to send Lady Dunmore and my children on Board the Man-of-war, and I shall remain here until I am forced out—But as I cannot expect to make any effectual resistance in this place against the numbers that are said to be moving against me, I intend to retire towards the Town or York, where the Man-of-war a 20 gun ship and an armed schooner lie, under the protection of the guns of which, and under cover of a little entrenchment which I

shall throw up, or at worst on Board the Man-of-War, I shall wait for his Majt'ys orders, and I have already signified to the Magistrates of Williamsburg, that I expect them on their allegiance to fall upon means of putting a stop to the March of the People now on their way, before they enter this City, that otherwise, I shall be forced, and it is my fixed purpose, to arm all my own negroes, & receive all others that will come to me, whom I shall declare free. That I do enjoin the Magistrates and all others, professing to be loyal subjects, to repair to my assistance that I shall consider the whole country in an Actual State of Rebellion, and myself at liberty to annoy it by every possible means, and that I shall not hesitate at reducing their houses to Ashes, and spreading devastation wherever I can reach. I have likewise summoned the Council to attend me about the time which these insurgents are expected here.

...

If the servants of the Crown should be of opinion, that the authority of Govern. ought to be enforced here, I am persuaded, that if His Majesty should think proper to add to a small body of Troops to be sent here, a quantity of Arms, Ammunition and other requisites for the service, I could raise such a Force from among Indians, Negroes, and other persons, as would soon reduce the refractory people of this Colony to obedience.

Source: McIlwaine et al., eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1773-1776*, pp. xviii-xix.

May 3, 1775—Governor Dunmore's Response to the House of Burgesses

In this proclamation, Dunmore explains his reasons for removing the gunpowder from the Magazine in Williamsburg. He claims that his actions were intended to make the town safe from a slave insurrection.

Although I consider myself, under the authority of the crown, the only constitutional judge, in what manner the munition, provided for the protection of the people of this government, is to be disposed of for that end; yet for effecting the salutary objects of this proclamation, and removing from the minds of his Majesty's subjects the groundless suspicions they have imbibed, I think proper to declare that the apprehensions which seemed to prevail throughout this whole country of an intended insurrection of the slaves, who had been seen in large numbers, in the night time, about the magazine, and my knowledge of its being a very insecure depositary, were my inducements to that measure, and I chose the night as the properest season, because I knew the temper to the times, and the misinterpretations of my design which would be apt to prevail if the thing should be known. Acting under these motives, I certainly rather deserved the thanks of the country than their reproaches. But, whenever the present ferment shall subside, and it shall become necessary to put arms into the hands of the militia, for the defence of the people against a foreign enemy or intestine insurgents, I shall be as ready as on a late occasion to exert my best abilities in the service of the country. In the mean time, as it is indispensably necessary to maintain order and the authority of the laws, and thereby the dignity of his Majesty's government, I exhort and

require, in his Majesty's name, all his faithful subjects, to leave no expedient unessayed which may tend to that happy end. Such as are not to be influenced by the love of order for its own sake, and the blessings it is always productive of, would do well to consider the internal weakness of this colony, as well as the dangers to which it is exposed from a savage enemy; who, from the most recent advices I have received from the frontier inhabitants, are ready to renew their hostilities against the people of this country. But, as on the one hand, nothing can justify men, without proper authority, in a rapid recurrence to arms, nothing excuse resistance to the executive power in the due enforcement of law, so on the other, nothing but such resistance and outrageous proceedings shall ever compel me to avail myself of any means that may carry the appearance of severity.

Anxious to restore peace and harmony to this distracted country, and to induce a firmer reliance on the goodness and tenderness of our most gracious Sovereign to all his subjects equally, and on the wisdom of his councils for a redress of all their real grievances, which can only be obtained by loyal and constitutional applications, I again call upon and require all his Majesty's liege subjects, and especially all magistrates and other officers, both civil and military, to exert themselves in removing the discontents, and suppressing the spirit of faction, which prevail among the people, that a dutiful submission to the laws of the land may be strictly observed, which shall ever be the rule of my conduct, as the interest and happiness of this dominion ever have been, and shall continue to be, the objects of my administration.

Source: McIlwaine et al., eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia 1773-1776*, p. xvii; see also *Virginia Gazette*, Pinkney, ed., May 4, 1775.

May 4, 1775—Slave Unrest Continues in Williamsburg

Pinkney's May 4, 1775 edition of the *Virginia Gazette* contains the following details about slave unrest in the Williamsburg area.

We are credibly informed that several negroes made a tender of their services to a certain noble lord when the attack from the west was expected to have been made on his sacred person. It must, however, be observed, to the honour of his lordship, that he threatened them with his severest resentment, should they presume to renew their application.

It has long been suspected that there were certain incendiaries in this place, whose business has been most sedu[s]ously to poison the minds of persons in office, by insidious tales; of which the following incident bears too convincing a proof: The servant of a certain canonical personage, not very far from college, was taken up by the patrol on Thursday night, without any pass. He had, however, a *sealed letter, without any superscription*, which he said he was ordered to deliver to a certain noble lord, or in his absence, to the lieutenant governor of one of the northern provinces. The patrol conceiving that this extraordinary procedure might arise from the nature of the case, waited on the reverend gentleman, and requested that he would communicate the contents

of the letter to them. The reason they alleged for this request was, that at this alarming crisis even the whispering of the wind was sufficient to rouse their fears. The gentleman complied with the request, when it was found that he intended to alarm his lordship with the report of a design to seize Mr. R.C. junior, who was at that time at the Palace. As this intelligence was utterly safe, it is imagined that many other reports, of the like nature, have, with familiar views, been whispered in his lordship's ears.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Pinkney, ed., May 4, 1775.

June 14, 1775—Five Men Discuss the Gunpowder Incident With the Burgesses

In the following excerpts, four residents of Williamsburg—William Pasteur, Benjamin Waller, John Randolph, John Dixon—and a man named Hugh Hamilton from Westmoreland County told members of the House of Burgesses about the Gunpowder Incident.

*It appears to your Committee by the Testimony of Doctor William Pasteur that on Friday Morning the twenty second of April last there was a Commotion in the City of Williamsburg occasioned by the Governor's removing some Powder from the public Magazine.... That in the morning of the twenty third of April the said Pasteur attending a Patient at the Palace, accidentally met with his Excellency the Governor, who introduced a Conversation relative to what had passed the preceeding day, and seemed greatly exasperated at the Peoples having been under Arms, when the said Pasteur observed that it was done in a Hurry and Confusion, that most of the People were convinced they were wrong. His Lordship then proceeded to make Use of several rash expressions and said that tho' he did not think himself in Danger yet he understood some injury or insult was intended to be offered to the Captains *Foy* and *Collins*, which he should consider as done to himself as those Gentlemen acted intirely by his particular Directions. That his Lordship then swore by the living God that if a Grain of Powder was burnt at Captain *Foy* or Captain *Collins*, or if any Injury or insult was offered to himself, or either of them, that he would declare Freedom to the Slaves, and reduce the City of *Williamsburg* to Ashes. His Lordship then mentioned setting up the Royal Standard, but did not say that he would actually do it, but said he believed, if he did he should have a Majority of white People and all the Slaves on the side of Government, that he had once fought for the *Virginians*, and that, by GOD, he would let them see that he could fight against them, and declared that in a short Time, he could depopulate the whole Country... That next Morning after this Report, the said *Pasteur* attending a Patient at the Palace again met accidentally with the Governor, who declared to the said *Pasteur* that if a large Body of People came below *Ruffin's Ferry* (a place about thirty Miles from this City) that he would immediately enlarge his plan, and carry it into Execution, but said that he should not regard a small number of Men, adding he then had two hundred Muskets loaded in the Palace.*

...

It appears to your Committee from the Testimony of *Benjamin Waller* that the morning after the Powder was removed from the public Magazine, the People in the City of *Williamsburg* were much alarmed and assembled some with and others without Arms, but when, the Corporation reported the Governor's answer to their Address, they, by the persuasion of the Magistrates, and other principal Gentlemen of the Town dispersed and were quiet, except in the Evening when a Report prevailed that the Marines were landed, and intended to Town, they expressed great uneasiness and went with their Arms to the Magazine to guard it, but soon dispersed except a few who acted a patrolle that Night. That the next Day Doctor *Pasteur* came to the said *Waller's* House, and informed him of the Governor's Threatening that if himself his Family or Captain *Collins* were insulted, he would declare liberty to the Slaves, and lay the Town in Ashes, and that the Governor had desired him to communicate this his Declaration to the Magistrates of the City, for that there was not an Hour to Loose. That these Declarations gave the said *Waller* and the other Inhabitants of the Town great uneasiness. That several Days afterwards his Excellency came to the said *Waller's* House on some private business, ... whereupon he said *Waller* took the liberty to mention to his lordship that he was very sorry to tell his Excellency that he had lost the Confidence of the People not so much for having taken the Powder as for the declaration he made of raising and freeing the said Slaves to which he answered that he did say so and made no secret of it and that he would do that or any thing else to have defended himself in case he had been attacked. That his Lordship further observed that some Slaves had offered him their Service at the time the *Hanover* Men were coming down but that he had sent them away.

...

It also appears to your Committee from the Testimony of *John Randolph*, Esquire, Attorney General, of the City of *Williamsburg* that the Morning after the Removal of the Powder many of the People were under Arms at the Court House. That he does not recollect he heard the Governor expressly say he would proclaim Freedom to the Slaves, but is well satisfied such was his Lordships intention, if it had been necessary for him to take up Arms in defence of his Person... The said *Randolph* says that he understood from the Governor, in case armed People came to *Williamsburg*, he would fix up the Royal Standard, to distinguish the Friends of Government from its foes, and that if Negroes on that Occasion offered their Service they would be received. That the Governor informed him some Negroes (by one of his Servants) had offered their Service, but he ordered his Servant to bid them go about their Business.

...

It also appears by the Testimony of *John Dixon*, Esquire, Mayor of the City of *Williamsburg*,... That the Inhabitants appeared to be in perfect tranquility til a Report was spread by his Excellency's throwing out some threats respecting the Slaves, when there seemed to be great uneasiness but nothing more was done but doubling the usual Patrolle.

...

It appears from the Testimony of *Hugh Hamilton* of the County of *Westmoreland*. . . That the people within his Acquaintance have been very orderly and that he never saw any Commotion before the Powder was taken from the Magazine. That there was an alarm concerning the Slaves prior to this transaction, which was greatly increased by the Report of the Governor's intention to declare them free. That he never discovered the smallest inclination in any of the Inhabitants to be independent of *Great Britain*, but on the contrary a most eager desire for a Connection as it stood prior to the Acts of Parliament imposing Taxes on *America*, and he is persuaded a Redress of the Grievances complained of would establish a perfect Tranquility throughout this Colony, and produce a Reconciliation with the parent State.

Source: McIlwaine et al., eds., *Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1773-1776*, pp. 231-234.

June 16, 1775—Letter to Alexander Purdie

An unidentified author sent the following letter to Alexander Purdie in June 1775. The author points out that Virginia has played a leading role in the American opposition to England and that the colony had enjoyed tranquility until the spring of 1775.

The rise and progress of the present troubles in America are so well known, through most parts of the world, and our resistance to arbitrary power so generally applauded, that I may well be excused from looking far backwards, and from vindicating the first steps of American opposition. Though Virginia most heartily concurred, and in many instances took the lead, in the virtuous struggles of the colonies, yet, till lately, she was free from those direful effects of ministerial tyranny which some other parts of the continent experienced. The first thing which particularly disturbed her tranquillity was a threatened insurrection of her negro slaves, in the beginning of the spring of 1775. Whether this was general, or who were the instigators, remains as yet a secret. There was reason, however, to believe that most of the negroes were too well affected to their masters, and too apprehensive of the bad consequences, as well as suspicious of the friendship of our adversaries, to join in such a wicked scheme. From some hints, it was inferred that the negroes had not been without encouragement from a Gentleman of the Navy, who has distinguished himself lately in our rivers. Whatever the plot was, it was seasonably discovered, and effectual measures taken to suppress it. . . . The people could not conceive how disarming them would discourage their negroes from rising, should they be so disposed; nor could they divine how he could procure the powder, upon any emergency, from a vessel whose station for one hour was uncertain. The magazine had never yet been attempted by the negroes; and, had this been apprehended, they thought it might easily have been secured by a guard. Upon the whole, they looked upon the Governour's answer as evasive and insulting; and the people were, with difficulty, kept within the bounds of moderation.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., June 16, 1775.

June 19, 1775—The Burgesses Address Governor Dunmore

The members of the House of Burgesses address Dunmore on the Gunpowder Incident. The tone of the address indicates that many Virginians feared a slave insurrection and believed that the slaves might be encouraged to take action because of lack of powder and arms in the Powder Magazine.

From the best Accounts received from Great Britain, there was too much Reason to be convinced that his Majesty's Ministry were prosecuting the most vigorous and arbitrary Measures towards subjugating the Continent of America to their despotick Rule; which Measures, it is more probable, had been suggested from hence, and the other Colonies: That a Scheme, the most diabolical, had been meditated, and generally recommended, by a Person of great Influence, to offer Freedom to our Slaves, and turn them against their Masters. The Convention, to guard against these Dangers not clearly seen into before that time, recommended a strict attention to the Militia Law of 1738 [Hening's V, p. 16.]; but thinking this defective in many essential Points, considering that under this Law the whole Militia were not obliged to exercise so frequently as might be necessary, it was recommended that volunteer Companies should be formed in each County, for the better Defence and Protection of the whole Country. These Proceedings, according to an unusual Style, it is more than probable, have been represented as designed to oppose Government; whereas, we are persuaded, that Nothing was farther from the Intentions of the Convention.... Judge then how very alarming a Removal of the small Stock which remained in the public Magazine, for the Defence of the Country, and the Striping the Guns of their Locks, must have been to any People, who had the Smallest Regard for their Security. The manner and Time, of doing it, made no small Addition to the General Apprehension of your Lordship's Views. The reason assigned by your Lordship for taking this step, we should have thought the most likely, at any other Time, to have dictated a very different Conduct. We should have supposed, that a well-grounded Apprehension of an Insurrection of the Slaves ought to have called forth the utmost exertions to suppress it.... That in the succeeding night, on a Report that a number of armed Men had landed at a Ferry about four Miles from the City, the Inhabitants were again much alarmed; but, upon the Interposition of some Gentlemen, they were quieted, and nothing farther was done than strengthening the usual Patrole for the security of the City. We farther find, that on the next Day, when every Thing was perfectly quiet, your Lordship sent a Message into the City by one of the Magistrates, which you delivered with the most solemn Asseverations, that if any Insult was offered to Captain Foy or Captain Collins, you would declare Freedom to the Slaves, and lay the Town in Ashes; and that you could easily depopulate the whole Country. What could have provoked your Lordship to this we cannot discover, as both Captain Foy and Captain Collins, and several other Officers, had been frequently seen walking publicly in the Streets, and no one offered either of them the least Injury; nor can we discover any Reason to believe that any Thing of the sort was intended. The Inhabitants my Lord could not but be exceedingly alarmed at so cruel a Threat, many People considered it as a part of that General Plan, they had heard was recommended in England, and which was discovered

by your Lordship through Accident, they, however, did nothing more, that we can learn than continue their former Patroles.

Source: McIlwaine et al., eds., *Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1773-1776*, pp. 256-258; see also *ibid.*, p. 245.

1775—Phillis Wheatley Praises George Washington and Freedom

Born in 1753, perhaps along the Gambia River in Africa, the slave girl later named Phillis Wheatley arrived in Boston Harbor on July 11, 1761. She was purchased by John and Susanna Wheatley and worked for them as a servant. Her first published writing appeared six years later, when she was about fourteen. Her poem, “On the Death of the Rev. George Whitefield,” published in London in 1770, brought her international renown. Early in September 1773, her *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, was published in London, the first book published by a black American. The next month, she described her recent manumission in a letter to a friend. Wheatley later married but died in poverty in Boston on December 5, 1784. The first American printing of her *Poems* occurred two years later.

Wheatley, who was manumitted sometime before October 1773, wrote several poems commemorating events in the American Revolution, including the Boston Massacre and the appointment of George Washington as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. The black poet and Virginia slaveholder later met. In the poem, first published in Providence in 1775 and later reprinted by Thomas Paine in *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, Wheatley celebrates freedom.

To His Excellency General Washington

Celestial choir! enthron'd in realms of light,
 Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.
 While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,
 She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.
 See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,
 And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!
 See the bright beams of heaven's revolving light
 Involved in sorrows and veil of night!

The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,
 Olive and laurel bind her golden hair:
 Wherever shines this native of the skies,
 Unnumber'd charms and recent graces rise.

Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates
 How pour her armies through a thousand gates,

As when Eolus heaven's fair face deforms,
 Enwrapp'd in tempest and a night of storms;
 Astonish'd ocean feels the wild uproar,
 The refluent surges beat the sounding shore;
 Or thick as leaves in Autumn's golden reign,
 Such, and so many, moves the warrior's train.
 In bright array they seek the work of war,
 Where high unfurl'd the ensign waves in air.
 Shall I to Washington their praise recite?
 Enough thou know'st them in the fields of fight.
 Thee, first in peace and honours,—we demand
 The grace and glory of thy martial band.
 Fam'd for thy valour, for thy virtues more,
 Hear every tongue thy guardian aid implore!

One century scarce perform'd its destined round,
 When Gallic powers Columbia's fury found;
 And so may you, whoever dares disgrace
 The land of freedom's heaven-defended race!
 Fix'd are the eyes of nations on the scales,
 For in their hopes Columbia's arm prevails.
 Anon Britannia droops the pensive head,
 While round increase the rising hills of dead.
 Ah! cruel blindness to Columbia's state!
 Lament thy thirst of boundless power too late.

Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
 Thy ev'ry action let the goddess guide.
 A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
 With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! be thine.

Source: *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley*, ed. Shields, pp. 145-146. See also pp. 73-75 for a poem in which Wheatley explains her appreciation for freedom.

1775—British General Thomas Gage Uses the Slave Metaphor to Complain about the Treatment of Prisoners

During the 1770s, colonial patriots perfected the use of the slave metaphor to complain about their treatment at the hands of the British government. In the summer of 1775, George Washington received a letter from Lieutenant General Thomas Gage, who used the same metaphor in a slightly different way when he protested that British prisoners in Boston were being treated like slaves because they were being forced to do common labor.

Sir Boston 13th August 1775.

To the Glory of Civilized nations, humanity and War have been compatible; and Compassion to the subdued, is become almost a general system.

Britons, ever preeminent in Mercy, have outgone common examples, and overlooked the Criminal in the Captive. Upon these principles your Prisoners, whose Lives by the Laws of the Land are destined to the Cord, have hitherto been treated with care and kindness, and more comfortably lodged then the King's Troops in the Hospitals, indiscriminately it is true, for I acknowledge no Rank that is not derived from the King.

My intelligence from your Army would justify severe recrimination. I understand there are of the King's faithfull Subjects, taken sometime since by the Rebels, labouring like Negro Slaves, to gain their daily Subsistence, or reduced to the Wretched Alternative, to perish by famine, or take Arms against their King and Country. Those who have made the treatment of the Prisoners in my hands, or of your other Friends in Boston, a Pretence for such measures, found Barbarity under falsehood.

Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Abbot, et al., Revolutionary War Series, 1:301-302.

1775—The Enlistment of Blacks During the Revolutionary War

In general orders issued from Cambridge, Massachusetts, on November 12, 1775, Washington prohibited officers of the Continental Army from enlisting black men. Manpower needs soon prevailed, however, and an estimated 5,000 black soldiers had fought on the American side by the end of the war.

In Virginia, the state government enacted similar restrictions, seeking in particular to prevent the enlistment of slaves. In 1777, the General Assembly forbade recruiting officers from enlisting blacks unless they produced free papers issued by a justice of the peace. Although the government never passed an act permitting the arming of slaves, slaves did enroll as soldiers and sailors, either passing as free men or simply participating in spite of the law. Particularly after the war's fighting shifted south in 1779 and it became increasingly difficult to fill Virginia's regiments, black men were routinely accepted in the calls for troops issued by the state. While the exact number of black troops who fought in Virginia is unknown, historian Luther Porter Jackson estimated that 500 free blacks took part along with a smaller number of slaves.

Excerpts from Washington's general orders follow.

The Officers are to be careful not to enlist any person, suspected of being unfriendly to the Liberties of America, or any abandon'd vagabond to whom all Causes and Countries are equal and alike indifferent—The Rights of mankind and the freedom of American will have Numbers sufficient to support them, without resorting to such wretched assistance—Let those who wish to put Shackles upon Freeman fill their Ranks, and place their confidence in such miscreants.

Neither Negroes, Boys unable to bare Arms, nor old men unfit to endure the fatigues of the campaign, are to be enlisted; The preferences being given to the present Army, The Officers are vigilantly to try, what number of men can be enlisted, in the Course of this week, and make report thereof to their Colonels, who will report it to the General—This is to be done every week, until the whole are completed.

Sources: *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Abbot et al., Revolutionary War Series, 2:354-355; Jackson, "Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seamen in the American Revolution," pp. 251-252, 253, 255-257.

November 16, 1775—Dunmore's Proclamation

Governor Dunmore drafted his proclamation on November 7, 1775. He issued it a day after he and his army defeated several hundred militia at Kemp's Landing.

By His Excellency the Right Honorable JOHN Earl of DUNMORE, His MAJESTY'S Lieutenant and Governor General of the Colony and Dominion of Virginia and Vice Admiral of the same.

A PROCLAMATION.

AS I have ever entertained Hopes, that an Accomodation might have taken Place between GREAT-BRITAIN and this Colony, without being compelled by my Duty to this most disagreeable but now absolutely necessary Step, rendered so by a Body of armed men unlawfully assembled, firing on His MAJESTY'S Tenders, and the formation of an Army, and that Army now on their March to attack His MAJESTY'S Troops and destroy the well disposed Subjects of this Colony. To defeat such reasonable Purposes, and that all such Traitors, and their Abettors, may be brought to Justice, and that the Peace, and good Order of this Colony may be again restored, which the ordinary Course of the Civil Law is unable to effect; I have thought fit to issue this my Proclamation, hereby declaring, that until the aforesaid good Purposes be obtained, I do in Virtue of the Power and Authority to ME given, by his MAJESTY, determine to execute Martial Law, and cause the same to be executed throughout this Colony: and to the end that Peace and good Order may the sooner be restored, I do require every Person capable of bearing Arms, to resort to His MAJESTY'S STANDARD, or be looked upon as Traitors to His MAJESTY'S Crown and Government, and thereby become liable to the Penalty the Law inflicts upon such Offences; such as forfeiture of Life, confiscation of Lands, &c. &c. And I do hereby further declare all indented Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to

Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining His MAJESTY'S Troops as soon as may be, for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to His MAJESTY'S Crown and Dignity. I do further order, and require, all His MAJESTY'S Leige Subjects, to retain their Quitrents, or any other Taxes due or that may become due, in their own Custody, till such Time as Peace may be again restored to this at present most unhappy Country, or demanded of them for their former salutary Purposes, by Officers properly authorised to receive the same.

GIVEN under my Hand on board the Ship WILLIAM, off NORFOLK, the 7th Day of November, in the SIXTEENTH Year of His MAJESTY'S Reign.

DUNMORE

(GOD save the KING.)

Source: Holton, "Rebel against Rebel," p. 183.

November 30, 1775 and December 9, 1775—Virginians Use the Newspaper to Discourage Slaves From Joining Dunmore

The following excerpts from John Pinkney's *Virginia Gazette* indicate that the colony's leaders used the newspaper to deter slaves from joining the British. They hoped that enslaved men, women, and children would hear about the poor treatment that slaves received from Dunmore when their masters read the paper, when they read the paper themselves, and when slaves shared the details with other slaves. Virginians hoped that their enslaved laborers would react to Dunmore's Proclamation in the same way that Barber Caesar (also known as John Hope) did.

Lord Dunmore's cruel policy begins at length to be discovered by the blacks, who have lately deserted from him to a considerable number. When his lordship first went down to Norfolk he gave great encouragement to unwary negroes, but, such was his baseness, some of them, it is confidently said, he sent to the West Indies, where these unfortunate creatures were disposed of to defray his lordship's expences; and others, such as he took any dislike to, he delivered up to their masters, to be punished. Since the troops under colonel Woodford's command began their march, lord Dunmore issued a proclamation inviting the [dirty] of rebels, as he is pleased to say, to repair to [] rd. A considerable number at first went to him, but upon their masters taking the oath of allegiance they were immediately told they ma [] return. Some runaways, however, remained, but these were kept constantly employed in digging entrenchments in wet ground, till at length the severity of their labour forced many of them to fly. Those that were left behind have made several attempts to get off, but such is the barbarous policy of this cruel man, he keeps these unhappy creatures not only against their will, but intends to place them in the front of the battle, to prevent their flying, in case of an engagement, which, from their utter ignorance of fire arms, he knows they will do.

An honest negro (Caesar, the famous barber of York) being asked what he thought of lord Dunmore's setting negroes free, said, that he did not know any one foolish enough to believe him, for if he intended to do so, he ought first to set his own free.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Pinkney, ed., November 30, 1775; *ibid.*, December 9, 1775.

December 1775—ACT VII. *An ordinance for establishing a mode of punishment for the enemies to America in this colony*

Virginia's leaders decided to punish any slave who fought against the colony. The Committee of Safety had the authority to send a captured slave to the West Indies to be sold. By early 1776 the members of the Committee of Safety decided to send some of the captured slaves to work in the lead mines in Montgomery County.

And be it farther ordained, That if any slave, or slaves, shall be hereafter taken in arms against this colony, or in the possession of an enemy, through their own choice, the committee of safety shall have full power and authority to transport such slave, or slaves, to any of the foreign West India islands, there to be disposed of by sale, and the money arising from such sale to be laid out in the purchase of arms and ammunition, or otherwise applied to the use of this colony, as the committee of safety shall judge most proper; and in case such slaves, so taken in arms, or in the possession of an enemy, cannot be transported with convenience to this colony, the same shall be disposed of for the use of this colony, or returned to the owner or owners of such slaves, or otherwise dealt with according to an act of assembly for punishing slaves committing capital offences, as the committee of safety may judge most proper.

Provided always, and be it farther ordained, That the owner, or owners, of such slaves, shall be paid, by the treasurer of this colony for the time being, the full amount of such sale, or value of such slaves, after deducting the expenses and charge of transportation; which said valuation shall be made by the commissioners in each county aforesaid, and certified to the committee of safety, who shall thereupon grant their warrant, directed to the treasurer for payment of the value of such slave as aforesaid.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 9:101, 106.

1775—Lund Washington's Response to Dunmore's Proclamation

George Washington's cousin Lund managed Mount Vernon between 1764 and 1785. Early in December 1775, Lund wrote to Washington about Dunmore's Proclamation and speculated that the plantation's slaves would be secure unless white laborers gave them ideas about escaping. While he acknowledged that "Liberty is sweet," he could not envision slaves seeking their liberty without instigation from white men.

Our Dunmore has at length Published his much dreaded proclamation—declareg Freedom to All Indented Servts & Slaves (the Property of Rebels) that will repair to his majestys Standard—being able to bear Arms—What effect it will have upon those sort of people I cannot tell—I think if there was no white Servts in this family I should be under no apprehension about the Slaves, however I am determined, that if any of them Create any confusition to make & [an] example of him, Sears who is at worck here says there is not a man of them, but woud leave us, if they believed they coud make their Escape—Tom Spears Excepted—& yet they have no fault to find[.] Liberty is sweet.

Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Abbot, et al., Revolutionary War Series, 2:479-480.

December 3, 1775—Letter from William Roscow Wilson Curle to the Elizabeth City County—Hampton Town Committee of Safety

In a December 3, 1775 letter to the Honorable Committee of Safety, William Roscow Wilson Curle, chair of the Elizabeth City County-Hampton Town joint committee formed to enforce non-importation, made an analogy between Virginia patriots and slaves after the patriots captured the merchant ship *Christian* and confiscated letters on board. He also referred to slaves captured while attempting to join Lord Dunmore's forces in response to the governor's proclamation.

Sir Decr. 3rd. Hampton

Night before the last, on hearing a Sloop from Norfolk bound out was laying below the Fort; The Gentleman who has Charge of this &c. at the Direction of our Commanding Officer went down with 7 or 8 men, boarded her and brought her to the Mouth of our Harbour, and Yesterday She was fetched in; She is called the Christian. The Property of A[rchibald] Govan & Co. and one [James] Avery is master thereof, who being bound to Glasgow, was bearing thither, a Number of Letters which our Committee together with the Concurrence of [Lt.] Colo. [Thomas] Elliott thought right to peruse. On which we have discovered some of our most base, vile, secret and malicious Enemys, who appear to have formed a diabolical Combination to do their Utmot; Slyly and ungratefully to reduce Americans, and especially Virginia to the most miserable and abject State and Condition; In Short I think they prove if Scotchmen continue in our Land thus free; Virginians must be Slaves

...

Pray Order what shall be done with the Christian and other Scotch Prizes; The Negroes we have from divers Quarters found going over to the Governor and secured, are becoming too numerous as our Goal [sic] is at present very insufficient; We therefore wish they may be sent for--there are 14 in Confinement.

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5:45-46.

December 5, 1775—Colonel William Woodford Describes the Battle of Great Bridge

Colonel William Woodford, commander of Virginia's 2nd Regiment, described the events of December 5, 1775 during the Battle of Great Bridge near Norfolk in a letter to Edmund Pendleton. In a skirmish before dawn, the Virginians killed two black loyalist soldiers and captured two others. The two prisoners were interrogated, and their testimony shows how fully escaped slaves participated in the British defense of Norfolk.

Examination of Negroes George and Ned taken prisoners by [Lt.] Colo: Stephen's [Edward Stevens's] detachment December 5th: 1775. before the field officers.

Negro George belonging to Mr. [Samuel] Donaldson at Suffolk informs that he left Norfolk yesterday with 55 Black and 2 White men, that he thinks there are 400 Blacks in that town, besides Soldiers and Tories;—That a tender went down the river to meet a ship & a snow which the Soldiers told him were expected from St. Augustine with troops to the Amount of 4 or 500: That the intrenchment at Norfolk was nearly compleated, and that they were to begin to mount their Cannon yesterday on the works, twelve pieces. That there are in the fort at the bridge about 30 Whites & 90 Blacks; The fort is commanded by one [John] Cunningham; They have six pieces of Cannon on Carriages in the fort, and he believes plenty of Ammunition and provision. That last Saturday there were about 30 head of Cattle & 50 Sheep driven into Norfolk by the Country people & put into an inclosure. That in general they are plentifully supplied with fresh provisions from the Market in Norfolk. That all the blacks who are sent to the fort at the great Bridge, are supplied with muskets, Cartridges, &C and strictly ordered to use them defensively & offensively. That the Officer who commanded the party from which he was taken last night, is named Wodrop [James Wardrop]. That negro Ned taken Prisoner with him the said George, entered as a Voluntier into the service.

Examination of Negro Ned taken prisoner by Lieut. Colo. Stephens's Detachment December 5th: 1775

Negro Ned, belonging to Mr. [Nathaniel?] Newton of Kemps Landing, upon his Examination, informs that a Ship & a snow arrived at Norfolk on Friday last with Soldiers. That he came from Norfolk yesterday with twenty odd Blacks and three Whites.

That all the Blacks who are at any time sent up to the fort at the Great Bridge are supplied with Muskets Ammunition &c, and ordered to use them against us

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5:58-59.

December 14, 1775—Delegates to the Fourth Virginia Convention Offer to Pardon Slaves Who Abandon Dunmore

On December 13, 1775, Treasurer Robert Carter Nicholas reported that the committee charged with drawing up a response to Dunmore's Proclamation had completed its work. The declaration, which described Dunmore's action as a despotic seizure of property and a stimulus to slave insurrection, was unanimously approved by the members of the Fourth Virginia Convention. The following day the delegates to the Fourth Virginia Convention unanimously approved the following declaration.

By the representatives of the people of the Colony and Dominion of Virginia assembled in General Convention.

A Declaration.

Whereas lord *Dunmore*, by his proclamation, dated on board the ship *William*, off *Norfolk*, the 7th day of *November* 1775, hath offered freedom to such able-bodied slaves as are willing to join him, and take up arms, against the good people of this colony, giving thereby encouragement to a general insurrection, which may induce a necessity of inflicting the several punishments upon those unhappy people, already deluded by his base and insidious arts, and whereas, by an act of the General Assembly now in force in this colony, it is enacted, that all negro or other slaves, conspiring to rebel or make insurrection, shall suffer death, and be excluded all benefit of clergy: We think it proper to declare, that all slaves who have been, or shall be seduced, by his lordship's proclamation, or other arts, to desert their masters' service, and take up arms against the inhabitants of this colony, shall be liable to such punishment as shall hereafter be directed by the General Convention. And to the end that all such, who have taken this unlawful and wicked step, may return in safety to their duty, and escape the punishment due to their crimes, we hereby promise pardon to them, they surrendering themselves to col. *William Woodford*, or any other commander of our troops, and not appearing in arms after the publication hereof. And we do farther earnestly recommend it to all humane and benevolent persons in this colony to explain and make known this our offer of mercy to those unfortunate people.

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5:139; see *ibid.*, 5:125-127 for the December 13, 1775, response to Dunmore and *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., December 16, 1775.

December 26, 1775—George Washington on Governor Dunmore

On December 26, 1775, Washington wrote to Richard Henry Lee from Cambridge, Massachusetts, and expressed his antipathy for Dunmore. Concerned about the damage Dunmore and his forces could cause, Washington hoped to stem the flow of slaves and servants to the former royal governor by capturing or killing him. In July 1776, three of Washington's slaves joined Dunmore's fleet. In addition, three of Washington's slaves

(two men and a woman), all of whom gave different times of escape, were among the close to 3,000 black refugees who left New York with the British in 1783.

Lord Dunmore's Letters to General Howe &ca wch very fortunately fell into my hands, & Inclosed by me to Congress, will let you pretty fully into his diabolical Schemes—If my Dear Sir that Man is not crushed before Spring, he will become the most formidable Enemy America has—his strength will Increase as a Snow ball by Rolling; and faster, if some expedient cannot be hit upon to convince the Slaves and Servants of the Impotency of His designs. You will see by his Letters what pains he is taking to invite a Reinforcement at all events there, & to transplant the War to the Southern Colonies. I do not think that forcing his Lordship on Ship board is sufficient; nothing less than depriving him of life or liberty will secure peace to Virginia; as motives of Resentment actuates his conduct to a degree equal to the total destruction of the Colony.

Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Abbot, et al., Revolutionary War Series, 2:611.

1775 to 1776—The Experiences of “Lord Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment”

While some slaves were suspicious of Dunmore because of his limited offer of emancipation and his unwillingness to free his own slaves, an estimated 800 or more slaves decided to join him. Male slaves who escaped in response to Dunmore’s Proclamation contributed to the British war effort in Virginia for about eight months. To try to minimize the number of slaves who might make themselves available to Dunmore, Virginia authorities collected and guarded potential escape vessels and required owners in some Tidewater counties to remove their slaves to the interior. Officials also tried to discourage slaves from joining Dunmore by selling those who were captured to the West Indies or purchasing them and putting them to work in the lead mines. Other runaways ended up in the public gaol in Williamsburg, where several died awaiting trial in 1776, leading the Virginia convention to order that sanitary measures be improved at the gaol.

When the fighting returned to Virginia between 1779 and 1781, slaves bolted to the British in even greater numbers than they had earlier in the war. British raids along the James and Potomac Rivers in 1781 caused widespread desertion of slaves from the plantations. Numerous slaves also joined General Cornwallis as he made his way from North Carolina to Yorktown. In all, thousands are estimated to have taken a chance on gaining their freedom. While some of the men among the runaways had the opportunity to fight, especially at sea, most served as military laborers or as body servants. Like many of Dunmore’s troops, large numbers of the new recruits suffered horribly from disease and famine.

In the following selection from his classic work, *The Negro During the American Revolution*, Benjamin Quarles describes some of the military experiences of black men who joined Dunmore as soldiers, pilots, and foragers. He also notes the terrible toll that disease took on the troops.

The Negroes who reached the British were generally able-bodied men who could be put to many uses. It was as soldiers, however, that Dunmore envisioned them, and from the beginning he enlisted them in his military forces. By early December [1775] he was arming them 'as fast as they came in.' Negro privates took part in a skirmish at Kemp's Landing in which the colonials were routed; indeed, slaves captured one of the two commanding colonels. In the encounters preceding the action at Great Bridge, two runaways who were taken prisoner testified that the garrison was manned by thirty whites and ninety Negroes, and that 'all the blacks who are sent to the fort at the great Bridge, are supplied with muskets, Cartridges &c strictly ordered to use them defensively & offensively.' By the first of December the British had nearly three hundred slaves outfitted in military garb, with the inscription, 'Liberty to Slaves,' emblazoned across the breast of each. The Governor officially designated them 'Lord Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment.'

The first and only major military action in which Dunmore's forces engaged was the battle of Great Bridge. Of the Governor's troops of some six hundred men, nearly half were Negroes. Of the eighteen wounded prisoners taken by the Virginians in this rout, two were former slaves. One of them, James Anderson, was wounded 'in the Forearm—Bones shattered and flesh much torn.' The other one, Cesar, was hit 'in the Thigh, by a Ball, and 5 shot—one lodged.' After the fiasco at Great Bridge, the Governor was forced to operate from his ships. Taking aboard the hardiest of his Negro followers and placing them under officers who exercised them at small arms, he sanguinely awaited recruits.

Dunmore's use of Negroes also embraced maritime service. On the six tenders sent by the Governor to cannonade Hampton in late October 1775, there were colored crewmen, two of whom were captured when the Virginians seized the pilot boat *Hawk* Tender. To man the small craft that scurried in and out of the river settlements, harassing the plantations, the British depended largely on ex-slaves, particularly as pilots. Joseph Harris, a runaway, served as pilot of the *Otter*, having come to Captain Matthew Squire with the highest recommendation from a fellow naval officer. 'I think him too useful to His Majesty's service to take away,' wrote the latter, because of 'his being well acquainted with many creeks in the *Eastern Shore*, at York, James River, and Nansemond, and many others,' and 'accustomed to pilot.' Two citizens on the Isle of Wight advised the chairman of the Virginia Committee of Safety to go slow on discharging 'a Negro fello, named Caesar,' who was not only 'a very great Scoundrel' but also 'a fello' they can't do well without being an Excellent pilot.'

Another service performed by Dunmore's black followers was foraging. The Governor's supply of provisions, particularly fresh foods needed constant replenishment, and the Virginia leaders understandably would not permit the British to send men ashore to make purchases. 'Back settlers' who might have been willing to supply his lordship with provisions had no means of conveying them, and Dunmore fell back upon the foraging abilities of his Negro recruits. Marauding parties of predominantly ex-slave composition preyed on the countryside, nightly descending upon plantations and making off with the choice livestock. One foraging party, captured while on its way to the Eastern Shore, was made up of 'one white and sixteen blacks.'

Allegedly one of the services of Negroes to Dunmore was germ spreading. That the charge of germ warfare was propaganda-laden did not make it less potent in arousing indignation. The accusation was that Dunmore had inoculated two Negroes and sent them ashore at Norfolk to spread the smallpox. The charge was ironic in view of the fate of the Negroes who fled to the British. The majority of them died of disease. Late in March the Governor informed his superior in England that the recruiting of the black regiment 'would have been in great forwardness had not a fever crept in amongst them, which carried off a great many very fine fellows.' He added that on advice of local physicians, he had concluded that the trouble came from overcrowding aboard ship and the lack of clothing, against both of which provision had now been made.

Nevertheless the plague persisted, killing off the Negroes and the Governor's hopes alike. Writing to Germain in June, Dunmore confessed defeat. The fever, he explained, was malignant, and had 'carried off an incredible number of our people, especially blacks.' Had this not happened he would have had 2,000 Negro followers. He was separating the sick from the well, he wrote, and would try to keep the two groups from intermingling. The Governor's efforts were unavailing, it seems, for by early June 1776 there were not more than '150 effective Negro men,' although each day the black corps was augmented by six to eight arrivals.

Failure to arrest the smallpox and the harassment by the Virginia and Maryland militia finally brought an end to his lordship's stay in Chesapeake waters. In May 1776, faced with the likelihood of heavy losses from disease, the fleet moved from their exposed quarters at Tucker's Mills near Portsmouth and took shelter on Gwynn's Island near the mouth of the Rappahannock. Nowhere were Dunmore and his 'floating Town' allowed peace; 'we no sooner appear off the land, than signals are made from it,' he wrote, 'and if we come to anchor within cannon-shot of either shore, guns are immediately brought to bear upon us.'

Early in July the British, after suffering an attack upon their shipping, took refuge on St. George's Island in the Potomac. By the end of the month the disease-ridden corps, lacking suitable drinking water and despairing of re-enforcements, prepared to leave. Dismantling, burning, or running aground 63 of their 103 vessels, they sailed out of the Potomac on August 6, seven of the ships bound for Sandy Hook and the others setting a southward course for St. Augustine and the Bermudas. With the departing fleet went some three hundred Negroes—the healthiest—who were going northward, destined for further military service. Dunmore's schemes had come to an inglorious end.

Sources: Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, pp. 27-31; Frey, "Between Slavery and Freedom: Virginia Blacks in the American Revolution," pp. 377-398.

Part VI—Independence and Enslavement

March 29, 1776—Letter from An American to Alexander Purdie

The following letter appeared in Purdie's *Virginia Gazette* on March 29, 1776. In arguing in favor of independence, the unidentified writer repeatedly described the American colonists as slaves to Great Britain. He even went so far as to compare English leaders to oppressive West Indian slaveholders. He viewed the colonists as enslaved because their trade had been restricted, their laws (including the General Assembly's attempt to limit the importation of slaves) had been repealed by the king and their representative assemblies dissolved by him, and their homes invaded during the first year of the Revolutionary War. He termed the attempt to attract the colonists' slaves to the British cause a grievous oppression. Finally, he called for an alliance between the colonies and France so as to save the former from further enslavement.

MUCH has been said concerning the independence of the colonies, and some people have been made to believe that such a state is not desirable, and that we should wish for no more liberty than we enjoyed in 1763; but let any man consider that, at that time, we were restrained from making nails and hats, and might with equal justice have been hindered from building houses or making stockings; that we were cruelly and wantonly restricted in our trade, in some instances as it were merely to show that we were the slaves of Britain.

Although the English cannot make wine, raise silk, grow olives, citrons, oranges or lemons, yet we were forced to buy these articles of them only, and were not *suffered* to purchase them of the French, Spaniards, or Italians; and *although* all Europe to the northward of *Cape Finisterre* had been starving for *want* of grain, and we had it in our power to supply their wants, yet we were not permitted to do it. Our tobacco trade was wholly *engrossed* by English merchants; they alone had the privilege of selling this invaluable article of our commerce to the Dutch, French, Spaniards, Portuguese, and to the different states up the Mediterranean. The king nominated all officers civil and military, had the power of repealing all our laws, however necessary to our security and happiness; and the present king has wantonly and cruelly exerted that power, in repealing an act of our Assembly, for obliging ships *to perform quarantine*, and another for preventing the farther importation of slaves, by laying heavy *duties* on such as should be imported.

The king, by his instructions to his governours, could dissolve our Assemblies as pleasure, without assigning any reason for doing, as he has frequently done. He had a right to keep any number of troops or ships in our colonies, which right he will never give up. He could build forts on our frontiers, and garrison them as he pleased. This was our situation in 1763, and yet some people are weak enough to wish to be left as we were then, as they express it; but, good God! Were we not abject slaves; We *wanted* but the name.

Indeed we were treated with some small respect, and it was not till 1763 that we were openly insulted, and treated as slaves. The English have certainly looked upon us as slaves, or they would have carried on the war in a manner more becoming the character of their nation. They seem to think, as the masters of slaves in the *West Indies* do, that no method is unjustifiable by which they can suppress an insurrection, nor any punishment too severe to be inflicted on revolting slaves.

Our masters in Britain, though they made us labour and toil for their emolument, yet did not attempt to take from us the little we had been permitted to earn for ourselves. In this respect, they were as indulgent to us as we are to our poor slaves; but this they evidently looked upon as an instance of their indulgence, moderation, and forbearance, for they have declared, in both houses of Parliament and the royal sanction has been given to the declaration, that they had, have, and of right ought to have, a power to make laws to bind us *in all cases whatsoever*, that is, that they are our absolute lords and masters.

Well, therefore, may lord North and general Burgoyne say, that they talk no more than that America should be in the situation she was in 1763. The truth is, the ministry do not wish that we were more enslaved now than we were then, but they earnestly wish we would be as passive.

Since this is the case, and we have not only been long oppressed, and of late grievously so, but have also been attacked by sea and land, our towns and private houses plundered and burnt, our property snatched from us, our countrymen dragged from their very beds to piratical boats, and hurried on board men of war, *our negroes taken from our plantations*, many encouraged to leave their masters, and take up arms against them, several hundreds of whom are now in arms against us, and when we know that all of these have been invited to do so; when we know that *an act of parliament was passed to encourage the Canadians to attack us*, that a skillful and artful general was sent amongst them to lead them on upon us, and when we know what pains have been taken to prevail on the Indians to ravage our frontiers (for no one is a stranger to *general Carletons, Dunmores and Connollys plots*) I say, since we know these things, who, that is not a slave indeed, who that has any feelings, or the least spirit, is there amongst us that would hesitate a moment to declare he will no longer submit to such hard restriction on his trade, that he will not suffer himself and his posterity to be so cruelly insulted and oppressed, and that he will be revenged of his inhuman plunderers and butchers; who, when he finds it necessary to carry on the war we have entered into (a most just and holy war, and in which Heaven has peculiarly favoured us) who, I say, can hesitate a moment to make use of all the alliance he can procure to prosecute it with vigour?

...

If a powerful fleet and army should suddenly invade our country, and get possession of the lower parts of it, wasting it with fire and sword, and should totally put a stop to our trade, and at the same time should supply their armies from hence with provision of every sort, and enable them to make a complete conquest of some other colony, we should then wish we had called in the alliance of the French and Spanish fleets; or if, whilst we are

most dutifully whining after our mother country; France should choose not to wait any longer for offers from the Congress, but should agree with England *to share the plunder of America*, what should we say for ourselves? But, God be praised, France has waited with patience, and it is not yet too late to ask assistance of her; and she seems prepared to give it. And if she does, England must desist from her cruel plan of enslaving the colonies, and will think herself happy to come in for a share of their extensive trade.

So shall peace and harmony be restored to these distracted countries, which will become great and flourishing in commerce, arts, and sciences; and will flourish as long as they enjoy freedom, and practise virtue.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., March 29, 1776.

April 24, 1776—A Public Letter of Instructions from the Freeholders of James City County to Robert Carter Nicholas and William Norvell, Delegates to the Fifth Virginia Convention

The freeholders of James City County instructed Robert Carter Nicholas and William Norvell to dissolve the connection between America and Great Britain.

It cannot be a violation of our faith, now, to reject the terms of 1763. They are a qualified slavery at best, and were acceptable to us, not as the extent of our right, but the probable cause of peace; but since the day in which they were most humbly offered, as the end of animosities, an interval hath passed, marked with **tyranny intolerable**.

We, therefore, whose names are hereunto subscribed, do request and instruct you, our delegates (provided no just and honourable terms are offered by the king) to exert your utmost ability, in next Convention, towards dissolving the connexion between America and Great Britain, **totally, finally, and irrevocably**.

Source: *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), April 26, 1776 supplement.

May 15, 1776—The Virginia Resolves

Members of the Fifth Convention voted to declare independence from Great Britain and to form a new government on May 15, 1776.

FORASMUCH as all the endeavours of the United Colonies, by the most decent representations and petitions to the King and Parliament of Great Britain, to restore peace and security to America under the British government, and a re-union with that people upon just and liberal terms, instead of a redress of grievances, have produced, from an imperious and vindictive Administration, increased insult, oppression, and a vigorous attempt to effect our total destruction. By a late act, all these colonies are declared to be in rebellion, and out of the protection of the British Crown, our properties subjected to confiscation, our people,

when captivated, compelled to join in the murder and plunder of their relations and countrymen, and all former rapine and oppression of Americans declared legal and just. Fleets and armies are raised, and the aid of foreign troops engaged to assist these destructive purposes: The King's representative in this colony hath not only withheld all the powers of government from operating for our safety, but, having retired on board an armed ship, is carrying on a piratical and savage war against us, tempting our slaves, by every artifice, to resort to him, and training and employing them against their masters. In this state of extreme danger, we have no alternative left but an abject submission to the will of those over-bearing tyrants, or a total separation from the Crown and Government of Great Britain, uniting and exerting the strength of all America for defence, and forming alliances with foreign powers for commerce and aid in war: Wherefore, appealing to the SEARCHER OF HEARTS for the sincerity of former declarations, expressing our desire to preserve the connection with that nation, and that we are driven from that inclination by their wicked councils, and the eternal laws of self preservation.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, that the delegates appointed to represent this colony in General Congress be instructed to propose to that respectable body to declare the United Colonies free and independent states, absolved from all allegiance to, or dependence upon, the Crown or Parliament of Great Britain; and that they give the assent of this colony to such declaration, and to whatever measures may be thought proper and necessary by the Congress for forming foreign alliances, and a confederation of the colonies, at such time, and in the manner, as to them shall seem best: Provided that the power of forming government for, and the regulations of the internal concerns of each colony, be left to the respective colonial legislatures.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, that a committee be appointed to prepare a DECLARATION of RIGHTS, and such a plan of government as will be most likely to maintain peace and order in this colony, and secure substantial and equal liberty to the people.

EDMUND PENDLETON, President.
John Tazewell, Clerk of the Conv.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., May 17, 1776; *ibid.*, Dixon, ed., May 18, 1776.

May to June 1776—Slavery and the First Clause of the Virginia Declaration of Rights

As a member of the Virginia Convention, George Mason drafted the Virginia Declaration of Rights some time between May 20 and 26, 1776. This draft, which included some additions by Thomas Ludwell Lee, was presented to the rest of the committee called to prepare the declaration; the committee added several provisions, and then the committee draft was printed for consideration by the full Convention.

During the debate over the committee draft, the issue of slavery arose as the delegates wrangled over the first clause of the declaration. Edmund Randolph recalled that Robert

Carter Nicholas and other conservatives expressed their anxiety that the first clause, especially the phrase "born equally free," might provoke an insurrection among Virginia slaves. Liberal members of the Convention dismissed this concern by arguing that slaves were not constituent members of civil society and would by no means apply the clause to themselves. A full debate over slavery did not ensue, and the delegates eventually compromised by modifying the language of the first clause to attempt to reconcile the ideal of freedom and the reality of slavery. The successive drafts of the first clause follow; the brackets in the final draft indicate the changes made by the full Convention.

First Draft, ca. May 20-26, 1776

That all Men are born equally free and independant, and have certain inherent natural Rights, of which they can not by any Compact, deprive or divest their Posterity; among which are the Enjoyment of Life and Liberty, with the Means of acquiring and possessing Property, and pursueing and obtaining Happiness and Safety.

Committee Draft, May 27, 1776

1. THAT all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent natural rights, of which they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; among which are, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

Final Draft, June 12, 1776

1. That all men are <by nature> equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, <when they enter into a state of society,> they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity,; <namely,> the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

Source: *The Papers of George Mason*, ed. Rutland, 1:275, 277, 283, 287, 289.

1776—Samuel Hopkins's *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*

Theologian Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), a disciple of Jonathan Edwards, began preaching against slavery in 1773. From the pulpit of the First Congregational Church in Newport, Rhode Island, a center of the slave trade in the colonies, Hopkins denounced slavery with Calvinist fervor. One of the first Congregational ministers to attack slavery, he raised money to free slaves in Newport and collected funds to train blacks as missionaries for Africa, a plan that never came to fruition because of the disruption of the Revolutionary War.

In 1776, Hopkins addressed his *Dialogue* to the members of the Continental Congress in the hope that they would abolish slavery in the colonies, just as they had halted the slave

trade. With its themes of original sin, conversion, and self-renunciation, the address reflected Hopkins's fundamental religious beliefs. Copies of Hopkins's pamphlet were presented to members of the Congress, as well as to other colonial leaders. The New York Manumission Society later reprinted the address. Historian William M. Wiecek has described Hopkins's piece as "the leading anti-slavery tract of the Revolution."

In the following excerpts, Hopkins treats the issues of the proper timing of emancipation and the potential practical problems associated with it, the Christianization of the slaves, the curse on Ham's posterity, and the desire for freedom among the slaves. In the dialogue, "A" represents a slaveowner, while "B" echoes Hopkins's views. Also included is the majority of Hopkins's direct address to slaveowners.

To the Honourable Members of the CONTINENTAL CONGRESS,
Representatives of the THIRTEEN AMERICAN COLONIES.

MUCH HONOURED GENTLEMEN,

As God the Great Father of the Universe, has made you the fathers of these Colonies; and in answer to the prayers of his people, given you counsel, and that wisdom and integrity, in the exertion of which, you have been such great and extensive blessings, and obtained the approbation and applause of your constituents, and the respect and veneration of the nations in whose fight you have acted, in the important, noble struggle for LIBERTY: We naturally look to you in behalf of more than half a million of persons in these Colonies, who are under such a degree of oppression and tyranny, as to be wholly deprived of all civil and personal liberty, to which they have as good a right as any of their fellow men, and are reduced to the most abject state of bondage and slavery, without any just cause.

We have particular encouragement thus to apply to you, since you have had the honour and happiness of leading these Colonies to resolve to stop the slave trade; and to buy no more slaves imported from Africa. We have the satisfaction of the best assurances that you have done this not merely from political reasons; but from a conviction of the unrighteousness and cruelty of the trade, and a regard to justice and benevolence, deeply sensible of the inconsistency of promoting slavery of the Africans, at the same time we are asserting our own civil liberty, at the risque of our fortunes and lives. This leaves in our minds no doubt of your being sensible of the equal unrighteousness and oppression, as well as inconsistency with ourselves in holding so many hundreds of thousands of blacks in slavery, who have an equal right to freedom with ourselves, while we are maintaining this struggle for our own and our children's liberty: and a hope and confidence that the cries and tears of these oppressed will be regarded by you and that your wisdom and the great influence you have in these colonies, will be so properly and effectually exerted, as to bring about a total abolition of slavery, in such a manner as shall greatly promote the happiness of those oppressed strangers, and the best interest of the public.

There are many difficulties and obstacles, we are sensible, in the way of this good work. But when the propriety, importance, and necessity of it, come into view, we think ourselves warranted to address you, in the words spoken to Ezra, on an occasion not

wholly dissimilar. "Arise, for this matter belongeth unto you; we also will be with you: be of good courage and do it."

The righteous and merciful governor of the world has given the greatest encouragement to go on, and thoroughly execute judgment, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, both in his word, and in the wonderful things he has done for us since we have began to reform this public iniquity. But if we stop here, what will be the consequence!--

It is observable that when the Swiss were engaged in their struggle for liberty, in which they so remarkably succeeded, they entered into the following public resolve: "No Swiss shall take any thing by violence from another, neither in time of war, nor peace." How reasonable and important is it that we should at this time heartily enter into, and thoroughly execute such a resolution! And that this implies the emancipation of all of our African slaves, surely none can doubt.

In this view, the following dialogue is humbly offered to your perusal, hoping that it may have your approbation and patronage.

May you judge the poor of the people, save the children of the needy, relieve the oppressed, and deliver the spoiled out of the hands of the oppressor; and be the happy instruments of procuring and establishing universal LIBERTY to white and black, to be transmitted down to the latest posterity. With high esteem, and the most friendly sentiments, We are, honourable Gentlemen,
Your very humble servants,

THE EDITORS

A DIALOGUE, &c.

A. SIR, What do you think of the motion made by some among us to free all our *African* slaves? They say, that our holding these blacks in slavery, as we do, is an open violation of the law of God, and is so great an instance of unrighteousness and cruelty, that we cannot expect deliverance from present calamities, and success in our struggle for liberty in the *American* colonies, until we repent, and make all the restitution in our power. For my part, I think they carry things much too far on this head; and if any thing might be done for the freedom of our slaves, this is not a proper time to attend to it, while we are in such a state of war and distress, and affairs of much greater importance demand all our attention, and the utmost exertion of the public.

B. Sir, I am glad you have introduced this subject, especially, as you own a number of these slaves; I shall attend to it with pleasure, and offer my sentiments upon it freely, expecting you will as freely propose the objections you shall have against any thing I shall advance. And I take leave here to observe, that if the slavery in which we hold the blacks, is wrong; it is a very great and public sin; and therefore a sin which God is now testifying against in the calamities he has brought upon us, consequently must be reformed, before we can reasonably expect deliverance, or even sincerely ask for it. It would be worse than madness then, to put off attention to this matter, under the notion of attending to more important affairs. This is acting like the mariner, who, when his ship is filling with water, neglects to stop the leak or ply the pump, that he may mend his sails.

There are at the lowest computation, 800,000 slaves in *British America*, including the *West India* islands; and a great part of these, are in the colonies on the continent. And if this is in every instance wrong, unrighteousness and oppression; it must be a very great and crying sin, there being nothing of the kind equal to it on the face of the earth. There are but few of these slaves, indeed in *New-England*, compared with the vast numbers in the islands and the southern colonies; and they are treated much better on the continent, and especially among us, than they are in the *West-Indies*. But if it be all wrong, and real oppression of the poor helpless blacks, we, by refusing to break this yoke, and let these injured captives go free, do practically justify and support this slavery in general, and make ourselves, in a measure at least, answerable for the whole: and we have no way to exculpate ourselves from the guilt of the whole, and bear proper testimony against this great evil, but by freeing all our slaves. Surely then, this matter admits of no delay; but demands our first, and most serious attention, and speedy reformation.

...

A. Sir, there is one important circumstance in favour of the slave-trade; or which will at least serve to counterbalance many of the evils you mention; and that is, we bring these slaves from a heathen land, to places of gospel light; and so put them under special advantages to be saved.

B. I know this has been mentioned by many in favour of the slave-trade: but when examined, will turn greatly against it. It can hardly be said with truth, that the *West-India* islands are places of gospel light. But if they were, are the Negroes in the least benefited by it? Have they any access to the gospel? Have they any instruction, more than if they were beasts? So far from this, that their masters guard against their having any instruction to their utmost; and if any one would attempt any such thing, it would be at the risque of his life. And all the poor creatures learn of Christianity, from what they see in those who call themselves Christians, only serves to prejudice them in the highest degree against the Christian religion. For they not only see the abominably wicked lives of most of those who are called Christians, but are constantly oppressed by them, and receive as cruel treatment from them, as they could from the worst of beings. And as to those who are brought to the continent, in the southern colonies, and even to *New-England*, so little pains are taken to instruct them, and there is so much to prejudice them against Christianity, that it is a very great wonder, and owing to an extraordinary divine interposition, in which we may say, God goes out of his common way, that any of them should think favourably of Christianity, and cordially embrace it. As to the most of them, no wonder they are unteachable, and get no good by the gospel; but have imbibed the deepest prejudices against it, from the treatment they receive from professed Christians; prejudices which most of them are by their circumstances restrained from expecting; while they are fixed in the strongest degree in their minds.

But if this was not the case, and all the slaves brought from *Africa*, were put under the best advantage to become Christians, and they were in circumstances that tended to give them the most favourable idea of Christians, and the religion they profess; and though all concerned in this trade, and in slavery in general, should have this wholly in view, viz. their becoming Christians, by which they should be eternally happy; yet this

would not justify the slave-trade, or continuing them in a state of slavery: For to take this method to christianize them, would be a direct and gross violation of the laws of Christ. He commands us to go and preach the gospel to all nations; to carry the gospel to them, and not to go, and with violence to bring them from their native country, without saying a word to them, or to the nations from whom they are taken, about the gospel, or any thing that relates to it.

If the *Europeans* and *Americans* had been as much engaged to christianize the *Africans*, as they have been to enslave them; and had been at half the cost and pains to introduce the gospel among them, that they have to captivate and destroy them; we have all the reason in the world to conclude that extensive country, containing such a vast multitude of inhabitants, would have been full of gospel light, and the many nations there, civilized and made happy; and a foundation laid for the salvation of millions of millions; and the happy instruments of it have been rewarded ten thousand fold for all their labour and expence. But now, instead of this, what has been done on that coast, by those who pass among the Negroes for Christians, has only served to produce and spread the greatest and most deep-rooted prejudices against the Christian religion, and bar the way to that which is above all things desirable, their coming to the knowledge of the truth that they might be saved. So that while, by the murdering or enslaving millions of millions, they have brought a curse upon themselves, and on all that partake with them, they have injured in the highest degree innumerable nations, and done what they could to prevent their salvation, and to fasten them down in ignorance and barbarity to the latest posterity!--Who can realize all this, and not feel a mixture of grief, pity, indignation and horror, truly ineffable! And must he not be filled with zeal to do his utmost to put a speedy stop to this seven-headed monster of iniquity, with all the horrid train of evils with which it is attended.

And can any one consider all these things, and yet pretend to justify the slave-trade, or the slavery of the *Africans* in *America*? Is it not impossible, that a real Christian, who has attended to all this, should have any hand in this trade? And it requires the utmost stretch of charity to suppose that any one ever did, or can buy or sell an *African* slave, with a sincere view to make a true Christian of him.

...

A. You know that a curse was pronounced on the posterity of *Ham*, for his wickedness, in the following words, *A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren*. He could not be a servant unto his brethren unless they made him so, or at least held him in servitude. The curse could not take place unless they executed it, and they seem to be by God appointed to do this. Therefore while we, the children of *Japheth*, are making such abject slaves of the blacks, the children of *Ham*, we are only executing the righteous curse denounced upon them; which is so far from being wrong in us, that it would be a sin, even disobedience to the revealed will of God, to refuse to make slaves of them, and attempt to set them at liberty.

B. Do you think, my good Sir, it was the duty of *Pharoah* to make the *Israelites* serve him and the *Egyptians*, and to afflict them in hard and cruel bondage, because God had expressly foretold this, and said it should be done? And was the *Assyrian* king blameless while he executed his judgments which God had threatened to inflict on his

professing people? Did God's threatening them with those evils, warrant this king to distress, captivate and destroy them, as he did? And will you say the *Jews* did right in crucifying our Lord because by this they fulfilled the Scriptures, declaring that it must be?--Your argument, if it is of any hope, will be renounced by you, and by all who have the least regard for the holy Scripture, with proper abhorrence.

But if this argument were not so fraught with absurdity and impiety as it really is, and it were granted to be forcible, with respect to all upon whom the mentioned curse was denounced; yet it would not justify our enslaving the *Africans*, for they are not the posterity of *Canaan*, who was the only son of *Ham* that was doomed to be a servant of servants. The other sons of *Ham*, and their posterity, are no more affected with the curse, than the other sons of *Noah*, and their posterity. Therefore this prediction is as much of a warrant for the *Africans* enslaving us, as it is for us to make slaves of them. The truth is, it gives not the least shadow of a right to any one of the children of Noah to make slaves of any of their brethren.

...

A. It is impossible to free all our Negroes; especially at once, and in present circumstances, without injuring them, at least, many of them, and the public to a great degree. Why then is this urged so vehemently *now*? I think this proceeds from a zeal, not according to knowledge.

B. If it be not a sin, an open flagrant violation of all the rules of justice and humanity, to hold these slaves in bondage, it is indeed folly to put ourselves to any trouble and expence, in order to free them. But if the contrary be true; if it be a sin of a crimson dye, which as most particularly pointed out by the public calamities which have come upon us, from which we have no reason to expect deliverance till we put away the evil of our doings, this reformation cannot be urged with too much zeal, nor attempted too soon, whatever difficulties are in the way. The more and greater these are, the more zealous and active should we be in removing them. You had need to take care, lest from selfish motives, and a backwardness to give up what you unrighteously retain, you are joining with the slothful man to cry, *there is a lion in the way! A lion is in the streets!* While there is no insurmountable difficulty, but that which lies in your own heart.

No wonder there are many and great difficulties in reforming an evil practice of this kind, which has got such deep root by length of time, and is become so common. But it does not yet appear that they cannot be removed, by the united wisdom and strength of the *American* colonies, without any injury to the slaves, or disadvantage to the public. Yea, the contrary is most certain, as the slaves cannot be put into a more wretched situation, ourselves being the judges, and the community cannot take a more likely step to escape ruin, and obtain the smiles and protection of Heaven. This matter ought doubtless to be attended to by the General Assemblies, and Continental and Provincial Congresses; and if they were as much united and engaged in devising ways and means to set at liberty these injured slaves, as they are to defend themselves from tyranny, it would soon be effected. There were without doubt many difficulties and impediments in the way of the *Jews* liberating those of their brethren they had brought into bondage, in the days of *Jeremiah*. But when they were besieged by the *Chaldeans*,

and this their sin was laid before them, and they were threatened with desolation if they did not reform: They broke through every difficulty, and set their servants at liberty.

And how great must have been the impediments, how many the seeming unanswerable objections, against reforming that gross violation of the divine command in *Ezra's* time, by their marrying strange wives, of which to[o] many of the *Jews* were guilty, and the hand of the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass! Yet the pious zeal of *Ezra* and those who joined with him, and their wisdom and indefatigable efforts conquered every obstacle, and brought them to a thorough reformation. Would not the like zeal, wisdom and resolution, think you, soon produce a reformation of this much greater abomination, by finding out an effectual method to put away all our slaves? Surely we have no reason to conclude it cannot be done, till we see a suitable zeal and resolution, among all orders of men, and answerable attempts are thoroughly made.

Let this iniquity be viewed in it's true magnitude, and in the shocking light in which it has been set in this conversation; let the wretched case of the poor blacks be considered with proper pity and benevolence; together with the probable dreadful consequence to this land, of retaining them in bondage, and all objections against liberating them would vanish. The mountains that are now raised up in the imagination of man, would become a plain, and every difficulty surmounted.

...

A. I believe my slaves are so far from thinking themselves abused, or being in the least uneasy in a state of slavery, that they have no desire to be made free; and if their freedom were offered to them, they would refuse to accept it.

B. I must take leave to call this in question, Sir; and I think you believe it, in contradiction to all reason and the strongest feelings of human nature, till they have declared it themselves, having had opportunity for due deliberation, and being in circumstances to act freely, without the least constraint or fear.

There are many masters (if we believe what they say) who please themselves with this fond opinion of their goodness to their slaves; and their choice of a state of slavery, in preference to freedom, without the least foundation, and while the contrary is known to be true by all who are acquainted with their slaves. If they really believe this, they by it only discover great insensibility, and want of proper reflection. They have not so much as put themselves in the place of their slaves, so as properly and with due sensibility to consult what would be their own feelings, on such a supposition. Have they themselves lost all desire of freedom? Are they destitute of all taste of the sweets of it; and have they no aversion to slavery, for themselves and children? If they have these feelings, what reason have they to conclude their servants have not?

But it seems most of those masters do not fully believe what they so often say on this head: For they have never made the trial; nor can they be persuaded to do it. Let them offer freedom to their servants; and give them opportunity to choose for themselves, without being under the most distant constraint. And if they then deliberately choose to continue their slaves the matter will be fairly decided, and they may continue to possess them with a good conscience.

Slaves are generally under such disadvantages and restraints, that however much they desire liberty, they dare not so much as mention it to their masters. And if their

master should order them into his presence, and ask them whether they had a desire to be made free, many would not dare to declare their choice, lest it should offend him, and instead of obtaining their freedom, bring themselves into a more evil case than they were in before, as the children of *Israel* did, by desiring *Pharoah* to free them.

In this case such precaution ought to be taken, as to give the slaves proper assurance that they may without any danger to themselves, declare their choice of freedom: and that it shall be done to them according to their choice.

...

AN ADDRESS TO THE OWNERS OF NEGRO SLAVES IN THE AMERICAN COLONIES.

GENTLEMEN,

SINCE it has been determined to publish the preceding dialogue, it was thought proper it should be attended with a particular address to you, who are more immediately interested in the slavery there considered.

It would be injurious, it is confessed, to consider you as the only persons guilty or concerned in this matter. The several legislatures in these colonies, the magistrates, and the body of the people have doubtless been greatly guilty in approving and encouraging, or at least conniving at this practice. Yea, every one is in a measure guilty, who has been inattentive to this oppression, and unaffected with it, and neglected to bear proper testimony against it. And it is granted, the public ought to go into some effectual measures to liberate all the slaves, without laying an unreasonable burden on their masters. But though this be not done, such neglect will not excuse you in holding them in slavery; as it is in your power to set them free, and your indispensable duty, and really your interest, to do them this piece of justice, though others should neglect to assist you, as they ought.

...

Consider also, how very inconsistent this injustice and oppression is with worshipping God through Christ, and attending on the institutions of religion; and how unacceptable and abominable these must be, while you neglect to let the oppressed go free, and refuse to do justice, and love mercy. The bible is full of declarations of this.

"To do justice and judgment, is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice." Without the former, the latter is nothing but gross hypocrisy, and abomination to God; for he "will have mercy, and not sacrifice." He requires no devotion, or attendance on any religious right or institution, which is inconsistent with mercy, or that is done without the love and exercise of mercy; but rejects all such prayers and service, as most dishonourable and abominable to him. And when we consider, that Christianity is the greatest instance and exhibition of righteousness and mercy that was ever known, or can be conceived of: And the great Author of it is, in the most eminent and glorious degree, THE JUST GOD AND THE SAVIOUR; we shall not wonder that no offering can be

acceptable to him, which is without the exercise and practice of righteousness and mercy: And that "he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy."

You who are professors of religion, and yet the owners of slaves, are intreated well to consider, how you must appear in the sight of God, and of all who view your conduct in a true light, while you attend your family and public devotions, and sit down from time to time, at the table of the Lord. If your neighbour wrong you of a few shillings, you think him utterly unfit to attend that sacred ordinance with you; but what is this, to the wrong you are doing to your brethren, whom you are holding in slavery! Should a man at *Algiers* have a number of your children his slaves, and should, by some means be converted, and become a professor of Christianity, would you not expect he would soon set your children at liberty? And if after you had particularly dealt with him about it, and offered abundant light and matter of conviction, of the oppression and cruelty of which he was guilty, he should be deaf to all you could say, and resolve to hold them and their children in slavery, what would you think of him, when you see him at his prayers, and attending at the Lord's supper? Would you think he was more acceptable to God, than if he neglected these institutions, and yet had been so just and merciful, as to set all his slaves at liberty? Yea, would you scruple to say, his devotion and attendance on the holy supper were hypocrisy and abomination? If *Nathan* the prophet was here, he would say, "*Thou art the man.*"

The Friends, who are commonly called Quakers, have been for a number of years, bearing testimony against this oppression, as inconsistent with Christianity; and striving to purge themselves of this iniquity, rejecting those from fellowship with them, who will not free their slaves. They indeed do not attend the Lord's supper; and it is granted, they are herein neglecting an important institution of Christ: But ought it not to alarm you to think, that while you are condemning them for this neglect, your attendance, in the omission of that righteousness and mercy which they practise, is inexpressibly more dishonourable and offensive to Christ, than their neglect! These things you ought *first* to have done, to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke; and then not leave the other undone.

May you all, in this day of your visitation, know and practice the things that belong to your peace, and the safety and happiness of the united *American* colonies, by no longer oppressing these *poor strangers* wrongfully, and doing violence to them; but by executing judgment, relieve the oppressed, and deliver the spoiled out of the hands of the oppressor! May this counsel be acceptable unto you, and you break off this your sin, and all your sins, by righteousness, and your iniquities by shewing mercy to these poor; that it may be a lengthening of the tranquility of yourselves, your families, and of this now distressed land!

Source: [Hopkins], *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*, pp. 8-12, 17-20, 26-28, 38-40, 49-50, 66-69.

1776—Thomas Jefferson Rebukes King George III over Slavery

In writing the preamble to the Virginia Constitution and drafting the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson castigated King George III for encouraging slaves to take up arms and for refusing to allow the colonists to place limitations on the slave trade. Jefferson's "original Rough draught" (as he labeled it late in his life) of the Declaration of Independence contained a harshly worded rebuke of George III for establishing slavery in the colonies, preventing the colonies from limiting the slave trade, and inciting insurrection among the slaves. The passage was eventually struck out entirely by the Continental Congress. Below are excerpts from the Virginia Constitution, the draft of the Declaration, and the Declaration as adopted.

The Virginia Constitution of 1776 as Adopted by the Convention
[29 June 1776]

In a General Convention.

Begun and holden at the Capitol, in the City of Williamsburg, on Monday the sixth day of May, one thousand seven hundred and seventy six, and continued, by adjournments to the day of June following:

A CONSTITUTION, OR FORM OF GOVERNMENT,

agreed to and resolved upon by the Delegates and Representatives of the several Counties and Corporations of Virginia.

Whereas George the Third, King of Great Britain and Ireland, and Elector of Hanover, heretofore intrusted with the exercise of the Kingly Office in this Government, hath endeavoured to pervert the same into a detestable and insupportable Tyranny; by putting his negative on laws the most wholesome and necessary for the publick good;

...

by inciting insurrections of our fellow Subjects, with the allurements of forfeiture and confiscation;

by prompting our Negroes to rise in Arms among us, those very negroes whom, by an inhuman use of his negative, he hath refused us permission to exclude by Law;

by endeavouring to bring on the inhabitants of our Frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of Warfare is an undistinguished Destruction of all Ages, Sexes, and Conditions of Existence

Jefferson's "original Rough draught" of the Declaration of Independence, 1776

the history of his present majesty, is a history of unremitting injuries and usurpations, among which no one fact stands single or solitary to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest, all of which have in direct object the establishment of absolute tyranny over these states. to prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world, for the truth of which we pledge a faith as yet unsullied by falsehood.

...

he has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, & conditions of existence;

he has incited treasonable insurrections in our fellow-subjects, with the allurements of forfeiture & confiscation of our property;

he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. this piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *infidel* powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which *he* has deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom *he* also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the *liberties* of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the *lives* of another.

The Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

...

He has excited domestic insurrection among us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions.

Sources: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Boyd, et al., 1:377-378, 424-426; The Declaration of Independence.

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TAKING POSSESSION AND ENSLAVING VIRGINIA RESOURCE BOOK

May 1723—ACT IV. *An Act directing the trial of Slaves, committing capital crimes; and for the more effectual punishing conspiracies and insurrections of them; and for the better government of Negros, Mulattos, and Indians, bond or free*

The legislators listened to the speech of Governor Drysdale and the fears of Virginians about slave rebellions and the growing free black population. They wrote a statute that imposed new restrictions on the colony's enslaved blacks and took away the few privileges that free men of color enjoyed. The law imposed a ban on all assemblies of slaves that were not licensed by masters, prohibited all blacks—free and enslaved—and Native Americans from providing testimony against white persons in court, imposed punishment if a black person provided false testimony, and withdrew the privilege of benefit of clergy for a slave convicted of plotting or attempting a rebellion. Punishments for runaway slaves became harsher and included dismemberment. The law required a master to prove that a slave had performed “meritorius service” in order to manumit the said slave.

The colonial leaders placed a financial burden on the free black population when they decided that free women of color over the age of sixteen were tithable (as they had been between 1668 and 1705). In addition, the wife of a free black or a Native American man was tithable. The only free black men allowed to own guns were those who lived on the frontier and who needed guns for protection. The legislators decided that all free children of color were to serve longer terms of servitude than did white children.

The legislators made this statute an instrument to maintain social control and stability. They required churchwardens to read it in April and October of each year and to enter a copy in each parish register. The sheriff of each county had to post the law at the courthouse in June or July.

Ira Berlin notes that Virginia's “social order required raw power to sustain it; and during the early years of the eighteenth century, planters mobilized the apparatus of coercion in the service of their new regime. In the previous century, maimings, brandings, and beatings had occurred commonly, but the level of violence increased dramatically as planters transformed the society with slaves into a slave society. Chesapeake slaves faced the pillory, whipping post, and gallows far more frequently and in far larger

numbers than ever before. Even as planters employed the rod, the lash, the branding iron, and the first with increased regularity, they invented new punishments that would humiliate and demoralize as well as correct.”

IV. And to the end, such Negros, Mulattos, or Indians, not being christians, as shall hereafter be produced as evidences, on the trial of any slave for capital crimes, may be under the greater obligation to declare the truth, *Be it enacted*, That where any such Negro, Mulatto, or Indian, shall upon due proof made, or pregnant circumstances appearing before any county court within this colony, be found to have given a false testimony, every such offender shall, without further trial, be ordered by the said court to have one ear nailed to the pillory, and there to stand for the space of one hour, and then the said ear to be cut off; and thereafter, the other ear nailed in like manner, and cut off, at the expiration of one other hour; and moreover, to order every such offender thirty-nine lashes, well laid on, on his or her bare back, at the common whipping-post.

X. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That if any white person, free negro, mulatto, or Indian, shall at any time hereafter be found in company with any such slaves, at any such unlawful meetings, as aforesaid, or harbor or entertain any negro, or other slave whatsoever, without the consent of their owners, he, she, or they, so offending, upon being thereof lawfully convicted, shall forfeit and pay the sum of fifteen shillings, or one hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco, to the informer: To be recovered, with costs, before any justice of the peace; and upon failure to make present payment, shall have and receive, on his, her, or their bare backs, for every such offence, twenty lashes, well laid on. And every negro, mulatto, or indian slave, who shall come or assemble to such unlawful meetings, shall, upon information thereof made to any justice of the peace of the county where such offence shall be committed, for every such offence, have and receive, on his or her bare back, any number of lashes, not exceeding thirty-nine.

XIII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That if any negro, mulatto, or Indian slave, shall at any time hereafter presume to come and be upon the plantation of any person or persons whatsoever, without the leave or consent, in writing, or his or her master, owner, or overseer, and without the consent and approbation of the owner or overseer of such plantation, it shall and may be lawful to and for the master, owner, or overseer of any such plantation or quarter, to correct and give such slave or slaves ten lashes, well laid on, on his or her bare back, for every such offence.

XIV. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid*, That no negro, mulatto, or Indian whatsoever; (except as is hereafter excepted,) shall hereafter presume to keep, or carry any gun, powder, shot, or any club, or other weapon whatsoever, offensive or defensive; but that every gun, and all powder and shot, and every such club or weapon. as aforesaid, found or taken in the hands, custody, or possession of any such negro, mulatto, or Indian, shall be taken away; and upon due proof thereof made, before any justice of the peace of the county where such offence shall be committed, be forfeited to the seisor and informer, and moreover, every such negro, mulatto, or Indian, in whose hands, custody, or possession, the same shall be found, shall, by order of the said justice,

have and receive any number of lashes, not exceeding thirty-nine, well laid on, on his or her bare back, for every such offence.

XXVII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That no negro, mullatto, or indian slaves, shall be set free, upon any pretence whatsoever, except for some meritorious services, to be adjudged and allowed by the governor and council, for the time being, and a licence thereupon first had and obtained.—And that, where any slave shall be set free by his master or owner, otherwise than is herein before directed, it shall and may be lawful for the churchwardens of the parish, wherein such negro, mullatto, or indian, shall reside for the space of one month, next after his or her being set free, and they are hereby authorized and required, to take up, and sell the said negro, mullatto, or indian, as slaves, at the next court held for the said county, by public outcry; and that the monies arising by such sale, shall be applied to the use of the said parish, by the vestry thereof.

XXI. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That all free negros, mullattos, or indians, (except tributary indians to this government) male and female, above the age of sixteen years, and all wives of such negros, mullattos, or indians, (except before excepted) shall be deemed and accounted tithables; any law, custom, or usage, to the contrary, in any wise, notwithstanding.

XXII. *And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid,* That where any female mullatto, or indian, by law obliged to serve 'till the age of thirty or thirty-one years, shall during the time of her servitude, have any child born of her body, every such child shall serve the master or mistress of such mullatto or indian, until it shall attain the same age the mother of such child was obliged by law to serve unto.

XXIII. *And be if further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted and declared,* That no free negro, mullatto, or indian whatsoever, shall hereafter have any vote at the election of burgesses, or any other election whatsoever.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 115; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 4:126-134. See also *ibid.*, 6:40-42 (1748) and *ibid.*, 7:519-520 (1762).

May 1732—ACT VII. *An Act for settling some doubts and differences of opinion, in relation to the benefit of Clergy; for allowing the same to Women; and taking away of Reading; and to disable certain Persons, therein mentioned, to be Witnesses*

This statute extended the privilege of benefit of clergy to women and, with some limitations, to slaves. At the same time, the legislation placed a further restriction on **all** people of color—a black or Native American, whether free or enslaved, could only provide testimony in the case of a slave accused of a capital offense.

IV. And whereas a question hath lately arisen, touching the right of negros, to the benefit of clergy: For the determination thereof, *Be it further enacted,* That when any negro, mulatto, or Indian whatsoever, shall be convicted of any offence within the benefit of clergy, judgment of death shall not be given against him or her, upon such conviction; but he or she, shall be burnt in the hand in open court, by the jailor, and suffer such other corporal punishment, as the court shall think fit to inflict; except where such negro, mulatto, or Indian shall be convicted of manslaughter, or the felonious breaking and

entring in the day-time any house, and taking from thence any goods or chattels whatsoever, to the value of five shillings sterling; and where he or she hath once had the benefit of this act; and in those cases, such negro, mulatto, or Indian, shall suffer death, and be excluded from the benefit of this act.

V. And whereas negroes, mulattos, and Indians, have lately been frequently allowed to give testimony as lawful witnesses in the general court, and other courts of this colony, when they have professed themselves to be christians, and been able to give some account of the principles of the christian religion: But forasmuch as they are people of such base and corrupt natures, that the credit of their testimony cannot be certainly depended upon, and some juries have altogether rejected their evidence, and others have given full credit thereto: For preventing the mischiefs that may possibly happen by admitting such precarious evidence,

VI. *Be it further enacted*, That no negro, mulatto, or indian, either a slave or free, shall hereafter be admitted in any court of this colony, to be sworn as a witness, or give evidence in any cause whatsoever, except upon the trial of a slave, for a capital offence; in which case they shall be allowed to give evidence, in the manner directed by one act of assembly, made in the ninth year of the reign of the late king George, intituled, An Act directing the trial of Slaves committing Capital Crimes; and for the more effectual punishing Conspiracies and Insurrections of them; and for the better government of Negroes, Mulattos, and Indians, bond or free.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 4:326-327.

**ASPECTS OF SLAVE LIFE IN EIGHTEENTH- AND EARLY
NINETEENTH-CENTURY VIRGINIA**

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Part VI—Slaves and the Cycle of Family Life

Birth and Infancy

Childrearing

Black Marriage and Married Life

Old Age

Excerpts from Landon Carter's Diary

Part VII—Free Blacks

Selection from Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*

Part VIII—Religion

1789—Olaudah Equiano Discusses Ibo Religious Practices

1749 to 1763—The Sermons of the Reverend Thomas Bacon

1756 to 1818—Slaves Draw Strength From Religion

January 1758—Elizabeth Jones to Thomas Jones Junior

1767 to 1785—Black Baptist Preachers

Michael A. Gomez on “Muslims in Early America.”

1831—The Autobiography of Omar ibn Seid

Part IX—Slaves in Other Regions of Virginia

Selection from Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*

The Experience of a Slave Woman Named Kate

"Sustaining the Bonds of Kinship in a Trans-Appalachian Migration, 1790-1811"

Part X—The Participation of Slaves in the Economy

Selection from Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*

Selection from Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*

1758 to 1817—The Records of John Glassford and Company

Part I—Introduction

This section of the Enslaving Virginia Resource Book focuses on aspects of the lives of slaves who lived in Virginia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The following selections indicate that enslaved men, women, and children experienced slavery in many ways.

A variety of documents contain details about the lives and experiences of slaves—letters, journals, travel accounts, business records, and advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette*. These documents provide information about the family life of slaves, religion, slaves in other areas of Virginia, and the participation of slaves in the economy.

Part II—In Their Own Words: Documents Written by Virginia Slaves

1723—A Virginia Slave Writes to Edmund Gibson, the Bishop of London

In 1723, a slave wrote a letter to the Bishop of London in which he pleaded for his freedom. Perhaps this letter led Edmund Gibson to query ministers in Virginia about the ways in which enslaved men, women, and children learned about and received instruction in the Anglican faith. See the “American Diversity” section for several of the responses that Gibson received to his 1724 questionnaire to Virginia ministers.

Slaves were seldom permitted to learn to write, and written expressions of their views of slavery in the colonial period are extremely rare, so it is doubly exciting to discover a passionate appeal for liberation written by a Virginia slave in 1723. This anonymous letter, at the Lambeth Palace Library, is the earliest known plea for freedom by a slave based on a principle designed for general application. The document makes an eloquent protest against slavery. It also opens a window on the conditions of slave life and provides evidence that race mixture endangered the logic of race that structured slave society. Moreover, the writer's plea shows how slaves could use Christian piety to condemn masters who limited their religious activity.

The letter bears two dates: August 4 at the head; September 8 at the foot. We can imagine the writer laboring privately at his text at odd hours (on Sunday) over a period of weeks. For obvious reasons, the letter had to be kept secret—all the more so because it was written in the aftermath of a series of slave plots culminating in the spring of 1723 that so unnerved Virginia planters that they transported a number of alleged plotters to Barbados and took other measures to improve internal security. In May and June, the legislature, meeting at Williamsburg, passed an act for the "more effectual" punishment of slave conspirators "and for the better Government of Negroes Mulattos and Indians bond or free." The act also placed further restrictions on free blacks and provided that condemned slave plotters receive no benefit of clergy, barring first-time offenders from claiming reprieve from capital punishment.

The letter was written only weeks after Virginians learned of the appointment of Edmund Gibson as bishop of London, of whose extended see they formed a distant part. Gibson's popular devotional tracts were already circulating in the colonies; as bishop he would take an active interest in the christianization of slaves. How the letter got to Gibson and into the Fulham Papers (strangely filed with correspondence from Jamaica rather than in one of the four Virginia volumes in the collection) is a mystery, but it demonstrates that slaves knew how to target their protests accurately. This letter, based on logical argument and fundamental moral law, is the earliest known plea in the history of American slavery for liberation of a group of slaves.

The identity of the slave who composed the letter is unknown....

The document was written by someone for whom the composition of grammatical English was a struggle. The ink is a peculiar reddish, faded color by comparison with other documents in the collection; it may have been homemade. The paper, approximately seven by eleven and three-fourths inches, is of good quality with a high rag content. The transcription retains the original spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and marks of emphasis. A few minor interlineations have been brought down on line. Canceled words are reproduced where decipherable.

[first page]

A [cancellation]

August the forth 1723

to The Right ~~Righ~~ Raverrand father in god my Lord arch Bishop of Lonnd
 this coms to sattesfie your honour that there is in this Land of verJennia a Sort of
 people that is Calld molatters which are Baptised and brouaht up in the way of the
 Christan faith ~~and the~~ and followes the wayes and Rulles of the Chrch of England
 and sum of them has white fathars and sum white mothers and there is in this
 Land ~~a~~ a Law or act which keeps and makes them and there seed SLaves
 forever--
 and most honoured sir a mongst the Rest of your Charitabell acts and deed wee
~~humbly~~ your humbell and ~~po~~ poore partishinners doo begg Sir your aid and
 assistancce in this one thing which Lise as I doo understand ~~of~~ in your LordShips
 brest which is that ~~yr honour~~ your honour will by the help of our Suffervering
 [i.e., sovereign] Lord King George and the Rest of the Rullers will Release us out
 of this Cruell Bondegg and this wee beg for Jesus Christs his ~~of~~ Sake who has
 commaded us to seeke first the kingdom of ~~god~~ god and all things shall be addid
~~un~~ un to us

and here it is to bee noted that one brother is a SLave to another and one Sister to
 an othe which is quite out of the way and as for mee [cancellation] my selfe I am
 my brothers SLave but my name is Secrett

and here it is to be notd againe that wee are commandded to keep holey the
 Sabbath day and wee doo hardly know when it comes for our [cancellation] task
 mastrs are has hard with us as the Egyptions was with the Chillardann of Issarall
 god be marcifill unto us

[second page]

here follows our ~~hard service~~ Sevarity and Sorrowfull Sarvice we are hard used up on Every account ~~wee-f~~ in the first place wee are in Ignorance of our Salvation and in the next place wee are kept out of the Church ~~and~~ and matrimony is deened us

and to be plain they doo Look no more up on us then if wee ware dogs which I hope when these Strange Lines comes to your Lord Ships hands will be Looket in to

and here wee beg for Jesus Christs his Sake that as your honour do hope for the marcy of god att the day of death and the Redemption of our Saviour Christ that when this comes to your Lord Ships hands your honour wll Take Sum pittty of us who is your humble butt Sorrowfull portitiners and Sir wee your humble perticners do humbly beg the favour of your Lord Ship that your honour will grant and Settell one thing upon us which is that our ~~eh~~ childarn may be broatt up in the way of the Christtian faith and our desire is that they may be Larnd the Lords prayer the creed and the ten commandements and that they may appeare Every Lord's day att Church before the ~~€~~ Curatt to bee Exammond for our desire is that godlines Should abbound amongs us and wee desire that our Childarn be putt to Scool and and Larnd to Reed through the Bybell

[third page]

which is all att prasant with our prayers to god for itt's good Success before your honour these from your humbell Servants in the Lord my Riting is vary bad I whope yr honour will take the will for the deede I am but a poore SLave ~~th~~ that writt itt and has no other ~~time~~ time butt Sunday and hardly that att Sumtimes

September the 8th 1723

To the Right Reverrand father in ~~d~~ god
my Lord arch bishop of J London
these with care

wee dare nott Subscribe any mans name to this for feare of our masters ~~if~~ for if they knew that wee have Sent home to your honour wee Should goo neare to Swing upon the gallass tree

Source: Thomas N. Ingersoll, "'Release us out of this Cruell Bondegg': An Appeal from Virginia in 1723," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., LI (1994): 777-782.

1803—Autobiography of Dick, a Slave

Dick's autobiography comes from a travel book written by John Davis, an Englishman who traveled throughout the new republic between 1798 and 1802. Age twenty-two when he arrived in America, Davis was a self-educated writer of elite birth who had been at sea for twelve years, including a stint in the navy. He visited Prince William County toward the end of his journey and signed on to teach for three months at a school on Ball's plantation, Pohoke.

Davis described Dick as a man of about sixty years, dressed in ragged clothing, who was slow of movement but still engaged in a variety of jobs for his owner. Dick described himself as his owner's right-hand man. Davis also depicted slavery on Ball's plantation as a benign institution, with light work loads and no punishment.

The excerpts below describe Dick's life in Virginia, where he lived both before and after the Revolution. In between he resided in Georgia and Maryland; he recalled having been sold several times during the war. Dick's account reveals how dramatically a slave's experience could vary depending on the character and fortunes of his owner. Dick's recollections also convey the persistence of African cultural forms, the undercurrent of violence that held slavery together, and the impact of gender roles on slaves' lives.

Story of Dick the Negro

I was born at a plantation on the *Rappahannoc* River. It was the pulling of corn time, when 'Squire *Musgrove* was Governor of *Virginia*. I have no mixed blood in my veins; I am no half and half breed; no chestnut-sorrel of a mulatto; but my father and mother both came over from *Guinea*.

When I was old enough to work, I was put to look after the horses, and, when a boy, I would not have turned my back against the best negur at catching or backing the most vicious beast that ever grazed in a pasture.

'Squire *Sutherland* had a son who rode every fall to look at a plantation on *James River*, which was under the care of an overseer. Young master could not go without somebody on another horse to carry his saddle-bags, and I was made his groom.

This young chap, Sir, (here *Dick* winked his left eye,) was a trimmer. The first thing he did on getting out of bed was to call for a *Julep*; and I honestly date my own love of whiskey, from mixing and tasting my young master's juleps. But this was not all. He was always upon the scent after game, and mighty ficious when he got among the negur wenches. He used to say that a likely negur wench was fit to be a Queen; and I forget how many Queens he had among the girls on the plantations.

My young master was a mighty one for music, and he made me learn to play the Banger. I could soon tune it sweetly, and of a moonlight night he would set me to play, and the wenches to dance. My young master himself could shake a desperate foot at the fiddle; there was nobody that could face him at a *Congo Minuet*; but *Pat Hickory* could tire him at a *Virginia Jig*.

The young 'Squire did not live long. He was for a short life and a merry one. He was killed by a drunken negur man, who found him over-ficious with his wife. The negur man was hanged alive upon a gibbet. It was the middle of the summer; the sun was full upon him; the negur lolled out his tongue, his eyes seemed starting from their sockets, and for three long days his only cry was Water! Water! Water!

The old gentleman took on to grieve mightily at the death of his son; he wished that he had sent him to *Britain* for his education; but after-wit is of no use; and he followed his son to that place where master and man, planter and slave must all at last lie down together.

The plantation and negurs now fell to the lot of a second son, who had gone to *Edinburgh* to learn the trade of a Doctor. He was not like 'Squire *Tommy*; he seemed to

be carved from different wood. The first thing he did on his return from *Britain*, was to free all the old negur people on the plantation and settle each on a patch of land. He tended the sick himself, gave them medicine, healed their wounds, and encouraged every man, woman and child to go to a Meeting-house, that every Sunday was opened between our plantation and *Fredericksburgh*. Every thing took a change. The young wenches, who, in Master *Tommy's* time, used to put on their drops, and their bracelets, and ogle their eyes, now looked down like modest young women, and carried their gewgaws in their pockets till they got clear of the woods. He encouraged matrimony on the plantation by settling each couple in a log-house, on a wholesome patch of land; hired a school master to teach the children, and to every one that could say his letters gave a Testament with cuts. This made me bold to marry, and I looked out sharp for a wife. I had before quenched my thirst at any dirty puddle; but a stream that I was to drink at constant, I thought should be pure,—and I made my court to a wholesome girl, who had never bored her ears, and went constantly to Meeting.

She was daughter to old *Solomon* the Carter, and by moon-light I used to play my *banger* under her window, and sing a *Guinea* Love-song that my mother had taught me. But I found there was another beside myself whose mouth watered after the fruit. *Cuffey*, one of the Crop Hands, came one night upon the same errand. I am but a little man, and *Cuffey* was above my pitch; for he was six foot two inches high, with a chew of tobacco clapped above that. But I was not scared because he was a big man, and I was a little one; I carried a good heart, and a good heart is everything in love.

Cuffey, says I, what part of the play is you acting? Does you come after *Sall*? May be, says he, I does. Then, says I, here's have at you boy; and I reckoned to fix him by getting the finger of one hand into his ear, and the knuckles of the other into his eye. But the whore-son was too strong for me, and after knocking me down upon the grass, he began to *stomp* upon me, and ax me if I had yet got enough. But *Dick* was not to be scared; and getting his great toe into my mouth, I bit it off and swallowed it. *Cuffey* now let go his hold, and it was my turn to ax *Cuffey* if he had got enough. *Cuffey* told me he had, and I walked away to the Quarter.

My master the next day heard of my battle with *Cuffey*. He said that I ought to live among *painters* and wolves, and sold me to a *Georgia* man for two hundred dollars.

...

My master at *Annapolis* being made a bankrupt, there was an execution lodged against his negurs. I was sent to *Alexander*, and knocked down at vendue to old 'Squire *Kegworth*. I was put to work at the hoe. I was up an hour before the sun, and worked naked till after dark. I had no food but *Homony*, and for fifteen months did not put a morsel of any meat in my mouth, but the flesh of a possum or a racoon that I killed in the woods. This was rather hard for an old man, but I knowed there was no help for it.

Squire *Kegworth* was a wicked one; he beat Master *Tommy*. He would talk of setting us free; you are not, he would say, Slaves for life, but ony for ninety-nine years. The 'Squire was never married; but an old negur-woman kept house; who governed both him and the plantation. Hard work would not have hurt me, but I could never get any liquor. This was desperate, and my only comfort was the stump of an old pipe that belonged to my first wife. This was a poor comfort without a little drap of whiskey now

and then; and I was laying a plan to run away, and travel through the wilderness of *Kentucky*, when the old 'Squire died.

I was now once more put up at vendue, and as good luck would have it, I was bid for by 'Squire *Ball*. Nobody would bid against him because my head was grey, my back covered with stripes, and I was lame of the left leg by the malice of an overseer who stuck a pitchfork in my ham. But 'Squire *Ball* knowed I was trusty; and though self praise is no praise, he has not a negur on the plantation that wishes him better than I; or a young man that would work for him with a more willing heart. There is few masters like the 'Squire. He has allowed me to build a log-house, and take in a patch of land where I raise corn and water *Melions*. I keep chickens and ducks, turkeys and geese, and his lady always gives me the price of the *Alexander* market for my stock. But what's better than all, Master never refuses me a dram, and with the help of whiskey, I don't doubt but I shall serve him these fifteen years to come. Some of his negurs impose on him; there's *Hinton*, a mulatto rascal, that will run him into debt; and there's *Let*, one of the house-girls, who will suck the eggs and swear it was a black snake. But I never wronged Master of a cent, and I do the work of *Hinton*, of *Henry*, and *Jack*, without ever grumbling. I look after the cows, dig in the garden, beat out the flax, curry-comb the riding nag, cart all the wood, tote the wheat to the mill, and bring all the logs to the school-house.

Source: John Davis, *Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America During 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1909), pp. 413-417, 422-424.

July 16, 1807—"James Carters Accot of his sufferings, &c."

Abolitionists used James Carter's 1807 account of his family's sufferings to detail the horrors of slavery during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

A small Jernel of an only and beloved Brother and two sisters my poor brother J[?] Henry was Born in the Family of Mrs. Lucy Armistead of Caroline County Virginia near the Bowling green untell he was 22 years old he was then Sold to one George Buckner of the County without knowing of it and buckner bearing a very cruel name My Brother would not go with him and Runaway a few days after I sawd him and pesuade him to go and try Mr. Buckner but Buckner had advertise him for 20 Dollars reward and thretting to send him to Millers Iron works in North Carolina he was afraid but after sometime pesuadeing he consent to go and set of form me at Frederickburg to go to his masters and met Mr. Wm Woodford who knewd him and want to take him up my Brother Run from him this was opposite to Mr Man Pages Mr Woodford Call to Mr Pages overseer and tell him to Stop my Brother the overseer Run as fast as he could but could not over take my brother he in this time got to the Rappahannock River near Mr Pages Mill whare he found a Sheltering Rock and Crept under it the was some little boys playing at the mill the overseer call to the boys and ask them whare that man went as Came Down to the River the boys told him that he was under the Rock my brother hearing this he came from under the rock and took to the River to Swim a Cross the overseer Immediately begun to Stone him and Struck him on his head which put an end to his Life these is the Last words of

my Brother Lord have murcy on me you have kiled me help help me for god sake I am all most gone and sunk to the bottom the next morning we heard of it and went to Look for him and was out 5 Days Looking for him the 6th Day after his Death I ask my Master if I might go with my father to Look for my Brother he said no you must go to Dumfries after my horse it appear that he had more Regard for his horse then he had for my poor Dead brother Dumfries is about 25 miles of from Fredg my mother said to me Do my Son try and get home by sun set, we may hear of your brohter and you can help your father to get him home I made all the hast I Could and got home as the Sun was setting the first thing I saw in the ward was a horse and Cart with a Coffin my mother I am glad you have come we have heard of your brohter he is 4 miles Down the River on the other Side we Immediately Set of and Cross the River and inquireing at Every house untell we Came to whare he was and Call up the Black men the got some nots of pine wood and lit them and got a little boat and went Down the River whare my brother was tied to a bush with a grape vine the boat was so very small it would not bear us all and the bank was so Steep we could not get him up we was oblige for to put him in the water a gain and flote him on the water untell we could land him we put him in the Coffin and brought him home to the buriel ground and we was not able to take him out of the Cart this was about 3 in the morning my father said to me you must Stay hear untell I go to the Town and get Some person to help us he ask me if I was not afraid to Stay I told him no that I was not afraid of my brother and that I had never Did thes Dead bodies any harm and for that Reason I was not afraid and when my father Came with the man I was fast a Sleep leaning on the Coffin my Brothers grave Look very Dreadfull at being open but I was not the least affraid my mind tell me not to be afraid that nothing will hurt me my brother Left under the Rock a Little napsack which Contains 1 lb of Sugar 1 bottle of Molasses and a few Ginderbreads which I gave him to take to his wife and one chield—My sister Nelly was sold to one Johnson a Merchant of Fredg it is true that Johnson is a Speculator but his Greatest Speculation is on human flesh he sold my sister Nelly whose I have never heard of her sence my Little sister Judy was sent for from my mothers house to be Brought to Bensons Tavern by Mr Landon Carter of Savern Hall who is a Son inlaw of Mrs Lucy Armisteads to be viewd by thes Blood thrusty fellows this Child was about 8 years old and was very much afraid of them She cried very much my mother and myself beaged Mr Carter not to sell this Child out of Fredg he gave us his word and honour that he would not but as soon as we left him he sold the Child to thes fellows and Did not Let us know of it and as soon as the fellow had got as many as he Could conveniently convay a Long he came to my mothers house and take the Child by its arm and Led it of he would not so much as to tell my mother what part the Cuntry he lives my mother in this time had got part of the money to purchase the Child we have never heard of the Child sence my mother has had 9 children and altho She and Mrs Armistead has been brought up together from little Girls She has sufferd all my mothers Children to be picked from her my mothers Family has Served the Family of Mrs Armistead upwards of one Hundred and 30 years my mother is at this time 64 years old and the has Jest Gave her the Discharge as She Can not be of any service to them my father is 67 years old and I have offerd Mrs Armistead one hundred Dollars for him and She would not take it as I want him to go and Live my with mother—I was Sold to Mr James Sutton of Alexandria a Clerk at the Bank by a Son of Mrs Armisteads who was my master and Servd him 15 months the last 3 monthes he hired me to 2 Gentlemen who live in Camden South Carolina to attend them

to that Place which is about 6 Hundred miles and after ward was Left thare to get home to Alexandria as I could the Paid me my wages which was 24 Dollars and 12 Dollars to bring me home and I walk all the way home and Paid Mr Sutton 24 Dollars and 6 Days after I had got home he Sold me to thes negro driver the Came to my house about 2 oclock in the morning and nock at the Door my master said to me get up I got up and open the Door he said to me you must go with these men I ask him whare he said to whare He [they?] Live I ask him if he was going to Sell me I would thank him if he would Let me get a master in Alexandria he said to me I am nothing more to Do with you and you have sence Enough to Come Back if you Do not Like the Place these words to me was what compell him to Return the money which he had Received for me the took me and Caries me 75 miles on thair Jerney on Night the put us in a Room and I got of from them and with a very great Difficulty I got to Philadelphia Whare I got to Live with Mr Elias Boudinot who I soon found was a Charatable man and I told him of my Distress he Immediately write to my master and Did Every thing to Release me he was very kind to my Family he Imploy my wife he gave her 60 Dollars per year for washing he gave my family Clothes and the is not one artikle of this Life but what he gave my Family and in the time this yellar Fever he take my Family to his house in the Cuntry for 2 and 3 monthes Mrs Boudinot and Mrs Bradford the Daughter of Mrs Boudinot also was very kind to my Family and through his goodness and the goodness of god I had got my Freedom

Wrote by me the 16th July 1807 in Alexandria James Carter a Mulatto man NB I had a Brother in Law Caried of in one of the Droves and he wrote me a few Lines he says when he got to tennessee Cuntry he had ticks on his back as Larg as the Ends of his fingers being not able to take them of for the Iron bands the is not a week but what the is Larg Droves go through this City men all Link together with Iron Bands at this moment this Goal is full of men womans and Children to be caried of my thes Negro Drivers the Genely take them of in night James Carter

[Written on the final page of journal?]
for one of the friend in Philadelphia as a Request of Doctor Stabler
Alexandria Virginia

Mr Boudinot please to tell what friend it is

[Written on the back of the journal?]
To the Care of Mr John B Wallace
Philadelphia
Or to Elias Boudinot Burlington for one of the friends Philadelphia---
James Carters Accot of his suffering &c—

Source: Parrish Collection of Quakeriana; see also Linda Stanley, ed., “James Carter’s Accounts of his Sufferings in Slavery,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 105 (1981): 335-339.

Early Nineteenth Century—Interview with Jeremy Prophet

Jeremy Prophet was a slave owned by John Washington, the brother of George Washington. He accompanied George Washington in the expedition to Fort Duquesne and on other travels. James Kirke Paulding did not mention when the interview with Jeremy Prophet took place. The notes from the conversation appeared in the second edition of Paulding's *Letters from the South* (1835).

“As a sample of what I have collected, I will copy for your gratification, a considerable long talk with an old negro, who was formerly a servant of the general, and accompanied him in the disastrous expedition of Braddock against Fort Duquesne. It is furnished me by a gentleman of Alexandria, of high character, and who is on terms of familiar intimacy with the Washington family. In communicating it, he says, “I have carefully avoided putting down any thing, but just as I received it, and have chosen the old negro's own language for his narratives, and only considered myself as his amanuensis; without reference to any other authority than himself in his own words. I spent several days at Mrs. Washington's; visited him frequently, took hasty notes as we went along, which were collected and amplified during my repeated visits. I give you but a fair copy of what I hastily wrote down on the occasion.”

“The old negro Jeremy, or Jeremy Prophet, bears in the family a high reputation in every respect; is as fine a specimen of an old-fashioned servant as you ever met with, an oracle among the blacks, and with the family, a sort of relic of their ancestors that they seem proud to cherish and make comfortable. I was introduced to him, seated before a rousing fire, in an arm-chair.”

Old gentleman, said I, I have come a long way to see you, and hear you talk of General Washington. I am told you went with him to Braddock's war.

“Aye, indeed, did I sir, and many's de t'other place I bin wid him – Lord, sir, he was amighty of a man, I tell you.”

How old was you at this time?

“Why, I was a good, smart, mannish sort of a chap, big enough to be gemman's servant.”

Can you tell exactly how old you were at that time?

“Not 'xactly – but I remember one morning, some time afore dat, I was at Mount Vernon, wid my old mass John Bushrod, and I hear him say to mass John, John Washington I tell you what I do. Jerry good smart boy, do a man's work, dough he but fifteen or sixteen year old – I give him to you. He ax me if I want to live wid mass John – I say yes – give me plenty meat and bread – and den I belong to John Washington. John he den live wid George Washington, at Mount Vernon.”

Well, now tell me something about Braddock's war.

“When Braddock (he pronounced the name sharp – Braddick) come, dey hear him burning powder good way off, and de people so glad to see him, day come down to de shore and burn powder too – pop – pop – pop, ebery hour de day. I couldn't tink what de debbil de matter. By'm by, I see de ships one fore God, most big as Mount Vernon house, dough it wornt no great much of a house den, no how. Next morning, mass John say, Git de carriage, Jerry, I gying to Belhaven, (dey call do place Alexandry now; huh! I Cod! I know'd it when dey more trees than houses, and dey couldn't find places to put

Braddick's soldiers in.) Well, when I come to Bell Haven, den I seed what de matter – de soldiers and de officers eberywhere. Ebery body want to see dis great man Braddick, so, as I was standing at de stable door, combing my head, de stable man at de armary dare say, Jerry, dare Braddick – and I know'd him, cause nobody else I seed, had star on left breast, and dare he was, tween tow odder gemmen. He wornt notting like gemman, take he clothes off, and dat sort of star – he broad, chunky man.

“Well, den mass John and mass George dey talk and talk, and den dey tell me I must git horses ready, and go ‘long o’ dem – and five hundred granadier gemmen joined Braddick, and off we go. Well, sir, d’ye mind me? We went ahead, trough de woods, and over de mountains – we stopped at a place dey call Cumberland, week or ten days – I disremember de ‘xact time – and den set off’ gin. Braddick halt de foot guard, and send de gemmen granadiers agead. I went gemman’s servant, wid mass John – well, sir – we was quarter mile ahead, goin trough de wood, huckleberry – bushes up to de horse belly, and when we got to a bit of a hill, ‘bout as big as fron de house (two or three hundred yards) – if you had eyes to see so far, you would see forty miles, and we seed rise up all round – gemmen got off horses, and ‘gan to consult. Neber seed nobody. I didn’t know what de debbil the matter, not I. Presently all mounted, come back to Braddick, and dare dey was, telling what dey had seed – and dare stood Braddick, listening wid all he ears, he rifle in he right hand, wid he britch on de ground – he rub he toe in de leeves, like he raking up something – he look at he toe, and seem mighty consarned, he never say a word. When dey done talking, he put he blowpipe to he mouth, and march was de word. De gemmen granadiers look mighty spicious, but neber said notting as I hear. Gemmen granadiers fall back – foot guards to de front. When we got to dat place – huh! We seed de smoke, we hear de pop-pop-pop, but we seed nobody. De rigglers’ drap, drap, drap – Braddick neber bark one cannon, but he look ris’lute. I took de bridle of my horse, an I git behind de tree – I Cod, I was Skeered – d’ye mind me? I was, I tell you. Braddick put he blowpipe to he mout – ‘Hurra, my boys, lose de saddle, or win de horse,’ he bawl out, and den, ‘Oh boys! I’m gone,’ and den I seed no more of Braddick on his legs – he down – but I seed mass George take hold one dem brass pieces same as if it was a stick – he look like de debbil – he put one hand on the muzzle so – he sling di sheet lead from dat and de touch-hole – he put – d’ye mind me? Dis hand on de muzzle, and dis on de britch – he pull wid dis and he push wid dis – and he wheel it round jis like nottin. He tear de ground up same as a bar shear (a kind of plough.) De powder-monkey jump wid de fire, and den de cannon bark, I tell you. Dey fit and dey fit, and den de ingens holler; when de thirty pieces of brass cannon bark, de trees fly and de Ingens come down, I tell you. Dat place dey call Rock Hill, and dare day left five hundred men behind.

“Mass George he sometime arter go mong de Ingens agin – dis arter Braddick’s war. John Washington was at Mount Vernon, and I was dare wid him. One Sunday morning, coming from stable, I seed a man riding up de road, wid his horse all in a ladder of sweat. Says, I what’s de matter? Says he, ‘I don’t know, but old misses in mighty trouble, and sent for mass John, he up?’ I say, don’t know – it was half hour by sun. When mass John got de letter, he come out and say, ‘Jerry, keep your gray horses up in de stable, feed um well, and be ready to set out to-moorw morning, at crack o’day.’ Afore light, every ting ready, and we set off, and dough we found mighty trouble to get across de ferry, at Colchester, it was so cold and frozen, we got to Dumfries to breakfast,

and same evening got to he mother's. When we come in sight of de home, we seed de old lady comin out on two sticks – “

“Two sticks” – what do you mean?

“Two sort of crutches, she hurt her foot or ancle, and was lame, 'bout dat time. She never say how you do, nor notting, but ‘O, Johnny Washington! Johnny Washington, have you heard any new of – George Washington? His time's run out, no papers, no news, no notting of him. He's dead – he's dead – I know he's dead – go and seek him, dead or alive – bring his bones, if notting else.’

“We rest one day at Mrs. Washington's, and one at Major Lewis's, over in Fredricksburg, and den we set out. We rested one night at Aldie, at one Billy West's. In de morning we started by time it was light, and got up to Colonel Sn[?]igge's to breakfast almost fifteen mile. De snow was up to our knees, and dare wornt no much of a road any how, and so we had hard work to get along, I tell you. But mass John so fond of he brodder George, and de old lady, he go foot sooner dan turn back. Well, it was gitting fur in de day, I was afore, on a horse, mass John was coming close behind, when I look up do road, and I seed a man coming down de mountain, wid his right leg over de pummel of de saddle, woman fashion, wid a broad piece of paper in his lap reading, and de bridle-rein loose in his fingers. He was dressed in a sort of a round jacket, wid moccasin gaiters, his beard mighty long. He cock his eye, and tinks I, I know him, and when mass John come up, he jump off he horse, and cry out. ‘Why, John, don't you know me?’ and den I seed 'twas mass George, sure enough. And den dey stop in de road and talk, talk, and mass George (the gin'ral mind me!) he call de man wid de horses, and Tom's horse was fairly covered wid leather, and he make dem open de saddle-bags, and, I Cod, if he didn't twist a ting about two or tree times and made a table, and ebery ting he had, down to pepper-box, and ebery ting, and dare dey eat, and dare day drink dough it was so cold. I Cod, I had to put my meat and bread in my pocket – and dare was dat man wid notting but his roundabout jacket, and dare wor his great-coat close by on de pummel of he saddle. I Cod, dat man he no more mind cold dan a stone fence – d'ye mind me? Mass George he set off for Mount Vernon, and we took de road to Fredericksburg agin, and we got dare, I reckon same as yesterday, on Wednesday night, and dey neber know'd notting about it, till we got dare. Dat same night, I went over to Major Lewis's massa gin me great parcel letters to carry over to him. Major Lewis in de door, and seed me comin to de house.

“‘Hollo, Jerry,’ he say, ‘you hear any ting of Col. Washington?’ he wornt no gin'ral den.”

“Lord, yes, massa,” I say, “I seed him.”

“You seed him?”

“Yes, massa, I seed him.”

“I 'bieve you lie, you rascal,’ he say.”

“Well, massa, you see if I lie den. I seed him same as I see you, and he be here to-morrow, for I hear him say so. Well, den I hand him de letters, and he say sure 'nough, well, I mightly glad – he holler to Bob to bring me dram – and den I tell him all 'bout how we meet him. Friday the gin'ral came dashing down de road, wid Miles Richardson on anoder horse behind him. Miles he go always wid him whereber he go. And den dare was such rejoicing, for de old lady was fondest of George of all de boys. Dis was arter he come from Braddick's war, long time. Dey say he gaged to be married

den, and when he go away, he leave word, if dey no hear from him in nine months, dey must give him up, and de nine months had den gone. He went out dat spring.”

Where had he been, do you know?

“Been to camp, but wha ‘xactly, I don’t know. I tell you what I see, not what I hear – behold you! The gin’ral had a face like he mother, and she was old Martram Ball’s daughter. I don’t ‘bieve old Matty Ball every have any odder child – ‘least I neber hear o’none. He live at Fleet’s Bay, down in Lancaster county. I have seeming rec’lection of he father, dough I can’t say ‘xactly. I live, when a boy, close by down dar at Norming, midway mass John Bushrod, he not so tall as any of he sons.

“I went along wid de gin’ral when he go down to get married, and Miles Richardson and me had all de trunks in a little wagon. We stopped at Dumfries to feed, and de gin’ral went on afore us – well sir, jist as we cross de creek, at de mills, going up dat hill, smash come down de left-hand fore wheel – I Cod, says I, Miles here a job, and so we takes de trunks and puts dem into Mr. Allen’s ornary – Miles he stay behind, and I sot off for Fredericksburg, ‘long wid de horses and de odder man. Lord, sir! When old misses see me come widout de trunks, she was *stuffed*, I tell you – so she says, take my two duns, Jerry, and start by daybreak, wid de two fore wheels o’ de carriage, and bring de trunks and wagon.

“When I seed she was in sich a fluster ‘bout de trunks, I goes off and I gets de wheels and de duns, and off I goes a cracking, I tell you. When I got back, I found de wheels wouldn’t fit, and de road so bad, I turn de horses in to get a mouthful, and Miles and I set to work and lashed de trunks, and Mr. Allen, who kept de ornary, make his boys help us, for dey was monstrous heavy, on to de axeltree, and bed of de fore wheels. Miles he got on top of um, and jist as we set off, says I to Mr. Allen, what o’clock is it? And he tell me it wanted tree hours or more to daylight. We had den twenty-four miles to go, but we moved – dem horses, ah! Dey was fellows, I tell you – dem same duns neber done notting but go in old misses carriage – Ned could hardly handle dem fellows, dey was so pranktous – and she wouldn’t let um ever go to mill, and when dey was turned out, she always had um turned out in de bottom land, below de house, whare she could see um all de time. I let um go – Miles he could hardly hold on – but I put on, I tell you, I did that. I was mighty proud, I tell you, when jis as I turned into de gate, I seed de red daybreak way off yonder. I left de tings and horses in de yard, and went to de house – firs person I meet was de old lady.

“‘Come, Jerry,’ she say, ‘make haste, you ought bin gone long ago.’

“Lord, misses, I done bin, says I.”

“You done bin? Den you kill your horses.’

“No, misses, says I, horses an’t hurt – dough, I Cod, I left um smoking, and I was skeered a trifle, all de time, I tell you – misses an’t hurt.

“Well, says she, I might glad – you tired, Jeery, come in and leave de tings where dey is.’

“Arter awhile de gin’ral he come out and say, neber mind de tings, bring um all over as dey are to Major Lewis’s at Fredericksburg, When we got dare, he say, put on boys to Colonel Lomax’s, I be dare tonight – take care of your horses. I come on behind, and pay de reck’ning. Den Miles, he ride on de trunks and drive, and I ride on a fine horse belonging to massa. We stop at de Bowling green, and fed our horses, left de gin’ral to come on and pay de reck’ning, and put off. Says Miles, ‘I tell you what, dese

horses tired, and I am debilish cold, how far we got to go?’ You know as wel as I, says I, and den we soon come to Colonel Lomax’s gate, and I look back an I seed de gin’ral a coming, standing up in he stirrups, dashing on wid he two servants behind him. I hill (held) de gate for him to get trough –

“Dat’s right boys,’ says he – and den he stop and say, ‘Jerry, dat de horse your massa raise at Prospect Hill?’

“Yes, says I, dis de feller.

“We stopped at Colonel Bob Lomax’s all night. De gin’ral send word for us to be up and off betimes in de morning to York, and tired as I was, I couldn’t sleep, ‘fore God, I tought de night was a fortnight long. Well, next morning, we puts out before de crack o’day, and just about sundown de horses look so bad, we stop to bait, a mile dis side York river – I didn’t tink we was so near, I would have gone on.

“De gin’ral he come dashing by, standing in he stirrups. ‘Hitch up,’ says he, ‘boys, and push on – you an’t got over a mile to de ferry, and its most night – push on, and I’ll go and call de ferry over.’

“And so on we went. When we got to de ferry, all de boats, de horse-boat and de foot-boat, gone t’oder side. It was dark den – de gin’ral he walk back and forward to keep warm – he blowed de conchy, and we hollered, and at last we see de foot-boat a coming over – de river look mighty ugly, all white, and de wind blowing like great guns, and it was a freezing hard, I tell you. When de foot-boat totch de shore, de gin’ral slung he great coat to Tom Bishop, he giv de boat one push wid he square barrellid rifle, and one push wid he foot. He jump in and say, pull away boys – and when dey seed who dey had got in de boat, dey did put it to it, dey did – d’ye hear me? Dey did. Captain Smith and Captain Dandridge kept de ferry, and Captain Smith de ornary, t’oder side. Come on dark night afore de horse-boat come over, and dar we war, no star – ebery ting black but de river – six hours in de boat, half leg deep in water – come on darker and darker – de men pull and pull, but de shore seem as if he done gone – de gin’ral over long ago – d’ye mind me? I hear one man say, ‘Tom, we shall be drown’d’ – I was scared, but I keep up – de water splash over de boat – I hear de concy blow – God, ‘twas same as a dram of a cold morning. De people seed we didn’t come, and got skeered. I stood upon de head of de boat, wid de bridle-reins of my horse over my shoulder – if de boat sink, I hang to de horse, I say to myself. Den, I seed something black a one side – I move over dat side – de boatman say, don’t come dis way – I shout out, ‘come on, come on,’ and den I hear de people in de firs boat shout – and den a rope fall bang, right over my horse. I snatch hold on um, and gave um a twist round de ring, right between my legs, and when dey draw de rope taut, den I feel de boat go ahead. When we go to shore, I feel glad, I tell you – ‘twas Christmas Eve, an I was most froze – I had pair of gloves, knit wid rabbit’s fur inside, and I Cod, dey war fairly froze. I was neber so nigh being drown’d in my life.

“As we drive by de kitchen door of de ornary, I see de light trough de crack ob de door, and says I, come, Bishop, ‘let’s go in, for fore God I can’t stand it. I knock – come in, say somebody, - and den dare war ebery ting snug enough; presently de gemman come out – ‘Ho! Boys,’ say he, ‘cold travelling.’ I seed de long-bottom glass in he hand, and spoke up. Yes sir, says I, cold travelling. How fur might it be to massa Custis’s? ‘Oh, you jis dare,’ says he, and he pours out a glass; ‘go round my yard, and dare you right at de house. Where you from to-day?’ Colonel Bob Lomax’s, say I. When I hear I was so nigh, I was fierce ‘nough, for I was always like a hog, all jaw.

“As we pass de winder, I see in, and I seed de gin’ral in de big chair, jis so – and dare was de lady jam up to him, jis so – an’ he had de lady’s little daughter on he lap. Aha! You feller, say I to mysef, dat what you come for trough de cold, eh!

“Presently madam come out to de door, wid de maid wid her candle. She call de servant, and he come – one great Guinea negger, wid he face jis like you draw currycomb all ober it. She say, take dem men in and treat um well, and tell Jack take care de trunks. And so we went into de laundry and den you may depend de tortoise shell bowl come [ou]t full – eh! Boys!

Nex day I hear de people say de gin’ral got he nose frost-bit; and when I seed it look red, I right glad, cause he ought to have some ob de pain, as he got all de fun – ha!ha! I went out to see my horses, and I was in fair misery for de water had frozen on um, and dey look so bad; de people hadn’t taken good care on um. De gin’ral he come out and say –

“Well, Jeremy, how you horse do?”

“Oh, tolorable say I.

“Well, says he, ‘Jeremy, stay rest yourself long as you please, and take holyday. I shan’t want your horses, and if I want a carriage, I can borrow de lady’s to go to Williamsburg. But do you stay and rest.’

“Oh, says I, I no want rest. I got wife at home. I rather go spend Christmas dare. I got notting buy wheels to take back, and so I tink to go home tomorrow.

“Says he, ‘Jerry, hold your hand.’

“He put he hand in he pocket. I hold one hand, he full um. When I see dat, I hold t’oder – he full dat, too. And when I go to de stable, I count it out in my hat. Aha! D’ye mind me, sir! He had gin me pounds.

On another occasion, Jeremy said:

“De gin’ral, he care notting for de cold; be hard as a bull, and sometime when de gemmen, Colonel Ramsy, Colonel Carlisle, and de rest ob um, use to come down from Belhaven, he go out to shoot deer we um. I recklect one day he send for me, and tell me, go git de white mare and come wid him, de odder gemmen all ready. I didn’t know what dey war going about, but I neber say a word. When we got to a place near Dorrel’s Hill, called Hell Hole, dey all stop. De gin’ral put he hand in he pocket an draw out a little bell. He tie um round de gray mare’s neck, and say – ‘Now, Jerry, you go ahead in a walk, and don’t say a word, no matter what you see; don’t be afraid, nor open your lips.’ I went on about twenty yards ahead, and presently I seed a great buck come jumping along. He stop, he look sideways at me – he lif up one leg – bang! I hear de rifle, and den he drop. I was fit to tumble off de horse, for all I know he might shoot me, too, I Cod. Presently dey all come up. De gin’ral an’ I lift de deer on to de mare, an’ I lead her home; he want me to git up, but I say, no, tank you.

“He, gin’ral, mighty man for horse. He had a horse dey call Starling – he was wicked debil – de gin’ral raise him at he plantation down at Muddy Hole. He no let nobody ride or break him. When he tree year old, he bring him one Sunday morning, and say he gying to ride him. I look out; I ‘xpect ebry minute he git he neck broke, but when he sling he leg over, he dare, no git him off. He mighty man for bad horse. I don’t say no better dan he, but I neber seen none.”

Source: James Kirke Paulding, *Letters from the South*, 2 vols. (1817; reprint, 1835), 1: 191-205

**Part III—Letters and Journals:
Whites and a Free Black Write About Slavery**

July 5, 1726—William Byrd II to the Earl of Arrery

William Byrd II describes himself as the patriarch of his family and notes that it is his responsibility to manage the work of his laborers. Compare the tone of this letter to the letter Byrd wrote to the Earl of Egmont in July 1736 in the “American Diversity” section.

...I have a large family of my own, and my doors are open to every body, yet I have no bills to pay, and half-a-Crown will rest undisturbed in my pocket for many moons together.

Like one of the patriarchs, I have my flocks and my herds, my bond-men and bond-women, and every soart of trade amongst my own servants, so that I live in a kind of independence on every one, but Providence. However, this soart of life is without expence yet it is attended with a great deal of trouble. I must take care to keep all my people to their duty, to set all the springs in motion, and to make every one draw his equal share to carry the machine forward.

Source: Marion Tinling, ed., *The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover Virginia 1684-1776*, 2 vols., (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 1:355.

1773 to 1774—The Journal of Philip Vickers Fithian

Philip Vickers Fithian, a native of New Jersey and a graduate of Princeton, spent a year as the tutor to Robert Carter’s children at Nomini Hall.

Thursday December 23, 1773

...when the Woman who makes my Bed, asked me for the key of my Room, and on seeing the young Man sitting with me, she told him that her Mistress had this afternoon given orders that their Allowance of Meat should be given out to them to-morrow.—She left us; I then asked the young man what their allowance is' He told me that excepting some favourites about the table, their weekly allowance is a peck of Corn, & a pound of Meat a Head! —And Mr Carter is allow'd by all, & from what I have already seen of others, I make no Doubt at all but he is, by far the most humane to his Slaves of any in these parts! Good God! are these Christians? —When I am on the Subject, I will relate further, what I heard Mr. George Lees Overseer, one Morgan, say the other day that he himself had often done to Negroes, and found it useful; He said that whipping of any kind

does them no good, for they will laugh at your greatest Severity; But he told us he had invented two things, and by several experiments had proved their success. —For Sullenness, Obstinacy, or Idleness, says he, Take a Negro, strip him, tie him fast to a post; take then a sharp Curry-Comb, & curry him severely til he is well scrap'd; & call a Boy with some dry Hay, and make the Boy rub him down for several Minutes, then salt him, & unlose him. He will attend to his Business, (said the inhuman Infidel) afterwards! — But savage Cruelty does not exceed His next diabolical Invention—To get a Secret from a Negro, says he, take the following Method—Lay upon your Floor a large thick plank, having a peg about eighteen Inches long, of hard wood, & very Sharp, on the upper end, fixed fast in the plank—then strip the Negro, tie the Cord to a staple in the Ceiling, so as that his foot may just rest on the sharpened Peg, then turn him briskly round, and you would laugh (said our informer) at the Dexterity of the Negro, while he was relieving his Feet on the sharpen'd Peg!—I need say nothing of these seeing there is a righteous God, who will take vengeance on such Inventions!—Miss *Priscilla and Nancy* returned in the evening.

Wednesday, January 26, 1774

At Supper from the conversation I learned that the slaves in this Colony never are married, their Lords thinking them improper Subjects for so valuable an Institution!—

Thursday, March 24, 1774

At Breakfast Mr Carter entertained us with an account of what he himself saw the other Day, which is a strong Representation of the cruelty & distress which many among the Negroes suffer in Virginia! Mr Carter dined at Squire Lees some few Weeks ago; at the same place, that day, dined also Mr George Turburville & his Wife—As Mr Carter rode up he observed Mr Turburvilles Coach-Man sitting on the Chariot-Box, the Horses off—After he had made his compliments in the House, He had Occasion soon after to go to the Door, when he saw the Coachman still sitting, & on examination found that he was there fast chained! The Fellow is inclined to run away, & this is the method which This Tyrant makes use of to keep him when abroad; & so soon as he goes home he is delivered into the pityless Hands of a bloody Overseer!—In the Language of a Heathen I query whether cunning old *Charon* will not refuse to transport this imperious, haughty Virginian Lord When he shall happen to die over the Styx to the Elysian Gardens; lest his Lordship in the passage should take affront at the treatment, & attempt to chain him also to the Stygean Galley for Life!—

Or, In the language of a Christian, I query whether he may be admitted into the peaceful Kingdom of Heaven where meekness, Holiness, & Brotherly-Love, are distinguishing Characteristicks?

Monday, April 4, 1774

After Supper I had a long conversation with Mrs Carter concerning Negroes in Virginia, & find that She esteems their value at no higher rate than I do. We both concluded, (& I am pretty certain that the conclusion is just) that if in Mr Carters, or in any Gentlemans Estate, all the Negroes should be sold, & the Money put to Interest in safe hands, & let the Lands which these Negroes now work lie wholly uncultivated, the bare Interest of the Price of the Negroes would be a much greater yearly income than what is now received from their working the Lands, making no allowance at all for the trouble & Risk of the Masters as to the Crops, & Negroes.—How much greater then must be the value of an Estate here if these poor enslaved Africans were all in their native desired Country, & in their Room industrious Tenants, who being born in freedom, by a laudable care, would not onlyly enrich their Landlords, but would raise a hardy Offspring to be the Strength & the honour of the Colony.

Friday, July 8, 1774

—O yes, says Mrs *Oakly*, I know Dadda *Gumby* at *Williamsburg*. I think you look as brisk, as hearty & as young now as you did ten years ago—*Gumby*—I & my old Woman, here Master, are the two oldest Negres in Mr *Carters* Estate. Here we live, Master, on our worthy Landlords Bounty—The *Nurse*, *Betsy*, & *Harriot* were at *Gumby's* House which stands about twenty Rod from the Garden—I was walking, with a Book in my Fist, musing & stumbling along—I saw them, I went up, & with a lower Bow than I should give to a Nurse, if Women are plenty, says I, pray Mrs *Oakly* do you know Dadda *Gumby*? We stood chattering with the old African, or rather he stood chattering with us, relating one story after another, leaving some of his Narrations half untold, beginning others in the middle having entered into the true Spirit of Loquacity—

Wednesday, July 13, 1774

I drew off this morning for Dadda *Gumby* a List of his Children, & their respective ages—He himself is 94—For this office I had as many *Thanks*, As I have had blessings before now from a Beggar for Sixpence—Thank you, thank you, thank you Master, was the language of the old Greyheaded pair.—Call on us at any time, you shall have *Eggs*, *Apples*, *Potatoes*—You shall have every thing we can get for you—Master!—In this Torrent of Expressions of Gratitude I was rung to Breakfast; I bow'd to the venerable old Negroes, thank'd them in my Turn for their Offers, & left them—

Source: *The Letters and Journal of Philip Vickers Fithian: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion, 1773-1774*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated, 1957), pp. 38-39, 59, 84-85, 92, 134-135,140.

August 19, 1791—Benjamin Banneker to Thomas Jefferson

Sir, I have long been convinced that if your love for yourselves, and for those inestimable laws, which preserved to you the rights of human nature, was founded on sincerity, you could not but be solicitous, that every individual, of whatever rank or distinction, might with you equally enjoy the blessings thereof; neither could you rest satisfied short of the most active effusion of your exertions, in order to the promotion from any state of degradation, to which the unjustifiable cruelty and barbarism of men have reduced them....

Source: Benjamin Banneker to Thomas Jefferson, August 19, 1791. *Early American Imprints (Microprint)*, 1639-1800.

August 30, 1791—Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Banneker

Philadelphia, Aug. 30, 1791

SIR, - I thank you sincerely for your letter of the 19th instant and for the Almanac it contained. No body wishes more than I do to see such proofs as you exhibit, that nature has given to our black brethren, talents equal to those of the other colors of men, and that the appearance of a want of them is owing merely to the degraded condition of their existence, both in Africa & America. I can add with truth, that no body wishes more ardently to see a good system commenced for raising the condition both of their body & mind to what it ought to be, as fast as the imbecility of their present existence, and other circumstances which cannot be neglected, will admit. I have taken the liberty of sending your Almanac to Monsieur di Condorcet, Secretary of the Academy of Sciences at Paris, and member of the Philanthropic society, because I considered it as a document to which your whole colour had a right for their justification against the doubts which have been entertained of them. I am with great esteem, Sir Your most obedt humble servt.

Source: Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 454-55.

October 12, 1803—Doctor Robert Carter to his children, Hill, Anne, Lucy, and Thomas Carter

Doctor Carter discusses his feelings about slavery and the slave trade.

Hill, Anne, Lucy and Thomas Carter,

My dear children,

...

Being married at the early period before mentioned, my mind had not so fully developed as to enable me to anticipate the mode of life which was likely to be ultimately congenial with my character, when it should have attained that maturity of which it was susceptible. My Father had spared no expense in attempting to give me as liberal an education as our country and my capacity would admit of, and being anxious that I should betake myself to the mode of life commonly resorted to by men of independent fortunes in this country gave me a plantation on one of the branches of York River consisting of one thousand or twelve hundred acres of land and a competent number of slaves and stocks of various kinds, intending after his death to make my estate at least equal to that of his other sons, and perhaps superior, which last, I can safely declare I never solicited or wished.

From the earliest point of time when I began to think of right and wrong, I conceived a strong disgust to the slave trade and all its barbarous consequences. This aversion was not likely to be diminished by becoming a slaveholder and witnessing many cruelties, even at this enlightened day, when the rights of man are so well ascertained. Yes, my dear children, habit and education, especially when abetted by sordid interest will make beasts of men.

But I have not time to enlarge upon this subject, in this place—it is at best but too unpopular a subject in your native State my dears. Suffice it to say, for the present that my short trial of the agricultural line disgusted me entirely with the mode practised in southern States. Nay, almost obliterated the recollections of those pleasing sensations which most people must have experienced upon contemplating the happy husbandman, emboomed in his harvest field, collecting the well earned fruits of his industry,—or melted in pleasing sympathetic melancholly by the mingled melody of his distant lowing herds.

With some little activity of mind I could not tolerate a mode of life, at once at variance with my conscience and secluded from every ray of scientific or rational social enjoyments which afforded the only antidote to that gloomy state of mind, (called by the French ennui) which sooner or later takes place unless we fall into common worldly habits which may or may not be pernicious to our temporal and eternal happiness or unless we engage in some interesting pursuit worthy of the character we ought to be ambitious to establish.

...

5th Be humane to your slaves, and dependents. Tho it has ever been a wish near my heart to have avoided entailing the miseries of slavery upon my children yet from circumstances which I could not entirely control it seems likely that you are to inherit this misfortune. Partial emancipation as it has been conducted in this state has certainly been attended with inconveniences to society, in a variety of respects, but the circumstance which has tended most to suspend my determination on this subject, is, that a freed man in this state, is often placed in a situation less desirable by emancipation, than by holding him in slavery, under humane treatment.

And this I am free to acknowledge was the chief argument with me (as I never professed emancipation, so far as I was personally concerned, either until I was in a situation to give the subjects of it, something to begin with without injuring my children,

or until my country had taken some steps towards this desirable end, so as to benefit the slave with injury to society at large.

But if I may judge of the future by the past, I cannot suppose that this happy temper of mind will very soon prevail in Virginia, or any State to the Southward of it.

Source: Shirley Papers, Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

February 17, 1804—Henry St. George Tucker to St. George Tucker

Henry St. George Tucker took a slave boy named Bob with him to Winchester where he intended to practice law. The uprooted Bob became despondent beyond anything young Tucker had witnessed. Despite his emotional bond with Bob, Tucker continued to use terms like “savage” and “brute” when referring to blacks.

I enclose a short note from Bob to his mother. Poor little fellow! I was much affected at an incident last night. I was waked from a very sound sleep by a most piteous lamentation. I found it was Bob. I called several times before he waked. "What is the matter, Bob?," "I was dreaming about my mammy Sir"!!! cried he in a melancholy & still distressed tone: "Gracious God!" thought I, "how ought not I to feel, who regarded this child as insensible when compared to those of our complexion." In truth our thoughts had been straying the same way. How finely woven, how delicately sensible must be those bonds of natural affection which equally adorn the civilized and savage. The American and African-nay the man and the brute! I declare I know not a situation in which I have been lately placed that touched me so nearly as that incident I have just related.

Source: Mrs. George P. Coleman, ed. *Virginia Silhouettes: Contemporary Letters Concerning Negro Slavery in the State of Virginia, To Which is Appended A Dissertation on Slavery with A Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It in the State of Virginia*, (Richmond: Press of the Dietz Printing Co., 1934), pp. 9 -10.

Part IV—Travel Accounts

1732—Diary of William Hugh Grove

William Hugh Grove’s diary provides one of the most informative descriptions of the colony written in the first half of the eighteenth century. He was well-traveled and must have been fairly affluent in order to finance his trips, but other than that little is known about him. Grove left England for a visit to Virginia in April 1732. Arriving in

Yorktown on June 23, he traveled to Williamsburg where he dined at the Palace with Governor Gooch. His brief stay in the capital ended on June 28 when he departed Yorktown by boat and sailed up the York River. What impressed Grove most about Virginia were the landscape, the flora and fauna, and the people of the colony. Unlike Europe, civilization, though present, had yet to dominate the colonial landscape; the wonders of Virginia were still in the realm of nature. Grove's observations on different groups of people in Virginia society—the gentry, blacks, and Indians, for example—are important because they were written at a time for which no other systematic comparison of these segments of the population exist.

The Negroes are all Slaves brought in or born here. I have been on board 2 ships from Guinea and Angolo. One had near 500 Negroes. The men are Stowed before the foremast, then the Boys between that and the mainmast, the Girls next, and the Grown Women behind the Missen. The Boyes and Girles [were] all Stark naked; so Were the greatest part of the Men and Women. Some had beads about their necks, arms, and Wasts, and a ragg or Piece of Leather the bigness of a figg Leafe. And I saw a Woman [who had] Come aboard to buy Examine the Limbs and soundness of some she seemed to Choose.

Dr. Dixon, with whome I went, bought 8 men and 2 women on board the Ship Consigned to Col. More and Mr. Lyde, and brought them on Shoar with us, all stark naked. But when [we had] come home [they] had Coarse Shirts and afterwards Drawers given [to] them. [They] cost L.20 [per] head

They allow them on shipboard only horsebeans. Here they are allowed a peck of Indian Corn per Week, which stand the master in 26sh[illings] per annum each, and broun Linnen at 6d per yard [for] 2 shirts [and] 2 drawers [is] 10 yds, [costing a total of] 5s; shoes, 1 pair [at] 3s; all [together] will Cost about per annum [blank]. They also allow them to plant on Sundays or [at] night, for they Work from Sunrising to setting. 6000 plants of Tobacco, which wil[l] make 1000 lbs. weight, beside their Share of Corn is a Slaves task.

Source: Gregory A. Stiverson and Patrick H. Butler, III, eds., “Virginia in 1732: The Travel Journal of William Hugh Grove,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 85 (1977): 18-21, 31-32.

1742—Edward Kimber's Observations

Edward Kimber's *Itinerant Observations in America*, first published serially from August 1745 through December 1746 in the *London Magazine*, contains a vivid record of life in the colonies. At twenty-three, Kimber left England to visit America. Though no evidence survives to identify his specific reasons for making the journey, some of his poems about the experience hint that he came to America to join the army and fight the Spanish. One of his stops included Yorktown. He arrived in the last week of November 1742 and stayed until December 23. He stayed long enough in Virginia to visit

Williamsburg, and he was not impressed. Kimber's excursion ended in the first week of July 1744, when he returned to London almost two years after his trip began.

...The Negroes live as easily as in any other Part of *America*, and at set Times have a pretty deal of Liberty in their Quarters, as they are called. The Argument, of the Reasonableness and legality, according to Nature, of the Slave-Trade, has been so well handled on the Negative Side of the Question, that there remains little for an Author to say on the Head; and that Captives taken in War, are the Property of the Captor, as to Life and Person, as was the Custom amongst the *Spartans*; who, like the *Americans*, perpetuated a Race of Slaves, by marrying them to one another, I think, has been fully disprov'd: But allowing some Justice in, or, at least, a great deal of Necessity for, making Slaves of this sable Part of the Species; surely, I think, Christianity, Gratitude, or, at least, good Policy, is concern'd in using them well, and in abridging them, instead of giving them Encouragement, of several brutal and scandalous Customs, that are too much practis'd: Such is the giving them a Number of Wives, or, in short, setting them up for Stallions to a whole Neighbourhood; when it has been prov'd, I think, unexceptionably, that Polygamy rather destroys than multiplies the Species; of which we have also living Proofs under the Eastern Tyrants, and amongst the Natives of *America*; so that it can in no Manner answer the End; and were these Masters to calculate, they'd find a regular Procreation would make them greater Gainers. A sad Consequence of this Practice is, that their Childrens Morals are debauch'd by the Frequency of such Sights, as only fit them to become the *Masters of Slaves*. This is one bad Custom amongst many others; but as to their general Usage of them, 'tis monstrous and shocking. To be sure, a *new Negro*, if he must be broke, either from Obstinacy, or, which I am more apt to suppose, from Greatness of Soul, will require more hard Discipline than a young Spaniel: You would really be surpriz'd at their Perseverance; let an hundred Men shew him how to hoe, or drive a Wheelbarrow, he'll still take the one by the Bottom, and the other by the Wheel; and they often die before they can be conquer'd. They are, no Doubt, very great Thieves, but this may flow from their unhappy, indigent Circumstance, and not from a natural Bent; and when they have robb'd, you may lash them Hours before they will confess the Fact; however, were they not to look upon every white Man as their Tormenter; were a slight Fault to be pardon'd now and then; were their Masters, and those adamantine-hearted *Overseers*, to exercise a little more Persuasion, Complacency, Tenderness and Humanity toward them, it might, perhaps, improve their Tempers to a greater degree of Tractability. Such Masters, and such Overseers, *Maryland* may with Justice boast; and Mr. *Bull*, the late Lieutenant-Governor of *Carolina*, is an Instance, amongst many, of the same, in that Province: But, on the contrary, I remember an Instance of a late Sea Officer, then resident in a neighbouring Colony, that for a mere Peccadillo, order'd his Slave to be ty'd up, and for an whole Hour diverted himself with the Wretch's Groans; struck at the mournful Sound, with a Friend, I hastened to the Noise, where the Brute was beginning a new Scene of Barbarity, and belabour'd the Creature so long with a large Cane, his Overseer being tir'd with the Cowskin, that he remained without Sense and Motion. Happily he recover'd, but alas! remain'd a Spectacle of Horror to his Death; his Master deceas'd soon after, and perhaps, may meet him, *where the Wicked cease from troubling, and the Weary be at rest*: Where, as our immortal *Pope* sings:

No fiends torment, no christians thirst for gold.

Another, upon the same Spot, when a Girl had been lash'd till she confess'd a Robbery, in mere Wantonness continu'd the Persecution, repeating every now and then these christianlike, and sensible Expressions in the Ragings of his Fury, "*G-d d-mn you, when you go to Hell I wish G-d would d-mn me, that I might follow you with the Cowskin there.*"

Slavery thou worst and greatest of Evils! sometimes thou appearest to my affrighted Imagination, sweating in the Mines of *Potosi*, and wiping the hard-bound Tears from thy exhausted Eyes; sometimes I view the sable Livery under the Torture of the Whip, inflicted by the Hands, the remorseless Hands of an *American* Planter: At other Times, I view thee in the Semblance of a Wretch trod upon by ermin'd or turban'd Tyrants, and with poignant, heart-breaking Sighs, dragging after thee a toilsome Length of Chain, or bearing *African* Burdens. Anon I am somewhat comforted, to see thee attempt to smile under the *Grand Monarque*; but, on the other Side of the *Alpes*, thou again resum'st they Tears, and what, and how great are thy *Iberian* Miseries! In *Britain*, and *Britain* only, thy Name is not heard; though has assum'd a new Form, and the heaviest Labours are lightsome under those mild Skies!

Source: Edward Kimber, *Itinerant Observations in America*, ed. Kevin J. Hayes, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), pp. 47-49.

1773—The Tour of John F. D. Smyth

John F. D. Smyth was orphaned at a young age. When he did not have enough money to finish his medical training in Scotland, Smyth decided to try his luck in the Chesapeake. He paid for his journey across the Atlantic by serving as a ship's surgeon. He arrived in Charles County, Maryland, in about 1772. After failing to establish a medical practice, Smyth became a tenant farmer—he rented both land and slaves. Smyth was a Loyalist who fled to the Backcountry in 1775.

Instead of retiring to rest, as might naturally be concluded he (the slave) would be glad to do, he generally sets out from home, and walks six or seven miles in the night, be the weather ever so sultry, to a negroe dance, in which he performs with astonishing agility...until he exhausts himself, and scarcely has time, or strength, to return home before the hour he is called to toil next morning.

Source: John F. D. Smyth, *A Tour in the United States of America*, (1784; reprint, London: The New York Times and Armo Press, reprint 1968), volume 2.

1774 to 1777—The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell

Nicholas Cresswell, born in Edale, England, was 24 when he went to America in 1774. Cresswell made the journey because he believed that “a person with a small fortune may live much better and make greater improvements in America than he can possibly do in England.” Sailing from Liverpool, he went to Virginia, and returned to Edale in 1777.

...went to see a Negro Ball. Sundays being the only days these poor creatures have to themselves, they generally meet together and amuse themselves with Dancing to the Banjo. This musical instrument (if it may be so called) is made of a Gourd something in the imitation of a Guitar, with only four strings and played with the fingers in the same manner. Some of them sing to it, which is very droll music indeed. In their songs they generally relate the usage they have received from their Masters or Mistresses in a very satirical stile and manner. Their poetry is like the Music - Rude and uncultivated. Their dancing is most violent exercise, but so irregular and grotesque. I am not able to describe it. They all appear to be exceedingly happy at these merry-makings and seem as if they had forgot or were not sensible of their miserable condition.

Source: Nicholas Cresswell, *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774-1777*, (New York: The Daily Press, 1928), pp. v, vi, 18-19.

1785 to 1787—Travels of Luigi Castiglioni

Luigi Castiglioni, of Milan, Italy, visited the individual states from Massachusetts to Georgia from 1785-1787. His two volumes, drawn from direct observations and secondary sources, consist of information on the topography, history, institutions, customs, agriculture, and industry of these states. Castiglioni’s comments are strikingly similar to those of John F. D. Smyth’s *A Tour in the United States of America* (1784), p. 46. Castiglioni noted that he took his description from *American Museum* 1, no. 3 (March 1787): 214-16.

But instead of retiring to rest, as it might naturally be concluded he would be glad to do, he generally sets out from home, and walks six or seven miles in the night, be the weather ever so sultry, to a negro dance, in which he performs with astonishing agility, and the most vigorous exertions, keeping time and cadence, most exactly, with the music of a banjor (a large hollow instrument with three strings), and a quaqua (somewhat resembling a drum), until he exhausts himself, and scarcely has time, or strength, to return home before the hour he is called forth to toil the next morning.

Source: *Luigi Castiglioni’s Viaggio: Travels in the United States of North America 1785-87*, ed. Antonio Pace, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1983), p. 195.

1793 to 1798—Travels of M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Mery

M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Mery (1750-1819) was born in Martinique, educated in France as a lawyer, was a leading figure of the French Revolution, and then fled to America in 1793, where he stayed until 1798. That year he returned to France, where again he became involved in the government, and died in 1819.

The following excerpt was written in 1794.

Although they are never allowed to forget their dependent state, the free people of color and the slaves are not strangers to the pleasures of life, the dance and finery.

It is chiefly on Sunday that they take advantage of the last. On that day they don their finest clothes, including boots and knickerbockers, and the women put on their brightest dresses and their prettiest shoes. They repair, particularly the Methodists, to church where their voices blend with those of the whites; the evening is spent in dancing, for which the Negroes have a mania.

At Christmas and Easter, when slaves are given three days vacation, they vie with each other in every form of indulgence--including, unfortunately, drunkenness.

Source: M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Mery, *Moreau de St. Mery's American Journey [1793-1798]*, tran. and ed. Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1947), p. 60.

1795 to 1797—Travels of Isaac Weld

Isaac Weld, an Irishman, came to America in 1795 at age 21. He wished to examine “with his own eyes into the truth of the various accounts which had been given of the flourishing and happy condition of the United States of America.” Travelling for two years, he explored the resources of both the United States and Canada. He mixed with the best American society and met George Washington. Yet he returned home in 1797, “without entertaining the slightest wish to revisit.” His *Travels*, the product of a “very youthful pen, unaccustomed to write a great deal,” was published in 1799. The press and public, eager for news of America, enthusiastically received the work.

The large estates are managed by stewards and overseers, the proprietors just amusing themselves with seeing what is going forward. The work is done wholly by slaves, whose numbers are in this part of the country more than double that of white persons. The slaves on the large plantations are in general very well provided for, and treated with mildness. During three months, nearly, that I was in Virginia, but two or three instances of ill treatment towards them came under my observation. Their quarters, the name whereby their habitations are called, are usually situated one or two hundred

yards from the dwelling house, which gives the appearance of a village to the residence of every planter in Virginia; when the estate, however, is so large as to be divided into several farms, then separate quarters are attached to the house of the overseer on each farm. Adjoining their little habitations, the slaves commonly have small gardens and yards for poultry, which are all their own property; they have ample time to attend to their own concerns, and their gardens are generally found well stocked, and their flocks of poultry numerous. Besides the food they raise for themselves, they are allowed liberal rations of salted pork and Indian corn. Many of their little huts are comfortably furnished, and they are themselves, in general, extremely well clothed. In short, their condition is by no means so wretched as might be imagined. They are forced to work certain hours in the day; but in return they are clothed, dieted, and lodged comfortably, and saved all anxiety about provision for their offspring. Still, however, let the condition of a slave be made ever so comfortable, as long as he is conscious of being the property of another man, who has it in his power to dispose of him according to the dictates of caprice; as long as he hears people around him talking of the blessings of liberty, and considers that he is in a state of bondage, it is not to be supposed that he can feel equally happy with the freeman. It is immaterial under what form slavery presents itself: whenever it appears, there is ample cause for humanity to weep at the sight, and to lament that men can be found so forgetful of their own situations, as to live regardless of the feelings of their fellow creatures.

Source: Isaac Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America*, ed. Joseph J. Kwiat, (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), 1:148-149.

Part V—The Family Life of Slaves

Family Life in Africa

Kinship is the key to understanding African society, using the word to refer to descendants of a common ancestor or people who share a physical (sexual) relationship. The family was a basic unit of the kinship structure, within which relatives were often known simply as father, mother, brother, sister. An individual's mother's brother's son or father's brother's son was considered a brother. Kinship was the bond that cemented human relationships in the society and instilled harmony, security, co-operation and a sense of community therein. Since the place of each person in the society was unique, kinship gave everyone identity, meaning, function and purpose. Two basic lineage structures existed in Africa: a patrilineal system and a matrilineal one. In the patrilineal system, descent was traced through the father, who remained the authority figure even when the child became an adult. In the matrilineal system, descent was traced through

the mother, and the mother's brother had the ultimate authority over his sister's children. Kinship groups beyond the family were viewed as a lineage; several lineages formed a clan and many clans formed a unitary group or state.

...

The kinship group was an entity that continued through time and grew and expanded through marriage and childbirth. The manner of acquiring spouses varied greatly in African societies, but marriage often involved the payment of bride-price, a transfer of goods and services which had more symbolic value than economic importance and did not give the man any absolute rights over the woman. While polygamy was common, there also were many monogamous marriages.

Marriage was never considered complete without procreation. Africans believed that without the birth of children the chain of being had been broken, and so they were, and are, highly valued. The names given to children in some African societies underscore this importance. Among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, names like *Owotomo*, "money is not as valuable as children", *Omodumbi*, "children are sweet to have", *Omololu*, "children are the summit of achievement", and *Omoniyi*, "children are the source of prestige", attested to the value of children. Birth was and is an occasion celebrated by appropriate rites in all African communities. Even before the new-born arrived, preparations were made in anticipation of the event and pregnant women observed certain rites and taboos.

A person normally had to be initiated into the group at an appropriate time, usually at puberty, the ceremony being significant in making that individual a full member of the community. Some societies held initiation rites for both sexes, while other such rites were confined to women.

Among the Mende of Sierra Leone all young people were initiated into adulthood: the men joined the Poro association and the women belonged to the Sande. (The Poro association was also found among people in Liberia and Guinea.) Mende boys were not regarded as mature adults until they had been initiated into the Poro, a ritual which involved being taken to the Poro compound in the bush for several weeks of training and instruction in Mende traditions, customs, the endurance of hardship, self-discipline, cooperation and respect for one's elders. These rites were secret and initiates took an oath of secrecy. The end of the training symbolized the change in status of those taking part and made them full members of the society. Women were similarly initiated into the Sande association.

The system of beliefs and thoughts that ordered the life of each African society included recognition of a supreme God, although African religious systems are often mistakenly generalized in terms such as animism, paganism, fetishism and polytheism. Africans were not animists in the sense of believing that every object had a soul; they did believe that spirits *used* certain objects as their abode and exerted influence through these objects. Paganism is a Western term commonly referring to practices and beliefs of those who were not Jewish, Christian or Muslim, and, as such, is too vague to apply to African religion. A fetish was originally a work of art or object such as a religious charm, but the fact that Africans made use of religious charms should not be allowed to categorize their religious systems. Neither can African religion be adequately described as polytheistic-

rather than worshipping many co-ordinate or several gods, Africans recognize a Supreme Being who is above all and is the Creator of any other gods, and is given various names in different areas of the continent. African societies viewed God the Creator as being essentially a life-giving and just spirit, devoid of form. He was everywhere, therefore there were no shrines and temples dedicated especially to Him; there were no feast days set aside for Him or priests appointed to serve Him. The essence of the worship of God was African societies' acknowledgment of His presence and their expression of dependence upon Him.

In addition to their Supreme God, Africans venerated their ancestors. Death, like other rites of passage, was a public affair, when the community was brought together to give the deceased person a proper burial. Many societies believed that the dead entered into a spiritual state of existence, so ancestors were revered, the dead being believed to be able to guard, protect or even punish their descendants. Protection manifested itself through prosperity, fertility, and abundant crops. Punishment took the form of epidemics, illness, misfortune and even death. Ancestors who had lived exemplary lives were often singled out for special reverence. Because Africans believed that their ancestors were alive and visited the living, they attempted to keep in touch with them through offerings of food and drink placed on their tombs.

The African pantheon contained other divinities who were created by God to fulfil specific functions, and who could be male or female or good or evil and had abodes in natural phenomena and animals. Some of the divinities were recognized as unique. Of these, the spirit of the earth ranked after God. Since everyone had access to the earth, no temples, shrines or priests were dedicated to it, but sacrifices were made on special occasions, such as the beginning of the planting season. Spirits or deities inhabited bodies of water of all kinds, and such spirits had priests and shrines and were worshiped and offered sacrifices.

Although all divinities were capable of doing both good and evil, certain deities were considered harmful because they were antagonistic toward people. Among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, Eshu was known as such a deity, and Sasabonsam was the evil spirit among the Akan of Ghana.

In addition to evil spirits, Africans believed in the mystical forces of witchcraft and magic. Witches were usually women and, occasionally, children who used their powers to harm those they did not like. Belief in witches may have rendered misfortune and adversity more understandable by blaming them on external forces. Magic, also employed to understand the environment, could be used for beneficial purposes. Medicine men used it to attempt healing, and rainmakers used it to encourage rain. Used for anti-social purposes African society called it black magic.

Religion pervaded the lives of all African communities, determining moral and ethical values, and its ultimate function was the establishment and maintenance of harmony, peace and prosperity for the benefit of the society. . . .

Source: Edward Reynolds, *Stand the Storm: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, (London: Allison & Busby, 1985), pp. 15-18.

How frequently masters sold or bequeathed their Afro-American slaves and where they sent them affected black household composition. Three points seem clear. First, planters kept women and their small children together but did not keep husbands and teenage children with their immediate family. Slave owner after slave owner bequeathed women and their increase to sons or daughters. However, children of Chesapeake slave owners tended to live near their parents. Thus, even when members of slave families were so separated, they remained in the same neighborhood. Second, slaves who lived on small farms were separated from their families more frequently than those on large plantations. At their death small slave owners typically willed a slave or two to the widow and to each child. They also frequently mortgaged or sold slaves to gain capital. If a slaveowner died with many unpaid debts, his slaves had to be sold. Finally, relatively few slaves were forced to move long distances. More slaves were affected by migration from the Chesapeake region to the new Southwest in the nineteenth century than by long-distance movement in the region before the Revolution. These points should not be misunderstood. Most slaves who lived in Maryland or Virginia during the eighteenth century experienced forced separation from members of their immediate family sometime in their lives, and about twenty-six thousand tidewater slaves (a quarter of all the region's slaves) were forced to move to Piedmont or to the valley of Virginia between 1755 and 1782, usually over such long distances that they could no longer see their kindred. More than two-thirds of all of tidewater's slaves, however, probably lived close enough to visit most family members.

. . . Slave families in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake were often unstable, but African-Americans learned to cope with displacement and separation from kindred with some success. Slaves created flexible kinship networks that permitted slaves to adjust to separation. Most slaves were either members of a kin-based household or could call upon kindred on their own or nearby quarters for aid and encouragement. A girl who grew up in a two-parent household on a large plantation, for instance, might be sold in her teens to a small planter, marry a slave from a neighboring farm, and raise her children with minimal help from her husband. She would have learned about alternative child-rearing methods from playmates whose fathers lived elsewhere and would have been familiar with the nocturnal movement of men to visit their families. Her husband's kindred could provide some help and friendship if they lived nearby. If she longed for her old home, she could run away and visit, knowing that kindred and friends would hide her from the whites.

In sum . . . slave kinship networks provided Afro-Americans with an alternative system of status and authority and thereby set outside limits to exploitation by the master. A slave had not only a place in the plantation work hierarchy, mostly determined by the master, but a position within his kin group. Slave culture and religion developed within this system: blacks participated as kindred at work and in song, dance, celebrations, prayer, and revivals at home.

Source: Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1986), pp. 359, 380.

Slave Families in Loudoun County, Virginia
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Contrary to popular views of family stability, the familial history of slaves in colonial and antebellum Loudoun and throughout Virginia offers compelling evidence that many slaves did not have a nuclear structure or "core" in their families. There also is very little evidence that suggests that a nuclear family was the slave's sociocultural ideal. Virginia slave families, while demonstrating much diversity in form, essentially were not nuclear and did not derive from long-term, monogamous marriages. The most discernible ideal for their principal kinship organization was a malleable extended family that, when possible, provided its members with nurture, education, socialization, material support, and recreation in the face of potential social chaos that the slaveholder imposed. Matrifocality, polygamy, single parents, abroad spouses, one-, two-, and three-generation households, all-male domestic residences of blood, marriage, and fictive kin, single- and mixed-gender sibling dwellings—these, along with monogamous marriages and co-residential nuclear families, all comprised the familial experience of Virginia slaves like James Monroe's Daniel. Beneath this overwhelming record of diversity, however, the extended slave family remained the consistent norm and the most identifiable ideal. . .

The primary role of the slave woman within her family, while more predictable and "stable" than that of the slave man, also was uniquely different from that of free women. She never was able to give the needs of her husband and children great attention, much less first priority. Even though most slave children were part of matrifocal families, the slave woman's most important duty was the labor she performed for her master, not her family. This responsibility claimed so much of her time and energy that childbearing was limited, while childrearing necessarily was a task she shared with a number of other females.

Slave marriages, even monogamous ones, rarely were uncompromised. While slave couples committed to monogamy may have been devoted to one another and able to sustain feelings of love and respect over time, feelings sufficient to lead them to marry legally after emancipation, many did not have the opportunity to express their feelings for more than a few years while enslaved. Across time and space, the frequent and indiscriminate separation of slave spouses, temporarily and permanently, denied them the opportunity to live together, to share the responsibilities of their households and children, and to provide each other with sociosexual outlets.

Free people of color, by law and custom, had more control of their family lives and greater domestic stability than slaves. Their free status guaranteed them at least the possibility of "traditional" monogamous marriages, nuclear families, and other functional familial structures. Their race and its stigma, nonetheless, had incredible impact on every aspect of their communities, and especially their family life.

Source: Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White, Family and Community in the Slave South*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 160-161.

John Custis and Jack

John Custis's February 3, 1747/8 letter to his son, Daniel, mentioned a special slave. Generally held to be the planter's son, his "dear black boy Jack" was inordinately important to the elderly man, who was plainly willing to express to Daniel this emotional tie. Besides the deed of manumission also given here, Jack received a significant bequest from Custis, who included both plans for a house and details about its furnishings among his arrangements for the boy's future.

. . . I wish you would determine to come down often, wch I am sure would bee very much to your advantage, besides my satisfaction the Jorny is nothing, to A young man; my dear black boy Jack [is] [torn] sick; wch make me very melacholly; and if please God [h]e [torn] I should do otherwise than well, I am sure I should soon follow him; it would break my heart, and bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave my lif being wrapt up in his; . . .

Source: John Custis IV to Daniel Parke Custis, February 3, 1747/8, quoted in Jo Zuppan, "Father To Son: Letters from John Custis IV to Daniel Parke Custis," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 98 (1990): 87-89.

* * * *

And whereas by my deed of Manumission recorded in the county Court of York I have freed and set at liberty my negro boy Christened John otherwise called Jack born of the body of my slave Alice Now I do hereby ratify and confirm the said deed of manumission unto the said John otherwise called Jack . . .and I hereby strictly require that as soon as possible after my decease my executor build on the land I bought of James Morris Scituate near the head of Queen's Creek in the county of York for the use of the said John otherwise called Jack a handsome strong convenient dwelling house according to the dimensions I shall direct and a plan thereof drawn by my said friend John Blair Esquire and that it be compleatly finished within side and without and when the house is compleatly furnished with one dozen high Russia leather chairs one dozen low Russia leather chairs a Russia leather couch good and strong three good feather beds bedsteads and furniture and two good black walnut tables I desire that the house fencing and other appurtenances belong to the said plantation be kept in good repair and so delivered to the said negro John otherwise called Jack when he shall arrive to the age of twenty years I also give him when he shall arrive to that age a good riding horse and two able working horses...I also give [Mrs. Anne Moody] the picture of my said negro boy John otherwise called Jack It is my will and I desire that my said negro boy John otherwise called Jack live with my son until he be twenty years of age and that he be handsomely maintained out of the profits of my estate given him

Source: Custis Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

George Calvert and Eleanor Beckett

Like many other slaveowners, like some of his own ancestors, George Calvert had another family. We can be sure of at least one slave mistress, and he probably had others. There were children from his liaisons, and Calvert, a man not given to freeing his slaves, set them free. There is no evidence that Rosalie knew of his relationships with his female slaves; certainly she never mentioned anything of the sort in her letters. It is difficult to imagine, however, that she did not know. Her slaves knew, and for a number of years Calvert's wife and his mistress lived on the same plantation.

George Calvert's relationship with his slave mistress, Eleanor Beckett, began long before he met Rosalie Stier. After his father's death in 1788, George, age twenty, became master of Mount Albion plantation, and there he spent a long bachelorhood, not marrying Rosalie until he was thirty-one. At Mount Albion Calvert began his affair with Eleanor Beckett. Evidently the relationship became emotional as well as sexual, for eventually he freed her, his children by her, and other members of her family as well. After his own marriage, he arranged a suitable marriage for Eleanor. When she was widowed, he moved her and her family to Montgomery County and made costly arrangements for their well-being. Like his Lord Baltimore ancestors, he did not deny his illegitimate offspring or the woman who had borne them.

There are only fragments of information about Eleanor Beckett. Apparently she was an Indian-Negro mulatto belonging to the Calverts, and sometimes she was called Charlotte, sometimes Nellie. Her first child with George Calvert was probably Anne, born in 1790, and the second was Carolina, born in 1793. Both used the Calvert surname in later years. Three more children came along to Eleanor—Cyrus, Charlotte, and John. They were also probably George's children, but we cannot be sure, and we do not know what surname they used.

The legal record begins in 1801 when, two years after his marriage to Rosalie, George Calvert freed ten of his slaves, including "Charlotte" Beckett and her five children, Anne, Caroline, Cyrus, Charlotte, and John. In 1822, soon after Rosalie died, George Calvert returned to court to clarify the record, explaining that the "Charlotte Beckett" he had freed twenty years before had been "christened" as "Eleanor Beckett" and reaffirming that she and all her children were forever free.

It was difficult in Maryland for manumitted blacks to maintain their free status, and evidently people were raising questions, because Calvert kept returning to the court to reaffirm the freedom of Eleanor and her children. In 1824, Calvert thought it necessary to repeat the manumission of Eleanor Beckett's second daughter, Caroline, age 31, along with her seven children—his own grandchildren—George, age 11; Caroline Elizabeth, 9; John Henry, 8; Henrietta Maria, 6; Thomas Adolphus, 5; Marietta, 2; and Richard, one month.

We can wonder about his thoughts as he freed the grandchild apparently named for him by his mulatto daughter who herself bore the same name as his first-born daughter by Rosalie. The following year he reaffirmed the manumission of Eleanor's first daughter, Anne, then age 35, and her six children: Theophilus, 11; Louisa, 10; Lucian, 8; John, 6; George Washington, 5; and Lucretia, 2.

A remarkable family account, handed down through four generations and published in 1927 by Nellie Arnold Plummer, a black great-granddaughter of Eleanor

Beckett, supplements the legal record. Nellie Arnold Plummer descended from one of Eleanor Beckett's later children, after Eleanor lived with an Englishman named William Norris. Nellie Arnold Plummer recounted the family memoir:

Nellie [Eleanor] Beckett, an Indian-Negro mulatto, a slave of the Calverts, married William Norris, an Englishman, who had to serve Calvert for seven years for debt. On finding that his wife was bearing children for Calvert as well as his own, noting his helplessness to correct matters, he died of a broken heart. Norris, with Philip Brashears and two apprentices, made all the shoes worn on the Riverdale [*sic*] plantation. Norris had two sisters who accompanied him to America. The sisters went to Montgomery County, Maryland, while their brother's time was bought by George Calvert, Riverdale [*sic*], Prince George's County, Maryland. The Calvert children of Nellie Beckett-Norris were so white that they were sent to Pennsylvania to live. From there Caroline, who had become Mrs. Crompton [*sic*], took her children and her six sisters to Monrovia, Liberia, Africa, with other mulattos who wished to be free.

No record remains of William Norris's bondage to George Calvert or his service at Riversdale, but a link between the two men exists in the record of George Calvert's manumissions. In 1822 Calvert freed two young mulatto women, Charlotte and Sophia Norris, both born about 1803. Several years later, Calvert freed Matilda Norris, a "bright mulatto" born about 1805. These could have been Eleanor Beckett's daughters by William Norris or by Calvert while she was living with Norris. In 1827 Calvert freed a mulatto male named William Beckett, about twenty-one, perhaps another of Eleanor's children.

In all, George Calvert freed thirty-three slaves during his lifetime. Twenty-nine of these bore surnames or are identifiable by family group, and twenty-three were members of the Beckett-Norris family.

Source: *Mistress of Riversdale: The Plantation Letters of Rosalie Stier Calvert, 1795-1821*, ed. and tran. Margaret Law Callcott, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 379-381.

Part VI—Slaves and the Cycle of Family Life

Birth and Infancy

African customs of nursing were different from those of Europeans. In Africa women often nursed children for more than three years, abstaining from sexual relations during that period. Black women continued these patterns in the Caribbean slave communities, as did seventeenth-century blacks in the Chesapeake.

Source: Joan Reznor Gundersen, "The Double Bonds of Race and Sex: Black and White Women in a Colonial Virginia Parish," *Journal of Southern History* 52 (1986), p. 361.

Childrearing

To an even greater degree than poor white parents, enslaved mothers and fathers also lacked a propertied foundation for parental authority. Depending upon his or her occupation, skill, and personal relationship to a white master, however, an enslaved parent might have some impact upon a child's future. A woman who performed work as a cook, nurse, or seamstress, for example, had limited opportunities to place her female children in a similar position within the household; this pattern may have been more likely by the later eighteenth century, as the numbers of enslaved women engaged in domestic work increased. She might also be able to press a claim for the training of a son in some craft that would ensure that child's future release from agricultural labor. An enslaved father engaged in tasks that brought him in frequent contact with his white master might similarly have been able to advance his son or daughter to indoor work.

Source: Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996), pp. 348-349.

* * * *

For the first months of life, a newborn infant stayed in the matricentral cell, that is, received his identity and subsistence from his mother. . . . Eventually, the child left its mother's lap and explored the world of the hut and quarter. In the evenings, he ate with his family and learned to love his parents, siblings, and other kinfolk. During the day the young child lived in an age-segregated world. While parents, other adults, and older siblings worked, children were "left, during a great portion of the day, on the ground at the doors of their huts, to their own struggles and efforts." They played with age mates or were left at home with other children and perhaps an aged grandparent. Siblings and age-mates commonly lived together or in nearby houses. . . . Black children began to work in the tobacco fields between seven and ten years of age. For the first time they joined fully in the daytime activities of adults. Those still living at home labored beside parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts, and other kinfolk. (Even on smaller plantations, they worked with their mothers.) Most were trained to be field hands by white masters or overseers and by their parents. Though these young hands were forced to work for the master, they quickly learned from their kinfolk to work at the pace that black adults set and to practice the skills necessary to "put the massa on."

Source: Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1986), pp.372-373.

Black Marriage and Married Life

Marriage was far less important for slave women than for white women; slave women, unlike their white counterparts, neither shared property with their husbands nor received subsistence from them. After the relationship was consummated, the woman probably stayed with her family (parents and siblings) until a child was born, unless she could form a household with her new husband. Childbearing, and the child rearing that followed, however, were highly important rites of passage for most slave women. Once she had a child, she moved from her mother's or parent's home to her own hut. The bonding between slave mother and her child may have been far more important than her relationship with her husband, especially if he lived on another plantation. Motherhood, moreover, gave women a few valued privileges. Masters sometimes treated pregnant women and their newborn children with greater than usual solicitude. For example, Richard Corbin, a Virginia planter, insisted in 1759 that his steward be "Kind and Indulgent to pregnant women and not force them when with Child upon any service or hardship that will be injurious to them." Children were "to be well looked after."

Source: Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1986), p. 375.

* * * *

The mulatto fellow William, who has been with me all the War is attached (married he says) to one of his own colour a free woman, who, during the War was also of my family.

. . .

I had conceived that the connection between them had ceased, but I am mistaken; they are both applying to me to get her here, and tho' I never wished to see her more yet I cannot refuse his request. . . . as he has lived with me so long & followed my fortunes through the War with fidelity.

Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Confederation Series, ed. W. W. Abbott, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 2:14.

Old Age

Harsh life experience matured them [slaves], and whereas some found their sense of self by opposing masters and slave-breakers (as did Frederick Douglass), others were "broken" in spirit or "adjusted fully" to the demands of harsh slave masters. Many, however, found a middle way, a mature acceptance of life's harsh reality, that gave them some pride of accomplishment and some self-respect. When they reached old age they might well achieve a new stature in their own, in other blacks', and in whites' estimation. And this new position changed their attitude and their possibilities in regard to work. As Dick said of his own expertise: "I ought to know these things; I served my time to it."

Landon Carter has left us with very detailed pictures of several of his slaves; the life of Jack Lubber, one of the black people he was intensely involved with, in some ways paralleled Dick's later development. Lubber had probably been born on a Carter estate. At any rate, he had spent many years on Carter's plantations and Carter had been directly involved with him. In the early phases of his life his pattern was very different from Dick's. Lubber was one of the slaves Carter had trusted and mistrusted. He had selected him as an overseer and then had been certain that he had lied, stolen, and allowed the other slaves to evade their "responsibilities." While he was an overseer Carter wrote, "Jack Lubber is a most lazy as well as stupid old fellow grown." He is "too easy with those people and too deceitful and careless himself." When Jack Lubber was "retired," with but limited tasks assigned him in the fruit orchard, Carter's view of him altered radically. . . In their joint old age Carter was ready to listen to Lubber and found both his use of time and his advice prudent.

As Lubber aged, Carter "aged" him even more. By 1774 he was writing that he had "suffered him to follow his own will now 9 or 10 years," although the diary records that he was still an overseer in 1770. Carter surveyed his slave's life, and as Lubber approached death Carter had nothing but praise for him: "As honest a human creature as could live, who to his last proved a faithful and a Profitable servant to his Master." Carter now "remembered" that in 1734 Lubber was foreman of his Mangorike field gang, but was aging and slowing down, and that in 1754 he made him overlooker of five hands at the Fork Quarter "in which service he so gratefully discharged his duty as to make me by his care alone larger crops of corn, tobacco, and Pease twice over than I had had by anyone. . . and besides shoats and piggs used by my house." Carter apparently forgot that he had earlier written that Lubber was "a Devil," "an old sun of a Bitch," a drinker, a cheat, and a liar. Carter claimed to have relieved Lubber of "abuse" from his own great-grandchildren, who were in his crew, and brought him and his wife, "our old midwife, to my henhouse at home, where I received until about 3 year ago the good effects of his care." He then allowed him "to live quite retired" for what turned out to be his last three years. "But ever active as his life has been he then became a vast progger in Catching fish, Beavers, Otters, Muskrats, and Minxes with his traps, a Constant church man in all good days," and he tended as well to his own garden. He died after getting a severe chill while trying to catch a minx that was destroying Carter's fowls.

The longer Lubber had lived, the more Carter had valued him. In part this was due to Lubber's changed status and behavior. "A constant church man," he may have seemed to have had Christian values. On his own he was enormously active, and as an old man he had much more respect from other blacks. But it was also due to Carter's

changing perception of Lubber because of his age. Slaveowners often perceived their elderly slaves as older than their own records should have informed them. In some cases slaves "aged" unnaturally from inventory to inventory; one year they were seventy, the following year they might well be seventy-five. By "ageing" a slave, the owner reduced the social distance between them and could allow himself to treat the black differently.

Aged slaves were widely regarded as "fellow creatures" by white people, inasmuch as respecting them was not seen as dangerous to the master-slave system. In fact, respecting them served the owner's interests, as they were often held responsible for order and stability in the slave community. Moreover, they often seemed to share the owner's attitude toward time and work. Charles Dabney's slaves assumed such shared values when, in 1769, they sent the oldest slave to air their grievances with their owner. They believed "a complaint from him would be listened to." They, as their African parents, respected age and believed their owner would as well. Indeed, in the English tradition out of which Charles Dabney's family came, it was expected that "the old were to rule," although given the radical social change underway in England, and the widespread disdain for those over sixty, the reality fell far short of the old ideal. In Virginia, blacks reinforced the old values of time, work, and respect for the elderly.

Source: Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 41-43.

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Excerpts from Landon Carter's Diary

June 12, 1771

I walkt out this evening to see how my very old and honest Slave Jack Lubber did to support life in his Extreme age; and I found him prudently working amongst his melon vines, both to divert the hours and indeed to keep nature stirring that indigestions might not hurry him off with great pain. I took notice of his Pea vines a good store and askt him why he had not got them hilled; his answer was the Prudence of Experience, Master, they have not got age enough and it will hurt too young things to Coat them too closely with earth. . . .

Old Lubber's observation about his pease being too young to be hill[ed] comforts me about mine between the barley which I cannot get a while hoe and earth up.

June 25, 1774

I fear my very old Slave and fellow creature Jack Lubbar is now going to Pay the debt of nature. About a fortnight ago as he has during his extreme age been subject to tender and indeed sore shins, by his going to fish along the creek side, as he ever has done ever since I suffered him to follow his own will now near 9 or 10 years, he somehow hurt his leg.

This brought on a fever; but being of a natural strong constitution with very little medical care his fevers were removed and his leg restored sound, and to Perfect the cure I have him gentle Apperients to take, this set him about lively and even to walk upright again; and then he made traps to catch a Mink that destroyed my fowls, and in doing this of his own head I fear he got wet and caught cold by going into the swamp. . . I believe the old man is going. Farewell to as honest a human creature as could live; Who to his last proved a faithful and a Profitable servant to his Master as every remembered Conduct must testify.

Poor Jack is cold in his extremities. Farewell, I may say, thou good and faithful Servant to me.

Source: *Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778*, ed. Jack P. Greene, 2 vols., (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1987), 1:574-575, 2:834.

Part VII—Free Blacks

Selection from Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs*

A few free black husbands and fathers quietly resisted the racism that overflowed from the slave system by turning the increasingly formalistic legal climate, which offered protection to established free male property holders, to their advantage. Their success as landowners and masters of households, although limited, testified to the discrepancies between identities produced in the courtroom and those generated through daily interaction in a community. The most successful of these free black men owned property, wrote wills, married, fathered children, and regularly used the county courts to collect debts and record deeds for sales and purchases. . . John Rawlinson, a substantial York County shoemaker born in 1725, also amassed considerable property before his death in 1780. In addition to eight houses and lots in Williamsburg, Rawlinson could boast a horse, saddle and cart, and "old Negro fellow," a looking glass, and a spinning wheel among his possessions.

. . . In addition to transmitting freedom to their progeny, free black women also provided their children with crucial links to other free people, creating the sinews of emerging free black communities. The free Afro-Virginian children of white mothers, in contrast, usually entered free black social networks, not by right of birth, but only to the degree that they were able to form their own alliances. . .

As free parents, black women often formed the first line of defense against encroachments upon the freedom of children, making possible free black family and community life. Many free woman may have participated in relationships unrecognized by white courts and churches, either because marriage ceremonies were not conducted according to white law or because white or enslaved black men could not legally become their husbands. Some women, in addition, may have entered these sexual relationships unwillingly, leaving them without partners when children were born. Both the failure of courts to recognized the presence of men in the lives of these women and the actual

absence of men in some cases resulted in a legal burden of mammoth proportions. Often the only adult kin capable of intervening in their children's fate, free black women provided their offspring's main protection against slavery.

Despite legal harassment, free black women turned to the courts both to arrange apprenticeship terms and to protect children from exploitative and abusive white masters. In doing so they were similar to mothers in the poorest white families, where poverty was often a consequence of widowhood or pregnancy outside wedlock. Yet there were important differences in the way the courts treated white and free black mothers. White mothers appearing in court on behalf of white children usually offered routine consent to the apprenticeship agreement, specifying the skills the child should be taught. Even when the child's father was black, a white mother retained a customary right to object to the terms under which her child was bound. Free black women seem to have had greater difficulty in establishing their right to voice consent to a child's apprenticeship arrangement. The failure of the 1723 law to require that the children of mulatto women be bound by legal indenture may have been the prime reason for this difficulty. Such children remained extremely vulnerable to being treated as slaves unless their mothers initiated procedures for legal indentures.

By making their children's indentures a matter of public record, some black mothers may have hoped to stave off attempts by the unscrupulous to turn young Afro-Virginia servants into slaves. . .

When masters failed to provide adequate food, clothing, and training, or in other ways abused a bound child, free mothers found it necessary to intervene. Although the situation varied depending on the county, several women appear to have viewed the courts as their best remedy. In Norfolk and Lancaster Counties, where free black social and economic networks were less dense, women intervened on behalf of their children more often than in York County, where a sizeable number of free black people lived in and near Williamsburg. . .

Some free women tried to protect their children by keeping them in the same or an adjacent neighborhood, making it easier for a mother to act quickly in cases of abuse and increasing the chances that white neighbors could testify to the child's free birth and subsequent treatment should such testimony be necessary. Not the least of a mother's motives may have been the desire to remain in close contact with children over whom she would otherwise have very little control. When servant Mary West of York County bore two sons while serving a thirty-one-year term to Sarah Walker, her sons were subject to the same punishment of extended service. Whether by West's urging or her own initiative, Walker requested the court to allow her to keep the boys at her house until they turned thirty-one, "being the term of y[ea]rs their mother was bound for." Mary Banks of York County lived near her mother and managed to make the same arrangements for her own children, who appear to have grown up on an adjacent Yorkhampton plantation.

If free children were lucky, their mothers lived long enough to protect them during their years of service and to help them secure their freedom at the very end of the term. Very often a child's only hope for freedom, a mother could be a powerful advocate.

Although fraught with numerous obstacles for petitioners, the legal system may have provided the best means for free black women to protect their children from slavery. In several cases, a woman's use of the courts succeeded not simply in securing freedom for herself and her children but in creating a public record of a family's free condition that

subsequently may have facilitated her descendants' claims. The late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century York County free black register is filled with names from a hundred years earlier, including Rawlinsons, Bankses, Jespers, Cannadys, and Poes. Although many of these individuals were indeed the actual descendants of an earlier generation of free women, others had simply adopted their surnames.

In a society based on racial slavery, a free black mother's protection of her children was not only good for her child, but also in her own self-interest. Families provided primary social identities, legal protection, and economic sustenance. Not least, they imbued daily life with meaning. Lacking kin, an individual could only hope to cultivate friends who would take an interest in his or her prosperity.

...

Although many associations among free black and white people resulted from reluctant decisions by Afro-Virginians who found their choices constrained, other contact was voluntary, perhaps even mutually satisfactory. . . Like many other free black men and women in Williamsburg, shoemaker Rawlinson depended upon the business of white neighbors as well as of other free Afro-Virginians in the area. Mary Roberts, a woman from York County's Hampton Parish, described as a "mulatto," earned part of her income from white people by providing midwife services to their servants and slaves.

By the mid-eighteenth century, significant populations of free Afro-Virginians lived in Yorktown, Williamsburg, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and several other towns, making community life possible. . . In York County, economic opportunity in Williamsburg's large houses and workshops may have drawn many free black people to the area from more rural environs.

Although dependent in many ways upon important economic and social networks with white people, free Afro-Virginian life in York County by the middle of the eighteenth century had become more firmly rooted in the interactions of free black people with each other and with slaves. Free women like Elizabeth Armfield assisted in the births of enslaved women's children. As guardians, Afro-Virginian men like John Rawlinson supervised the upbringing of orphaned children and watched over their estates. Free black people also represented each other in court, as when Jane Savey acted on behalf of Ann Gwin in a suit against two other Afro-Virginian women, Elizabeth and Martha Armfield. In addition to these connections, free black people forged ties with other free people of color through barter, the extension of credit, and patronage of each other's businesses. Later in life, free Afro-Virginians married and bore children, knitting together their families of origin. The Gillets, Macklins, Robards, Cannadys Bankses, Saveys, and Combes found themselves intertwined by the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The networks of free black people standing as witnesses for each other and posting security grew denser, as did the suits for debt, trespass, and assault and battery. At the end of their lives, free people witnessed each other's wills, died in each other's homes, and left inheritances to siblings, children, godchildren, and other kin.

Source: Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*, (Chapel Hill: University of North

Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996), pp. 225, 229-232, 235, 236-237, 240-241.

Part VIII—Religion

1789—Olaudah Equiano Discusses Ibo Religious Practices

In his narrative published in 1789, Equiano described the religious life of the Ibo, from the region around Benin where he lived until brought to Virginia in 1757 at age twelve.

As to religion, the natives believe that there is one Creator of all things, and that he lives in the sun, and is girded round with a belt, that he may never eat or drink; but according to some, he smokes a pipe, which is our own favorite luxury. They believe he governs events, especially our deaths or captivity; but, as for the doctrine of eternity, I do not remember to have ever heard of it: some however believe in the transmigration of souls in a certain degree. Those spirits, which are not transmigrated, such as their dear friends or relations, they believe always attend them, and guard them from the bad spirits of their foes. For this reason, they always, before eating, as I have observed, put some small portion of the meat, and pour some of their drink, on the ground for them; and they often make oblations of the blood of beasts or fowls at their graves. I was very fond of my mother, and almost constantly with her. When she went to make these oblations at her mother's tomb, which was a kind of small solitary thatched house, I sometimes attended her. There she made her libations, and spent most of the night in cries and lamentation. I have been often extremely terrified on these occasions. The loneliness of the place, the darkness of the night, and the ceremony of libation, naturally awful and gloomy, were heightened by my mother's lamentations; and these concurring with the doleful cries of birds, by which these places were frequented, gave an inexpressible terror to the scene.

We compute the year from the day on which the sun crosses the line; and, on its setting that evening, there is a general shout throughout the land; at least, I can speak from my own knowledge, throughout our vicinity. The people at the same time made a great noise with rattles not unlike the basket rattles used by children here, though much larger, and hold up their hands to heaven for a blessing. It is then the greatest offerings are made; and those children whom our wise men foretel will be fortunate are then presented to different people. I remember many used to come to see me, and I was carried about to others for that purpose. They have many offerings, particularly at full moons, generally two at harvest, before the fruits are taken out of the ground; and, when any young animals are killed, sometimes they offer up part of them as a sacrifice. These offerings, when made by one of the heads of a family, serve for the whole. I remember we often had them at my father's and my uncle's, and their families had been present. Some of our offerings are eaten with bitter herbs. We had a saying among us to any one of a cross temper, That if they were to be eaten, they should be eaten with bitter herbs."

We practised circumcision like the Jews, and made offerings and feasts on that occasion in the same manner as they did. Like them also our children were named from

some event, some circumstance, or fancied foreboding, at the time of their birth. I was named Olaudah, which, in our language, signifies vicissitude, or fortune also; one favoured, and having a loud voice, and well spoken. I remember we never polluted the name of the object of our adoration; on the contrary, it was always mentioned with the greatest reverence; and we were totally unacquainted with swearing, and all those terms of abuse and reproach which find their way so readily and copiously into the language of more civilized people. The only expressions of that kind I remember were "May you rot, or may you swell, or may a beast take you."

I have before remarked, that the natives of this part of Africa are extremely clean. This necessary habit of decency was with us a part of religion, and therefore we had many purification's and washings; indeed almost as many, and used on the same occasions, if my recollection does not fail me, as the Jews. Those that touched the dead at any time were obliged to wash and purify themselves before they could enter a dwelling-house. Every woman, too, at certain times, was forbidden to come into a dwelling-house, or touch any person, or anything we eat. I was so fond of my mother I could not keep from her, or avoid touching her at some of those periods, in consequence of which I was obliged to be kept out with her in a little house made for that purpose, till offering was made, and then we were purified.

Though we had no places of public worship, we had priests and magicians, or wise men. I do not remember whether they had different offices, or whether they were united in the same persons, but they were held in great reverence by the people. They calculated our time, and foretold events, as their name imported, for we called them Ah-affoe-way-cah, which signifies calculations or yearly men, our year being called Ah-affoe. They wore their beads, and, when they died, they were succeeded by their sons. Most of their implements and things of value were interred along with them. Pipes and tobacco were also put into the grave with the corpse, which was always perfumed and ornamented; and animals were offered in sacrifice to them. None accompanied their funerals, but those of the same profession or tribe. They buried them after sunset, and always returned from the grave by a different way from that which they went.

Source: Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 69, 78-80.

1749 to 1763—The Sermons of the Reverend Thomas Bacon

Slaveholders in Virginia and elsewhere in the Chesapeake were slow to take an interest in the conversion of their slaves to Christianity. Based on the vague notion that no Christian might lawfully hold another Christian as a slave, masters at first wondered if their baptized slaves would go free. Even after the Virginia General Assembly passed a law in 1667 declaring that baptism did not necessitate manumission, however, masters were still reluctant to "Christianize" their slaves. Some feared that religious training would make slaves "proud and saucy," more difficult to control, as the idea of equality before God sank in. Others feared that slaves taught to read the Bible might take inspiration from biblical tales of flight and rebellion. And, too, many a slave holder remained utterly indifferent to slaves' spiritual needs.

The Reverend Thomas Bacon (c. 1700-1768) arrived in Maryland in 1745. An ordained Church of England minister, he served first in St. Peter's Parish, Talbot County and later in All Saints Parish, Frederick County. Like some of his fellow clergymen in Virginia, Bacon ministered diligently among the slaves in his parish, yet he never questioned the institution of slavery itself. Between 1749 and 1763, Bacon published his sermons addressed to masters on their duties toward their slaves, as well as two sermons addressed specifically "to a Congregation of *Black Slaves*, at the Parish Church of St. *Peter's*, in the Province of *Maryland*," in which he spelled out the obligations of slaves to their masters.

Both Bacon the man and his sermons were known in Williamsburg. Bacon himself was in Williamsburg in 1751 drumming up subscriptions for a charity school in Maryland. Peyton Randolph and Councilor John Blair among others made contributions. William Hunter, printer of the *Virginia Gazette*, sold printed copies of a charity sermon of Bacon's for the benefit of the Maryland school. In July 1751, Bacon preached in Williamsburg ("My Yoke is Easie") and dined with John Blair. By October he was back and again preached. In November, he dined with the Council. In the 1760s, the Bray Associates sent Mrs. Ann Wager copies of Bacon's sermons to masters and slaves to use at the Negro School in Williamsburg. Long after Bacon's death, these same sermons were reprinted and imitated by nineteenth-century defenders of slavery.

Special Collections at the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library has copies of an eighteenth-century edition of Bacon's sermons as well as a version republished about 1813 by William Meade, later the Episcopal bishop of Virginia.

Excerpt from a sermon that the Reverend Thomas Bacon addressed to masters:

Masters, give unto your Servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven...Colossians IV.I.

Thus hath our heavenly Father thought fit to establish the ordinary Course of his divine Providence for the common Benefit of his Children: – and thus hath he laid the Foundation of Justice and Equity between Man and Man, by making each, in his several Station, conducive to the Preservation and Benefit of the Whole, and in return, to receive Protection and Assistance from others.

...

Things are too often judged to be right or wrong, not from the Nature of the Facts, but from the Difference of People's Circumstances: – so that what shall be approved of in the Behaviour of one, shall be highly condemned in another, only because the first is perhaps a rich or a *free* Man, and the latter a poor Man, or it may be a *Slave*: – whereas Almighty GOD makes no such Distinctions, for *with him there is no respect of Persons* . . . For when we die, and are laid down in the common Bosom of the Earth, all outward Distinctions vanish . . .

Next to our Children, and Brethren by Blood, our Servants, and especially our Slaves, are certainly in the nearest Relation to us. – They are an immediate and necessary Part of our Households, by whose Labours and Assistance we are enabled to enjoy the Gifts of Providence in Ease and Plenty: – and surely we owe them a Return of *what is just and equal* for the Drudgery and Hardships they go through in our Service. – This Nature and plain unassisted Reason might teach us. – But when we farther consider it as a positive Command of Almighty GOD, who is our as well as their *Master in Heaven* it must needs receive a vast additional Force, and convince us, that our want of Love and Gratitude to these poor serviceable Creatures, must be attended with the highest Dangers; – the Danger of bringing the Wrath and Indignation of our *heavenly Master* upon our Heads . . .

To speak at large upon all the different Branches of the Duty of Masters to their Servants and Slaves, and to shew in every Particular *what is just and equal* towards them, would extend far beyond the Limits of my present Design . . . I shall therefore confine myself to one, and that indeed a principal Branch of this Duty, viz. *The indispensable OBLIGATION every Master and Mistress lies under, of bringing up their SLAVES in the Knowledge and Fear of Almighty GOD.*

* * * *

Excerpt from a sermon that the Reverend Thomas Bacon addressed to slaves:

Knowing, that whatsoever good Thing any Man doth, the same shall he receive of the LORD, whether he be Bond or Free. Ephesians VI. 8.

I am struck with an awful Dread and my Heart Trembles within me, lest any one of these precious Souls, for which our Saviour died, should be lost through my Carelessness.

...

These Considerations, my dear Christian Brethren, have long employed my serious Thoughts, and put me upon various Methods of performing this great and important Duty, which I owe to the *poorest Slave*, as well as the *richest* and most *powerful* among my Parishioners.

...

And now, *my dear BLACK Brethren and Sisters*, I beg that you will listen seriously to what I shall say.—You all know what Love and Affection I have for you, and I do believe that most of you have the like Love for me, as you have always found me ready to serve you, when you wanted my Help.

Now, from this great general Rule, namely, that you are to *do all Service for your Masters and Mistresses, as if you did it for GOD himself*, there arise several other Rules of Duty toward your *Masters* and *Mistresses*, which I shall endeavour to lay in order before you.

...

1. And in the First Place, *You are to be obedient and subject to your Masters in all Things*—For the Rules which GOD hath left us in the Scriptures are these-----*Servants, obey in all Things your Masters according to the Flesh, not with Eye-service as Men-pleasers, but in Singleness of Heart, fearing GOD.* . . .

2. You are *not* to be *Eye-Servants*.—Now *Eye-Servants* are such as will *work hard*, and seem mighty diligent, while they think that any Body is taking Notice of them; but when their *Masters* and *Mistresses* Backs are turned, they are idle, and neglect their Business. . .

..

3. You are to be *faithful and honest to your Masters and Mistresses*, ---*not purloining* (or wasting their Goods or Substance) *but shewing all good Fidelity in all Things.* . . .

4. You are to *serve your Masters with Cheerfulness, and Reverence, and Humility*.—You are to do your Masters Service *with good Will*, doing it as *the Will of GOD, from the Heart*, without any Sauciness or answering again. . . .

Source: Thomas Bacon, *Four Sermons upon the Great and Indispensable Duty of All Christian Masters* . . . With Two sermons preached to a congregation of Black slaves, (London: J. Oliver, 1750, pp. 27-32 and 8-10, 32-37.

1756 to 1818—Slaves Draw Strength From Religion

The following excerpts from Mechal Sobel's *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth Century Virginia* detail ways in which Virginia slaves drew strength from religion in the face of the rigors of slavery

March 2, 1756—Account of Samuel Davies in Hanover County, Virginia

Sundry of them [the Negroes] have lodged all night in my kitchen; and, sometimes, when I have awaked about two or three a-clock in the morning, a torrent of sacred harmony poured into my chamber, and carried my min away to Heaven. In this seraphic exercise, some of them spend almost the whole night.

* * * *

I was told that I was one of the elected children and that I would live as long as God lives. I rejoice every day of my life for I know that I have another home—a house not made with human hands. A building is waiting for me way back in eternal glory and I have no need to fear.

* * * *

1818—Letter from Hannah to her master, Thomas Jefferson

we all ought to be thankful for what he has done for us we ought to serve and obey his commandments that you may set to win the prize and after glory run

Source: Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 184, 201, 215.

January 1758—Elizabeth Jones to Thomas Jones Junior

Elizabeth Jones, the widow of Thomas Jones of Hanover County, indicates that she does not approve of slaves being exposed to “new Light principals” or becoming itinerant preachers in this January 1758 letter to her son.

Dear Tom

I was sorry to find by your Letter that you disapproved so much of my putting Watt to Davis nay it even made so great an impression on me, that I had almost resolved to send him back to you again, but on consideration that he was very young: and that while I live I should be very watchful of there [their] corrupting him with there [their] new Light principals: and if I die I hop you’l take him entirely under your care and direction which is what I shall earnestly desire but I think he would not be safe there, for they are a [subtle crew] and when they find he has quick parts a good membor and a glib Tongue which are all necessary qualification for an Itenerant preacher, they will leave no stone unturned to bring him over....

Source: Elizabeth Jones to Thomas Jones, Jr., January 8, 1758, Roger Jones Family Papers, Library of Congress, reel 3, frame 1501.

1767 to 1785—Black Baptist Preachers

Moses and Gowan Pamphlet were two of a number of black Baptist preachers in the eighteenth century. Two of the runaway preachers detailed in the following advertisements preached in Williamsburg—Jemmy, also known as James Williams, in 1775 and Tim, also known as James Traveller, in 1783.

July 18, 1767

...Runaway, about the 15th of December last...Hannah...She pretends much to the religion the Negroes of late have practised, and may probably endeavour to pass for a free woman, as I understand she intended when she went away, by the Negroes in the neighbourhood. She is supposed to have made for Carolina....

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., July 18, 1767.

September 28, 1767

PRINCE GEORGE, *Sept. 28, 1767.*

RUN AWAY from the subscriber, the 22d of this instant, three slaves, viz. JUPITER, alias GIBB, a Negro fellow, about 35 years of age, about 6 feet high, knock kneed, flat footed, the right knee bent in more than the left, has several scars on his back from a severe whipping he lately had at *Sussex* court-house, having been tried there for stirring up the Negroes to an insurrection, being a great Newlight preacher. ROBIN, about 25 years of age, a stout fellow, about 6 feet high, has a film over one of his eyes, a sore on one of his shins, and is brother to *Gibb*. DINAH, an old wench, very large, near 6 feet high; she has a remarkable stump of a thumb, occasioned by a whitlow, by which the bones of the first joint came out, and is mother to the two fellows. They carried with them a variety of clothes, among the rest an old blue duffil great coat, one bearskin do. a scarlet jacket, and a fine new linen shirt. It is supposed they will endeavour to make their escape to the Southward. Whoever takes up, and conveys to me the above slaves, shall have a reward of 50 s. for each of the fellows, and 20 s. for the wench, if taken in Virginia; if in any other governmnet, 5 l. for each of the fellows, and 40 s. for the wench, paid by

GEORGE NOBLE.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., October 1, 1767.

September 23, 1768

Charles City, Sept. 23, 1768.

RUN away from the subscriber, the 11th inst. A Negro fellow named *Charles*, about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, of a yellow complexion, speaks slow and soft, and is about twenty-seven years of age, an artful cunning fellow; had with him when he went away sundry cloaths, but of what sort more than common I cannot remember, only a bearskin great coat, and a large pair of silver shoe buckles. He is a sawyer and shoemaker by trade, and carried with him his shoemaker's tools. The said fellow reads tolerably well, and is a great preacher, from which I imagine he will endeavour to pass for a freeman. He is outlawed, and I hereby offer a reward of fifteen pounds for his head, severed from

his body, or ten pounds if brought alive. He ran away on the 16th of *February* 1765, and was absent near two years.

CHARLES FLOYD.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., October 27, 1768.

September 23, 1769

Charles City, September 23, 1769.

RUN away from the subscriber, on the 11th inst. A Negro fellow named *Charles*, about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, of a yellow complexion, speaks slow and soft, and is about 27 years of age, an artful cunning fellow, and had with him when he went away, sundry cloaths, but of what sort more than common I cannot tell, only a bearskin great coat, and a large pair of silver shoe buckles. He is a sawyer and shoe maker by trade, and carried with him his shoemaker's tools. The said fellow reads very well, and is a great preacher, from which I imagine he will endeavour to pass for a free man. I hereby offer a reward of three pounds, if taken in the colony, or if out of it five pounds, paid by

SARAH FLOYD.

N.B. The said fellow run away the 16th of *February* 1765, and was absent near two years.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., February 16, 1769; see also *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., April 18, 1771.

January 3, 1771

THREE POUNDS reward if taken in *Virginia*, if out of the colony FIVE POUNDS. RUN away from the subscriber, in *Chesterfield* the 10th of *November*, 1770, a Mulatto lad named PRIMUS, about 18 years old, he squints a little, and has a scar, I think, over the left eye, just in the edge of his hair, which was done when very young and I do not remember whether it is plain to be seen at this day, he chews tobacco very much, walks and runs very upright, is a dark Mulatto, and his face appears rough, with small bumps, he is about 5 feet 5 inches high, of a slender make, though well proportioned; he carried with him a very good snaffle bridle, and his working cloaths are as followeth, viz. two new oznabrig shirts, two pair breeches, one of plains, the other hempen rolls, which were his last year's breeches, a pair of new shoes and plad hose; he may perhaps change his name, and attempt to pass for a free man, or get off in some vessel; I therefore forewarn all persons from carrying him out of the colony, or employing him in any kind of business, and will give the above reward of 3 l. if taken in *Virginia*, or 5 l. if out of the colony, to any person who will apprehend the said runaway, and convey him to me in *Chesterfield*, about 4 miles below *Warwick*. He is a cunning artful lad, and I would advise the person who takes him up, to put hand-cuffs on him to prevent his making his escape, and I will be at the expence of the irons. He is suspected to be about Mr. Allen

Cocke's in Surry county, as he is well acquainted with some of his Negroes and has married into his family. He was a preacher at 16 years of age, for which he has been severely whipped; he sometimes has fits, or I believe rather affects to have them, occasionally, as it suits him.

SETH WARD.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., January 3, 1771.

February 27, 1772

RUN away from the Subscriber, in *Chesterfield*, a likely *Virginia* born Mulatto Lad named PRIMUS; about nineteen or twenty Years of Age, five Feet seven or eight Inches high, squints a little with one Eye, has a Scar on his Forehead, occasioned by a Stroke from a Stick when a Boy, he is very active, runs and walks upright, and is very artful. He has been a Preacher ever since he was sixteen Years of Age, and has done much Mischief in his Neighbourhood. I expect he will endeavour to pass for a Freeman, and perhaps may change his Name. Whoever takes up the said Lad, and conveys him to me, in *Chesterfield*, on the *James River*, or to my Overseer (John Traylor) on *Appamattox River*, shall have THREE POUNDS Reward if he is taken in *Virginia*, and FIVE POUNDS if out thereof, besides what the Law allows.

SETH WARD.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., February 27, 1772; see also, *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., February 27, 1772.

September 8, 1775

RUN away from the Subscriber in Dinwiddie, the 5th day of April last, a dark mulatto man named JEMMY, 5 feet 9 or 10 inches high, well made, has remarkable long feet, the middle toes longer than the rest, which they ride over, has lost part of one of his fore teeth, which occasions the next to it to look blue, is a very artful fellow, and will probably endeavour to pass for a freeman; he is very fond of singing hymns and preaching, and has been about Williamsburg, ever since he went off, passing by the name of James Williams. Whoever apprehends the said slave, and secures him so that I get him again, shall have 40s. reward, and if delivered to me in Dinwiddie, 4 l.

DAVID WALKER.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., September 8, 1775.

March 3, 1777

RUN away...a negro man slave named SAM...he is a carpenter by trade, and is a good cooper. He can read print, pretends to a deal of religion, has been a good fiddler, and is acquainted with many parts of Virginia...

William Green.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., May 9, 1777.

May 1, 1778

RUN away from the subscriber, living in *Brunswick* county, two negro fellows formerly the property of the Rev. *John Dixon*, viz. JACK, a large likely fellow about five feet eleven inches high, dressed in a Virginia cloth jacket and breeches, with a furred cap. NAT, about five feet ten inches high, with thin lips, pretends to be very religious, and is a *Baptist teacher*. They got away last night at *Capahosick* ferry, ironed together. I will give FIFTY DOLLARD reward for each to any person that will secure them in *Williamsburg* jail.

TURNER BYNAM.

N.B. I expect they will be lurking about Mr. *John Dixon*'s quarters in *Gloucester*.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., May 1, 1778.

May 21, 1778

FORTY DOLLARS REWARD,

For apprehending the following slaves, and securing them so that I get them again, or twenty dollars for each, viz. Sam, a negro fellow about thirty five years old, five feet six or seven inches high, his complexion a little yellowish, has thick lips, and a scar from his under lip down his chin, occasioned by the cut of a whipsaw, is fond of liquor, and when drunk talks loud and pert, but the contrary when sober. He had on an old pale blue cloth coat, buckskin breeches, patched in several places, and shoes and stockings; he also carried with him a Dutch blanket, a jacket of Virginia cloth, white filled with black wool, and kersey wove, with red cuffs, and several other clothes. Tom, a white mulatto lad, about eighteen or nineteen years of age, five feet six or seven inches high, his lips thick, and has a surly look, has bad fore teeth, gray eyes, his hair cut on the crown of his head, and of a rusty brown colour, has a clumsy lounging walk, and pretends to be religious. He has with him sundry clothes, a white Virginia cloth jeans coat, a green cloth coat with a blue narrow cape, blue button holes, and metal buttons, an old mixed Wilton coat, two narrow striped Virginia cloth jackets, white breeches, and good shoes and stockings. He is a simple fellow, and I am persuaded was enticed away by Sam. They ran away from me the 19th instant, were seen at *Williamsburg* the 21st, and at *York* on the 23d. I suppose they intend to get on board some vessel, as they said they were watermen, or on board the men of war. Sam is an artful cunning fellow, and if not put in irons when taking will make his escape.

JAMES BELSCHES.

CABIN POINT, May 21, 1778.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., June 19, 1779.

December 31, 1782

TEN POUNDS REWARD.

RAN away from the subscriber, the 22d. inst. a negro man named HARRY, about thirty years of age, five feet eight or nine inches high, of a yellowish complexion, and well made. He is an artful fellow, can read very well, and pretends to be very religious. He took with him a red coloured coat, a blue velvet ditto, and sundry other cloaths that I cannot recollect. As he was raised in King and Queen county, it is probable he is lurking about there now, or in Williamsburg. I forewarn all persons whatsoever from employing or harbouring the said negro at their peril. I will give the above reward to any person that will deliver the said negro to me, or five pounds if secured in any public jail so that I may get him again.

WILLIAM ROAN.

RICHMOND, December 31, 1782.

Source: *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, Nicholson and Prentis, eds., January 18, 1783.

October 25, 1783

Twenty Five Dollars Reward.

RUN away from the subscriber in June, 1782, a likely negro fellow name TIM, about thirty years of age, five feet seven or eight inches high, and well made; he had on and took with him, a Kendall cotton jacket, two osnabrig shirts, a pair of country cloth trowsers, and other clothes that I cannot recollect; it is probable he has changed his clothes before this. He is an artful fellow, has a very smooth way of speaking, and I am told has changed his name to James Traveller, passes for a free man, and pretends to be a Baptist preacher: he has been lately seen near Williamsburg. Any person delivering him to me, shall receive the above reward, and if secured so that I get him again, fifteen dollars.

CATESBY JONES.

Source: *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, Nicholson and Prentis, eds., October 25, 1783.

August 6, 1785

Twenty Six POUNDS REWARD.

RUN away from the subscriber in Louisa county, four negroes, viz. Jack a black fellow, about thirty five years old, five feet six or seven inches high, has lost two of his fore teeth, and limps when he walks, occasioned by having had one of his thighs broke; he has been run away about three years, and some time last spring was taken by a certain John Rancy of Prince George county, and brought within a few miles of home, and broke from him by violence, had on at that time, a blackcloth coat and cloth jacket and breeches, and a very good hat; he is remarkable for affecting religious conversation, and has commonly passed in King William, Charles City, and Prince George counties, and in Williamsburg, by the name of Free Jack. Jane, a young negro woman, about nineteen years of age; she went away last spring, is about five feet four or five inches high, of a yellow complexion, rather slim made; her dress I cannot well discribe. Frank, who went away at the same time, is a boy, about twelve years old, slim made and very well grown, of a brown complexion, brother to the above negro woman. Robin, a likely young fellow, about twenty four years of age, five feet ten or eleven inches high, a long well made fellow, has lost one or more of his fore teeth, or a yellow complexion, has a pouting lip, and had on a negro cotton jacket and breeches, it is very likely he will change his dress, as he has other cloaths. I will give fifteen pounds for Jack, five pounds for Robin, and three pounds each for Jane and Frank, if brought home to me, or half the above rewards if secured (so that I get them again) in any public jail, or other place of security. I hereby forewarn all masters of vessels from carrying the above slaves out of this state, or otherwise employing them.

JOHN NELSON.

Source: *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, Nicholson and Prentis, eds., August 6, 1785.

Michael A. Gomez on "Muslims in Early America."

This essay is a preliminary study of Islam in early African American history. Because of the limited data available at this stage of research, the arguments presented are necessarily more tentative than conclusive; nonetheless, available evidence does permit several statements on Muslims in early America. First of all, their numbers were significant, probably reaching into the thousands. Second, Muslims made genuine and persistent efforts to observe their religion; and even though they perpetuated their faith primarily within their own families, in some cases they may have converted slaves who were not relatives. Third, Islam and ethnicity were important in the process of social stratification within the larger African American society. And finally, cultural phenomena found in segments of the African American community, such as ostensibly Christian worship practices and certain artistic expressions, probably reflect the influence of these early Muslims.

...

The study of Muslims in the American colonial and antebellum periods has yet to be undertaken seriously because materials on the subject are scarce. This scarcity of primary data is a function of two factors. First, colonial and antebellum observers, who were ignorant of the Islamic faith, did not accurately record the variegated cultural expressions of African slaves. The cumulative evidence suggests that such observers could distinguish the Muslims from other slaves but had neither the skills nor the interest to record detailed information about them. The other factor contributing to the scarcity of data is the reluctance of the descendants of these early Muslims to be forthright in answering questions about their ancestors.

...

The evidence for the presence of Muslims in colonial and antebellum America comes from both sides of the Atlantic. On the African side, the historical research provides a reasonably clear picture of the political and cultural milieu out of which American-bound captives emerged. Several different types of sources yield information on the presence and activities of Muslims upon landing in the New world: the ethnic and cultural makeup of the African supply zones; the appearance of Muslim names in the ledgers of slave owners and in the runaway slave advertisements in newspapers; references to Muslim ancestry in interviews with ex-slaves and the descendants of Muslims; stated preferences for certain “types” of Africans by the slaveholding community; recorded observations of Islamic activity; and profiles of certain Muslim figures. Within the last genre are documents written in Arabic by Muslims themselves, a rare phenomenon. While very general statements can be ventured as estimates of the Muslim population in America, the data on this subject are almost entirely qualitative, so that attempts at quantification are only speculative at this point.

...

The appearance of incontestably Muslim names in the runaway notices is relatively infrequent. More commonly, owners seeking the return of their slaves associated them with particular supply zones (e.g., Gambia or Senegal), or they provided an ethnic identity (Mandingo or Fula, for example). In the case of either supposed area of origin or ethnic derivation, one cannot conclusively argue that the individual in question is Muslim, but—given both the African background and the tendency of American planters to conflate Muslims, ethnicity, and area of origin—the probability that many of these people were Muslims is high.

Interestingly, examples of Muslim runaways come overwhelmingly from South Carolina and Georgia, especially along the coast, and also from colonial Louisiana. This is probably because Charleston (and Savannah to a lesser extent) was a preeminent slave port and was surrounded by major slaveholding areas devoted to rice and indigo cultivation. Similarly, rice (and secondarily indigo) was extremely important to early Louisianians for their own use, and when the first two slavers arrived in Louisiana in 1719, they carried “several barrels of rice seed and African slaves who knew how to produce the crop.” That is, slave ships arrived with people from Senegambia, Gold

Coast, and Sierra Leone, who were noted for their skills in this type of agriculture and therefore greatly in demand. In turn, these captives tended to come from islamized areas. Given their preference for slaves from these areas and their distaste for Africans from the Bight of Biafra, South Carolina and Georgia planters paid close attention to ethnicity. In contrast, Virginians were not as discriminating. Their relative lack of interest in ethnicity—rather than an absence of slaves from those locations—may help to explain the scarcity of references by Virginians to Muslims from Senegambia and Sierra Leone.

Source: Michael A. Gomez, “Muslims in Early America,” *Journal of Southern History*, LX (1994), pp. 671-710.

1831—The Autobiography of Omar ibn Seid

Omar ibn Seid was a resident of North Carolina when he wrote his autobiography in 1831. He recounts details about his life in Africa, the events that led to his enslavement, and his Muslim faith.

In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful.—Thanks be to God, supreme in goodness and kindness and grace, and who is worthy of all honor, who created all things for his service, even man’s power of action and of speech.

From Omar to Sheikh Hunter⁶

You asked me to write my life. I am not able to do this because I have much forgotten my own, as well as the Arabic language. Neither can I write very grammatically or according to the true idiom. And so, my brother, I beg you, in God’s name, not to blame me, for I am a man of weak eyes, and of a weak body.

My name is Omar ibn Seid. My birthplace was Fut Tûr,⁷ between the two rivers. I sought knowledge under the instruction of a Sheikh called Mohammed Seid, my own brother, and Sheikh Soleiman Kembeh and Sheikh Gabriel Abdal. I continued my studies twenty-five years, and then returned to my home where I remained six years. Then there came to our place a large army, who killed many men,⁸ and took me, and brought me to the great sea, and sold me into the hands of the Christians, who bound me and sent me on board a great ship and we sailed upon the great sea month and a half, when we came to a place called Charleston in the Christian language. There they sold me

⁶ Omar does not identify “Sheikh Hunter.”

⁷ Futa Toro is located along the middle Senegal valley in West Africa.

⁸ Probably a reference an invasion of Futa Toro in 1806-1807 by the combined armies of Bundu, Kaara, and Khasso.

to a small, weak, and wicked man, called Johnson, a complete infidel, who had no fear of God at all. Now I am a small man, and unable to do hard work so I fled from the hand of Johnson and after a month came to a place called Fayd-il.⁹ There I saw some great houses (churches). On the new moon I went into a church to pray. A lad saw me and rode off to the place of his father and informed him that he had seen a black man in the church. A man named Handah (Hunter?) and another man with him on horseback, came attended by a troop of dogs. They took me and made me go with them twelve miles to a place called Fayd-il, where they put me into a great house from which I could not go out. I continued in the great house (which in the Christian language, they called *jail*) sixteen days and nights. One Friday the jailor came and opened the door of the house and I saw a great many men, all Christians, some of whom called out to me, “What is your name? Is it Omar or Seid?” I did not understand their Christian language. A man called Bob Mumford¹⁰ took me and led me out of the jail, and I was very well pleased to go with them to their place. I stayed at Mumford’s four days and nights, and then a man named Jim Owen,¹¹ son-in-law of Mumford, having married his daughter Betsey, asked me if I was willing to go to a place called Bladen.¹² I said, Yes, I was willing. I went with them and have remained in the place of Jim Owen until now.

...

Before I came to the Christian country, my religion was the religion of “Mohammed, the Apostle of God—may God have mercy upon him and give him peace.” I walked to the mosque before day-break, washed my face and hands and feet. I prayed at noon, prayed in the afternoon, prayed at sunset, prayed in the evening. I gave alms every year, gold, silver, seeds, cattle, sheep, goats, rice, wheat, and barley. I have tithes of all the above-named things. I went every year to the holy war against the infidels. I went on pilgrimage to Mecca, as all did who were able.—My father had six sons and five daughters, and my mother had three sons and one daughter. When I left my country I was thirty-seven years old; I have been in the country of the Christians twenty-four years.—Written A.D. 1831.

Source: “Autobiography of Omar ibn Said, Slave in North Carolina, 1831,” *American Historical Review*, XXX (July 1925):787-795.

Part IX—Slaves in Other Regions of Virginia

⁹ Fayetteville.

¹⁰ Sheriff of Cumberland County, of which Fayetteville is the county seat.

¹¹ James Owen (1784-1865), a member of Congress from North Carolina, 1817-1819, and afterward president of the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad and major-general of the militia.

¹² Bladen, North Carolina.

Selection from Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*

More significantly, over the course of the war the number of slaves in the Upper South increased by natural means. In Maryland the slave population inched up from 80,000 at the beginning of the war to 83,000 in 1783, as did Virginia's—from about 210,000 at the commencement of the war to 236,000 at its end. Despite all of the wartime turbulence that increased mortality and allowed some slaves to escape, the Chesapeake's slave population continued to increase at an annual rate of about 2 percent. In the last quarter of the century, the slave population of the Chesapeake had nearly doubled. As more children were born to slaves on plantations and as some states, following the North, banned importation, the Chesapeake became a net exporter of slaves.

The steady expansion of the slave population in the Upper South during the wartime years allowed many nonslaveholders to enter the slaveholders' ranks. Between 1782 and 1790 the proportion of propertyholders owning slaves increased from 47 to 60 percent in Charles County, Maryland, and it followed a similar path in other rural jurisdictions, so that two-thirds of white householders held slaves. But the greatest growth in slaveholding came not among new entries to the owning class, but among the grandees, whose expanding holdings swelled the population of the great plantation towns. On many estates, the number of slaves exceeded the number of workers needed. George Washington spoke for his class when he observed that it was “demonstratively clear that . . . I have more working Negroes by a full moiety, than can be employed to any advantage in the farming system.”

Enjoying a surfeit of bound labor, Chesapeake planters became the great opponents of the African trade, smugly condemning both Lower South planters who were eager to repopulate their plantations after the disruptions of the war and the northern merchants who were equally eager to supply them. In condemning the international slave trade while embracing the interstate trade, Upper South planters could lament slavery as an evil that had been foisted upon them by their former British overlords while reaffirming their commitment to chattel bondage.

Indeed, the internal slave trade proved to be a source of enormous profit, what one Maryland newspaper called “an almost universal resource to raise money.” Planters not only collected quick cash from the sale of “excess” slaves, much of which was promptly invested in the region's expanding industrial economy, but it also provided them an opportunity to reconfigure their labor force in ways that improved productivity. Edward Lloyd, the largest slaveowner on Maryland's eastern shore, regularly sold a portion of his holdings—generally teenaged children—to keep his plantation workforce at what he believed to be the appropriate level. The practice was adopted by many others, as even the most conscientious masters found it necessary to reduce the size of their holdings periodically. Smaller planters followed suit, although some of them migrated with their slaves to seek new opportunities in the West. Yet others migrated cityward.

The migration to the Virginia piedmont, begun before the war, continued in its aftermath. But the Blue Ridge could not contain the ambitions of the Chesapeake planters and farmers, who spilled into the Great Valley of the Shenandoah and up to the

edge of the Alleghenies. Before long they had vaulted into Kentucky and Tennessee, and some were headed down the Mississippi with slaves in tow. By century's end, slaves whose ancestors had worked the tobacco fields of the Chesapeake for a hundred years or more were growing hemp in Kentucky and Tennessee, cotton in the Lower South, and sugar in the lower Mississippi Valley. In 1790 Kentucky counted 13,000 slaves, almost all of them from the Chesapeake region. Ten years later the total was nearly 40,000. Other slaves could be found in Tennessee, Missouri, and Louisiana. The exodus accelerated in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In all, an estimated 115,000 slaves left the tidewater region between 1780 and 1810. The long-distance migrations from the tidewater to the piedmont and from the seaboard states to Kentucky and Tennessee created havoc as thousands of slave families were dismembered and communities set adrift.

Source: Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1998), pp. 264-265.

* * * *

The Experience of a Slave Woman Named Kate

The experience of a slave woman named Kate, who was imported from Africa to piedmont Virginia at the time of the Revolution, illustrates the changing face of slavery after 1750. Slave life in the rapidly growing piedmont region differed significantly from demographic conditions in the early tidewater: Women and children made up a large proportion of African immigrants, slaves were concentrated on middle-sized plantations, and many slaves had little contact with their white masters.

On Monday, May 25, 1772, a young African woman, one of many slaves aboard the Polly, stepped onto Virginia soil at Bermuda Hundred, a Chesterfield County village close to the confluence of the James and Appomattox rivers. Perhaps she caught a glimpse of Shirley, the imposing brick manor house majestically sitting beyond the James. Would her fate fall there? she may have wondered. Had she arrived in Virginia a half century earlier, she would probably have landed at a wharf along the York River or the Rappahannock, perhaps destined to live the rest of her life in the tidewater region. But in the years after 1750 most Africans brought to Virginia were taken up the James to be sold at ports like Bermuda Hundred. Most were then marched into the interior, where planters eagerly sought their labor on newly settled piedmont plantations and quarters. In this regard, the fate of this African woman was typical.

No doubt, many planters and merchants were drawn to Bermuda Hundred on May 25 by newspaper notices advertising the Polly's 450 "fine healthy SLAVES." Among them was Paul Carrington, holder of several local offices and a member of the House of Burgesses for Charlotte County. He bought 50 slaves with intent to resell them in the Southside. As the king's attorney in several counties and a professional lawyer,

Carrington traveled regularly in this rapidly expanding subregion. He must have been aware of the Southside's insatiable demand for labor. Perhaps he also found encouragement in the slave prices. Richard Hanson, a Petersburg area merchant, expressed surprise at the owners of this consignment, Burnley and Braikenridge, "breaking the price so low £60 to £67.10 privilege. . . as the People expected to give £65 to £67.10 privilege. . . . They likewise abated £3 pr inch in the small slaves." Nevertheless, "considering the sum large and a considerable risque in the health & life of the Slaves," Carrington took on three silent partners. With their financial support he could proceed more securely in the resale of his purchases. Carrington led the Africans to his plantation near the junction of the Roanoke and Little Roanoke rivers in southern Charlotte County. He ultimately kept only one of them for his own use; he estimated her age as eighteen years old; he named her Kate.

Initially, Kate lived at Carrington's home plantation. She was accompanied for at least some months by other Africans from the Polly, since the credit crisis of 1772, the effects of which were felt in Virginia that summer, undoubtedly hampered sales. By the fall, however, Carrington had apparently sold about thirty-five of his Africans, for he then bought winter clothing for only fourteen. What ties Kate developed to her shipmates cannot be determined, nor can the number of men, women, or children in this dwindling group. More critical to Kate's future were the five adult slaves who already could call this plantation home. Two were men, both named Will. One, aged about forty-two, had been purchased about a decade earlier; the other, at least half his age, only two years before. The three adult women included Barbara, acquired five years earlier and, at age twenty-four, the mother of a two-year-old daughter named Sarah; Amey, given as a young girl to Carrington by his father-in-law Clement Read, now twenty-five years of age and the mother of three boys, Lewis, Hampton, and Amos; and Nell, born in July 1754, now almost eighteen, about the same age as the African newcomer. Kate lived among these slaves—some Africans, some Virginians—for about a year and a half.

By residing on the manor plantation Kate came into close contact with whites. When she arrived, Carrington, a widower, was raising five children—two girls and three boys—who ranged in age from eight to sixteen years. It is impossible to gauge the impact on Kate of these early encounters with her owner, his children, and white visitors. What is clear is that this close contact with her master and his family was short-lived.

By November 1773 Carrington had transferred Kate to his Twittys Creek plantation a mile or so up the Little Roanoke from his home. There she joined eight other adults: five men and three women. One of the women was an African named Dicey, who, in the spring of 1763, had been judged by the Lunenburg court to be twelve years old. Since that time, she had given birth to three children, two of whom had died. Perhaps she helped Kate bring her first child into the world, a son named Byas, born in February 1774, twenty-one months after his mother's arrival in Virginia, the father unknown. Another woman, Belinda, had turned seventeen in the fall of 1773. She, too, was pregnant and would give birth to her first child, Ryly, one month before Kate. The age of Tabb, the remaining woman, was never recorded, but she was probably middle-aged, since she was exempt from field labor (being put instead to spinning) and never bore a child while a Carrington slave. She had been purchased, along with two other Twittys Creek slaves—Robin, the thirty-three-year-old head of the quarter, and Toby, aged twenty-five—from Benjamin Harrison in 1770. The other men at this quarter

included Hampton, about twenty-eight years old, purchased from Edward Branch in late 1770; George, nearly thirty-four, who came into Carrington's possession in the fall of 1767; and Jack, in his early thirties, possibly an African, bought from the merchant Thomas Tabb in September 1762. All nine adults therefore had been in Carrington's service no more than a few years, a decade or so at most.

Kate's transfer to Twittys Creek apparently removed her from continual contact with whites. With the possible exception of one year, Carrington did not employ a white overseer at this quarter. In fact, he soon referred to it as "Robins." When he gave one thousand acres to his youngest son, Paul Carrington, Jr., in July 1786, the land included a parcel on the east side of the Little Roanoke above Horsepen Creek, including the mouth of Twittys Creek "and the plantation called Robins." Robin himself became the possession, but not yet the property, of the younger Carrington. By January 1782 Kate, who seems to have remained at Robin's, was the mother of three more children; two girls, Lucy and Anitta, and a boy, Abram. Together with Byas, Kate and her three younger children most likely passed into the ownership of Paul Carrington, Jr., at his marriage in August 1785. At that point she disappeared from the senior Carrington's records.

The story of Kate's first decade in piedmont Virginia is tantalizingly inconclusive at its most critical junctures. How had this young African woman withstood the horrors of the Middle Passage? How did she view her new surroundings and master? How did she react to the sale of her shipmates? What friendships did she strike up with the slaves on Carrington's home plantation and Twittys Creek quarter? Did she form a special relationship with Nell at the former residence and Dicey at the latter? Was it an African from the Polly, one of the two men named Will at the home quarter, or some other person who fathered her first child? Who fathered her next three? There are no answers to these questions. It is impossible to penetrate the veil of silence.

We can, however, place the known facts of Kate's life in broader context. For one thing, Kate was part of a large stream of people flowing into the piedmont region. An understanding of this remarkably rapid settlement, which shifted the center of black life from tidewater to piedmont about the time Kate arrived in Virginia, will enlarge her tale. Second, it is not too farfetched to speak of the Africanization of the piedmont during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Kate played a small role in that broader story. Third, Kate's life encourages us to explore the demographic profile of the piedmont slave population. While large numbers of women and children appeared late among tidewater slaves, they were important to piedmont settlements from the first. Finally, the setting that awaited most of the region's black settlers will be investigated. It will be argued that remarkably early in piedmont settlement most slaves found themselves on middle-sized estates, with a fair degree of autonomy from whites. Kate's situation was not unusual. Thus we move beyond Kate's story to explore the people of a region and the emergence of black community life.

...

What, then, is the import of Kate's story when placed in this larger context? In some respects, Africans like Kate who reached the piedmont in the third quarter of the eighteenth century replicated many of the experiences of their predecessors in the tidewater during the previous half-century. As before, these newcomers contributed to

extremely rapid population growth: in certain places at certain times, the adult slave population was heavily African; as waves of immigrants moved into the region, imbalances between men and women occurred, making stable family life difficult to achieve; and, in the early years of settlement, most new arrivals resided on small plantations and quarters.

Thus there were similarities between this later piedmont and earlier tidewater slave experiences, yet the differences are more striking. Even the composition of African immigrants seems to have changed. African girls, and perhaps women, formed a larger proportion of newcomers than ever before. Because of this, and because of a similar trend among creoles, the numbers of slave men and women moved rapidly toward equality. In addition, children formed a significant proportion of the piedmont's slave population from the beginning. The opportunities for family life were therefore not negligible. Moreover, women and children were important to production in the piedmont at an early stage in the region's development. Whether they gained any material advantages from the early assumption of these field work responsibilities is an open question. Finally, before long, most Africans and creoles found themselves on middle-sized, not small, estates, often in neighborhoods where many other slaves resided. At the same time, the chances to live beyond the control of a white master were greatest in the earliest years of piedmont settlement, in marked contrast to the tidewater pattern.

Kate's situation can hardly be described as fortunate. Nevertheless, she and many other immigrants like her at least enjoyed more favorable demographic and social conditions than had their predecessors in the tidewater. Newcomers like Kate discovered it much easier to find a mate; they had more children; they were less isolated from fellow slaves; they played a central role in the primary productive activity of the region, which may have afforded them some advantages; and some even lived beyond the purview of whites. The demographic constraints that existed for generations in the oldest tidewater counties disappeared in a matter of decades on the frontier.

Source: Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls, "Slaves in Piedmont Virginia, 1720-1790," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XLVI (April 1989): 211-215, 246-247.

"Sustaining the Bonds of Kinship in a Trans-Appalachian Migration, 1790-1811"

Gail S. Terry explores how slaves owned by John Breckinridge and Mary "Polly" Cabell Breckinridge adapted to their relocation from Albemarle County to Kentucky at the turn of the century. John Breckinridge, who later served as a United States senator from Kentucky and attorney general of the United States, came from a prominent Shenandoah Valley family and Polly Breckinridge from a powerful Piedmont clan. Their marriage in 1785 had combined slaves from the respective families under a new roof. The excerpts below illustrate how individual slaves resisted the resettlement before slowly adjusting to their new situation.

The years immediately preceding the first migration to Kentucky in 1790 proved disruptive ones for the Breckinridge and Cabell slaves because of the transfer of individuals to these newly created households [formed by marriages within the two families]. But even as they were being dispersed and recombined or reassembled with

slaves acquired from other sources, members of the original Cabell and Breckinridge slave communities retained some contact with each other. They had lived in their earlier locations long enough to establish ties of friendship and kinship; authorized and unauthorized visits sustained these ties, as did some shifting of slave personnel among the white households. The Cabell slaves included several skilled boatmen who moved tobacco and other produce down the James River to Richmond, and these men may have conveyed information from slaves attached to one household to those in another. In spite of the process of dispersal, the Cabell and Breckinridge slave communities retained a notable degree of cohesion.

Cohesion did not necessarily translate into stability or satisfaction for individual slaves, however. The reaction of John Breckinridge's slave George provides some insight into the effect of this redistribution of slaves on individual blacks. In 1772 John's father had bequeathed the young slave to his twelve-year-old son, and by 1785 George and ten other blacks had lived and worked on the Breckinridge family farm for more than a dozen years. In the early 1780s, he accompanied his master on journeys to college in Williamsburg and to the General Assembly in Richmond, but after serving as an escort, George always returned to the farm in Botetourt County. George responded to the wrenching changes that John Breckinridge's marriage brought by running away. He returned to the Botetourt farm, where John's mother sheltered him for nearly three months. She finally allowed George to return to Albemarle with the man John had sent to fetch him, but she pleaded with her son not to whip the slave because she had promised that he would not and because running away marked George's "first offense."

George's story reveals both the intertwining of the lives of masters and slaves and the extent to which they experienced the same events differently. For John Breckinridge, the move to Albemarle County represented opportunity—the chance to establish his own family, household, and farm and to further a promising legal career. For George, it meant disruption; it removed him from the community where he had grown up, from friends, and perhaps from family. Running away reunited him with this community. Breckinridge interpreted the incident as a deliberate attempt to ruin him: "If the ungrateful rascal has [run away] I can never forgive him. He has left my Harvests ready to cut & my corn in weeds . . . He has almost broke me up after my treating him so kindly as I have always done since he came" to Albemarle. For her part, Breckinridge's mother tried to use the incident to her own advantage; she sheltered George in the hope that her son would come to retrieve him and to visit her. For each of the three principals involved, the incident had a different meaning, and each tried to shape events to his or her own advantage, even though their society did not accord them equivalent powers of agency. The same dynamic emerges in a close examination of the migration to Kentucky.

...

Over the course of his lifetime John Breckinridge acquired slaves from several sources. He inherited a few from his parents; he purchased a few; and he received many from his wife's father. Joseph Cabell's death in Virginia in 1798 triggered a redistribution of his remaining slaves and initiated another migration of Cabell slaves to Kentucky. In his will Cabell added to and confirmed previous gifts of slaves to his son and sons-in-law

and reserved the thirty-five slaves not given to them for the use of his widow, Mary, during her lifetime. Shortly after his death, however, Cabell's heirs persuaded Mary Cabell to give up her life interest in most of these slaves. Under the terms of the agreement with her son and sons-in-law, she retained the right to choose five slaves to serve her, and John Breckinridge gained an additional eight slaves: Allen, Mike, Isabel and her son Jacob, Abram, and Violet and her children Bill and Sarah.

Violet was among the five slaves Mary Cabell chose to keep with her, and Violet's subsequent experience illustrates the pain and emotional distress that owners' migration decisions could cause for individual slaves, even when a nucleus of the old slave community was transferred to a new location. In February 1799 Allen, Mike, Isabel, Abram, and Bill made their way from the Cabell place to the house of one of John Breckinridge's brothers in Botetourt. By then, Isabel was more than seven months' pregnant, and not until four months later, after she had given birth, did the group set out for Kentucky. Missing from the migrants were Violet and her daughter Sarah because, according to Mary Cabell, "violet would not agree to part with her. so then i proposed for her to go with her daughter . . . however she said she would not go to Cantucky nor let Sarah untill I deyed unless Stephen her husband could go with them."

Violet's declaration provoked a battle of wills with John Breckinridge and his kin that lasted for more than a decade. Initially, the Cabell men in Virginia arranged for Breckinridge to purchase Stephen from Nicholas Cabell, their uncle and Mary Cabell's neighbor. John rejected this solution, however, and Violet, Sarah, and Stephen remained among the Virginia Cabells. In 1803, when Polly Cabell Breckinridge and her children visited her mother and then returned to Kentucky, Violet and Sarah again stayed behind, although Mary Cabell later regretted her decision not to force Sarah to go with them. In 1807 Sarah, still in Virginia, had her first child.

Some time after this date, Violet's situation changed. Polly Breckinridge's daughter, visiting her Cabell relatives in Virginia, wrote to her mother that "Aunt Violet has just made me open My letter to send love to you her daughters & sons & husband & to say if you will only let her go out [to Kentucky] she has Money enough to be on her expences & that she is very anxious to go out & do what she can for you." Violet had had at least one son, Bill, in Kentucky since 1799, and by 1807 her daughter Jenny was there as well. Precisely when and how Stephen came to be in Kentucky remain undetermined, but clearly his presence there changed his wife's mind about moving.

At some time during their mother's last illness, about 1810, Elizabeth Cabell Lewis wrote from Virginia to her sister Polly Breckinridge in Kentucky. "I am glade to find from your letter that Sarah & her children are to be taken from here," Elizabeth confided. "[S]he is one of the most indifferent creatures I ever saw. She has two fine children the second is very sick I have it at the house & am trying to Nurse it up a little. Old Violet is here also. She says she is sick, that Mrs. Hoyle [the woman to whom Violet had been hired out] is very kind to her, but that she will not be confined so much for no flesh, that she can prove she is free & so she is one of the most provoking old creatures i ever saw. do when she come[s] out put her to live with her daughter Jenny & task her to cotton so much In a day. She will ruin all your house servants if she stays near them don't let her stay near the house, you may rely on this."

Elizabeth Cabell Lewis's diatribe against Violet and her daughter should not obscure Violet's unhappiness at being separated from the majority of her family. She

tried various strategies to get to Kentucky. First she issued a plea to Polly Cabell Breckinridge; then she tried to establish her right to freedom; and, finally, perhaps she simply made herself disagreeable to Elizabeth Lewis in the hope that she would send her west. After Mary Cabell's death in 1811, her daughters continued to make plans to transport Violet to Kentucky, but these arrangements fell through. The next year Polly Cabell Breckinridge's daughter, visiting in Virginia, tried to set up an escort to Kentucky for Violet, but she failed. In the summer of 1812, Violet was still in Virginia vowing that she would not "go from here to anywhere but to Kentucky." Whether she actually got there remains undetermined.

Her status as a slave deprived Violet of the ability to decide where she would live, but she, like George, used the avenues open to her to try to influence those who could make that decision. Violet's most effective leverage came from her relationship with Mary Cabell. Although the source and duration of the bond between the two women remain obscure, it clearly enabled Violet to persuade her mistress to keep her and Sarah in Virginia while Stephen was there. Mary Cabell apparently lacked the power to keep Stephen in Virginia, however; and Violet's persuasive abilities had limits. By the time Stephen was transferred to Kentucky, Cabell's health had begun to fail, and Violet had less success negotiating with Mary's daughter Elizabeth Cabell Lewis. Polly Cabell Breckinridge and her daughter proved more responsive to Violet's requests, but they also failed to effect an immediate transfer to Kentucky. John Breckinridge had died in 1806, and as a widow Polly had the legal authority to bring Violet to Kentucky, but she certainly did not act promptly.

...

More than just "chords of memory" bound at least a few of the Cabell-Breckinridge slaves to their trans-Appalachian kin. A process of serial migration among families in their owners' extended kin network enabled some slaves to retain ties of kinship and friendship in Kentucky. In other cases, mistresses and slaves cooperated in sustaining connections among both white and black families by passing along information in letters or by word of mouth during visits. The migration of the Cabell-Breckinridge slaves represented only one of several possible experiences of forced migration in the early republic, and it certainly ranked among the more favorable of them. After the first decade of the nineteenth century, the domestic slave trade carried increasing numbers of African Americans into the interior, and after 1820, the Commonwealth of Kentucky became a net exporter of slaves to the Lower South. The history of the Cabell-Breckinridge migration remains a single story imbedded in the broader history of the territorial expansion of slavery in the United States. This migration's wider significance lies in what it adds to scholars' understanding of the ways that individual masters, mistresses, and slaves hammered out the particulars of slavery in a variety of contexts, including migration, and in what it reveals about the means by which slaves tried to transcend an oppressive system.

Source: Gail S. Terry, "Sustaining the Bonds of Kinship in a Trans-Appalachian Migration, 1790-1811," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 102 (1994): 460-462, 465-467, 476.

Part X—The Participation of Slaves in the Economy

Selection from Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*

The time slaves spent working their owners' crop meant time lost tending their own gardens and provision grounds. The slaves' independent economy shriveled as the great planters expanded their domain. Whereas seventeenth-century planters had gladly allowed slaves to feed and clothe themselves, the new grandees—eager to cloak themselves in the patriarch's mantle and to maximize the time slaves spent in their fields—issued weekly rations and seasonal allotments of clothing, taking pride in the largess they bestowed on their slaves. Plantation slaves generally maintained gardens, raised barnyard fowl, and hunted and fished to supplement their allowance. But few cultivated provision grounds where they grew tobacco in competition with their owners, or kept hogs or cattle. If they did, they did so illegally, for in 1692 the Virginia legislature ordered owners to confiscate “all cattle, hoggs marked of any negro or other slave mark, or by any slave kept.” When planters failed to act, the slaves' estate became the property of the parish church wardens and “forfeited to the use of the poore.”

Under such conditions, the slaves' economy only rarely reached beyond the boundaries of their owners' estates. Chesapeake slaves traded among themselves and occasionally offered some barnyard fowl to their owners, who—in a grand gesture—bestowed a few coins along with injunctions about frugality and the like. Those slaves who traded independently generally did so clandestinely, shrinking the distance between legitimate trade and theft—at least in their owners' eyes. As far as is known, none followed Emanuel Driggus's lead to request—and receive—judicial authorization to trade on their own. Instead, slaves became “the general Chicken merchants” of the Chesapeake. Their petty trade could rarely generate the income necessary to purchase freedom, as had Francis Payne and John Graweere in an earlier age.

...

Although the slaves' economy never equaled the level achieved in the seventeenth century when slaves traded in cattle and tobacco, it grew substantially after midcentury, with slaves dealing among themselves, with their owners, and with white nonslaveholders for cash and kind.¹³ Once again, planters complained about itinerant traders dealing with slaves and encouraging theft. The new laws that followed only reiterated the old and did little to address the planters' lament beyond documenting the reinvigoration of the slaves' economy.

The proceeds of their independent production permitted slaves to enrich their families' diet and expand their wardrobes. They purchased clothes beyond the standard issue of shoes, shirt and trousers or shift, and waistcoat. To prevent his slaves from

¹³ For information about the participation of slaves in the Williamsburg economy see the sections on Foodways Programs, the Governor's Palace, the Randolph House, and the Wythe House.

“buying liquor with their fowls,” one Virginia planter “obliged them to buy linnen” to make their clothes. It was an ingenious scheme, and yet another way to put the slaves’ independent production in the planters’ service, but, much to their chagrin, slaveholders were astounded to find their slaves dressing the gentleman, complete with watches in their pockets, powdered wigs on their heads, and silver buckles on their shoes. Although slaveholders appreciated and profited from the work of the skilled, many came to regret the creation of a new generation of slaves who, in the words of one slaveowner, had “an extra measure of pride” or, as another slaveholder expressed it, had “more Sense than Honesty.” A visitor to North Carolina found that slave men used their earnings to “buy Hats, and other Necessaries for themselves, as *Linnen, Bracelets, Ribbons*, and several other Toys for their Wives and Mistresses.”

The slaves’ economy made for a new sociability that transformed relations between master and slave and among slaves. Slaves presented chickens, eggs, melons, items of handicraft, and even small gifts to their friends, families, and occasionally owners. Such exchanges marked a leveling up of relations, as even the greatest paternalist understood that when their slaves presented them with a gift, the terms of the relationship shifted, however subtly. But if gifting strengthened the hand of some slaves in dealing with their owners, it left others at a loss. Indeed, participation in the exchange economy created new divisions within slave society, as access to the market distinguished the haves from the have-nots.

Source: Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1998), pp. 119, 137-138.

Selection from Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter’s Grove*

One can get some sense from the Burwell family account books of when, and eventually of how thoroughly, the Carter’s Grove slaves took advantage of growing opportunities for petty trade with the master and other neighboring gentry families, and surely also with townspeople, slaves residing on adjacent plantations, and free black and poor white families in the area. The Burwell records are inadequate for tracing the early development of this trade. By the late 1770s and early 1780s, when Nathaniel Burwell II began recording frequent small cash transactions with his bondspeople, it is clear that the slaves were already active and knowledgeable, though still tightly circumscribed, participants in a lively local cash-based trading economy.

This was surely a development that neither Robert (“King”) Carter nor even his grandson Carter Burwell envisioned, and one of which they would likely not have approved. Only on rare occasions in the late 1740s and early 1750s did Carter Burwell trust any of his slaves with cash to cover incidental expenses they might incur while traveling or conducting business. The £2. 3d. given to “my Negroes at Shenandoa” in 1745 and 10s. 10d. given to Pompey at Neck of Land in 1749 were exceptional. So were tips of 1s. 3d. paid to “Major Taliaferro’s boy” in 1745 and the “governor’s coach man” two years later. Burwell also seldom trucked with neighbor’s slaves. His accounts record only 7s. 11d. paid to “Potter’s Bob” for chickens and ten shillings paid to neighbor William Diggs’s blacks for unspecified goods or services. From Carter Burwell’s records

one would suppose that the slaves seldom if ever managed to trade independently in goods and almost never laid hands on any cash.

Had Lucy Burwell's household accounts survived, however, we might have a somewhat different perspective. The 16s. 1d. Carter Burwell paid to his brother Robert's cook in 1749 and the 3s. 9d. he paid the next year to the Carter's Grove cook to cover her purchases of fowls for the family table are likely the tip of the iceberg. Other period plantation records suggest the beginnings of a regular, owner-sanctioned trade in fowls and eggs between neighborhood slaves and gentry households. The archaeological evidence from Rich Neck and Kingsmill points to the same conclusion: area slaves were acquiring consumer goods and accumulating hard currency by one means or another. Probably the Carter's Grove and Kingsmill workers took advantage of the increasingly frequent trips they made to Williamsburg to deliver or peddle produce for their owner to trade on their own account.

Years of relaxed oversight between Carter Burwell's death and Nathaniel Burwell II's majority likely opened up other opportunities, although executor William Nelson's accounts offer little corroborating evidence. However, even the little suggests much. Would Nelson have handed over cash to Billy, Daniel, Tom, and three unidentified slaves to cover their traveling expenses from Carter's Grove to western quarters on Bull Run in Prince William County or to the Frederick quarters on the Shenandoah if he was not certain that these men already knew the value of a coin and the customary charges they should pay for food, forage, and ferriage along the way? The domestics who were hired out to work in Williamsburg also would have had more opportunities to learn about cash transactions, to earn money by working on their own time, and to collect tips than did those living in the country.

Nathaniel Burwell II's daybooks confirm the extent to which the Carter's Grove slaves became involved in the local economy as the Revolution ended and the relatively sophisticated level of financial knowledge that some had acquired. Between 1775 and 1786 he recorded cash transactions with thirty-four of his own bondsmen and women. Burwell also entrusted cash to Billy and Bristol from King's Creek and to Hugh Nelson's Jack. Almost all of the individuals with whom Nathaniel recorded transactions lived on the home plantation, and most of them were wagoners, millers, artisans, or domestics. Whatever trading networks field workers on outlying quarters developed seem not to have involved many exchanges with the master.

Nathaniel's records provide no more than a glimpse into the home farm workers' trading activities, because he was often absent in the west, and his wives usually handled the housekeeping accounts. From the beginning of their marriage, Nathaniel regularly handed over cash to Susannah to pay for produce and other household goods she purchased from slaves or free peddlers who brought their wares to Carter's Grove. Surely Nathaniel's second wife, Lucy, controlled a similar housekeeping fund, as well as her share of proceeds from the quarter dairies. Susannah's and Lucy's household accounts would likely document an increasing trade between Carter's Grove slaves and others from neighboring farms with the plantation mistress in poultry, eggs, fish and shellfish, fruits, and vegetables.

The master's dealings were not restricted to simple exchanges of a few pence or shillings for produce the slaves sold Burwell or for goods that they bought from him. Hard coin remained in short supply, and Nathaniel sometimes resorted to borrowing

money from domestics Nelly, Old Nanny, and Billy to cover small, unexpected household purchases. He also made small loans—usually repaid within a month or two—to Nanny, Sukey, Caesar the barber, and Harry to finance independent purchases. In addition, Burwell regularly trusted some of the men, including Sam, Joe, Tom, and Daniel, with cash to cover their expenses en route when they left the county, sometimes on journeys of several weeks. A few of the slaves began retailing goods for the master, for which the customers paid cash on the spot. Occasionally some of the bondsmen handled several pounds' worth of cash at a time. Amos at Mill Quarter, for example, was selling butter for cash in 1778, and Cyrus collected £5 2s. for cider he marketed in 1783. In addition, in the 1780s, whenever the white miller was absent, miller Gregory collected payments from customers who brought grain to be ground at Burwell's mill or else came to purchase flour, cornmeal, cider, or whisky.

Thus, between the 1740s and 1780s, many of the Burwell slaves had acquired an accurate knowledge of the customary prices of locally traded goods and services, the values of the various denominations of European coins periodically in circulation, and Anglo-American conventions regarding the lending and borrowing of money. For people who theoretically could own nothing, this knowledge surely was gained over the years from some combination of observation, barter transactions sanctioned or at the least tolerated by the owner, and unsanctioned trades in goods or cash negotiated outside the view of owners or supervisors. By the 1780s, Nathaniel Burwell apparently was forced to accept his slaves' incongruent, independent participation in a market economy as an accomplished fact. Perhaps, by becoming more involved in their internal trading, he hoped to maintain some control over it.

Source: Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community*, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1997), pp. 183-186.

1758 to 1817—The Records of John Glassford and Company

The records for the store that John Glassford and Company operated in Colchester, Virginia, between 1758 and 1817 indicate that several slaves made purchases. Jack, a slave who belonged to Mr. Linton's estate, bought a wide range of items—hinges, nails, liquor, fabric, thread, hats, stockings, meat (beef and pork), powder and shot for his gun, sugar, salt—at the store between November 1760 and August 1769. Jack sold eggs, hired out his horse, built coffins and furniture, repaired buildings and bridges, ran errands, and did masonry work to pay for his purchases.

The following excerpt from the records kept by John Glassford and Company details Jack's debts and credits between November 1760 and December 1761.

Negro Jack belonging to Mr Lintons Estate

Dr
To Balance from Liber A

179

1.7.2½

Nov. 9 To [?] Rum 17/6 11th bro: threds 1/9 15th To 1 pint Rum 1/	0.4.3
Feb'y 3 To ½ Gallon Rum 3/ March 20th to ¼ Rum 2/	
May 30th ¼ Rum 1/9	0.6.9
Aug ^t 22 To ¼ Rum 1/6 2lb Sugar 1/6 30th To 2 old stripd &	
flowred Lawn 14/	0.17.0
Sept ^f 16 To 2 [?] HL hinges 3/ 250 3d Nails 1/3 1 yd ferret 6d 1 Bottle	
Turlingtons Balsam 8/6	0.13.3
Decm ^f 4 To 4lb Shott 2/ 4 flints 8d	0.2.8
	£3.11.1½

Cr	
Sept ^f 16 By Cash 145	0.5.0
By House Expences 1 Doz & 9 Eggs 159	0.0.10½
By Ballance to Liber G	3.5.3
	£3.11.1½

folio 159

Housekeeping Expences ...	
Nov. 21 To Negro Jack for 1 Doz & 9 Eggs 114	0.0.10½

Source: John Glassford & Co. Records for Virginia, Colchester Store Ledger B (1760-1761), folio 114; originals at the Library of Congress (CWF Microfilm M-1442.8).

Sue, a slave owned by Mr. Grayson, also had an account with John Glassford and Company between November 1760 and December 1761.

Negro Sue belong to Mr Grayson	
To Balance from ledger A	0.11.0
Nov 22 To 1 Chest Lock 1/3	0.1.3
	£0.12.3

Cr	
Dec 10 By Housekeeper Expenses 16 Chickgs & 3 Fowls 5	0.6.10
Dec By Ditto for sundry Cabbages 159	0.5.5
	£0.12.3

folio 5 Housekeeping Expenses	
1760 Dec 10 To Negro Sue for 16 Chickings & 3 Fowls 79	0.6.10

folio 159 Housekeeping Expenses	
1761 Dec 29 To Negro Sue for Cabbages	0.5.5

Source: John Glassford & Co. Records for Virginia, Colchester Store Ledger B (1760-1761), folio 79; originals in the Library of Congress (CWF Microfilm M-1442.8).

The Material World

This section includes information on Material Culture of Slaves, African-American Archaeology, and Slave Housing in the Eighteenth Century.

* * * *

Martha Katz-Hyman—“In the Middle of this Poverty Some Cups and a Teapot”:
Furnishing the African-American Presence at Colonial Williamsburg

Curators and historians use many sources to learn about the material culture of eighteenth-century Virginia. Most of these concern themselves exclusively with objects purchased and used by its European residents, but information about slaves' material world is found in many of the same sources. These sources fall into four major categories: legal records, personal records, business records, and archeological recoveries.

Because slavery was a function of legal status, public documents contain a great deal of information about slaves and their ownership but relatively little information about material goods. Probate inventories, which are the primary documents in planning Exhibition Building furnishings, are of limited use in this instance because they do not, except in very rare cases, record slaves' personal property¹⁴ but rather record what

¹⁴ Slaves were legally the property of their owners and technically could not own property themselves. However the fact that slaves' personal property does not appear in probate inventories is probably due to one of the following factors: 1) slaves' personal goods were considered by both blacks and whites to belong to the slaves and therefore not subject to inventory; 2) white owners felt that the items owned by their slaves were of no value and therefore did not include them in probate inventories; or 3) slaves' personal items were included in the value listed for the slave himself/herself.

masters provided for their overseers or for slaves to do their work.¹⁵ Some masters left a favored slave a bed, tools of their trade, money, or even their time, in their wills, but this was unusual.¹⁶ Trial proceedings, primarily those from the surviving records of Virginia's oyer and terminer courts, reveal, through the lists of stolen goods, what slaves thought were valuable and useful goods to steal.¹⁷

Personal records—letters, diaries, and travelers' accounts—have a wealth of information about slaves, their lives, and their material world. Although seen through the eyes of white observers, they give important information that is not available in any other format. In a letter written February 10, 1773, Thomas Everard ordered “4 Strong Great Coats for Negros 2 for men about the House and 2 for Lads Postillions” from merchant John Norton in London. Joseph Ball, a Virginian living in London in the 1740s, wrote often to his nephew and plantation overseer, Joseph Chinn, with detailed instructions regarding the slaves on his plantation, “Morattico,” in Richmond County. In February 1744, he directed that in case of illness, “let them [the slaves] ly by a Good fire; and have Fresh Meat & broth; and blood, and vomit them, as you shall think proper; though I think both to be proper in most Cases. I would have no Doctor, unless in very Violent Cases: They Generally do more harm than Good.” George Washington was concerned with his slaves' clothing, for in 1788 he asked Clement Biddle in Philadelphia to purchase “German and British Oznaburgs of the best quality, suitable for making Negroes shirts and shifts.”¹⁸

15 See, for example, the probate inventory for James Shields, taken between December 1750 and January 1751, which included “At the Quarter,” “45 head of old Cattle; 13 Yearlings and 5 Calves; 10 Head of Hogs; A parcel of Carpenters tools; 1 Bed & furniture; 6 Dishes; 1 Iron Pot; 2 Mares and 2 Colts; 1 Whip Saw; 1 Cross cut Do. [ditto]; 1 Gun; 1 Wheat Sifter; 5 Milk Pans; 1 Grindstone; a Parcel of Coopers Tools; 1 Case & 11 Bottles for Do.; 25 Negros; a Parcel of Corn Tobacco and Pease.” No value was given. [York County Wills & Inventories 20, 1745-1759, pp. 198-200]

16 Charles Smith, the minister of Portsmouth Parish in Norfolk County, wrote the following in his will, written in 1771 and recorded in 1773: “...I give unto my Grand Daughter Abigail Taylor Five Hundred & Twenty Pounds Currency & my Mollatto woman Mary & my New Bible...I Give unto my Mollatto woman Mary three Months of Her Time fifty Pounds in Money and my Old Bible with the Spinning and Weaving Gears and implements in or about the house with her Clothes &c.” [Norfolk County Records, Will Book No. 2, 1772-1788, p. 11, CWF Microfilm M-1365-21]

17 For example, see the proceedings of the trial of Will and Cambridge, who were found guilty on February 14, 1747, of breaking and entering and stealing two pieces of linen from Thomas Hornsby, 12 pairs of cotton stockings and 24 silk purses from Armistead Burwell, and nine pairs of shoes from the Honorable William Gooch, Esq. [York County Court Order Book, February 14, 1747, OW (19), 489-90]

18 Thomas Everard, Williamsburg, to John Norton and Sons, London, February 10, 1773, in Frances Norton Mason, ed. *John Norton and Sons: Merchants of London and Virginia; Being the Papers from their Counting House for the Years 1750 to 1795*

Frances Baylor Hill of “Hillsborough” in King and Queen County, Virginia, wrote in her diary in June, 1797, that she and her mother “went over the river to see Phill who was very ill when we got over he died in about an hour, his poor wife was greatly distress'd I never was sorry'r for a negro in my life.” Some of these journals also record payments made to slaves for goods and services. Philip Vickers Fithian, tutor to the children of Robert Carter of Nomoni Hall in Westmoreland County, noted in January, 1774, that he “gave Martha who makes my Bed, for a Christmas Box, a Bit,...I gave to John also, who waits at Table & calls me to Supper a Bit.” Francis Taylor, an Orange County, Virginia, planter, noted in his diary many monetary transactions in which he bought chickens and produce from his slaves and paid them for extra work.¹⁹

Travelers to the New World, especially those who visited Virginia and other southern states in the years right after the American Revolution, did not hesitate to express their views on slaves and slavery. Very often these views included descriptions of slaves and their living conditions. Julian Niemcewicz, a close friend of Polish general and patriot Tadeusz Kosciuszko, wrote the following during a visit to Mount Vernon in 1798:

We entered one of the huts of the Blacks, for one can not call them by the name of houses. They are more miserable than the most miserable of the cottages of our peasants. The husband and wife sleep on a mean pallet, the children on the ground; a very bad fireplace, some utensils for cooking, but in the middle of this poverty some cups and a teapot. . . . A very small garden planted with vegetables was close by, with 5 or 6 hens, each one leading ten to fifteen chickens. It is the only comfort that is permitted them; for they may not keep ducks, geese, or pigs. They sell the poultry in Alexandria and procure for themselves a few amenities.²⁰

(Richmond: Dietz Press, 1937), pp. 300-301; Joseph Ball, London, England, to Joseph Chinn, Virginia, Ball Letterbook, 1743-59, February 18, 1743/44, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (microfilm M-21, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation); George Washington to Clement Biddle, April 4, 1788, in George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources*, 39 vols., ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931-44), 29:458.

19 Frances Baylor Hill, “The Diary of Frances Baylor Hill of Hillsborough[,] King and Queen County Virginia [1797],” ed. William K. Bottorff and Roy C. Flannagan, *Early American Literature Newsletter* 2, no. 3 (Winter 1967): 33; Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1957), p. 54; Francis Taylor diary, 1786-99, Library of Virginia, Richmond (microfilm M-1759, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation). Used by permission of the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

20 Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, “Under Their Vine and Fig Tree: Travels through American in 1797-1799, 1805 with Some Further Account of Life in New Jersey,” trans. and ed. Metchie J.E. Budka, *Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society at Newark* 14 (Elizabeth, N.J.: Glassmann Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 100-101.

The accounts of eighteenth-century travelers to Africa offer insights into cultural traditions that may have persisted in America. For instance, in 1745 Marchais, a French traveller, observed on Guinea's Grain Coast:

These Houses resemble, pretty much, our Mountebanks Stages in Europe. The Front is open, and the Floor has a Jutting-out of five or six Foot broad, where the Negros, laid on Mats, pass the Day with their Wives and Family. The Walls of these Chambers are of a red Clay near a Foot thick. The Roof, raised like a Tent, is covered with Reeds, or Palm-Leaves, so close interwoven, as to admit neither Sun nor Rain. To the Right and Left are two Estrades, or Benches, one Foot high and four broad: On these they lay Mats a Foot thick, which they cover with Cotton-Cloth, or Calico, and surround with Curtains of the same. At the upper-End of this Room they place their Trunks, or Boxes, and hang their Arms upon the Wall.²¹

Almost 100 years later, in 1830, the executors of Captain Hugh Crow of Liverpool, England, published the memoirs of his travels to the west coast of Africa, and in particular Bonny, the imperial capitol of the Ibo, the area from which many of Virginia's slaves were taken. In these memoirs Captain Crow noted "most of the hard articles such as lead and iron bars, chests of beads, and marcelas (a kind of coin), they bury under the floors of their houses. Much valuable property is secreted in that way."²² Here is evidence that the root cellars found archaeologically at so many eighteenth-century slave sites may in fact be an African cultural tradition that was brought to the New World and survived.

Business records, including account books of both merchants and craftsmen, are the third major source of information, and reveal the types of goods purchased in Tidewater Virginia for slaves' use. Purchases of shoes, stockings, livery, hats, blankets, and tools for the use of slaves are commonly found in these account books, and the frequent use of the same descriptive terms for these goods—"Negro shoes," "plaid hose for Negroes," "Negro cotton"—indicates that these were common items whose definition was well-understood by residents of the region. For example, the account books of William Allason, a merchant in Falmouth, Virginia, reveal numerous sales of all kinds of goods for the use of slaves: hoes, shoes, oznaburg, and plaid stockings to name just a few

²¹ Thomas Astley, comp., *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels...Comprehending Everything Remarkable in Its Kind in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America...* (London: 1745; reprint, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968), 2:527-528 (page references are to reprint edition).

²² Hugh Crow (edited by the Executors), *Memoirs of the Late Captain Hugh Crow of Liverpool Comprising a Narrative of His Life Together with Descriptive Sketches of the Western Coast of Africa, Particularly of Bonny* (Liverpool: G. and J. Robinson, 1830; reprint, London: Frank Cass, 1970), p. 251.

items. Likewise, plantation account books record purchases for the slaves, such as Robert Carter's purchase of shoes for the “people” at Old Ordinary Quarter in November 1773.²³

It is one of the anomalies of eighteenth-century Tidewater Virginia slavery that even though slaves were regarded as property and bought and sold like livestock, they were also active participants in the region’s market economy. The pages of these same account books also record payments made directly to slaves for goods and services and record credit purchases slaves made for themselves. It is impossible to know the details of cash sales to slaves because the records of such sales were usually not associated with the name of a particular individual, but those slaves who ran credit accounts—and there were more than just a handful—purchased a variety of goods. Between 1760 and 1768, Colchester, Virginia, merchants Glassford & Company kept a running account with Jack, a slave who belonged to Mr. Linton's estate in Colchester. Jack obtained, among other things, textiles, liquor, knives, cooking equipment, and tools in exchange for his work as a carter and carpenter. Another slave named Jack, also a carpenter, purchased an iron pot from William Allason in 1776.²⁴

Another type of business record were the advertisements for runaway slaves. They constitute one of the best sources for information about the physical appearance and skills of slaves and the clothing and goods they used. It is apparent from a close reading of these advertisements that slaves wore a variety of clothing, from the basic “uniform” of field hands, to the much more elaborate wardrobe worn by household and personal servants. References in these advertisements to slaves “clothed in the usual manner of labouring Negroes” or to “the usual negro dress” suggest that there was a general basic standard for slave clothing. The more elaborate clothes listed in the advertisements (“a pair of shoes with buckles;” “new brown cloth waistcoat, lappelled, lined with white taminy, and yellow gilt buttons;” “white linen shirts...and osnabrug trousers”) indicate that slaves obtained a much greater variety of clothing than is generally assumed.²⁵

23 William Allason Papers, 1757-1804, Falmouth [Va.] Store, Ledge G, September 1768-October 1769, Library of Virginia (microfilm M-1144-8, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation); Robert Carter III, Nomini Hall Waste Book, 1773-83, September 18, 1773 (Special Collections, microfilm M-50, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation). The use, by slave owners, of the term people for enslaved African Americans was common throughout the Chesapeake in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

24 The account began in 1760 and ended in 1769. John Glassford and Company papers, Records for Virginia, Colchester [Va.] Store (hereafter Glassford papers), Ledgers A-B, D-I, November 9, 1760-August 26, 1769, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (microfilm M-1442-8-11, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation); William Allason daybook, June 11, 1773-June 18, 1777, Allason papers, Falmouth [Va.] Store (microfilm M-1144-4, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).

25 *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), March 8, 1770, November 8, 1770, May 7, 1767, December 13, 1770, and *Virginia Gazette* (Hunter), July 15, 1752, all in Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from 1730s to 1790*,

Because so many of these advertisements list slaves' skills, they are important sources for determining what tools may have been at a slave quarter. In March 1770 Joshua Jones placed the following advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette*: “RUN away from the subscriber, In York county, about the 11th or 12th of November last, very black Negro man named BEN...by trade a carpenter, and understands something of the coopers business....He took with him sundry carpenters and coopers tools. I expect he will endeavour to pass for a freeman, as he can read tolerably well...”²⁶ That Ben was a carpenter and cooper means that there probably were tools for making at least hogsheads, tubs, and other barrels; pails; and other such items, at the slave quarter where he lived and presumably worked. Listing reading and writing as among his skills suggests that there may have been writing implements or a book or two at the quarter. Thus a close inspection of these advertisements provides clues to material goods not previously thought to have been at a slave quarter.

The fourth major source of information about eighteenth-century Tidewater Virginia slave material culture is archaeological recoveries. These objects, ranging from seeds and bones (both animal and human) to intact ceramic vessels and pewter spoons, reveal information about diet and culture that is not covered by documentary sources. More information on archaeological recoveries as a source of information about Tidewater slave material culture can be found in Ywone Edwards-Ingram's essay.

Two potentially valuable sources of information—one visual, one written—turn out to be of limited help in understanding the material culture of eighteenth-century Tidewater Virginia slaves. These sources are slave narratives and period illustrations. Eighteenth-century slave narratives are rare and deal primarily with the experience of slavery in an episodic way (i.e., there is little description of clothing, food, possessions, etc.). They were thus of relatively little value in learning about material culture, although they were very valuable in learning about experiences of enslaved Africans.²⁷

vol. 1, *Virginia and North Carolina* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), respectively, pp. 78, 88, 52, 88, and 28. On slave clothing, see Linda Baumgarten, “‘Clothes for the People’: Slave Clothing in Early Virginia,” *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 14, no. 2 (November 1988): 27-70, and Linda Baumgarten, “Plains, Plaid, and Cotton: Woolens for Slave Clothing,” *Ars Textrina* 15 (July 1991): 203-222, for thorough documentation of the types of clothing worn by slaves, seasonal variations in this clothing, special types of clothing worn by slaves (such as livery), variations in clothing between house slaves and field hands, and the lengths to which owners went to make sure that this clothing was serviceable but obtained at the best price.

²⁶ *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), March 22, 1770, in Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements* 1:78-79.

²⁷ Oloudah Equiano's narrative, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African...* (Reprint of 1837 ed.; New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), although very descriptive of African life, customs, and material culture, is not as useful in understanding the material life of enslaved Africans.

Considerable time was spent attempting to locate prints, paintings and other visual records of eighteenth-century Virginia slave life. There are many eighteenth-century visual representations, both English and American, of individual slaves, but there are almost no period visual sources that illustrate the environment in which slaves lived and worked, the material goods they used in their everyday lives, or how these objects were arranged within a particular living or working area.

All of these sources tell us a great deal about how slaves acquired their clothing, food, and furnishings. Moreover, they give us some idea of how they were used. Masters issued clothing, blankets, and food on a more-or-less regular schedule: clothing was issued in the spring/summer and fall/winter, blankets in the fall, and food was issued weekly or seasonally. Masters also supplied slaves with the tools and clothing necessary to do their jobs, but these remained the property of the master, unlike issued items, which both master and slave considered the slaves' property. Some slaves were fortunate to receive hand-me-down clothing, cooking utensils, and even furniture from their masters, but this was not common. Slaves made things for themselves and bartered and sold these goods both to their masters and on the open market. Especially on rural plantations, slaves had their own plots of land and grew their own produce and also took advantage of nearby streams, rivers, and woodlands to catch fish and trap animals. They also acquired goods by theft, a crime for which they were sometimes prosecuted and sometimes not. And, in what will be a surprise for most visitors, slaves acquired goods by purchasing them with money they earned from tips or gifts, from the sale of produce or animals (primarily chickens), from the sale of their own products, like baskets, or their own labor. With this cash they purchased a variety of goods, ranging from fabrics and ribbons to tools, liquor, and food. All of these goods were the same types of things purchased by whites and free blacks.

It is also important to understand that the condition of slavery did not mean that all slaves lived in impoverished material circumstances. Slaves lived at all levels of the economic ladder, in circumstances that ranged from the meanest poverty to the fairly comfortable. Two examples illustrate this point. Aron Jameson, a slave of Joseph Ball, was sent back to the colony from London in 1754. Ball wrote to Joseph Chinn that Aron was bringing with him

... a small chest, & a box, containing a seabed, a Large Mattress stuffed well with flocks and stitched with tufts, and a bolster filled with feathers, the Mattress & Bolster both besides their Ticks having Ozenbrigs cases; and two new coverleds, and other old Bedcloths, and Three suits of wearing cloths (one new) and Two pair of new shoes; and several pair of stockings, a pair of boots, and Twelve shirts Eight of which are New, a small iron Pot & hooks and Rack to hang it on, an Iron skillet, a copper sauce pan, an old Bridle & Saddle, a Cheese, a Narrow ax, a Tin pint pot, Three hats, Twelve Neckcloths, two Handkercheifs, one Violin and some

spare strings, a small spit, an old pewter basin, Two pair of sheets, and several other things which Aron very well knows of....28

In addition, Ball specified how Aron was to be treated and where he was to sleep:

I would have him used kindly Especially this year, and not put into the crop for any part of a share; but I would have him work at the How but not constantly this year, for perhaps he may not be able to bear it, not having been used to hard Labor; but you may between whiles Imploy him about one odd Jobb or other;... His Beding is Quite New & Clean and I would have it kept so; and to that End would have him to ly in the Kitchin Loft when he is at Morattico; and in some Clean Place when he is in the Forrest. I would forthwith after his arrival have one of the worst of my old Bed steads cut short & fit for his Mattress, and have a cord and hide to it. . . . He must have his own Meat to himself in a Good Little powdering Tub to be made on purpose; and he must have his own fat & Milk to himself and be allowed to Raise fowl.29

By contrast, Ferdinand-Marie Bayard described the following scene in 1791:

A box-like frame made of boards hardly roughed down, upheld by stakes, constituted the nuptial couch. Some wheat straw and cornstalks, on which was spread a very short-napped woolen blanket that was burned in several places, completed the wretched pallet of the enslaved couple.30

In these two descriptions there is a great contrast in the physical circumstances of the individuals: Aron has more property at his own disposal than many free white families of the period, while Bayard's unnamed couple barely have a decent place to sleep. But their legal status is the same: they are all the property of another person. This legal status, and not their material status, is what made them slaves.

And, as we discuss slavery in eighteenth-century Williamsburg and Tidewater Virginia, we need to understand that in the course of their daily work, as slaves tended fields, prepared food, cleaned houses, did errands, sewed clothes, constructed houses, joined furniture, printed newspapers, piloted boats, played musical instruments, and administered medical treatments, all of the objects they

28 Joseph Ball, Stratford, England to Joseph Chinn, Morattico, Richmond County, Virginia, "Letter Book, 1743-1759," April 23, 1754, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation microfilm M-21); transcript in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library.

29 Ibid.

30 Ferdinand-Marie Bayard, *Travels of a Frenchman in Maryland and Virginia With a Description of Philadelphia and Baltimore in 1791...*, trans. & ed. Ben C. McCary (Williamsburg, Va.: Ben C. McCary, 1950), 13.

encountered each day were part of their material culture. This means that tools from England, ceramics from China, fabrics from Europe, and goods made right in Williamsburg were part of the material world of Williamsburg's enslaved population. And once we understand that the entire range of available goods were part of a slave's world, we also understand that slaves both used and owned objects that were indistinguishable from those used and owned by the free whites and blacks around them.

However, although we know, in a fairly specific way, how slaves acquired their own possessions, we have very little information about how these things were arranged and used in daily life. There are no known visual records of the interior of eighteenth-century Virginia slave quarters, and the few surviving slave narratives from that period do not really discuss the appearance of the interiors of these spaces. Even travelers' accounts, while superficially helpful in understanding some aspects of slaves' lives, fail to adequately convey the material world in which slaves lived. In addition, we have only a few clues—most of them archaeological—to tell us how these European objects might have been used in non-European ways. With care, intelligent use can be made of later cultural practices, stories, and songs to interpret now-lost customs and rituals. But we cannot “retrofit” the material culture of a later period on an earlier one, i.e., use the existence of an object or an object-centered tradition to argue that it “must” have its roots in an earlier form. Therefore, although we now know a great deal about the material culture of Tidewater Virginia's eighteenth-century enslaved population, there are still many questions that remain.

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<p>Ywone Edwards-Ingram—“An Introduction to the Archaeology of African Americans in Colonial Virginia”</p>
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This introduction describes some of the main approaches and issues in the archaeological study of African Americans in the Tidewater area of Virginia. Various sites in other areas of Virginia and Maryland are included in the discussion which provide material evidence and refine interpretations of sites in the Tidewater area. The archaeology of African Americans is concerned with cultural, social, political, and economic differences in the past. Emphasis is placed on understanding the complexities of slavery and freedom through the material remains left by African Americans and other people. Archaeologist James Deetz writes that “archaeology's prime value to history lies in its promise to take into account large numbers of people in the past who either were not included in the written record or, if they were, were included in a biased or minimal way.”³¹ Africans and their descendants in the New World fall within Deetz's category of people whose history is made more comprehensive through archaeological research.

³¹ James Deetz, *Flowerdew Hundred: The Archaeology of a Virginia Plantation 1619 – 1864*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993, p.12.

Since the late 1960s, the study of African-American past lifeways has been a major concern of the archaeological investigations of colonial Virginia. The concerted efforts of archaeologists have led to the production of several studies illuminating the diverse experiences of African Americans. In addition, these archaeological investigations have provided more information about living conditions, housing, foodways, and other aspects of life and culture. The archaeological study of the enslaved, for example, has guided reconstructions and interpretations at many living history museums.

Artifacts made and used by enslaved and free Africans and their descendants formed the main body of evidence for the archaeological study of African Americans but the field benefits from an interdisciplinary approach. Archaeologists use information from various sources, including documents and oral testimony in their work. With the proliferation of studies on slavery, archaeologists have included more information about traditional and present-day African and African-American aesthetics, artistic productions, religion, and other cultural practices in order to gain more insights about African Americans during slavery. Other findings from African-American studies, including literature, art, folklore, religion, and research on yards and gardens, have been influencing the interdisciplinary world of archaeological scholarship.³²

How Africans and their descendants sustained vibrant cultures have been the focus of many archaeological investigations. Over the years archaeologists have considered the extent to which slaves' African cultural heritage can be studied through the material remains found on African-American sites. Most Africans who were brought to the New World came from West Africa so archaeologists have concentrated on objects and cultural practices that have been associated with West Africa and the slave trade. Beads (particularly blue ones), a coarse earthenware called colonoware, Chesapeake clay tobacco pipes, fragmented animal bones used as food, and sub-floor pits (popularly known as root cellars) have all figured prominently in the debate about the African heritage of African Americans. Cowrie shells, for example, have been found in slave living spaces and burials. These objects were used as "the shell money of the slave trade" and as components of African and African-American cultural practices. In African societies, cowrie shells served as a form of currency. They were also used in rituals and as decorations on objects and the body. Archaeological remains of cowrie shells have been found on various sites in Virginia including, the Historic Area of Colonial Williamsburg.³³

³²Ywone Edwards and Maria Franklin, "Archaeology and the Material Culture of Enslaved Africans and African Americans." *The Research Review*. Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Vol. VI (1), 1995/96: 22-24 .

³³ Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*, New York: Vintage Books, 1983; Theresa A. Singleton, "The Archaeology of Slave Life." In *Before Freedom Came: African American Life in the Antebellum South*. Edited by Edward D.C. Campbell, Jr. and Kym S. Rice. Richmond: Museum of the Confederacy and Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991; 155-175, 188-191; Laurie E. Pearce, "The Cowrie Shell in Virginia: A Critical Evaluation of Potential Archaeological Significance." Anthropology Masters Thesis, College of William and Mary, 1992.

Photograph: Cowrie shells from archaeological excavations in the Historic Area of Colonial Williamsburg.

Archaeologists have found vastly more European-manufactured objects than materials that can be used as markers of West African cultural continuities. Earlier the predominance of European and American manufactured objects was interpreted as evidence that enslaved Africans and African Americans had acculturated to Anglo-American culture. In fact, it is the acculturation framework that was most used in archaeological studies to show how African-American material life and culture changed over time. But this approach has been criticized because of its tendency to interpret African Americans' acquisition and use of American and European goods as indications that African Americans changed their identity and severed connections to African cultural traditions and practices³⁴.

Today archaeologists have refined their approaches and interpretations of the past. They are using the same classes of data to provide stronger interpretation of how cultures change through time and the role of objects in everyday life. The emphasis has shifted to presenting the multiple uses and meanings that African Americans ascribed to the material world of slavery, a world that they helped to create and change. Archaeologists have found that many European and American-made items were used in cultural ways that drew on African antecedents and a developing African-American culture. Newer approaches in archaeology seek to present enslaved Africans and their descendants as social actors responsible in part for their material life.

Some archaeologists have argued that the social relations between masters and slaves are important factors to consider in any interpretations of the material remains on slave sites. Different groups of enslaved individuals received different allocations of goods based on slaveholders' perceptions of the role of these individuals. The material world of the enslaved resulted, in part, from the power relations between slaveholders and slaves and from slaves' efforts to define themselves as individuals and as members of communities. ³⁵

Some studies have focused on how enslaved Africans and African Americans negotiated and changed their identity as they interacted with both the enslaved and the free. Material items were deeply embedded in these social interactions, hence their importance to archaeological studies. They helped to make and unmake identities and to define both the visible aspects of power, domination, and resilience. A clear example of the role of objects in social interaction comes from an examination of dress. Many enslaved persons who sought freedom dressed in the appropriate manner in order to pass as free persons. Buttons,

³⁴Theresa A. Singleton (editor)*The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life*. Orlando, Florida: Academic Press, 1985; Jean Howson, "Social Relations and Material Culture: A Critique of the Archaeology of Plantation Slavery." *Historical Archaeology* 1990:24 (4):78-91.

³⁵Jean Howson, "Social Relations and Material Culture."

pins, other fasteners, and items of adornment recovered from African-Americans sites in Virginia throw more light on the role of dress in social interactions.³⁶

In their search to understand cultural changes and continuities, some archaeologists have found the creolization model particularly valuable to their studies of colonial American cultures. Creolization, perhaps best illustrated in the studies of the formation of languages, can be used to study how new cultural forms arose from processes that include the complex blending of old ones.³⁷ This concept has helped archaeologists to explain how different cultures in contact were transformed and how new products and forms emerged from their interactions. They have applied this concept to create stronger interpretations of the evidence of slave life. The study of African-Americans' creativity in manufacture and use of coarse earthenware vessels and clay tobacco pipes has benefited from the application of this concept. Other studies have identified creolization among the factors responsible for slave approaches to the environment and other forms of material culture, particularly to nurture religions and rituals. Food has also been the subject of such studies.³⁸ African-American culture was created and transformed through processes that prioritized tradition, adaptation, resistance, accommodation, and various cultural exchanges among African Americans and other racial and ethnic groups. Archaeological studies have reinforced interpretations that the cultures of people of African descent incorporated both Old World and New World cultural traditions and practices.

Photograph: The reconstructed Carter's Grove Slave Quarter.

Living Spaces

Most archaeological studies of African Americans have concentrated on plantation sites. On many of these sites, the material remains of African Americans have been found geographically separate from other racial and cultural groups. Obviously, this type of site provides archaeologists with the strongest opportunities to describe and

³⁶ Barbara Heath, "Buttons, Beads and Buckles: Self Definition within the Bounds of Slavery." Paper presented for the Society for Historical Archaeology Meeting, Cincinnati, 1996.

³⁷For more information on the use of creolization and acculturation in archaeology see Jean Howson, "Social Relations and Material Culture;" L. Daniel Mouer, "Chesapeake Creoles: The Creation of Folk Culture in Colonial Virginia." In *The Archaeology of 17th-Century Virginia*. Edited by Theodore R. Reinhart and Dennis J. Pogue. Richmond, Virginia: The Deitz Press, 1993 :105-166; and Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African-America, 1650-1800*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

³⁸ L. Daniel Mouer, "Chesapeake Creoles: The Creation of Folk Culture in Colonial Virginia."

interpret African-American lifeways. It is far more difficult to find such discrete African-American remains in urban areas. The material remains from sites that were occupied simultaneously by African Americans and Anglo-Americans were most certainly generated by both groups. Although it is more challenging to study African-American life within these contexts, archaeologists can still develop insightful interpretations for these multi-component sites.

It is not sufficient to seek an “African-American presence” by describing and counting items such as cowrie shells, colonoware, and root cellars that have been commonly associated with African-American life. African-American culture and life constituted more than the sum of these “markers” and reflected far more complicated strategies of living under domination within an urban setting. But by using evidence from several related disciplines and the results of archaeological studies of both rural and urban sites, archaeologists can make sound inferences about the lifeways of the occupants at these sites. Overall, however, separate structures that had housed African Americans, whether in towns or on plantations, probably have more potential for study.

Investigations of slave living areas form the main body of evidence for interpreting slave life. Slave housing was usually located away from the formal approach to the planter's house and closer to slave working areas. Some slaves, however, did not have separate lodging but lived and slept where they worked. This may have been the case for slaves in urban areas such as the eighteenth-century town of Williamsburg. Slaves in Williamsburg probably lived in outbuildings, in general service areas, or had sleeping spaces in their masters' residences or business places.³⁹

In the late 1980s, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation archaeologists excavated a nineteenth-century house that was the residence of an enslaved nursemaid, Polly Valentine.⁴⁰ The remains of a pier-supported house with a substantial brick chimney base were found during excavation at the south end of the Brush-Everard property, next door to the Tucker lot. Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, a professor of law at the nearby College of William and Mary and the son of St. George Tucker, legally owned Valentine. The Polly Valentine House was built on the north edge of the Tucker family property in the 1840s and was destroyed between 1862 and 1864. It is the only separate structure built explicitly for an enslaved person that has been excavated in the Historic Area. The Valentine house with its brick-and-pier support probably was built in accordance with nineteenth-century recommendations about slave housing. One recommendation was that slave houses should be on raised foundation to encourage better circulation of air and to prevent the build up of garbage. (One archaeologist has argued that slaveholders' contentions about garbage around slave houses might have been another effort to present

³⁹ Edward Chappell, “Slave Housing.” *Fresh Advises* Supplement to *The Interpreter*, A Newsletter of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Williamsburg 1982:i-ii,iv.

⁴⁰ Ywone Edwards, “Master-Slave Relations: A Williamsburg Perspective.” Anthropology Masters Thesis. The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia 1990.

slaves as inferiors).⁴¹ On both Anglo-and Afro-Virginian sites, garbage was dumped very close to where it was generated, for example, close to buildings, in yard areas, along fencelines, and in nearby ravines.

Slave housing ranged from small log structures to larger brick buildings. They were built with different dimensions and from a variety of building materials. Some structures had dirt floors while others were raised from the ground and had wood flooring. These buildings usually had end-chimneys made of brick or sticks and clay. For structures that had central fireplaces, the chimneys were usually constructed of brick. The archaeological literature has concentrated on sub-floor pits or root cellars in discussing slave housing and slave life.⁴² Root cellars are pit features that occur, usually in conjunction with building remains, on Anglo-American, Native-American, and African-American sites. But they are particularly common on slave sites. Root cellars have been interpreted as storage areas for root crops and for various domestic and personal items. They are usually found filled with the remains of tools, animal bones (presumably relating to diet), coins, clay tobacco pipes, buttons, ceramics, bottles, and beads. Documentary evidence suggests that they were caches for items slaves had acquired clandestinely. Wine bottles found in root cellars suggest that slaves consumed liquor but other interpretations are plausible. These bottles may have contained herbal medicine that slaves had concocted.

The reconstructed slave quarter at Carter's Grove Plantation, near Williamsburg, was placed atop the archaeological features found at the site. The root cellars found there are among the earliest excavated on slave sites. Robert "King" Carter, a wealthy Virginian, purchased Carter's Grove in the early eighteenth century. His descendants owned the property until 1838. Archaeologist William Kelso, working at Carter's Grove in the early 1970s, uncovered subterranean pits that were initially interpreted as tanning pits but were later re-interpreted as root cellars relating to eighteenth-century slave housing. The site lacked structural remains that readily would have indicated that it was a living area. Thirteen pits were found filled with domestic trash, personal objects, and tools. The investigations of similar features on archaeological sites with eighteenth-century slave occupations, such as Lewis Burwell's Kingsmill Plantation near Carter's Grove, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello Plantation, and George Washington's Mount Vernon Plantation contributed to the identification and reconstruction of the Carter's Grove slave quarter. ⁴³

⁴¹Larry McKee, "The Ideals and Realities Behind the Design and Use of 19th Century Virginia Slave Cabins." In *The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology: Essays in Honor of James Deetz*. Ann Arbor: CRC Press, 1992:.195-213.

⁴²William M. Kelso, *Kingsmill Plantations, 1619-1800: Archaeology of Country Life in Colonial Virginia*. Studies in Historical Archaeology Series. New York: Academic Press, 1984; Theresa Singleton, "The Archaeology of Slave Life;" Patricia Samford, "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. Third Series . 53 (1996) :87-114.

⁴³ Patricia Samford, "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture;" William Kelso, *Kingsmill Plantation*; Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*.

The remains of a central brick chimney and a series of root cellars were the main evidence delineating the structure of a slave quarter on land formerly known as Rich Neck Plantation, off Jamestown Road in Williamsburg.⁴⁴ Rich Neck is associated with Thomas and Philip Ludwell, gentlemen who were both active in colonial government. The Ludwells and their descendants were mainly absentee landowners of Rich Neck Plantation. Philip Ludwell I married Governor William Berkeley's widow and lived at Green Spring plantation. Green Spring probably served as the main residence of the Ludwell family when they resided in Virginia. But the duplex slave quarter at Rich Neck, excavated by Colonial Williamsburg's archaeologists in the early 1990s, was probably home to some of the twenty-one slaves who are listed on Philip Ludwell III's 1767 inventory.

The majority of the artifacts from both Rich Neck and Carter's Grove slave occupations came from the root cellars.⁴⁵ Some of the root cellars were lined with materials such as wood, clay, sand, and brick. This practice implied that different cellars probably served different functions although different linings may have simply resulted from personal preferences. Two of the root cellars at Carter's Grove were wood-lined. Even some Anglo-Americans' homes had moderate to large cellars that were used for storage and other purposes. A brick-lined root cellar was found at the Grissell Hay kitchen in the Historic Area. The cellar dated to the 1730s.⁴⁶

Photograph: The Rich Neck Slave Quarter showing the remains of a central fireplace and several root cellars.

Ceramics

Ceramics account for a large proportion of the objects on many archaeological sites. The ceramic assemblages for the Carter's Grove and Rich Neck slave quarters contained both locally-made and imported ceramics. Refined ceramics, including porcelain and creamware, were recovered from both sites. Plates, bowls, and teawares were identified among the various vessel forms. There were more food consumption than food preparation ceramic items in both assemblages. The ceramics from Rich Neck were

⁴⁴ Ywone D. Edwards, "Rich Neck Slave Quarter: A Research Proposal." Manuscript on file, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Department of Archaeological Research, June 1994; Maria Franklin, "Out of Site, Out of Mind: The Archaeology of an Enslaved Virginian Household, ca. 1740-1778." Unpublished doctoral thesis, Anthropology. Berkeley: University of California, 1997.

⁴⁵ Patricia Samford, "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture;" Lorena Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*; Maria Franklin, "Out of Site, Out of Mind."

⁴⁶ Gregory J. Brown and Meredith C. Moodey, "Research Plan for the Excavation of the Grissell Hay Site Summer 1992. Manuscript on file, Colonial Williamsburg Department of Archaeological Research, 1992.

far more fragmented and fewer than those found at Carter's Grove. The larger pieces of ceramics at Carter's Grove had scratches and stains, perhaps from heavy use. It may be significant that Rich Neck was an outlying plantation with mainly field hands unlike Carter's Grove plantation. However, archaeologists have found that the remains from field and household slave sites are generally almost identical.⁴⁷

Photograph: The remains of ceramic vessels, a fork, two completed spoons, and a wine bottle fragment recovered during archaeological investigations at the Carter's Grove Slave Quarter.

Comparative studies of ceramics at Anglo-American and African-American archaeological sites have revealed that both groups had similar ranges of material goods. For example, archaeologists have recovered identical types of expensive ceramics and other objects from slave and planter sites. There are some indications that some slaves had more hollowware vessels and planters had more flatware vessels. Cultural practices, personal preferences and culinary practices have been suggested as explanations for these occurrences. Presumably, the slaves consumed more inexpensive stew-based meals of vegetables, meat, and broth. The planter, on the other hand, is believed to have consumed more roasts. Rich Neck had more bowls than plates and Carter's Grove had more spoons than forks, suggesting that slaves at these plantations probably consumed semi-liquid meals. It is risky, however, to ascribe dietary patterns for slaves and masters based on ceramic evidence. There was no single slave's or master's diet. The evidence for dietary patterns and cultural assumptions is constantly challenged by other findings that show both similarity and variability in the dietary remains for both groups.

Foodways

The analysis of how African Americans obtained, prepared, consumed, exchanged, and discarded food and food-related materials has been a challenging area of study. On some slave sites, archaeologists have noted the prevalence of fragmented animal bones and the presence of parts from the feet and heads. The dietary evidence of the elite has exhibited less fragmentation of similar bones and appeared to have more evidence of presumably high-quality body elements. But among the explanations offered for the differences in the slave assemblages are factors relating to the economic and social conditions of the enslaved and to the slave cultural preference for one-pot meal of stews and soups, a practice common in African societies. Remains of heads and feet, earlier assumed to be lower-quality meats, have been unearthed from sites associated with the elite in Virginia and larger faunal remains linked to roast and presumably better-quality cuts have been recovered from slave sites.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Patricia Samford, "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture;" Theresa Singleton, "The Archaeology of Slave Life."

⁴⁸Theresa Singleton, "The Archaeology of Slave Life;" Joanne Bowen, "Slavery at Mount Vernon: A Dietary Analysis." Paper presented to the Society for Historical Archaeology, Washington D.C, 1995; Patricia Samford, "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture."

A study of the “trash” associated with the “House of Families” a major slave housing area for George Washington’s Mount Vernon estate has supported the thesis that slave diet was for more varied than plantation records suggest. 49 The remains of both large and small cuts of meat were found amid ash, charcoal, and oyster shells in a brick-lined cellar beneath the slave dwelling. Archaeological studies of animal bones, seeds, and other remains from several sites in Virginia have found that, in addition to rations of corn, pork, and beef, slave diets included a variety of wild sources including fish and birds.⁵⁰ The slaves were supplementing their diets with game, birds, and fish, domestic sources, and agricultural produce. The archaeological remains of lead shots and gunflint at Rich Neck suggest that hunting may have been one way to diversify dietary supplements.

Photograph: Animal bones from the Rich Neck Slave Quarter Site.

The dietary evidence from the Rich Neck slave quarter may be the most complete slave-related faunal assemblage ever recovered from the Chesapeake area. (Carter’s Grove was not excavated expressly to recover comprehensive faunal and botanical materials.) Both domestic and wild species of animals and birds are included in the faunal assemblage at Rich Neck. In addition to pork and beef that were probably meat rations, the slaves at Rich Neck seemed to have consumed turtles, rabbits, squirrels, and turkeys. A large quantity of fish scales and bones implies that fish and fishing were important to slaves at Rich Neck. Catfish, perches, herrings, and sturgeons are among the species of fish found at the site.⁵¹

Archaeologists usually interpret slave gardening activities from the study of plants, seeds, and other environmental remains and from the evidence for fenced enclosures. The seed remains from Rich Neck include both wild and domestic species. The cultivated species include the remains of corn, beans, and squash, and fruits such as melon, cherry, and blackberry. Honey locust, black walnuts, and acorns are numbered among the wild species that appeared to have been collected on a regular basis. Apparently the slaves at Rich Neck augmented their diet by fishing, hunting, and gardening. They may have used some of the plants identified at the site in herbal and folk medicinal practices. ⁵²

49 Joanne Bowen, “Slavery at Mount Vernon: A Dietary Analysis.”

50Ibid; Theresa Singleton, “The Archaeology of Slave Life”.

51Lorena Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter’s Grove*; Maria Franklin, “Out of Site, Out of Mind.”

52 Stephen A. Mrozowski and Leslie H. Driscoll, “Seeds of Learning: An Archaeobotanical Analysis of the Rich Neck Plantation Slave Quarter, Williamsburg, Virginia.” Manuscript on file at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Department of Archaeological Research, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1997; Ywone Edwards-Ingram, “An Inter-Disciplinary Approach to African-American Medicinal and Health Practices in Colonial America.” *The Watermark: Newsletter of the Archivists and Librarians in the*

Rituals, Health, and Well-Being

Several objects that are documented as part of formal medicinal practices have been found at slave sites. Among these are pharmaceutical bottles, ceramic salve pots, and ointment jars. European-American doctors or slaveholders probably supplied these items to slaves or used them for slave medical needs. A delftware salve pot was found in the Brush-Everard kitchen.⁵³ It appeared to have been intentionally buried as it was found in a hole that perhaps was prepared to receive it. It is uncertain whether this pot relates to eighteenth-century slave life at the site. Burying objects in a ritualistic way, however, has been documented as practiced by African Americans. ⁵⁴

African Americans enclosed, buried, and used seemingly unconnected objects including ceramics, nails, animal bones, metal objects, and shells as part of rituals.⁵⁵ Support for archaeological interpretations of rituals in Virginia comes from studies in Maryland. Materials indicating rituals have been recovered from the Charles Carroll House in Annapolis, Maryland. ⁵⁶ The Carrolls were among the prominent Catholic families in Maryland. The assemblage was found in a ground-story room in the east wing of the house. Apparently the room once had a wooden floor with an underlying shallow space. The eighteenth-century assemblage included twelve separate clear quartz crystals, pieces of chipped quartz, a polished black stone, a clear faceted glass bead, and bone disks. The materials were found in conjunction with a bowl. The bowl had a symbol that resembles African ritual markings. The archaeologists believe that the recovered materials suggest that African Americans had lived and worked in the room. Other crystals have been recovered from African-American sites in Virginia.

Interpretations of animal bones have linked these remains to rituals. Historical, ethnographic, and archaeological sources have detailed the importance of animals and

History of the Health Sciences. Edited by Joan Echtenkamp Klein and Jodi Koste. (Charlottesville: The Claude Moore Health Sciences Library, and Richmond: The Tompkins-McCaws Library, 1997), 20 (3): 67-73.

⁵³Patricia Samford, "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture."

⁵⁴ Grey Gundaker, "Tradition and Innovation in African American Yards." *African Arts* 26 (1993) (2) : 58-71, 94-96; George C. Logan, "Archaeology at Charles Carroll's House and Garden and of his African American Slaves." Annapolis: Historic Annapolis Foundation, 1992; Ywone Edwards-Ingram, "An Inter-Disciplinary Approach to African-American Medicinal and Health Practices."

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ George Logan, "Archaeology at the Charles Carroll's House."

animal remains in African and African-American rituals. Archaeological evidence suggests that animal bones were part of slave rituals at Mount Vernon. Faunal remains from the “House for Families” included modified animal bones. A highly polished raccoon baculum (or penis bone) with its posterior end encircled with an incised cut was identified. The anterior end, of the bone had not been modified. The analysts suggest “that the incised cut was used to tie a cord around the baculum for suspension from an individual's neck.”⁵⁷ The raccoon bone probably was used as a symbol of fertility.

African Americans used some common objects as part of personal adornment and as decoration in houses and yards.⁵⁸ Some materials were employed in ways that were not readily recognized by Anglo-Americans. Seemingly, African Americans conferred specific meanings to ceramics, shells, clay tobacco smoking pipes, and beads. Beads, common finds on archaeological sites, may have functioned for both protection and decoration. Archaeologists have found that blue is the predominant bead color on African-American sites. They have suggested that blue beads were linked to beliefs about the power of the color blue for protection from evil and negative forces.⁵⁹ The presence of blue beads on slave sites also has been interpreted as possibly linked to a Muslim belief that these beads had the power to ward off “the evil eye”. African-American rituals included beliefs and practices of different religions including Islam and Christianity⁶⁰.

Beads have been found within the living areas and with the burial remains of African Americans. Historical documents relating to the eighteenth century show Africans and African Americans wearing beads. Several beads were found in the root cellars associated with the Rich Neck slave quarter. Excavations at the Utopia slave quarter site in James City County associated in the eighteenth century with James Bray and Lewis Burwell families, located a burial ground on with the remains of 25 individuals.⁶¹ Many of the twelve children and thirteen adults, probably African Americans were interred in wooden coffins. Three adult burials included English clay

⁵⁷ Stephen Charles Atkins, “An Archaeological Perspective on the African-American Slave Diet at Mount Vernon's House for Families.” Masters Thesis, Department of Anthropology, The College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1994:84.

⁵⁸ Grey Gundaker, “Tradition and Innovation in African-American Yards.”

⁵⁹ Ibid; Ywone Edwards and Maria Franklin, “ Archaeology and the Material Culture of Enslaved Africans and African Americans.”

⁶⁰ A.J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South*. New York:Oxford University Press, 1978; Charles E. Orser, Jr. “The Archaeology of African-American Slave Religion in the Antebellum South. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 4 (1)1994:33-45.

⁶¹ Garrett R. Fesler, “Interim Report of Excavations at Utopia Quarter (44JC32): An 18th-Century Slave Complex at Kingsmill on the James in James City County, Virginia, 1996.” James River Institute for Archaeology, Inc. Williamsburg, Virginia.

tobacco pipes that the archaeologist believed were purposely placed with the skeletal remains. One adolescent was buried with a glass bead necklace around his or her neck. The presence of beads in African-American burials indicates their significance to beliefs and rituals.

The slave assemblages of Carter's Grove and Rich Neck have a large quantity of buttons. Some of these buttons are made of metal while others are of bone. Buttons are mainly interpreted as items of adornment because of their popularity as decorative objects and as fasteners on clothing. On sites such as Rich Neck and Carter's Grove, slaves may have acquired buttons through owner's provisioning, other supply mechanisms, in various exchanges, and as found items. Some archaeologists regard the presence of buttons on slave sites as probably linked to the manufacture of clothing and other items such as quilts. It is likely that some buttons were also playthings or keepsakes.

Some pierced objects were worn suspended from, or grouped together on, strings or chains. Pierced and otherwise modified objects such as pewter spoons and coins were probably used in rituals of protection and empowerment. Both Utopia and Rich Neck slave occupations had pierced clamshells. Though similar pierced shells could be naturally bored by worms, they may have been intentionally pierced by the occupants at these sites. Pewter spoons fragments recovered from Rich Neck display various modifications and decorations. Slaves at Rich Neck probably made pewter spoons based on the interpretation of the archaeological finds from the sites. Both documentary and archaeological evidence suggest that the Ludwells had resourceful slaves. The enslaved population at Rich Neck probably made beads from shells and other materials. Some materials used in beadwork were likely chosen carefully.

Photograph: The remains of pewter spoons, clay tobacco pipes, and a shell from the Rich Neck Slave Quarter site. These artifacts have been variously modified, probably for specific purposes.

Creativity

The material residues, tools, and finished products of slave crafts have been found at archaeological sites. Evidence of nail manufacture, bone-working crafts, and other trades has been identified archaeologically in slave living and working areas along Mulberry Row at Monticello Plantation.⁶² Some slaves probably obtained monetary gains from their engagement in craftwork. Archaeologists have debated extensively about the slave manufacture and use of colonoware pottery. Rich Neck had far more colonoware than Carter's Grove. A growing body of evidence suggests that enslaved African Americans, as well as Native Americans, made this type of coarse unglazed earthenware. It is mostly found as utilitarian forms such as milkpans, basins, pots, jars,

⁶² Douglas W. Sanford, "The Archaeology of Plantation Slavery in Piedmont Virginia." In *Historical Archaeology of the Chesapeake*. Edited by Paul A. Shackel and Barbara J. Little. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994:115-130.

and chamber pots. Some slaves probably made and used colonoware to prepare and serve stew-based meals and pottage and to make medicine.

Archaeologist Leland Ferguson, who worked on sites in South Carolina, has linked colonoware vessels with African-American cultural autonomy, particularly in foodways and rituals. 63 Ferguson studied the marks on colonoware vessels and found that most marks were a simple cross or “x”. Some marks, however, were more complicated and in some cases a circle or a rectangle enclosed the “x.” Ferguson has argued that some of the markings on colonoware vessels resemble ritual symbols of the Bakongo and Bakongo-influenced cultural groups in West and Central Africa. The enclosed “x” within a circle is one of the many abstract representations of African worldview that connected life through death and rebirth. Ferguson’s work drew on research by art historian Robert Farris Thompson and other scholars who have shown that African worldviews had a significant impact on the cultures of enslaved Africans and their descendants in the Americas.

A locally-made clay tobacco pipe with a similar design of a cross enclosed within a circle was included in the seventeenth-century artifact assemblage of the Rich Neck Plantation. American-manufactured clay tobacco pipes ranging in color from orange to brown have been used to study the interactions of different groups in early Virginia. They have been recovered from several seventeenth-century sites in the Chesapeake. The pipes show the combined influences of Native American, African, and European cultures. Archaeologists have interpreted the decorations on the pipes as evidence of African craftsmanship in early America. The designs are similar to decorations found on a variety of objects in Africa.64

Discussion and Conclusion

Archaeologists have found more similarities than differences in their studies of African-American and Anglo-American sites. However, this should not be read as evidence that these different groups had similar life experiences. While reckoning with similarities and differences one should not obliterate considerations of the oppressive and exploitative nature of slavery. African Americans acquired goods through various supplies and exchanges. Some materials were parts of rations that were supplied by slaveholders, while other items were gained through the slave initiative. Activities such as gardening, rearing animals, and the sale of goods and produces, mostly conducted on “slave time,” provided some slaves with the means to increase their material acquisitions.

63 Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground*.

64 Matthew Emerson, “Decorated Clay Tobacco Pipes from the Chesapeake: An African Connection.” In *Historical Archaeology of the Chesapeake*. Edited by Paul A. Shackel and Barbara J. Little. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994:35-49; Theresa Singleton, “The Archaeology of Slave Life.”

Some items were obtained as gifts. Slaves through a redistribution system that was not sanctioned by slaveholders, however, appropriated other materials.

The acquisition of trappings of a dominant culture by a subordinated group does not always result in a wholesale acceptance of the dominant culture. When many slaves adapted new material items and practices, they did not necessarily forsake their traditions and other cultural practices. Increasingly, archaeologists have been interpreting aspects of African-American practices that incorporated the use of objects and the landscape in uncommon ways as acts of “separatism.” Seemingly, these practices were meant to keep African-American lifeways distinct from that of Anglo-Americans. Archaeologists have only begun to understand the multiple uses and the meanings that African Americans assigned to the material world of New World slavery. Enslaved and free Africans and African Americans incorporated remembered, invented, and contemporaneous ideas and practices of both the New and Old World in everyday life. In many ways, they helped to shape their experiences during slavery and freedom.

* * * *

The following selections from Mechal Sobel’s book, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* focus on housing in Africa and Virginia.

Town locations, town plans, house plans, and field layouts were all likely to have spiritual significance. In Akan towns seven quarters were set apart for seven clans that corresponded with the seven heavenly bodies that they believed ruled the world. Dogon towns, houses, and fields were all laid out with correspondence to their cosmology. Fields had to be farmed in a particular order and houses built in a special pattern, or the order of the universe would be upset and the crops would be affected. The Igbo, and most other groups, had myths “validating” their claims to their land, while ancestral curses made particular places taboo for settlement. The Kikuyu avoided graves and battlefields. The Lango would not build on high places, believing the dangerous deity Jok to dwell on them.

Most Africans built houses according to ritual requirements, and their location and structure had spiritual significance. The house was regarded as a place for the union of male and female, for work and for pleasure, and was often organized in terms of gender duality. Sometimes invisible constructs, perhaps imaginary lines between houses, were of equal import. And although the carving of divinities on door-posts or the use of white paint might mark an explicit spiritual symbolism, much of the importance of structure and positioning was evident only to the initiated.

Meyer Fortes suggests that an African residence should be regarded as a physical projection of the social organization of the family that lived in it. The broader landscape of village or town reflected as well the wider social organization. Wives’ rooms were around their husbands’, sons’ houses joined around their fathers’, the village around the

chiefs. In some groups clan chieftains had two-story homes, whereas all others were one-story. Kings had palaces, their status obviously reflected in the physical structure.

Houses in West Africa were generally made of natural materials that decayed within a few years. They were repaired or rebuilt, or settlements were moved periodically. Houses were generally small. A basic unit of approximately 12 feet in length or diameter was the most widely accepted dimension. Much living was done outside the house, in compounds formed by many one-room houses. It was common to have separate houses for men, for women, for cooking, for storing grain, and so forth. Olaudah Equiano described his Igbo (Nigerian) home of the 1730s in great detail, indicating the social significance of the physical order:

In our buildings we study convenience rather than ornament. Each master of a family has a large square piece of ground, surrounded with a moat or fence, or enclosed with a wall made of red earth tempered, which, when dry, is as hard as bricks. Within this, are his houses to accommodate his family and slaves, which, if numerous, frequently present the appearance of a village. In the middle, stands the principal building, appropriated to the sole use of the master and consisting of two apartments; in one of which he sits in the day with his family, the other is left apart for the reception of his friends. He has besides these a distinct apartment in which he sleeps, together with his male children. On each side are the apartments of his wives, who have also their separate day and night houses. The habitations of the slaves and their families are distributed together throughout the rest of the enclosure. These houses never exceed one storey in height; they are always built of wood, or stakes driven into the ground, crossed with wattles, and neatly plastered within and without. The roof is thatched with reeds. Our day houses are left open at the sides; but those in which we sleep are always covered and plastered in the inside, with a composition mixed with cow-dung, to keep off the different insects, which annoy us during the night....Houses so constructed....require but little skill to erect them. Every man is a sufficient architect for the purpose. The whole neighborhood afford their unanimous assistance in building them, and in return receive and expect no other recompense than a feast.

Although the circular hut is the shape most widely associated with African vernacular housing, the range of house forms or styles is and was quite extensive. Susan Denyer has condensed about a thousand recorded variations into thirty-two main types: four are variations of one-story round houses; several are two-stories high; several are oval. There are the tent-like structures of nomadic peoples and several styles of caves or “dug ins.” However surprising for Westerners who have tended to assume that the circular hut is normative, at least thirteen categories in Denyer’s taxonomy are of square or rectangular houses. It is in West African “slave-exporting” coastal areas that “the rectangular gable-roofed hut is....characteristic....We find it especially in the coastal areas of Nigeria, down to the Congo estuary.” Many of the Africans coming to North America brought with them a tradition of building small, light rectangular cabins, with gable roofs.

...

The extraordinary archaeological research done at Kingsmill plantation, near Williamsburg, and William Kelso's analysis of these data, reveal both the village-like appearance of this large plantation and the range of housing built for both blacks and whites. The eighteenth-century Kingsmill properties had substantial Big Houses made of brick: the Bray's manor at Littleton, circa 1700-1781, one and a half stories high, 53' x 29', and the Burwell family's Kingsmill mansion, circa 1724-1820, two stories high, each floor 61' x 40'. This mansion was flanked by two brick dependencies (22' x 45') that housed slaves along with the kitchen and plantation offices and created a symmetrically ordered Big House complex. There was also a two-room home on the property (42' x 19') that was apparently first used by whites and then by blacks, communal slave quarters (40' x 18' and 28' x 20'), as well as a large range of other wooden, earthfast buildings in three separate quarters. One quarter was stretched out along Quartermaster Road, the main road passing Kingsmill's Big House and connecting Williamsburg with Burwell's Ferry Landing. Two other quarters were to the north and east, the second near the second Big House incorporated into the Burwell plantation. These wooden buildings ranged in size from a 40' x 18' two-room building with a 12' x 36' lean-to to an 8' x 8' structure. When the Kingsmill properties were put up for sale by the Burwell family in the 1780s, they were appropriately advertised as having "every necessary outhouse."

In the Kingsmill pattern, the brick Great House with a well and brick "offices" (kitchen, dairy, laundry, and storehouse) were symmetrically arranged on a prominent bluff, with extensive formal landscaping, whereas virtually all the wooden, earthfast structures were apparently randomly strung out along a road—their placement restricted only by the location of spring water for the slave dwellings, some quarter mile down the road, with large "puddles" and waste disposal areas nearby. This pattern was probably repeated at other large plantations in the early eighteenth century. On the poorer farms, where most slaves lived, lofts, kitchens, and small cabins housed the black population, and both blacks and whites lived amidst disorder.

By the last decades of the century a new trend toward overall order and symmetry affected many of the larger plantations. George Washington, for example, reorganized his slave housing in 1793, taking a great deal of time, trouble, and expense to have the outlying slave houses and cabins moved and refit. They were reorganized in rigid lines or streets, "a uniform shape in a convenient place," as he described it. The "convenient place" was along a straight fence, opposite the overseer's house at each outlying farm. At Muddy Hole farm, however, where Davy, a slave, was the overseer, the slaves remained in small cabins, randomly situated among the trees.

Washington's slaves lived in a wide range of housing. At the Big House, circa 1785, he built what he called the Greenhouse Quarters. These were two immense halls, each 20' x 70.5', flanking a central greenhouse room that gave these quarters a substantial Big House look from the outside, belying the fact that unlike his family mansion, these "mansion" quarters housed some ninety slaves. Other slaves lived in cabins, some near the mansion but most of them at the four outlying farms. These were built by the occupants themselves out of locally available logs, with the interstices "daubed and filled in." But even at the quarters, groups of slaves lived in larger, carpenter-built houses of scantling, plank, and shingles. Analyses of the black families on Washington's plantations indicate that most married couples were living at separate locations, and these larger houses may well have accommodated mixed related and

unrelated groups. Similarly at Philip Ludwell Lee's plantation, it would appear that groups of eight to twenty-four slaves were communally housed in one- or two-room structures

White homes, too, in the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries, often housed "motley crews" of relatives, inlaws, stepchildren, boarders, servants, and slaves; but by the late eighteenth century, these homes had by and large come to house more stable nuclear families. Black patterns changed over this time as well. As blacks married and established families, the small cabin came to be the modal form. Earlier, most blacks probably had lived kitchens, lofts, sheds, and houses in communal arrangements, although the very small slave hut was known at the outset of the slave period as well. "[T]he first thing to be done," advised a Southerner to prospective planters in 1710, "is after having cutt down a few Trees, to split Palisades or Clapboards and therewith make small Houses or Huts to shelter the slaves." Such small cabins could, of course, house a mixed group rather than a family. J. F. Smyth, in Virginia in 1774, slept one night in what he described as a small "wretched and miserable" one-room hut, with one bed and no other furniture. A white overseer and five or six slaves lived here together, isolated by over five miles of wilderness in each direction.

The slave, Old Dick, had reported that his young owner, Dr. Sutherland, encouraged slave couples to live in separate cabins, and this may well have representative of a process underway with both blacks and whites moving slaves toward family homes. Dick himself was very pleased when Spencer Ball "allowed me to build a log-house, and take in a patch of land where I raise corn and water *Melions*. I keep chickens and ducks, turkeys and geese." John Davis, the schoolmaster on this plantation, living himself in a small log house, described Dick's home in some detail:

Dick's log-hut was not unpleasantly situated. He had built it near a spring of clear water, and defended it from the sun by an awning of boughs. It was in Mr. Ball's peach-orchard. A cock that never strayed from his cabin served him instead of a time-keeper; and a dog that lay always before his door was an equivalent for a lock.

Whites certainly played a role in blacks' use of space. They wanted their homes small, cheap, and generally near one another, although Dick and many others were living apart. Jefferson is known to have ordered his overseer to build the Negro houses close together so that "the fewer nurses may serve & that the children may be more easily attended to by the superannuated women." He, as many other slaveowners, selected sites for slave houses. For example, he wrote his overseer in Bedford County, Joel Yancey, "Maria having now a child, I promised her a house to be built this winter, be so good as to have it done. place it along the garden fence on the road Eastward from Hannah's house." Jefferson's promise was clearly given in response to a black's request, dependent on her family status. Maria was Hannah's sister. They no doubt *wanted* houses next to each other. The overseer is being ordered to do what the slave wanted. Slaves also wanted small proximate housing: it fit their own inner language of building and space. And slaves probably wanted small cabins for each family: it now fit their social needs.

At Jefferson's quarters after the turn of the century it would appear women, both with husbands and without, had cabins. He wrote his overseer, Jeremiah A. Goodman,

that “Several of the negro women complain that their houses want repair badly. this should be attended to every winter. for the present winter, repair, of preference those of women who have no husbands to do it for them.”

When slaveowners built slave quarters or barracks for house slaves, sometimes what seems to have been a black inner language influenced them. Jefferson seems to have built his servant quarters with the 12-foot African protoform in mind. He described Mulberry Row, just below the Great House at Monticello, as including “a servants’ house 20 ½ f. by 12 f. of wood, with a wooden chimney, & earth floor,” three servants houses 12’ x 14’, with wooden chimneys and earthen floors; one 12’ x 20 ½; a joiner’s shed 12 ½’ x 25’, and a stable 12 x 105 ½. Only the washhouse was 16.5’ by 16.5’.

Houses that were 12-foot square, or close to that size, dotted the countryside, sometimes used for white although most often for black homes. Sometimes the very same building served blacks and whites serially. In 1770, Landon Carter recorded that “Guy and the Carpenters gone to build Jamy and Jugg a 12 foot house, then to new fit their house and remove it for Doleman to live.” Here, Carter’s black carpenters were building a 12’ x 12’ house for a black couple, but they were also refitting a similar former slave cabin for John Doleman, white overseer at Fork Quarter, who had a wife and child. “The Carpenters removed Jugg’s house as far as Doleman chose to have it from the spring.” Doleman, like the slaves, did not have a well: springs served slaves and probably most whites in the eighteenth century.

One feature does seem to distinguish eighteenth-century slave housing from that of whites: earthen root cellars, often wood-lined, dug near the chimneys, and generally later backfilled with debris, have been found in slave quarters at Kingsmill and Monticello. In the large communal buildings at Kingsmill, up to eighteen backfilled cellars have been found. (Kelso posits that they were used for private food storage and perhaps filled with the bones of animals taken without the plantation owner’s knowledge.) The presence of these cellars at most Kingsmill buildings had led to the assumption that they were occupied by slaves. This has made it difficult to identify the white overseer’s home. What seems likely is that here, as at Carter’s plantation and at Washington’s, whites occupied buildings that had been slave quarters, indicating important inner values in relation to shared space. Black and white housing had been much the same and was interchangeable. But this situation was itself changing, and by the end of the eighteenth century, whites were more likely to be in larger houses and/or to want to mark their distinction from slaves. In the 1790s Washington’s two black overseers at Muddy Hole and Dogue Run farms each had houses 16’ x 20’, one room up and one down. At the other farms the white overseers’ homes were of similar construction—scantling, plank, and shingles—but considerably larger. At Union farm the house had two rooms below, each 16’ x 18’, one room above, and a separate kitchen shed.

During most of the eighteenth century, if the poor or “middling” white was in a house larger than the small slave cabin, it was only slightly larger, and although a much higher percentage of the white houses appeared to be frame dwellings, many of these were log houses covered with boards.

Source: Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 71-73, 104-113.

* * * *

Camille Wells provides a succinct summary of slave housing with several examples from the Northern Neck.

What passed for slave housing in eighteenth-century Virginia included a wide assortment of accommodations. Some slaves were forced to make themselves at home in the vacant corners of buildings designed for other purposes. Joseph Ball wrote in 1758 that some of the slaves at his Little Falls plantation "must ly in the tobacco house." At Marmion in King George County, the unlit kitchen loft enclosed living space for two black households. By the middle of the century, however, most slaves apparently lived in small one- or two-room wood structures that varied in size from a 7-by-8-foot example at one of Joseph Ball's quarters to John Gordon's comparatively spacious 30-by-16-foot structure. The brick chimneys of Gordon's example suggest that it also represented the top of the line in terms of finish and state of repair. So did the quarters available to some of the slaves at Joseph Ball's Forest plantation in Lancaster County: "well cover'd weatherboarded, and lath'd & filled," each with a "good plank door, with iron hinges & a good lock & key." At the opposite end of the range of possibilities was the "miserable shell, a poor apology for a house" that an English traveler claimed to have shared one night in 1784 with six slaves and their overseer: "[It] was not lathed nor plaistered, neither ceiled nor lofted above, and only very thin boards for its covering; it had a door in each side, and one window, but no glass in it; it had not even a brick chimney, and as it stood on blocks about a foot above the ground, the hogs lay constantly under the floor, which made it swarm with fleas." Clearly, slave dwellings in eighteenth-century Virginia could be very humble. But the presence of the white overseer hints at another reality of this landscape. Slave housing was never vastly inferior in terms of size and finish to that occupied by most of the Chesapeake's common planters and landless laborers. They were all just colonial Virginians with few material resources—they were poor.

Source: Camille Wells, "Social and Economic Aspects of Eighteenth-Century Housing on the Northern Neck of Virginia," (College of William and Mary: Ph.D. diss., 1994), pp. 58-59.

AMERICAN DIVERSITY: Williamsburg Sites

The Apothecary

The first part of this section focuses on the slaves owned by John Minson Galt and William Pasteur. Galt and Pasteur were partners from April 1775 to December 1778. Second, an

excerpt from Lorena S. Walsh's book, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community*, details the medical care that members of the Burwell family customarily provided for their slaves.

John Minson Galt

Doctor John Minson Galt established his practice in Williamsburg in February 1769 after he completed his medical training at St. Thomas' Hospital in London. Galt married Judith Craig, the daughter of Alexander Craig, in June 1769. Judith Craig owned two slaves when she married Galt: Nanny (who was a girl when Craig inherited her from Mark Cosby in 1752) and Nanny's son, Henry (who was baptised on April 7, 1765). It is likely that Henry was the slave named Harry in Galt's household in the 1780s. Nanny was one of the doctor's six tithes in September 1773. Galt might have had an apprentice and several other slaves in his household.

Galt took advantage of the disruption caused by the Revolution and gained possession of three slaves left behind by Graham Frank, a Loyalist. Galt acquired a woman named Betty in 1779 and two boys—Jack and Billy—the following year. Perhaps Jack and Billy were Betty's sons. It is known that Betty gave birth to two children. Her son, George Preston, was baptized in July 1783, and a daughter, Polly Preston, was baptized in May 1785. Betty might have had a connection to the free black community because both of her children had a surname.

Doctor Galt had both enslaved adults and children in his household in 1783, 1784, and 1786:

1783—Sam, Harry, Jenny, Rachel, and Betty over sixteen
Lewis, Suckey, Polly, Jack, and Billy under sixteen

1784—Sam, Harry, George, Lewis, Rachel, and Betty over sixteen
Polly, Suckey, Billy, and Jack under sixteen

1786—George, Harry, Betty, and Rachel over sixteen
Suckey, Polly, Jack, Billy, George, and Mary under sixteen

Unfortunately, there is no evidence about the work that Galt's slaves performed. Betty and Rachel might have assisted Judith Galt with cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry. Judith Galt gave birth to two daughters, Sarah Trebell in 1782 and Lucy Ann in 1785. It is possible that there was a bond between Judith Galt and Betty because they experienced pregnancy and child birth in the early 1780s. Perhaps Harry accompanied Doctor Galt when he traveled to Carter's Grove and other nearby plantations to treat slaves.

Galt lived in Williamsburg until the time of his death in 1808. However, there is no evidence about the fate of his enslaved men, women, and children.

William Pasteur

William Pasteur was the son of John [Jean] Pasteur, a Williamsburg wigmaker. Pasteur inherited a slave girl named Ectie from his uncle, Thomas Harris, by 1745. There is no additional information about Ectie.

In 1760, Pasteur had two tithables, presumably an adult slave in addition to himself. Pasteur married Elizabeth whose maiden name is unknown. Their son, William Stith Pasteur, was born on November 12, 1762. Pasteur's slave woman Ely had a daughter (whose name not given in the records) baptized on November 6, 1763, and Lucy's son Benjamin was baptized at Bruton on November 2, 1766. The doctor had nine tithes in his household on the James City County side of Williamsburg in 1768. The following year Pasteur had seven tithes. The doctor purchased a mulatto man named Wentworth, livestock, and household goods for £40 from Thomas Brammer in January 1771.

An Oyer and Terminer case involved "William Scott alias Sam," a Negro man slave belonging to William Winston of Hanover County, who broke into Pasteur's kitchen on 22 April 1762. Sam was first condemned to die by hanging but was afterwards pardoned by Governor Fauquier.

Pasteur shows up frequently in the Burwell Account Books. Between 1764 and 1771, Pasteur's account totaling £85.8.5—presumably for medical treatment of both whites and blacks at Carter's Grove—was paid off in cash, wheat, corn, straw, fodder, pork, lamb, and other local products. Pasteur was also one of Nathaniel Burwell's best customers for the whiskey distilled at the Burwell plantation in Frederick County or at Carter's Grove. On August 15, 1777 the apothecary was charged £15.10.0 for thirty-one gallons of whiskey. In the spring of 1778 Pasteur and Galt charged £34.4.0 for inoculations performed on Burwell's family and slaves. There is a suggestion in 1780 that Pasteur treated Nathaniel Burwell's people at the quarter at King's Creek.

Doctor Pasteur purchased 630 acres on King's Creek in Yorkhampton Parish in 1773. He had eight tithes tending the fields on his plantation by September of that year. Five adult laborers worked on Pasteur's land in 1778. The doctor relocated his family and Williamsburg slaves to Yorkhampton Parish after his partnership with Doctor John Minson Galt expired in December 1778. It is likely that the move to Yorkhampton Parish broke some of the ties that Pasteur's slaves had to other slaves and free blacks who lived in Williamsburg.

In July 1780 Pasteur announced that he would sell an unnamed "very valuable negro fellow," who was thirty-five years old, "remarkably strong and active." The doctor noted that he "has been regularly brought up to the butchering business" and was also a good hostler. He advised his readers to contact him in York County or to see Dr. Galt in Williamsburg for terms of the sale.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Clarkson, ed., August 19, 1780.

Pasteur added to his labor force in the late 1770s and the early 1780s. In 1784 he had an unnamed overseer and twenty-five slaves on his plantation:

Abraham, Daniel, Wentworth, Jemmy, Harry, Tom, Emanuel, Sam, Natt, Edy,
Rachel, Sally, Judith, Edy, and Molly over sixteen
William, Joe, Abraham, Barkley, Billy, Watt, Henry, Fanny, Sally, and Ariana
under sixteen

The following year Pasteur had a total of twenty tithes and seven slave children in Yorkhampton Parish.

The doctor returned to Williamsburg in late 1785 or early 1786. He appeared on the 1786 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List as the owner of six slaves over sixteen—Wentworth, Sam, Edy, Rachel, Nelly, and Edy. Pasteur had an equal number of slaves under sixteen—Barkley, Sally, Billy, Watt, Ariana, and Lucy.

Pasteur placed an advertisement for a runaway slave in the May 20, 1790 issue of the *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*. He offered a ten dollar reward “FOR taking up and delivering to William Rose, jailor in Richmond, or John Fenton, jailor in Williamsburg, my negro man, JEMMY, who left my Farm in York county about four weeks ago. He is a tall, active, yellowish fellow, remarkably stout, and thick lips, by which alone he may be known, speaks quick, is very apt to smile when he speaks; he is a sensible fellow, and will perhaps endeavour to pass for a free man; was my foreman; has no striking fault but an impudent tongue – never run away before. I will sell him for a good price, and his wife also, if required.”⁶⁶ It is possible that Jemmy was the slave named James on the 1791 inventory of Pasteur’s estate.

William Pasteur’s will was recorded in the Williamsburg Hustings Court on July 4, 1791. He left his slave Pat and her three children to his niece, Ann Smith, the wife of Granville Smith. The doctor noted that “I desire that my Executors or administrators after my Wife’s death may immediately procure my mulatto fellow Wentworth and my mulatto girl Nelly their freedom.” His widow received all the rest of the estate for her lifetime. After Elizabeth Pasteur’s death, her share of the estate was to be sold and divided among his nephew William Pasteur (son of Blovet Pasteur), his niece Anne Smith, and his sister Ann Craig (wife of Thomas Craig). Pasteur appointed his wife, Elizabeth, and Nathaniel Burwell of Martin’s Hundred to serve as the executors of his estate.⁶⁷

The July 27, 1791 inventory of Pasteur’s York County estate included the following slaves:

⁶⁶ *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, May 20, 1790.

⁶⁷ Will of William Pasteur, dated October 1, 1788 and recorded on July 4, 1791, Robert Anderson Papers, Mss1An245b24, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

James	£60	Sarah	£45
Harry	£50	George	£60
Sam	£60	Abraham	£2
Pompey	£60	Billey	£55
Tom	£50	Judieth	£10
Gilly	£60	Jack	£50
Nimmo [?]	£60	Joe	£50

The August 16, 1791 inventory of Pasteur's personal property in Goochland County included the names of seven slaves:

man Bob	£10
man Robbin	£15
man Ben	£60
man Jo	£60
man Billey	£60
man Nimrod	£65
woman Phebe	£35

Both inventories were recorded in the Williamsburg Hustings Court on February 6, 1792.⁶⁸

* * * *

The Carter's Grove account books, a collection of bills and receipts from Lewis Burwell III and Lewis Burwell IV of Kingsmill, and the 1783-85 medical diary of Williamsburg physician John Minson Galt, who doctored the black and white families at both Carter's Grove and King's Creek, provide information about some of the kinds of medical care that the various Burwell owners customarily provided their slaves. These accounts of course give but part of the picture, for they document only payments made to medical professionals: midwives, dentists or barber-surgeons, and physicians. They reveal little or nothing of internal plantation medicine, which likely had an equal if not greater impact on the slaves' well-being than did professional ministrations. What is omitted from these records is as revealing as what was recorded.

Some combination of slave healers, quarter overseers, estate managers, and resident master or mistress, for example, tended to almost all of the assorted physical injuries-cuts, sprains, burns, broken bones, and the like-that both the adult workers and younger children must often have suffered. So far as we can determine, physicians were almost never called on to treat such accidental injuries. Plantation residents must also have initially doctored most cases of ague, fever, colds, dysentery, and intestinal parasites that were seasonally endemic to the area. Until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the owners appear often to have turned to medical professionals (with the exception of

⁶⁸ Burwell Manuscripts, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

midwives) only when home remedies or more exotic imported drugs sold over the counter by town apothecaries proved ineffectual. By the 1780s, however, the various Burwells increasingly relied on European-trained local doctors to treat a broad range of ailments, especially among the adult slaves. But at the same time there are hints that toward the end of the century the slaves may also have begun to manage some areas of health care themselves.

One clear pattern that emerges from the extant medical and financial records is the owners' long-standing decision to hire professional midwives to attend the slave women when they gave birth. Such assistance reflected customary birthing practices within the European community, as well as the owners' financial interest in preserving the health of both the mothers and their enslaved offspring. The hired midwives also may have provided skills that were in short supply in the quarters early in the century. Since many of the African-born women had been taken from their homelands while they were still in their teens or at most in their early twenties, their collective experience with childbirthing was perhaps limited. Much of the accumulated medical knowledge of older African women must surely have been lost in the forced migration to the New World.

From the 1740s into the 1770s, local midwives Ann Fortune, Mary Clark, Mrs. Slater, and Granny Lester (or Lister) delivered numerous black babies at both Carter's Grove and at Kingsmill, receiving a standard fee of ten shillings per delivery. Lester, who assisted at the births of at least four mothers at Kingsmill and Carter's Grove, was probably Sarah Lester, the widow of John Lester, a Yorkhampton Parish planter of middling means. Lester regularly delivered babies for slave women on other neighboring plantations and also for local whites and additionally treated minor ailments, such as curing the sore leg of Sall, a woman at the Bryan farm between Kingsmill and King's Creek. Catherine Blaikley, a well-regarded Williamsburg midwife who served a large clientele over a long professional career, submitted a bill for £1 2s. 6d. to Carter Burwell for unspecified services in 1739. She may have attended either Carter's wife Lucy (who bore no baby that year but could have had a miscarriage) or one or more of the Carter's Grove slave women. Blaikley, Lester, and Slater were white; Fortune and Clark cannot be further identified.

Before the Revolution, Burwell family overseers managing more distant plantations also were under order to secure midwives for the pregnant women in their charge. In 1733, for example, Charles Carter, acting as executor for his father, informed Lewis Burwell of Kingsmill that he had to pay midwives' fees for three women who lived on western quarters and were part of Lewis's father's estate. In 1754 Carter Burwell reimbursed Frederick County overseer John Ashby for the ten shillings he had paid a neighborhood midwife to assist at a birth there. In the later 1760s western overseers Thomas Shelton, William Pollard, Robert Catlett, and James Ware regularly submitted accounts to Carter Burwell's executor William Nelson that included payments to local midwives Sarah Balanger (probably the wife of a neighboring landowner in the Millwood area), Mrs. Garnet, and Mrs. Stevens. Reimbursable birthing expenses also included small amounts of brandy, rum, and molasses that the overseers bought for either the mother or the women who attended her labor.

After about 1775 the Burwell family records are less clear about who assisted women giving birth. Nathaniel Burwell II's accounts note only one payment of twelve shillings to an unidentified midwife in 1782; however, the ten shillings he paid Polly

Clarke in 1776 for unspecified services may also have represented the customary midwife's compensation. Once in 1785 Nathaniel took the extraordinary step of calling in Dr. Galt, who had trained in midwifery at St. Thomas's Hospital in London, to attend Sukey, a woman on the home plantation, in what must have been an exceptionally difficult labor. There must have been several dozen more births at the quarters before the turn of the century. It seems unlikely that Nathaniel II continued the family practice of calling in midwives but routinely failed in later years to record payments, and it is even more improbable that he decided to cut costs so drastically as to eliminate their services.

Later, in the early 1800s after the white family had moved to Frederick County, neither estate manager John Bryan at Carter's Grove nor Nathaniel Burwell II's son Nathaniel Jr., who was managing the outlying tidewater quarters, noted any payments to midwives. Both kept detailed records of quite small expenditures, so it is unlikely that they, too, omitted mention of birthing fees. In 1806 however, Bryan did seek credit for 1s. 6d. he had paid for sugar and an identical amount for molasses and rice for Kate, 1s. 6d. for sugar and brandy for Judy, and 2s. 4d. and 1s. 2d. to an overseer who had bought molasses and rice for Rose. These appear to be the customary provisions provided to birthing women and their attendants.

From this negative evidence one is left with the supposition that toward the end of the 1700s the slave women gained almost complete autonomy over their childbirthing. By then there must have been one or more slave midwives at Carter's Grove who assisted at slave births at both the home house and the outlying quarters. Free black midwives may have played some intermediary, if unrecorded, role in this transfer of responsibility from outsiders to the slave community. Midwife Mary Roberts, for example, who practiced in the area through the 1740s, and whom Carter Burwell paid for delivering a slave woman belonging to a local orphan whose estate he administered, was a free mulatto who lived in Chiscale, the upland ridge area interior to Carter's Grove. Other members of the Roberts family subsequently rented houses and ground from the Burwells. Later, from 1782 until at least 1813, another free mulatto midwife, Betty Armfield (or Amphill), rented a tenement on Carter's Grove or on one of the quarters. Neither Roberts nor Armfield were ever recorded as having been compensated for delivering babies at Carter's Grove. However, it seems likely that one or both may have shared their knowledge and skills with some of the Carter's Grove women whom the Burwells eventually accepted as legitimate professionals.

Otherwise the surviving materials suggest a variety of decisions about medical care that depended much on individual circumstance. In the mid-1730s, after King Carter's death, Lewis Burwell III of Kingsmill took responsibility for the Merchant's Hundred slaves whom his minor nephew Carter Burwell was to inherit. Perhaps wishing to avoid any accusation of failing to take proper care of his nephew's human legacy, Lewis paid substantial sums in 1735 and 1736 to Williamsburg physicians Robert Davidson and George Gilmore to visit and provide medicines for the Merchant's Hundred people. Another payment to William Bryan in 1736 for "bleeding 26 negroes at Foaces and Mill quarters" also suggests an asset-preserving strategy, devoid of much concern for the feelings and preferences of the men, women, and children who had to undergo such treatments.

Once he came of age, Carter Burwell, the first resident master at Carter's Grove, like his better-documented contemporaries William Byrd II and Landon Carter,

apparently played the role of family physician to himself, to members of his white family, and to his slaves. In the end pages of his plantation account book, Burwell recorded some of the recipes that he had collected from various local doctors for compounding medicines from a variety of imported ingredients. There were variously intended to cure “dry gripes,” a gastrointestinal disorder from which he himself suffered; to treat pleurisy (inflammation of the chest cavity); and to make purges and worm powders. As Byrd’s and Carter’s diaries make clear, most young children, black and white alike, frequently suffered from intestinal parasites. Burwell noted approvingly that Dr. John Symmer of Gloucester County had cured a critically sick black child with one of the recorded compounds. He may have dosed children on his own plantations with this strenuous concoction of powdered rhubarb (a botanic purgative), coralline (a vermifuge made from seaweed), and tinea, which was to be preceded and followed by additional purges of rhubarb, calomel (mercurous chloride), resin of jalap (another botanic purgative), and Jesuit’s bark (cinchona), mixed with honey and molasses or else steeped in strong beer.

Burwell’s attempts at doctoring often must have failed, however, for he also employed Williamsburg physicians John Amson, Alexander Mackenzie, Henry Potter, Thomas Wharton, and John de Sequeyra and Yorktown doctors John Payras and George Riddell to treat both black and white family members. In addition, he paid Elizabeth Hansford, a local white woman who nursed several of Burwell’s own children, £10 16s. 3d. for caring for slaves infected in the smallpox epidemic of 1748.

Carter Burwell’s executor William Nelson—like Lewis Burwell III in the 1730s—probably also erred on the side of caution in attempting to preserve the health of the estate’s workers. During his executorship he engaged Williamsburg doctors Peter Hay, William Pasteur, William Carter, George Pitt, and John Minson Galt to tend to both the blacks and the Burwell children. In addition, Nelson once hired Galt’s wife, rather than the physician himself, to ‘cure a sore negro.’ Nathaniel Burwell II had similar concern for caring for the human property of his cousins at King’s Creek in the 1770s. His administration accounts include payment for a blister and plaster for an old woman belonging to the estate.

Decaying and sometimes painfully abscessed teeth were a recurring health problem. The Burwells routinely paid physicians and surgeons like Andrew Anderson and John Galt to perform more complicated extractions. Between 1745 and 1748, for example, Anderson drew teeth for Robin, Phil, Sarah, Lucy, and Jack the miller from Kingsmill, as well as bleeding Moll. Similarly, Carter Burwell gave Joshua from Mill Quarter 2s. 6d. to go to town to get a tooth pulled in 1749. Between 1783 and 1785 Dr. Galt drew teeth for Gregory, Moses, Simon, Jenny, and Cate from Carter’s Grove and for Rachel and an unnamed man from King’s Creek. Frequent and severe dental problems were also evident among the slaves buried at Utopia Quarter. Of the ten individuals with some preserved teeth, six had either lost one or more teeth before they died, or else had caries in those remaining. By the time she died, one older woman had apparently lost all her teeth in half of her upper jaw.

The doctors most often came out to the quarters to visit the sick, although the Burwells also sent some slaves who were able to travel into Williamsburg for treatment. Only rarely did the owners resort to professionals to treat physical injuries. One exception is recorded by a 1767 bill from Williamsburg doctor George Pitt, who sutured

and dressed the face of a man from Kingsmill at the request of a local tavern keeper. Apparently he had an accident or got into a fight while on a trip to town.

The more detailed medical bills from Kingsmill, covering the middle two quarters of the century, indicate that the most common treatments these physicians administered were the then standard regimens of bleeding and purging. These were routinely employed in an attempt to cure a broad range of often undiagnosed illnesses, ailments that fall within the realm of what one would today term internal medicine. Although we tend to regard bloodletting as an exclusively European practice, Africans may have found it a relatively familiar treatment. Equiano, for example, related that doctors in his homeland ‘practiced bleeding by cupping.’ Such strenuous interventions, however, did not play nearly so central a role in healing in contemporary African medicine as they did among Europeans. Moreover, any injury or illness in the quarters that required some medical intervention inevitably raised perplexing issues of autonomy and control. Sick slaves may often have turned first to self-help solicited in secret from local black healers. If these remedies proved ineffective, they still may have attempted to conceal illnesses as long as possible, rather than submit to whatever treatments and regimens the owner might administer or dictate.

After he came of age, Nathaniel Burwell II variously employed Williamsburg physicians Galt, Pasteur, de Sequeyra, Philip Barraud, William Carter, and Richard Coulthard and surgeon-dentist John Baker to doctor his family and workers. Nathaniel had some knowledge of recent medical advances, deciding, for example, to pay, periodically, for inoculation against smallpox for all unexposed slaves as a routine preventive measure. Unlike his father, however, Nathaniel seems to have eschewed the role of family physician. He recorded no directions for compounding medicines in any of his extant papers, and his financial accounts, as well as Galt’s medical diary, suggest instead much greater reliance on medical professionals. Although Burwell and his overseers occasionally purchased some medicines that may have been used to doctor minor ailments in the quarters, the fact that he called on Galt to treat ailments that prompted no more serious remedies than liniment, plasters, Virginia snakeroot, or gargles suggests considerable disengagement.

One suspects that by the end of the century overseers and the estate managers were expected to treat only physical injuries and minor illnesses and to call a doctor for most serious health problems. Between 1801 and 1806, for example, when Nathaniel was absent from the Grove, estate manager John Bryan arranged for issues of brandy, sugar, molasses, and rice to invalids and occasionally also purchased over-the-counter drugs, such as salts. Overseers on more distant quarters clearly were authorized to engage doctors to treat cases of illnesses that did not respond to customary remedies and to employ local residents to nurse ailing slaves who proved unable to work for long periods of time. The western overseers, for example, employed Drs. Wells (or Wills), Jones, and Mackey to treat laborers for whom they were responsible, as well as paying the other local men and women for ‘keeping,’ or tending, others who were chronically sick.

From 1778 on, Burwell apparently made arrangements with Williamsburg doctor John Galt to provide routine medical care for his slaves and those of his cousin Nathaniel Junior at King’s Creek, whose estate he administered. Between October 1783 and October 1785, for which his medical diaries are extant, Galt made ten general plantation

visits to Carter's Grove, New Quarter, and Foaces and in addition at other times treated separately about thirty-seven individuals, including twenty-six adults. Several, including Kate, Jenny, Sam, Simon, and Betty, shared a common name with one or more other adult Carter's Grove slaves. Galt's diary did not always specify age or residence—Carter's Grove or one of the quarters—so it is impossible to determine the exact number of his patients. Over this same period Galt also treated six blacks (four adults and two children) at King's Creek separately.

Tax lists for 1783-86 record about seventy-three adult slaves aged sixteen and over and about thirty-seven younger slave children at Nathaniel II's holdings. At King's Creek there were between thirty-seven and thirty-nine adults and twenty-two to twenty-six children. Thus, Galt treated at least a quarter of the adults at Carter's Grove one or more times over the course of a single year but perhaps fewer than 10 percent of the children. It is unclear whether Burwell was reluctant to spend much on professional medical care for children too young to work, or whether the slaves were themselves reluctant to subject sick youngsters to the standard European medical treatments. The result, however, was that seriously ailing laboring men and women and old people were eventually treated by a European-trained professional, while the health care of most youngsters was confined to the realm of plantation medicine.

Since Dr. Galt recorded only procedures used and remedies prescribed, and not diagnoses, it is usually unclear what diseases or conditions he was treating. He did note that a woman had contracted a venereal disease and prescribed an unguent used for treating infected wounds for one man. Several of the sick children were afflicted with internal parasites that Galt treated with worm powders and laxatives. Apparently there was no particular 'sickly season,' or at least none that involved ailments for which professional treatment was indicated. With the exception of January and February, when bad roads may have precluded travel, Galt's ministrations were spread fairly evenly across the calendar year. Whatever the ailment, the doctor most often relied on the standard bleeding and purging, and he occasionally also administered blisters and plasters, fever remedies, gargles, and painkillers. About two-thirds of the sick either recovered or died after a single visit. Galt was called in to treat the remaining third of the adult male and female patients between two and five times per year.

Because, across the eighteenth century, most of the Burwell group lived near a town amply supplied with physicians, the adult slaves who developed serious health problems were likely to be treated more often and more promptly by medical professionals than were slaves living in more rural areas. However, given the limited efficacy of medicine at the time, it is uncertain whether they gained much benefit or in fact were more harmed than helped. Whatever healing skills were available on the individual quarters to treat common injuries and ailments were likely to have been equally or more important, and about these we know almost nothing. Other factors such as a calorically and nutritionally adequate diet, sufficient clothing and shelter, and reasonable labor requirements would have contributed much more to their general well-being. In these areas slaves on the Burwell quarters seem to have fared no better than those living on most other large plantations.

Source: Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*, pp. 173-180.

The Blacksmith

In 1775, three of the blacksmiths in Williamsburg owned slaves—James Anderson, Robert Bond, and John Draper. Anderson, Bond, and Draper also relied on the labor of apprentices in their shops.

James Anderson

James Anderson, the son of William and Sarah Anderson, was born in Gloucester County on January 24, 1739/40. Anderson established his blacksmith business in Williamsburg by 1763. In February of that year, he agreed to take James Banks, a free mulatto of York County, as his apprentice. Banks apprenticed himself to Anderson for seven years to learn the trade of a blacksmith and how to read and write.⁶⁹

Anderson received his appointment as the public armourer for Virginia by October of 1765. One of the items that he and others in his shop made was a “strong iron collar.... with the letters (P. G.) stamped thereon.” Anderson placed the iron collar around the neck of any slave hired out by the Keeper of the Public Gaol.⁷⁰

It is known that the blacksmith was a slaveowner by November 1766. He purchased a slave woman named Pat from William Cosby for £26.11.9. Pat might have helped Anderson’s wife, Hannah, with the cooking, cleaning, and laundry. The blacksmith hired a slave woman named Jenny from Edmund Bacon in 1770.⁷¹ Surviving documents do not indicate when Anderson gained possession of Nat, an enslaved blacksmith. Perhaps Nat received his training as a blacksmith in Anderson’s shop.

Anderson purchased the southern half of Lot 19 in 1767. The blacksmith bought Lot 18 and part of Lot 19 on Duke of Gloucester Street from William Holt in October 1770. He did not move his business to Lot 18 right after he gained possession of the property; the blacksmith rented the lot to William Drinkard, a tavern keeper, by February 1771. It is possible that Drinkard operated a tavern on Lot 18 for a short period of time.

⁶⁹ James Banks was a poor orphan ordered to be bound out by the churchwardens of Yorkhampton Parish on February 21, 1763, the date of his apprenticeship to James Anderson. He would have been at least 14 years old to have apprenticed himself to Anderson. It is possible that he was the son of Elizabeth Banks or Moll Banks, two free mulatto women who lived in Yorkhampton Parish. Banks served his apprenticeship with Anderson and probably remained in the Williamsburg area. The grand jury presented him on November 19, 1770 and on July 15, 1771 for not listing himself as a tithable (his name appears on the presentment with the names of known residents of Bruton Parish). The July 1771 presentment is the last reference to Banks in the York County records.

⁷⁰ May 1726—ACT IV. *An Act for amending the Act concerning Servants and Slaves; and for the further preventing the clandestine transportation of Persons out of this Colony* in Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 4:168-173.

⁷¹ *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., August 8, 1771.

Archaeological evidence indicates that Anderson had forges on the western boundary of Lot 18 and on part of Lot 19.

This blacksmith became the Public Armourer for the Commonwealth of Virginia on March 20, 1776.⁷² Anderson agreed to rent his shop and laborers to the Commonwealth. The blacksmith and the Council reached the following agreement on December 3, 1777:

The Governor & Council this day agreed to allow Mr James Anderson (Blacksmith) thirty two pounds per month for Nine Hands, & twenty shillings per Diem (Sundays excluded) for himself; and at the rate of Ninety pounds per Annum for his Shop & Tools for Six Months to commence from the 21st Sept last. Mr Anderson is to be allowed Rations for himself & Workeman—a load of Wood per Week or as much as is necessary to cook for the Workmen. The Wages of the Journeymen are to be as Cheap as Mr Anderson can get them for. Mr Anderson attended in Council & accepted of the above Terms.⁷³

Advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette* indicate that Anderson took apprentices and hired laborers. On August 22, 1776 Anderson announced that “Journeymen GUNSMITHS and BLACKSMITHS will meet with encouragement from the subscriber. Wanting likewise, 8 or 10 healthy BOYS, as apprentices.”⁷⁴ In April 1779, he stated “I WILL give extraordinary wages to a good BLACKSMITH and NAILER, that is capable of acting as foreman in my shops—I am in want of six likely young NEGRO FELLOWS for six months, for which I will give 100 £ each.”⁷⁵ Three months later, in June 1779, Anderson noted that he would “give great wages for GUN STOCKERS, and BLACKSMITHS, that are good workmen.”⁷⁶

The records of the Public Store in Williamsburg indicate that Anderson had both white and black laborers in his shop during the Revolution. In April 1779 he received “5 pairs Shoes for 5 Negroes employ’d in the Publick Blacksmiths Shop” and “10 Yds do [baize] for aprons for the Negroes hired by the Publick.” The following month, the blacksmith received fabric for clothes for the five white boys—Samuel Dunn, Thomas Stroud, Thomas Haney, John Martin, and Samuel Bryan—who made nails.⁷⁷

⁷² During the Revolution, the Commonwealth contracted him to clean and repair muskets, swords, and bayonets as well as to manufacture nails, axes, tomahawks, and hardware for carts and carriages.

⁷³ McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Journal of the Council of the State of Virginia*, 2:39.

⁷⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., August 23, 1776.

⁷⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., April 24, 1779.

⁷⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., June 19, 1779.

⁷⁷ Williamsburg Public Store Records, Colonial Williamsburg Microfilm M-1016-2.

Anderson rented his blacksmith shop and forges on Lots 18 and 19 to the Commonwealth until the capital was moved to Richmond. He relocated to Richmond and served as the Public Armourer for the Commonwealth until his resignation in July 1782. Anderson had been a resident of Richmond for ten months when the 1782 Census was taken. He had nine apprentices, one adult slave—the blacksmith Nat, and two slaves under the age of sixteen in his household.

The blacksmith returned to Williamsburg after he left the position of Public Armourer. Details in Anderson’s account book indicate that he operated his shop on Lots 18 and 19 until his death in September 1798. The October 1803 inventory of Anderson’s estate included “Nat, a Negro man blacksmith” who was valued at \$600. The total value of Anderson’s real property was \$860.90. The high value that appraisers gave to Nat is an indication that he had received some formal training as a blacksmith and was skilled. Robert Anderson purchased Nat for \$600 at the November 1, 1803 sale of his father’s estate.⁷⁸

Robert Bond

Robert Bond, the son of John and Ann Bond, was born in Charles Parish on July 9, 1728. He apprenticed himself to John Terry, a Yorktown blacksmith, on March 18, 1744/5. Bond completed his apprenticeship and worked as a blacksmith in York County. He moved to Williamsburg and bought Lot 34 in the Waller Subdivision from a carpenter named Robert Brown on February 1, 1762.

In November 1774, the churchwardens of Bruton Parish bound Edward Jasper, a poor orphan, to Bond. Jasper was probably part of the free black Jasper family who lived in Bruton and Yorkhampton parishes. Bond had financial difficulties in 1781. He did not have enough money to buy leather for his bellows. The blacksmith did have an enslaved woman named Grace by 1782. Grace might have assisted Bond’s wife, Ann, with cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and looking after the Bonds’ children: John, Dixon, William, and Charlotte.

John Draper

John Draper, a blacksmith and farrier, was one of the English servants who accompanied Lord Botetourt to Virginia in 1768. Draper worked at the Palace until September 1769. He gained possession of a blacksmith’s shop on Lot 25 on Duke of Gloucester Street by October of the same year. Draper entered into a seven-year lease for this property with William Goodson, a Williamsburg merchant, on August 27, 1770. He rented part of the dwelling house, a blacksmith shop located behind the house, half of the garden, part of the stables, and one of the cellars under the dwelling.

⁷⁸ Inventory and appraisal of the estate of James Anderson, deceased, in Williamsburg in the Robert Anderson Account Book, Virginia Historical Society.

Draper owned a slave man named Jack whom he failed to list as a title in November 1770. It is possible that Jack had some training as a blacksmith. In May 1771, Francis Moss apprenticed himself to Draper for six years.⁷⁹ The blacksmith gained a second apprentice in January 1773. The churchwardens of Bruton Parish bound John Martin, a poor orphan, to Draper until September 1775.

Draper's household included a servant and a slave who ran away. In November 1773, Draper offered a reward to anyone who helped him to regain possession of Samuel Johnson, an English servant. Johnson was a baker. Two months later, in January 1774, Draper announced that he thought his thirty-five year old slave woman had ran to Norfolk or Hampton. It is likely that Draper bought this woman from a resident of Charles Parish so that he would have someone to do the domestic chores in his house. Another one of Draper's slaves—a boy named Gaby—ran away in February 1780.

On November 15, 1779, Draper's slave man Emanuel appeared in the York County Courthouse for an oyer and terminer trial. He faced the charges of felony and burglary. Emanuel pled not guilty to entering the storehouse of William Goodson and taking "one piece of black Alamade of the value of Fourteen hundred pounds, one piece of Marseilles Quilting of the Value of six hundred pounds, four pieces of Chex of the Value of five hundred pounds, Eleven pair of Leather Breeches of the Value of four hundred pounds." The justices found Emanuel guilty of the felony, but not of the burglary. He pled benefit of clergy. Emanuel was burned on his left hand and received thirty-nine lashes on his back.⁸⁰

In June 1780, Draper purchased the lot where the old play house stood. The lot adjoined the Capitol Square. The blacksmith had two slaves in his household in 1782. The following year Draper paid the assessment on one slave—a woman named Molly.

The Cabinetmaker

Peter Scott, Anthony Hay, Edmund Dickenson, James Honey, and Yorktown's James Tyrie depended upon skilled slaves and a free man of color in their cabinetmaking businesses. It is possible that enslaved men owned and rented by Richard Booker and Benjamin Bucktrout and the slave hired by John Crump also helped to produce furniture in Williamsburg.

Peter Scott

Peter Scott had a cabinetmaking business in Williamsburg by May 1749. He placed the following advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* on September 12, 1755:

⁷⁹ Francis Moss completed his apprenticeship to Draper and moved to Yorktown. He owned part of Lot 30 in the 1790s.

⁸⁰ York County Order Book 4 (1774-1784) 246, November 15, 1779.

Before Mr. Finnie's Door, on the 23d Day of October next, Two Lots of Ground, situate on the Back Street, near Col. Custis's in Williamsburg; on which there is a good Dwelling House, containing Six Rooms and Closets, a good dry Cellar, with all convenient Out-Houses, and a good Well: Twelve Months Credit will be allowed the Purchaser giving Bond and Security. At the same Time and Place will be sold, for Bills of Exchange or ready Money, Two Negroes, bred to the Business of a Cabinet-maker; likewise will be sold, at the Subscriber's Shop near the Church, sundry Pieces of Cabinet Work, of Mahogany and Walnut, consisting of Desks, Book-Cases, Tables of various Sorts, Tools, and some Materials. Six Months Credit will be given to those that purchase above the Value of Fifty Shillings, on their giving Bond and Security; and Five per Cent. will be allowed for ready Money.

And as I intend to go for Great-Britain the latter End of next Month, therefore I desire all Persons indebted to me, to make speedy Payment, otherwise they may expect Trouble without further Notice.⁸¹

Scott stayed in Williamsburg and continued his cabinetmaking business. It is possible that he decided to keep the enslaved cabinetmakers to work in his shop. On November 2, 1772, Thomas Jefferson noted that he "Pd. Peter Scott in full £ 16" and "Gave negro man at Peter Scott's 2/."⁸²

Scott died in December 1775. The cabinetmaker lived on the James City County side of Williamsburg and it is likely that his will and inventory were recorded in that county. Alexander Craig and Robert Nicholson, the executors of Scott's estate placed information about the sale of his personal property in the January 5, 1776 issue of Purdie's *Virginia Gazette*. They announced:

*To be SOLD before Robert Nicolson's store, on Tuesday the 10th instant, A GREAT variety of cabinet-makers tools, mohogany, walnut, and pine plank, likewise new walnut book cases, desks, tables, &c. belonging to the estate of mr. Peter Scott, deceased. Six months credit will be allowed for all sums above 5 l. the purchasers giving bond with good security.*⁸³

⁸¹ *Virginia Gazette*, 12 September 1755.

⁸² James A. Bear, Jr., and Lucia C. Stanton, eds., *Jefferson's Memorandum Books: Accounts, with Legal Records and Miscellany, 1767-1826*, 2 vols., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), I:296, 297; see also Wallace B. Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg and Eastern Virginia 1740-1790*, (1979; reprint, Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1993), p. 26; and Ronald L. Hurst and Jonathan Prown, *Southern Furniture 1680-1830: The Colonial Williamsburg Collection*, (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1997), pp. 370, 373n, 452, 457n.

⁸³ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 5 January 1776.

The fact that Craig and Nicholson did not include an enslaved cabinetmaker in the list of Scott's estate suggests that this cabinetmaker hired the slave whom Jefferson tipped in 1772, sold this slave before he died, or bequeathed the enslaved man in his will.

Anthony Hay

Anthony Hay worked as a cabinetmaker when he first arrived in Williamsburg. In November 1751 he placed an advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* for a journeyman and a servant. Evidence indicates that Hay gained the services of two workers who saw his announcement. On the last day of 1751 the cabinetmaker purchased a pair of indentures at William Hunter's printing office. In May of the following year Hay paid Hunter for another pair of indentures. It is possible that Hay used these indentures to secure the services of a white apprentice or to purchase an enslaved laborer.⁸⁴ Hay and Christopher Ford Junior sold carpenter's, joiner's, and cabinetmakers tools in 1755. A carver named James Wilson also worked in Hay's shop in 1755.

The cabinetmaker's household included journeymen and slaves. Hay's son, Thomas, inherited a slave woman named Elizabeth from his grandfather, Thomas Penman, in September 1759. A child named Jeremiah was baptized on January 7, 1759 and another child, Tom, was baptized on June 7, 1761. The baptism of Ben, the son of his slave woman Peg, was recorded in 1762. Hay sent Rippon, age three, to the Bray School in September of 1762. In September 1764 Hay had a slave named Wiltshire pick up a spelling book at the printing office.⁸⁵ Two more slave children—Richard, the son of Nanny, and Peg's daughter Lucy—were baptized in April and June of 1765, respectively. Jenny, another one of Peg's daughters, attended the Bray School in November of 1765.

Hay decided to give up his cabinetmaking business in 1767. He purchased the Raleigh Tavern and the twenty-acre parcel of land adjoining Williamsburg from William Trebell on January 1, 1767. A week later he announced these changes in the *Virginia Gazette*. Hay informed "The Gentlemen who have bespoke work of the subscriber may depend upon having it made in the best manner by Mr. Benjamin Bucktrout, to whom he has given up his business."⁸⁶ Benjamin Bucktrout's announcement in the *Virginia*

⁸⁴ *Virginia Gazette Journals, 1750-1752* (William Hunter), Alderman Library, University of Virginia; Rockefeller Library Microfilm No. M-1136, 7 November 1751, 31 December 1751, and 30 May 1752. See also Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg*, p. 61.

⁸⁵ Wiltshire also ran errands to the Printing Office on June 13, 1765 and September 13, 1765.

⁸⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., January 8, 1767.

Gazette noted that Hay had moved to the Raleigh Tavern. It is possible that Hay rented his shop and his skilled slave man, Wiltshire, to Bucktrout.⁸⁷

Anthony Hay died between November 19, 1770 and December 17, 1770. Hay left his whole estate (after the payment of his debts) to his widow, Elizabeth, for her support and for the maintenance and education of his children. After her death, all of his children (except Thomas who had been provided for by his grandfather) were to share the estate. The February 2, 1771 inventory of Hay's estate listed twenty slaves and their appraised values:

Lucy £25
 Peggy and her children Ben, Lucy, Jimmy, and Jenny £125
 Caesar £45
 Gaby £60
 Rachel £30
 Rippon £60
 Jerry £50
 Wiltshire £65
 Sarah and her child Mary £70
 Will £60
 Tom £50
 Kate £50
 Betty £50
 Nancy and her child Edmund £60

On January 17, 1771, William Trebell and Robert Nicholson, the executors of Hay's estate, announced two sales of his real and personal property. The first was to be on March 6, 1771 and included

THAT noted and well accustomed Tavern in Williamsburg, called the RALEIGH, which has every Convenience to it, and an exceeding fine stable and Pasture adjoining. At the same Time will be sold the Stock of LIQUORS, a great Quantity of HOUSEHOLD and KITCHEN FURNITURE, some CHAIRS and HARNESS, CARTS and HORSES, CATTLE, SHEEP, &c.-----Also a very good DWELLINGHOUSE on the back street, where Mr. Hay formerly lived, with large Cabinet Maker's Shop and Timber yard, and all necessary Out houses for a Family.

⁸⁷ There is no clear statement that Wiltshire was the "very good Cabinet Maker" whom Hay owned. However, Wiltshire was the highest valued slave in the inventory of Hay's estate and it is unlikely that James Southall would have purchased a cabinetmaker at the sale of Hay's estate. Will, valued at £ 60, was probably the "good Coachman and Carter."

The second sale was to be on May 7, 1771 before the door of the Raleigh. People would have the opportunity to buy “nineteen NEGROES belonging to the said Estate among them a very good Cabinet Maker, a good Coachman and Carter, some fine Waiting Boys, good Cooks, Washers, &c.”⁸⁸

Elizabeth Hay renounced the will of her deceased husband on March 20, 1771. She bought Lots 263 and 264 at the March 6, 1771 sale and received a deed for this property on January 18, 1772. The widow Hay also bought two slaves—Sarah and her daughter Mary—on May 7, 1771.⁸⁹ James Southall paid £101 for a negro fellow named Will whom he purchased at the sale of Anthony Hay’s estate on November 6, 1771.⁹⁰ It is likely that Edmund Dickenson gained possession of Wiltshire, the cabinetmaker. However, it is not clear if Dickenson rented him from Hay’s estate or purchased him.⁹¹

Benjamin Bucktrout

Benjamin Bucktrout took over Anthony Hay’s cabinetmaking business on January 1, 1767. It is possible that Hay hired Wiltshire to Bucktrout and that Edmund Dickenson also worked for the new master of the Hay Shop. Bucktrout operated his business at Hay’s Shop until January 1771 when he relocated to the Chiswell-Bucktrout House on Francis Street. Bucktrout advertised for journeymen cabinetmakers in September 1769 and for apprentices in February 1775. This cabinetmaker decided to sell a slave woman whom he described as “an exceeding good washer and ironer” in August of 1779.⁹²

⁸⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., January 17, 1771. William Marshman’s accounts indicate that Anthony Hay had a “Black Waiting Man” (28 December 1769). It is probable that Will was the man who drove the cart that Marshman hired on February 1769.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth Hay paid the assessment on Sarah and Mary (both over sixteen years old) in 1784 and 1786. The widow Hay’s household also included Judith (under sixteen years old in 1786), Nelly (under sixteen in 1784 and over sixteen in 1786), and Sall (under sixteen in 1784 and 1786).

⁹⁰ Southall Receipt Book; see also note 7 above.

⁹¹ Alexander Craig, James Southall, and Blovet Pasteur noted that Hay’s slaves sold for £ 1007, a sum that was £ 207 higher than the appraised value of the enslaved individuals. Unfortunately, they did not list the names of the people who purchased these slaves. York County Wills and Inventories (22) 168-172, dated 16 April 1773 and recorded 17 May 1773.

⁹² *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon ed., 28 August 1779.

Edmund Dickenson

It is likely that Edmund Dickenson gained possession of Hay's enslaved man Wiltshire—"a very good Cabinet Maker"—after the death of the keeper of the Raleigh Tavern in late 1770. Unfortunately, extant documents do not indicate if Dickenson purchased or hired Wiltshire. However, it is known that Dickenson opened his business in the shop formerly occupied by Hay in January 1771.

Wiltshire worked in Dickenson's shop with James Tyrie, his owner's apprentice. Tyrie learned the skills of a cabinetmaker from Dickenson between August 1772 and August 1777. It is likely that Dickenson employed several journeymen in his shop. Dickenson advertised for journeymen cabinetmakers in November 1771 and September of 1773. In July 1774 George Hamilton, a carver and gilder from Britain, worked out of Dickenson's shop. There were seven workers in the cabinetmaker's shop in 1775, the year he failed to turn in a list of his tithes.

Dickenson enlisted in the army and he received a commission as a captain in the First Virginia Regiment. Dickenson rose to the rank of a major by October 1777. He was killed at the Battle of Monmouth on June 28, 1778.⁹³ The July 1778 inventory of Dickenson's estate did not include any slaves.⁹⁴ Either Wiltshire died before Dickenson or he had a new master by 1778.

James Tyrie

James Tyrie learned the skills of a cabinetmaker from Edmund Dickenson between August 1772 and August 1777. Tyrie opened a shop in Yorktown after he finished his apprenticeship. Francis Hern, a free mulatto, apprenticed himself to James Tyrie on July 19, 1785. Hern agreed to serve until his twenty-first birthday.⁹⁵ Tyrie died in the spring of 1786. His inventory included five slaves: Betty valued at £40; Frank, a boy valued at £25; Milly and her child Ben valued at £60; and Prince valued at £20.

John Crump

⁹³ Gusler, *Furniture of Williamsburg*, pp. 66-67; Hurst and Prown, *Southern Furniture*, p. 305.

⁹⁴ York County Wills and Inventories (22) 401, dated 28 July 1778 and recorded 17 August 1778.

⁹⁵ York County Deeds (6) 274, dated and recorded 19 July 1785.

John Crump hired one of Henry Wetherburn Nicholson's slaves from his guardian, Benjamin Weldon, in 1780. The cabinetmaker paid £11.10 for the hire of an enslaved worker. The following year Crump paid £16 for the labor of Peter and Nanny for one year. Perhaps Peter assisted Crump in his business.

Richard Booker

Richard Booker advertised for journeymen cabinetmakers in November 1773, April 1774, October 1774, January 1775 (with his partner, John Crump), and July 1776. It is possible that Booker had enslaved men who worked in his shop in the late 1780s. Booker had fourteen slaves over the age of twelve in his household in 1788.

James Honey

James Honey was a cabinetmaker who lived in Williamsburg from June 1776 until the time of his death in April 1787. In 1782 Honey gained a free mulatto apprentice after the death of his friend, Thomas Jarvis. In his will Jarvis noted

It is also my desire that my mulatto boy Billy whom I believe to be my son should be set free next session of assembly & I request that my exrs. (who I shall hereafter name) see to have it so done Likewise that the sd Billy Jarvis should be bound to James Honey of the City of Williamsburg to learn his trade & calling but that he shall be free when he arrives to 21 years of age. It is also my will & desire that my exrs. purchase two mulatto children brother & sister to the sd Billy at present the property of Nathaniel Burwell on Kings Creek & that they shall be set free in the same manner before mentioned. I give to the sd Billy Jarvis his heirs & exrs. forever my negro woman Sarah & Pat & all the ballance of my estate of what kind soever after purchasing out of the same the afore mentioned mulatto children but if the sd Nathaniel Burwell whould not agree to sell the sd children namely Franky & Johnny the whole balance after paying all my just & lawfull debts to belong to the sd Billy Jarvis.

I nominate & appoint my friends James Honey of the City of Williamsburg & Robert Goodrich of York County to be my exrs. & to see the fair & just settling of my estate. I likewise desire they may see the sd Billy Jarvis properly educated & that they have the disposal of the above estate til he arrives at 24 years of age. I likewise empower the sd James Honey & Robert Goodrich to retain all the negroes & what part of the stock of horses, cattle, hogs &c they may see proper for my plantation for this present year, then to be disposed of as they may judge most to the advantage of the sd Billy.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ York County Wills and Inventories (23) 537-538, dated 2 February 1781 and recorded

Perhaps Jarvis turned to Honey as the executor of his estate and the teacher of Billy Jarvis because the slaves whom Honey owned at his death in 1787 included a “negro man that has been brought up to the cabinet business.”⁹⁷

It is possible that Robert Goodrich handled Thomas Jarvis’s estate after the death of James Honey since Billy Jarvis (born in circa 1769; see below for information on Billy Jarvis’s age) was not yet twenty-four years old. Billy Jarvis was about thirteen years old when Thomas Jarvis died and about eighteen years old when James Honey died. Billy Jarvis used the name William Jarvis as an adult and lived in York County. He registered a description of himself with the clerk of York County on December 17, 1810:

William Jarvis a bright mulatto about 41 years of age – five feet 7 ½ Inches high – bald on the top of his head a scar on the right side of his head an one on his left foot – Emancipated by the will of Thomas Jarvis decd recorded in York Ct on the [blank] day of [] 177 []

Perhaps three other free men of color with the surname of Jarvis were related to Billy/William Jarvis. Charles Jarvis was about twenty-one years old in 1814, John Jarvis was about twenty-four years old in 1826, and Thomas Jarvis was about twenty-one years old in 1822. All three men were free-born mulattoes.⁹⁸

The Capitol

17 September 1782; *ibid.*, pp. 156-157, dated 24 September 1782 and recorded 21 April 1788. Nathaniel Burwell Junior was one of the three men who appraised Jarvis’s estate. The September 1782 inventory of Jarvis’s estate included three slaves: Sampson a fellow valued at £ 90, a wench named Sarah who was worth £ 30, and a second wench, Pat, appraised at £ 50. Burwell sold Franky and Johnny to Jarvis’s executors in 1782. See Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter’s Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community*, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1997, p. 257.

⁹⁷ *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, 17 May 1787.

⁹⁸ York County Register of Free Negroes & Mulattoes 1798-1831 .

The laws passed in the Capitol continued the paradox of freedom for white persons based on the enslavement of blacks that legislators created in the seventeenth century.

The connection between the capitol building in Williamsburg and slavery began in 1699. In that year, the colonial legislators enacted a duty on slaves imported into Virginia. The money raised from the duty helped to pay for the construction of the legislative building in the colony's new capital, Williamsburg. Six years later, in 1705, the General Assembly passed legislation that codified the seventeenth-century slave laws into the colony's first slave code. Legislators passed major revisions to the laws that supported the institution of slavery and placed restrictions on free persons of color in 1723, 1732, 1748, 1765, and 1769. Virginia's leaders also placed duties on enslaved persons imported to the colony as a way to limit the slave trade.

The laws passed during the first half of the eighteenth century increased the harshness of slavery and placed a greater number of constraints on free black men, women, and children. The legislation enacted by Virginia's leaders between 1763 and 1776 eased some (but not all) of the regulations imposed earlier in the century. However, the members of the House of Burgesses did not vote to extend liberty to their slaves at the same time that they sought to gain their independence from Britain.

* * * *

December 18, 1764—Address to the King

The House of Burgesses wrote an address to King George III and two memorials to Parliament to protest the imposition of a stamp tax. The Burgesses stated that the tax would bring economic suffering to Virginians. They based their opposition to the tax on the fact that the British Constitution protected subjects from taxation without their consent and that Virginia's charters gave the House of Burgesses the sole right to tax Virginians. Parliament passed the Stamp Act on March 22, 1765. Virginians learned about the approval of the Stamp Act at the end of April.

In the following excerpt from the address to King George III, the Burgesses noted that the colonists would be the slaves of Britain if Parliament was allowed to impose the Stamp Act.

Your Memorialists are therefore led into an humble Confidence that your Lordship will not think any Reason sufficient to support such a Power in the **British** Parliament, where the Colonies cannot be represented; a Power never before constitutionally assumed, and which if they have a Right to exercise on any Occasion must necessarily establish this melancholy Truth, that the Inhabitants of the Colonies are the Slaves of **Britons**, from whom they are descended, and from whom they might expect every Indulgence that the Obligations of Interest and Affection can entitle them to.

Source: McIlwaine et al., eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1761-1765*, pp. 302-304.

May 18, 1769—The Association of 1769

On May 16, 1769 the members of the House of Burgesses adopted resolutions that maintained their right to levy taxes in Virginia and condemned Parliament's decision to transport colonists accused of treason to England for trial. The following day the Burgesses approved an address to King George III based on the resolutions. Lord Botetourt called the Burgesses to the Council chamber and dissolved the body. Many of the Burgesses gathered at the Raleigh Tavern where they elected Peyton Randolph as the moderator. They also appointed a committee to study George Mason's proposal for an association that called for all who signed the document not to import a specified list of British goods, or to purchase such imported items, after September 1, 1769 or to import slaves after November 1, 1769. On May 18, 1769, eighty-eight Burgesses signed the association and took copies of the document to circulate in their counties.

Fifthly, That they will not import any Slaves, or purchase any imported, after the **First** day of **November** next, until the said Acts of Parliament are repealed.

Source: McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1766-1769*, p. xli.

1769 to 1770—Richard Bland's Proposal to Moderate the Slave Code

Thomas Jefferson recalled seconding a motion initiated by Richard Bland "for certain moderate extensions of the protection of the laws" to slaves in his first or second session as a member of the House of Burgesses. Historian David Brion Davis summarizes Jefferson's efforts to end slavery in Virginia.

From the time of Jefferson's election to the Virginia House of Burgesses to his departure for France as American Minister, his political experience with slavery amounted to a series of rebuffs from the class which first accorded him recognition and prestige. Late in life he recalled that soon after his election to the House of Burgesses, at the age of twenty-six, he succeeded in persuading Richard Bland to move "for certain moderate extensions of the protection of the laws" to slaves. Although Bland was "one of the oldest, ablest, and most respected members," he was denounced as an enemy of his country, and was treated with the grossest indecorum." Jefferson, because of his youth, "was more spared in the debate." He clearly thought this story contained a lesson for twenty-seven-year-old Edward Coles, who had written the aged and respected former President, hopeful that "in the calm of this retirement you might, most beneficially to society, and with much addition to your own fame, avail yourself of that love and confidence to put into complete practice those hallowed principles contained in that

renowned Declaration, of which you were the immortal author.” Jefferson urged Coles to work “softly but steadily” for emancipation, promising to give the cause “all my prayers, & these are the only weapons of an old man.”

As a young man, he had dared a good bit more. In his *Summary View* of 1774 he had attacked the British crown for refusing to allow colonies to restrict or prohibit the further importation of slaves. This was a safe stand in Virginia, but Jefferson also asserted that “the abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state.” He surely knew this was an exaggeration, in the light of his experience with Richard Bland, but it strengthened the case against England and no doubt expressed his own true desire as well as that of mentors like Bland and George Wythe. In the Declaration of Independence, however, he made no mention of emancipation but condemned King George for enslaving innocent Africans, for encouraging the “execrable commerce” in men, and for inciting American Negroes to rise in arms against their masters. Congress struck out the entire section. Thus in writing the document that gave him international fame, Jefferson learned that on the question of slavery one yielded to older and more cautious men, and especially to outspoken objections from any segment of the planter class. In 1776 he also met defeat when, in his drafts of a constitution for Virginia, he introduced an unacceptable clause prohibiting any future importation of slaves. At the end of the Revolution he was apparently emboldened by the national spirit of thanksgiving and the expectation of a new republican era. In his 1783 draft of a new constitution of Virginia he provided for the freedom of all children born of slaves after the year 1800. This is the only definite record of a formal proposal by Jefferson for gradual emancipation; along with the measure his committee submitted to Congress in 1784 for excluding slaves from the western territories, again after the year 1800, it represents the high-water mark of his reform zeal. But both propositions were defeated.

Thomas Jefferson recounted Richard Bland’s efforts to moderate slaves laws in an August 24, 1814 letter to Edward Coles.

In the first or second session of the Legislature after I became a member, I drew to this subject that attention of Col. Bland, one of the oldest, ablest, and most respected members, and he undertook to move for certain moderate extensions of the protection of the laws to these people. I seconded his motion, and, as a younger member, was more spared in the debate; but he was denounced as an enemy of his country, and was treated with the grossest indecorum.

Source: David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 172-174; Thomas Jefferson to Edward Coles, in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed., Merrill D. Peterson, (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), p. 545.

November 27, 1769—Matthew Ashby Receives Permission to Free his Wife and Children

Free black Matthew Ashby purchased his wife, Ann, and their two children—John and Mary—from their owner, Samuel Spurr. In November 1769, he received permission from the Council to “Manumit and set them free.”

On the petition of Matthew Ashby, a free Mulatto setting forth that he had two Children by his present Wife Ann Ashby, while she was a Slave to Samuel Spurr, that he bought her and the two Children of the said Spurr for one hundred and fifty pounds, that he has now two Children alive by her John and Mary, that she has been a faithful and diligent Wife ever since marriage, and praying that he may be permitted to set her and his Children free; the Board being satisfied therein, were of opinion, that the said Ann, John and Mary were deserving of their freedom, and it was order'd that the said Matthew Ashby have leave to Manumit and set them free:

Source: McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, 6:334-335.

November 1769—CHAP. XXXVII. *An act for exempting free negro, mulatto, and Indian women, from the payment of levies*

In November 1769, the legislators passed a statute that exempted free black and Indian women from the payment of tithes. The free black men who successfully petitioned the colonial leaders began the process in May of 1769. See the “American Diversity” section of the Enslaving Virginia Resource Book for the text of this statute.

May 10, 1769

A Petition of the People called Mulattoes and free Negroes, whose Names are thereunto subscribed, was presented to the House, and read, praying that the Wives and Daughters of the petitioners may be exempt from the Payment of Levies.

Ordered, That the said Petition be referred to the Consideration of a Committee: And that they report their Opinion thereupon to the House.

And it is referred to the Committee of Propositions and Grievances.

May 11, 1769

Resolved, That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that the Petition of the Mulattoes and free Negroes, praying that their Wives and Daughters may be exempted from the Payment of Levies, is reasonable.

November 10, 1769

A *Petition* of the People, called Mulattoes and Free Negroes, whose Names are thereunto subscribed, was presented to the House, and read, praying that the Wives and Daughters of the Petitioners may be exempt from the Payment of Levies.

Ordered, That the said *Petition* be referred to the Committee of Propositions and Grievances; and that they do examine the Matter thereof, and report the same, with their Opinion thereupon, to the House.

November 11, 1769

Mr *Bland* reported, from the Committee of Propositions and Grievances, that the Committee had had under their Consideration several *Petitions* to them referred, and had come to several Resolutions thereupon; which he read in his Place, and afterwards delivered in at the Clerk's Table; where the same were read, and are as followeth, *viz.*

Resolved, That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that the *Petition* of the Mulattoes and Free Negroes, praying that their Wives and Daughters may be exempted from the Payment of Levies, is reasonable.

November 17, 1769

Mr *Bland* presented to the House, according to Order, a Bill for exempting Free Negro, Mulatto, and *Indian* Women, from the Payment of Levies: And the same was received, and read the first Time.

November 20, 1769

A *Bill* for exempting free Negro, Mulatto, and *Indian* Women from the Payment of Levies, was read a second Time.

November 25, 1769

An ingrossed *Bill*, for exempting Free *Negro*, *Mulatto*, and, *Indian* Women, from the Payment of levies, was read the third Time.

After the Burgesses approved the bill, they sent it to the Council. The Councillors requested that the phrase "other than Slaves" be inserted after the word "Wives" in the bill so that enslaved wives of free black men would continue to be tithable. The Burgesses agreed to the change on November 30th.

November 30, 1769

The Council have agreed to the Bill, intituled, An Act for exempting Free Negro, Mulatto and Indian Women, from the Payment of Levies, with some Amendments; to which Amendments the Council desire the Concurrence of this House.

Source: McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia: 1766-1769*, pp. 198, 203, 246, 251, 267, 275, 295, 304.

April 1770—The Case of Samuel Howell v. Wade Netherland in the General Court

In April 1770, Thomas Jefferson represented Samuel Howell in a case against his master, Wade Netherland. Howell, a mulatto born to a mulatto mother, claimed that he should serve his master until the age of twenty-one instead, not to the age of thirty-one. The following documents include background information on Howell and Jefferson's argument before the General Court.

June 25, 1764

On the petition and summons brought by Samuel Howel, Plaintiff against Wade Netherland, Gent, defendant, this day came the Parties and on hearing the arguments of the said Parties, it is considered that the said petition be dismissed.

Source: Cumberland County, Virginia, Order Book, 1762-1764, p. 494.

May 2, 1766

Run away from the subscriber, the 20th of October last [1765], a likely young Mulatto Man named Sam Howell, 23 years old, about 5 feet 9 inches high, well made for strength, has a remarkable good set of teeth, very black large eyebrows, and is a little bow legged; as for his apparel it is so long since he went away that I sup- he has worn them out, and got others. He was bound for 31 years, according to the condition of his mother, who was to serve until that time; his pretence for going away was to apply to some lawyer at Williamsburg to try to get his freedom, though he had a trial in the county court, and was adjudged to serve his full time. I did hear that he applied to the King's Attorney, and he told him he could not get free until his time was out; and I have never heard from him since. As he passes for a free man, I imagine he will endeavour to get on board some vessel, I therefore desire all matters of vessels not to entertain him, or carry him out of the country. Whoever apprehends the said slave, and brings him to me, in Cumberland county, on James river, shall receive 5 l. reward. WADE NETHERLAND.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., May 2, 1766.

October 27, 1766

On the motion of Wade Netherland against Samuel Howel, a servant man belonging to him the said Wade, the said Samuel having absented himself from his master's service the space of six months, it is ordered that the said servant serve the said Wade one year in lieu of the said six months after the term be indenture or former order is expired and further that the said servant serve the said Wade one month for ten shillings expended by the said Wade on the recovery of the said servant.

Source: Cumberland County, Virginia, Order Book, 1764-1767, p. 351.

April 1770

HOWELL v. NETHERLAND

This case was referred to the determination of the court, on facts stated by the counsel for both parties, which were, That the plaintiff's grandmother was a mulatto, begotten on a white woman by a negro man, after the year 1705, and bound by the churchwardens, under the law of that date, to serve to the age of thirty-one. That after the year 1723, but during her servitude, to wit, in 1742, was delivered of the plaintiff, and he again was sold by the person to whom his grandmother was bound, to the defendant, who now claims his service till he shall be thirty-one years of age. On behalf of the plaintiff it was insisted, 1st. that if he could be detained in servitude by his first master, he yet could not be aliened. But, 2nd. that he could not be detained in servitude.

I. It was observed that the purpose of the act was to punish and deter women from that confusion of species, which the legislature seems to have considered as an evil, and not to oppress their innocent offspring. That accordingly it had made cautious provision for the welfare of the child, by leaving it to the discretion of the churchwardens to choose out a proper master; and by directing, that that master should provide for it sufficient food, clothing, and lodging, and should not give immoderate correction. For these purposes the master enters into covenants with the churchwardens; and to admit he had a power after this to sell his ward, would be to admit him a power of discharging himself of his covenants. Nor is this objection answered by saying that the covenants of the first master are transferred to the alienee, because he may be insolvent of the damages which should be recovered against him, and indeed they might be of such a nature as could not be atoned for, either to the servant or to society; such for instance, would be a corruption of morals either by the wicked precept or example of the master, or of his family. The truth is, the master is bound to the servant for food, raiment and protection, and is not at liberty, by aliening his charge to put it out of his own power to afford them when wanting. The servant may as well set up a right of withdrawing from his master those personal services which he, in return, is bound to yield him. Again, the same trust which is created by express compact in favor of the first mulatto, is extended by the law to her issue. The legislature confiding that the choice of a master for the first mulatto, by the churchwardens, would be prudent, vest the issue in him also without further act to be done: and the master, at the time he takes the mother, knowing that her issue also is to be under his servitude on the same conditions, does by accepting her, tacitly undertake to

comply with those conditions raised by the law in their favor. These servants bear greater resemblance to apprentices than to slaves. Thus, on the death of the first master, they go to his executor as an apprentice would, and not to his heir as a slave. The master is chosen, in both cases, from an opinion of his peculiar propriety for that charge, and the performance of his duty in both cases is secured by mutual covenants. Now it is well known that an apprentice cannot be aliened; and that, not from any particular provision of the legislature, but from the general nature of the connection and engagements between them: there being, as was before observed, a trust reposed in the diligence and discretion of the master; and a trust by our law cannot be assigned. It adheres to the person as closely as does his integrity, and he can no more transfer the one than the other to a purchaser, But,

2nd. It was insisted, that the plaintiff, being a mulatto of the third generation, could not be detained in servitude under any law whatever: the grand position now to be proved being that one law had reduced to servitude the first mulatto only, the immediate offspring of a white woman by a negro or mulatto man; that a second law had extended it to the ‘children’ of that mulatto; but that no law had yet extended it to her grand children, or other issue more remote than this. To prove this, a general statement of these laws was premised. Act of 1705, c. 49.s.18. ‘If any woman servant shall have a bastard child, by a negro or mulatto, or if a free Christian white woman shall have such bastard child by a negro or mulatto; in both the said cases the churchwardens shall bind the said child to be a servant until it shall be of thirty one years of age.’ In other parts of the act, it is declared who shall be slaves, and what a manumission of them; from sect. 34. to 39. are regulations solely relative to slaves, among which is sect. 36. ‘Baptism of slaves doth not exempt them from bondage; and all children shall be bond or free according to the condition of their mothers and the particular directions of this act.’

Act 1723.c.4.s.22. ‘where any female mulatto, or Indian, by law obliged to serve till the age of thirty or thirty one years, shall, during the time of her servitude, have any child born of her body, every such child shall serve the master or mistress of such mulatto or Indian, until it shall attain the same age, the mother of such child was obliged, by law, to serve unto.’

In 1748, the Assembly revising and digesting the whole body of our acts of Assembly, in act 14.s.4 incorporate the clauses before cited, without any addition or alteration. And in 1753, c. 2.s.4.13, the law of 1748, is re-enacted with some new matter which does not affect the present question.

Now it is plain the plaintiff does not come within the description of the act of 1705, s. 18; that only reducing to servitude ‘the child of a white woman by a negro or mulatto man.’ This was the predicament of the plaintiff’s grandmother. I suppose it will not be pretended that the mother being a servant, the child would be a servant also under the law of nature, without any particular provision in the act. Under the law of nature, all men are born free, every one comes into the world with a right to his own person, which includes the liberty of moving and using it at his own will. This is what is called personal liberty, and is given him by the author of nature, because necessary for his own sustenance. The reducing the mother to servitude was a violation of the law of nature: surely then the same law cannot prescribe a continuance of the violation to her issue, and that too without end, for if it extends to any, it must to every degree of descendants. Puff.b.6.c.3.s.4.9. supports this doctrine. For having proved that servitude to be rightful,

must be founded on either compact, or capture in war, he proceeds to shew that the children of the latter only follow the condition of the mother: for which he gives this reason, that the person and labor of the mother in a condition of perfect slavery, (as he supposes to be that of the captive in war) being the property of the master, it is impossible she should maintain it but with her master's goods; by which he supposes a debt contracted from the infant to the master. But he says in cases of servitude founded on contract, 'The food of the future issue is contained or implied in their own maintenance, which their master owes them as a just debt; and consequently their children are not involved in a necessity of slavery.' This is the nature of the servitude introduced by the act of 1705, the master deriving his title to the service of the mother, entirely from the contract entered into with the churchwardens. That the bondage of the mother does not under the law of nature, infer that of his issue; for he may with equal, and some anatomists say with greater reason, be said to include all his posterity. But this very law admits there is no such descent of condition from father to child, when it imposes servitude on the child of a slave, which would have been unnecessary, if the condition had descended of course. Again, if it be a law of nature that the child shall follow the condition of the parent, it would introduce a very perplexing dilemma; as where one parent is free and the other a slave. Here the child is to be a slave says this law by inheritance of the father's bondage: but it is also to be free, says the same law by inheritance of its mother's freedom. This contradiction proves it to be no law of nature.

But the 36th section of the act will perhaps be cited as entailing the condition of the mother on the child, where it says, that 'children shall be bond or free according to the condition of the mother, and the particular direction of this act.' Now that the word 'bond' in this clause relates to 'slaves' only, I am justified in asserting, not only from common parlance, but also from its sense in other parts of this very act. And that on the other hand it considers those who were to be free after a temporary servitude, as described under the word 'free.' In this very section, 36, it says, 'baptism of slaves does not exempt them from bondage.' Here then in the very sentence now under consideration, the word bondage is used to express perpetual slavery; and we cannot conceive they meant to use it in two different senses in the same sentence. So in clause nineteen of the same act, it says; 'to prevent that abominable mixture of white men or women with negroes or mulattoes, whatever white man or woman being free, shall intermarry with a negro or mulatto, &c. shall be committed to prison, &c.' Now unless the act means to include white servants and apprentices under the denomination of 'freemen,' then a white servant or apprentice may intermarry with a negro or mulatto. But this is making the act miss of its purpose, which was 'to prevent the abominable mixture of white men or women with negroes or mulattoes.' But to put it out of dispute, the next clause (twenty) says that 'if any minister shall, notwithstanding, presume to marry a white man or woman with a negro or mulatto,' he shall incur such a penalty. Here then the prohibition is extended to whites in general, without saying 'free whites,' as the former clause did. But these two clauses are plainly co-extensive; and consequently the word 'free' in the nineteenth, was intended to include the temporary white servants taken in by the twentieth clause, under the general appellation of 'white men or women.' So that this act where it speaks of bondmen, means those who are 'perpetual slaves,' and where of 'freemen,' those who are to be free after a temporary servitude, as well as those who are so now. Indeed to supposed, where the act says, 'the

children of a bondwoman shall be bond,' that it means 'the children of a temporary servant shall be temporary servants,' would infer too much: for it would make temporary servants of the children of white servant women, or of white apprentice women, which yet was never pretended. The conclusion I draw from this, is, that since the temporary service of a white woman does not take from her the appellation of a freewoman, in the sense of this act, and her children under this very clause are free, as being the children of a free woman, neither does the temporary servitude of a mulatto exclude her from the same appellation, and her children also shall be free under this clause, as the children of a free woman. So that the meaning of this clause is, that children shall be slaves, where slavery was the condition of the mother; and free, where freedom either immediate or remote, was her condition: excepting only the instance of the mulatto bastard, which this act had made a temporary servant of the child, though the mother was not so.

Then comes the act of 1723, directing that where any female mulatto or Indian, by law obliged to serve till⁹⁹ thirty or thirty one, shall have a child during her servitude, such child shall serve the same master to the same age. This act does itself prove that the child was not obliged to serve under the former law of 1705, that of 1723, was wholly unnecessary. But on the contrary, when we find an Assembly within eighteen years after the law of 1705, had been passed, the one half of whom would probably be the same members who had passed that law, when we see these people I say, enacting expressly that the children should be temporary servants, it is a strong proof the makers of the first law had intended they should be so. *Expositio comtemporanea est optima*, is a maxim in our law, because such exposition is supposed to be taken from the makers of the law themselves, who best knew their own intention; and it is doubly exclusive, where the makers themselves passed a new act to testify their intention. So that I hold it certain, the act of 1705, did not extend to the children of the first mulatto, or that of 1723, would not have been made.

That the act of 1723, did not extend to the plaintiff, is apparent from its words. 'Where any female mulatto by law obliged to serve till thirty one (that is, the plaintiff's grandmother) shall during the time of her servitude, have a child born of her body (that is, the plaintiff's mother) such child shall serve till thirty one.' This act describes the plaintiff's mother then as the subject on which it meant to operate. The common sense of mankind would surely spare me the trouble of proving the word 'child' does not include the grandchild, great-grandchild, great-great-grandchild, &c. *in infinitum*. Or if that would not, the act itself precludes me, by declaring it means only a 'child born of her body.' So that as the law of 1705, has made a servant of the first mulatto, that of 1723, extends it to her children.

The act of 1748, is the next in course. At this time all our acts were revised and digested, and sent in one volume to receive his Majesty's approbation. These two laws being found to be on the same subject, were then incorporated without any alteration. This however, could not affect their meaning, which is still to be sought after by considering the component acts in their separate state. At any rate it cannot affect the

⁹⁹ This refers to an act of Ass. 1670, c. 12, which had enacted 'that all servants not being christians, imported into this country by shipping, shall be slaves for their life-time, but what shall come by land shall serve, if boys and girls, till thirty years of age, if men and women, twelve years and no longer.'

condition of the plaintiff, who was born in 1742, which was six years before it was made. The same may be said of the law of 1753, which is copied from 1748, with only the addition of some new matter, foreign to the present question. So that on the laws of 1705, and 1723, alone, it is to be determined; with respect to which I have endeavored to shew;

That the first of them subjected to servitude, the first mulatto only.

That this did not, under the law of nature, affect the liberty of the children,

Because, under the law we are all born free.

Because, the servitude of the mother was founded on compact, which implies maintenance of her children, so as to have them under no obligation to the master.

And because, this descent of condition from parent to child, would introduce a contradiction where the one parent is free, and the other in servitude.

That as little are they affected by the words of the act, ‘children shall be bond or free, according to the condition of the mother.’

Because that act uses the word ‘bond,’ so as to shew it means thereby those only who are perpetual slaves, and by the word ‘free,’ those who are entitled to freedom in *praesenti* or *in futuro*; and consequently calling the mother ‘free,’ says her children shall be ‘free.’

Because it would make servants of the children of white servants or apprentices, which nobody will say is right.

And because the passing the act of 1723, to subject the child to servitude, shews it was not subject to that state under the old law.

And lastly, that the act of 1723, affects only ‘children of such mulattoes,’ as when that law was made were obliged to serve till thirty-one; which takes in the plaintiff’s mother who was of the second generation, but does not extend to himself who is of the third.

So that the position at first laid down is now proven, that the act of 1705, makes servants of the first mulatto, that of 1723, extends it to her children, but that it remains for some future legislature, if any shall be found wicked enough, to extend it to the grand-children and other issue more remote, to the ‘*nati natorum et qui nascentur ab illis!*’

Wythe, for the defendant, was about to answer, but the court interrupted him and gave judgment in favor of his client.

Source: Thomas Jefferson, *Reports of Cases Determined in the General Court of Virginia, from 1730, to 1740; and from 1768, to 1772*, ed. John M. Lindsey, (New York: William S. Hein & Co., Inc., 1981), pp. 90-96.

June 22, 1770—The Association of 1770

The Association of 1769 proved to be ineffective despite initial enthusiasm for the plan. The Burgesses adopted a new measure—the Association of 1770—on June 22 of that year. Williamsburg’s leading merchants also signed the document. Committees in each county were to enforce the agreement by publishing the names of the violators. However, public support for the Association of 1770 decreased after the repeal of the

Townshend Duties. The December 14, 1770 meeting of the associators was adjourned because of poor attendance. The associators voted to end the agreement on July 15, 1771.

Fourthly. That we will not import or bring into the colony or cause to be imported or brought into the colony, either by sea or land, any slaves, or make sale of any upon commission, or purchase any slave or slaves that may be imported by others after the 1st day of **November** next, unless the same have been twelve months upon the continent.

Source: McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1770-1772*, p. xxvii-xxxii.

March 20, 1772—The Burgesses Appoint a Committee to Draft an Address to the King Regarding the Slave Trade

Resolved, That an humble Address be prepared to be presented to his Majesty to express the high Opinion we entertain of his benevolent Intentions towards his Subjects in the Colonies, and that we are thereby induced to ask his paternal Assistance in averting a Calamity of a most alarming Nature; that the Importation of Negroes from Africa has long been considered as a Trade of great Inhumanity, and, under its present Encouragement, may endanger the Existence of his *American* Dominions; that Self-Preservation therefore urges us to implore him to remove all Restraints on his Governors from passing Acts of Assembly, which are intended to check this pernicious Commerce; and that we presume to hope the Interests of a few of his Subjects in *Great-Britain* will be disregarded, when such a Number of his People look up to him for Protection in a Point so essential; that, when our Duty calls upon us to make Application for his Attention to the Welfare of this his antient Colony, we cannot refrain from renewing those Professions of Loyalty and Affection we have so often, with great Sincerity, made, or from assuring him, that we regard his Wisdom and Virtue as the surest Pledges of the Happiness of his People.

Ordered, That a Committee be appointed to draw up an Address to be presented to his Majesty upon the said Resolution.

And a *Committee* was appointed of Mr *Harrison*, Mr *Cary*, Mr *Edmund Pendleton*, Mr *Richard Henry Lee*, Mr *Treasurer*, and Mr *Bland*.

Source: McIlwaine, et al., eds. *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1770-1772*, pp. 256-257.

April 1, 1772—Address to the King Regarding the Slave Trade

On April 1, 1772, the House of Burgesses resolved to present the following address to King George III through the auspices of Governor Dunmore. The legislators implored the king to enable representative assemblies in the colonies to restrict the importation of slaves if desired. The address indicates that the legislators were most concerned with the

effect of an increasing slave population on white colonists and potential settlers in Virginia rather than its effect on slaves themselves. This concern is similar to that expressed in the 1752 letter written by “Peter Limits” in the American Diversity section.

Mr *Harrison* reported from the Committee appointed upon *Friday*, the twentieth Day of last Month, to draw up an Address to be presented to his Majesty, that the Committee had drawn up an Address accordingly, which they had directed him to report to the House; and he read the same in his Place, and afterwards delivered it in at the Clerk’s Table; where the same was read, and is as followeth, *viz.*

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, your Majesty’s dutiful and loyal Subjects, the Burgesses of Virginia, now met in General Assembly, beg Leave, with all Humility, to approach your Royal Presence.

The many Instances of your Majesty’s benevolent intentions and most gracious Disposition to promote the Prosperity and Happiness of your Subjects in the Colonies, encourage us to look up to the Throne, and implore your Majesty’s paternal Assistance in averting a Calamity of a most alarming Nature.

The Importation of Slaves into the Colonies from the Coast of Africa hath long been considered as a Trade of great Inhumanity, and, under its present Encouragement, we have too much Reason to fear will endanger the very Existance of your Majesty’s American Dominions.

We are sensible that some of your Majesty’s Subjects in Great-Britain may reap Emoluments from this Sort of Traffic, but when we consider that it greatly retards the Settlement of the Colonies, with more useful Inhabitants, and may, in Time, have the most destructive Influence, we presume to hope that the Interest of a few will be disregarded when placed in Competition with the Security and Happiness of such Numbers of your Majesty’s dutiful and loyal Subjects.

Deeply impressed with these Sentiments, we most humbly beseech your Majesty to remove all those Restraints on your Majesty’s Governors of this Colony, which inhibit their assenting to such Laws as might check so very pernicious a Commerce.

Your Majesty’s antient Colony and Dominion of Virginia hath, at all Times, and upon every Occasion, been entirely devoted to your Majesty’s sacred Person and Government, and we cannot forego this Opportunity of renewing those Assurances of the truest Loyalty, and warmest Affection, which we have so often, with the greatest Sincerity, given to the best of Kings, whose Wisdom and Goodness we esteem the surest Pledges of the Happiness of all his People.

The said Address being read a second Time;

Resolved, Nemine contradicente, That the House doth agree with the Committee in the said Address, to be presented to his Majesty.

Resolved, That an Address be presented to his Excellency the Governor, to desire that he will be pleased to transmit the Address to his Majesty, and to support it in such Manner as he shall think most likely to promote the desirable End proposed.

Ordered, That the said Address be presented to the Governor by the Gentlemen who drew up the Address to his Majesty.

Source: McIlwaine, et al., eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1770-1772*, pp. 283-284.

August 1774—The Association of 1774

In 1774 and 1775, there were a number of factors which led colonial leaders to propose abolishing the slave trade. To be sure, concerns about slave revolts and the widespread belief that the institution was in imminent danger of economic collapse combined with the challenge that emerging ideals of liberty and natural rights offered to chattel slavery to raise serious doubts about its future. Yet, as W.E.B. Du Bois argued in 1896, the most immediate issue was the fact that banning further imports of slaves might force the business-minded British government to the bargaining table once again. “The movement was not a great moral protest against an iniquitous traffic;” Du Bois wrote, “although it undoubtedly had a strong moral backing, it was primarily a temporary war measure.” The leaders of the Virginia resistance were particularly prominent in pushing the end to the slave trade, resolving in August of 1774 that, “We will neither ourselves import, nor purchase any slave or slaves imported by any other person, after the first day of *November* next, either from *Africa*, the *West Indies*, or any other place.” It was the Virginians as well who were the instigators and leaders within the Continental Congress of that body’s measures against the slave trade. In September of 1774, Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee proposed a resolution in favor of non-importation, and the Continental Congress responded with a declaration on October 12 which included this provision: “We will neither import, nor purchase any Slave imported after the First Day of *December* next; after which Time, we will wholly discontinue the Slave Trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our Vessels, nor sell our Commodities or Manufactures to those who are concerned in it.” This clause, along with the rest of the non-importation agreement, appears to have been upheld by the citizens of the new nation, at least in the beginning. In Norfolk, for example, the vigilance committee publicly censured a merchant named John Brown who had imported slaves from Jamaica on several occasions.

We his majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the late representatives of the good people of this country, having been deprived by the sudden interposition of the executive part of this government from giving our countrymen the advice we wished to convey to them in a legislative capacity, find ourselves under the hard necessity of adopting this, the only method we have left, of pointing out to our countrymen such measures as in our opinion are best fitted to secure our dearest rights and liberty from destruction, by the heavy hand of power now lifted against North America: With much grief we find that our dutiful applications to Great Britain for security of our just, antient, and constitutional rights, have been not only disregarded, but that a determined system is formed and pressed for reducing the inhabitants of British America to slavery, by subjecting them to the payment of taxes, imposed without the consent of the people or their representatives; and that in pursuit of this system, we find an act of the British parliament, lately passed, for stopping the harbour and commerce of the town of Boston, in our sister colony of Massachusetts Bay, until the people

there submit to the payment of such unconstitutional taxes, and which act most violently and arbitrarily deprives them of their property, in wharfs erected by private persons, at their own great and proper expence, which act is, in our opinion, a most dangerous attempt to destroy the constitutional liberty and rights of all North America...

2dly. We will neither ourselves import, nor purchase, any Slave, or Slaves, imported by any Person, after the 1st Day of November next, either from Africa, the West Indies, or any other Place.

Source: W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, Harvard Historical Studies, (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1896), pp. 42-47; McIlwaine, et. al., eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1773-1776*, pp xiii-xiv; see also *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., August 11, 1774.

cc

April 22, 1775

Last Saturday, and this week the following persons were put to the bar of the General Court....William Pitman from King George for murder.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., April 22, 1775.

May 11, 1775

This day (Friday) were executed pursuant to their sentence, John Watkins, William Pitman, William Gray, and John Wood.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Pinkney, ed., May 11, 1775.

May 12, 1775

This day were executed at the gallows, pursuant to their sentence, William Pitman, for murdering his negro lad....

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., May 12, 1775.

May 13, 1775

Yesterday William Pitman, for murder of his slave, John Watkins, for a rape, and John Wood and William Gray for burglary were executed at the gallows, pursuant to their sentence at the last General Court. When the sheriff and his attendants entered the gaol

to take them into custody, Pitman made some resistance, but was soon overpowered; he behaved with decency at the place of execution, and attributed his unhappy fate to be the effect of intemperate drinking.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., May 13, 1775.

June 20, 1775—Masters to Receive Compensation for Slaves Who Were Executed

A master received compensation from the colony if one of his or her slaves was executed. The justices of the oyer and terminer court determined the value of a condemned slave after they sentence the individual to death.

Ordered, that the Committee of public Claims do state an Account of all sums of Money due from the public for Slaves condemned and executed, and of such other Claims as have been agreed by the House to be paid to Claimants, except those in the Resolves for payment of which the Council have concurred, and report the same with the Salaries to the Offices of the General Assembly in a Schedule, to the House.

Source: McIlwaine, et. al., eds., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1773-1776*, p. 271.

May to June 1776—Slavery and the First Clause of the Virginia Declaration of Rights

As a member of the Virginia Convention, George Mason drafted the Virginia Declaration of Rights some time between May 20 and 26, 1776. This draft, which included some additions by Thomas Ludwell Lee, was presented to the rest of the committee called to prepare the declaration; the committee added several provisions, and then the committee draft was printed for consideration by the full Convention.

During the debate over the committee draft, the issue of slavery arose as the delegates wrangled over the first clause of the declaration. Edmund Randolph recalled that Robert Carter Nicholas and other conservatives expressed their anxiety that the first clause, especially the phrase "born equally free," might provoke an insurrection among Virginia slaves. Liberal members of the Convention dismissed this concern by arguing that slaves were not constituent members of civil society and would by no means apply the clause to themselves. A full debate over slavery did not ensue, and the delegates eventually compromised by modifying the language of the first clause to attempt to reconcile the ideal of freedom and the reality of slavery. The successive drafts of the first clause follow; the brackets in the final draft indicate the changes made by the full Convention.

First Draft, ca. May 20-26, 1776

That all Men are born equally free and independant, and have certain inherent natural Rights, of which they can not by any Compact, deprive or divest their Posterity;

among which are the Enjoyment of Life and Liberty, with the Means of acquiring and possessing Property, and pursueing and obtaining Happiness and Safety.

Committee Draft, May 27, 1776

1. THAT all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent natural rights, of which they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; among which are, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

Final Draft, June 12, 1776

1. That all men are <by nature> equally free and independent, and have certain inherent <> rights, of which, <when they enter into a state of society,> they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; <namely,> the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

Source: *The Papers of George Mason*, ed. Rutland, 1:275, 277, 283, 287, 289.

June 29, 1776—Virginia Adopts a Constitution

The members of the House of Burgesses drafted and adopted a constitution for the state of Virginia in June 1776. The Burgesses included a preamble that Thomas Jefferson wrote. Jefferson's list of reasons why Virginians declared independence from Britain draws upon his *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774) and The Declaration of Independence.

**The CONSTITUTION, or FORM of
GOVERNMENT, agreed to and resolved
upon by the Delegates and
Representatives of the several
counties and corporations of Virginia**

[Unanimously adopted June 29, 1776.]

I. WHEREAS, George the third, king of Great Britain and Ireland, and elector of Hanover, heretofore intrusted with the exercise of the kingly office in this government, hath endeavoured to prevent the same into a detestable and insupportable tyranny, by putting his negative on laws the most wholesome and necessary for the publick good:

...

By prompting our negroes to rise in arms among us, those very negroes whom, by an inhuman use of his negative, he hath refused us permission to exclude by law:

Source: Virginia Constitution (1776).

The Carpenter's and Brickmaker's Yard

The following information about African Americans in the Building Trades is excerpted from Vanessa E. Patrick's report entitled "'as good a joiner as any in Virginia': African-Americans in Eighteenth-Century Building Trades" (1995).

An Introduction

One of the greatest challenges facing historians of colonial America is the search for material evidence of African-American life. The objects used and created by the enslaved majority and the free minority have proved to be largely fragile, impermanent and often difficult to identify. Once discovered, they endow plantation journals and tax records with a heightened degree of eloquence and in themselves speak directly of individual hopes and trials. The metal button and bone fish-hook are especially important to the history museum striving to interpret the past in immediate and compelling ways. African-American material culture, however, was not limited to small, portable items, but embraced houses, outbuildings, bridges, roads--in short every man-made element of the colonial landscape. Sometimes such structures, like most moveable objects, have come to light only through archaeological investigation. Many others, particularly buildings, have remained clearly in view to this day. A walk along Williamsburg's Duke of Gloucester Street, or in any locality in which eighteenth-century architecture has survived, reveals the sites and, indeed, the products of African-American endeavor. This most extensive yet accessible artifact of African-American life includes not only living spaces and workplaces, but the tangible results of labor and creativity. It owes its existence to the significant numbers of slaves and free blacks employed in the building trades. This introduction considers those African-Americans who contributed to the building of eighteenth-century Virginia....

African-Americans worked in every facet of the colonial building process, from preparation of materials to decorative finishing, and in every capacity, from unskilled laborer to accomplished craftsman. With their fellow artisans among the indentured servants, convicts, apprentices and free individuals of European and Native American descent, they constituted one of the very largest occupational groups in the colonies. In eighteenth-century Virginia only agriculture claimed larger numbers of workers than the building trades in both the free and enslaved segments of the population. The Sourcebook references for Virginia, spanning the years 1717 to 1825, include some 302 African-American building tradesmen known by name. The carpenters outnumber all other tradesmen, accounting for 52% of the total, and when joined by the carpenter-joiners, carpenter-painters and other dual specialists they truly dominate at approximately 70%. A distant second place is held by the sawyers at roughly 21% of the total, and bricklayers and masons follow at about 5% and a little better than 2% respectively. Brickmakers, painters and millwrights make up the remaining 2% of the named

craftsmen. These relative percentages hold true for both runaway slaves and those who remained; the small number of free black artisans identified are all carpenter-joiners. A comparable sample of white building trades craftsmen yields the same predominance of the carpenters and carpenter-joiners, amounting to about 72% of the total number. Second place belongs not to the sawyers, who are hardly represented at less than 1%, but to the bricklayers constituting about 16%. The painters follow and masons, millwrights, plasterers, carver-gilders and glaziers complete the total. The absence of many finishing trades among the African-American craftsmen is somewhat misleading, as carpenters and bricklayers, particularly in a plantation context, usually carried out the glazing of windows and plastering of rooms. Sawing, however, does seem to have been a building-related activity associated with African-Americans and, in general, those craftsmen proficient in more than one trade were quite often slaves.

Craft Training. Like their white counterparts, black workers in the building trades acquired their training in one of three ways. Some arrived in America with construction skills they had developed in their homelands. Their knowledge of building traditions utilizing wood and other botanical materials undoubtedly found ready application in the colonies and perhaps led to their further training along European lines. Such might have been the experience of Gruff and Bob, a carpenter and sawyer who ran away from their Prince George County owner in 1745. Both Africans, their familiarity with construction matters could have recommended them for on-the-job training, the route by which most enslaved building craftsmen learned their trades. Richard Henry Lee of Westmoreland County issued a set of tools "to Jubiter for him to learn the Carpenters trade with" in 1782 and presumably had in mind an experienced craftsman who would show the slave how to use them. Many slaves learned their trades from free white craftsmen hired either to instruct them or undertake a specific job with their assistance. The brickmaker Charles Hagen worked for George Washington for eight months in 1788 and one of the slaves who had helped him was moulding and firing his own bricks in 1789. Slaves owned by craftsmen also acquired various levels of training; Going was sold in 1795 by a Richmond bricklayer "with whom he sometime worked at that trade."

The carpenter-joiner Charles Harding reported in 1772 that he had learned to paint from his former master in Nansemond County. Harding may have been intentionally taught, or he may have acquired his new skill through his own powers of observation and aptitude. Whether bound or free, many African-Americans developed their facility with saw, chisel or trowel by simply watching or assisting a family member, neighbor, master or hired craftsman at work. Especially after mid-century and on the larger plantations, trained slaves taught others. Quite often the aspiring craftsman was the son or other relation of his teacher. Writing about the carpenter Tony in 1770, Landon Carter noted that "his boy has now been going on 3 years his apprentice." John Hemings had been trained by the free white carpenters employed by Thomas Jefferson. He, in turn, instructed his own nephews in carpentry and, incidentally, left behind not only physical, but written evidence of his exceptional craftsmanship in the letters he wrote to Jefferson.

The third and least common type of craft instruction was the formal apprenticeship. The contractual agreement between craftsman and neophyte proved just as rigorous and effective as on-the-job training and, moreover, was defined in detail and legally binding. The same conventions that applied to whites governed apprenticeships for African-Americans with the omission of literacy instruction for slaves. The slaveowner who could or would not provide training on his own properties sometimes opted to bind out a potential tradesman for a set number of years. In return for an apprentice's labor, a craftsman offered not only instruction, but housing, food and clothing. Though the owner temporarily lost one member of his labor force, he profited ultimately on the return of a skilled worker. Free blacks also entered apprenticeships, bound usually by family members or themselves just like free whites. Unlike enslaved African-American apprentices, John Whitlock Spurlock of York County bound himself in 1753 to learn not only a trade, but to read and write and receive the customarily promised "freedom dues." The free apprentice, whether white or black, could also complain to a county court when his master failed to honor the terms of their agreement. Just so did Richard Limehouse obtain his release, as well as court costs and a suit of clothes, from the York County carpenter John Jones in 1752. There is evidence that some slave owners terminated apprenticeships before the contracted time had elapsed in their impatience to capitalize on the slaves' enhanced abilities. George and Stepney, apprenticed to the Williamsburg carpenter Matthew Tuell, were apparently "inveigle[d] ... away" by their Yorktown owner in 1772, when he judged their training to be sufficiently advanced for his purposes.

Training for both free and enslaved African-Americans in the various building trades sometimes began when they were as young as seven to ten years old. At each of two farms belonging to William Byrd III, one of the full-fledged carpenters was yet a boy in age. Formally bound apprentices seem to have embarked on their education as teenagers. Among slaves, the taking up of a craft might occur at even more advanced ages, possibly through individual initiative or as a kind of "promotion" granted by an owner. Mention should be made of a small number of African-Americans who, like the sawyer Sam Howell of Cumberland County, were "bound for 31 years according to the [free] condition of [their] mother[s]." In 1766, the twenty-three year old Howell had eight years to wait before his release from indentured servitude, though he possessed a skill which might sustain him in freedom. It should also be noted that just as free white women appear to have been barred from the building trades, so too were their free and enslaved African-American sisters. Some slave women worked at the periphery of construction, clearing vegetation from building sites, repairing the simpler types of fencing or whitewashing outbuildings. No doubt they and many white women carried out other tasks in the realms of carpentry or bricklaying, but their actual training in any of the building crafts has yet to be proved.

The premature return of the apprentices George and Stepney to the domain of their owner illustrates not only the economic needs of a particular individual, but the defining characteristic of the colonial Chesapeake—a chronic shortage of labor. By the later decades of the seventeenth-century, large farms and plantations had begun to emerge, modest urban areas to develop and agriculture to diversify. These trends

continued into the next century and demands for labor, especially skilled labor, intensified accordingly. In the seventeenth century some African-Americans could be found among the carpenters and coopers so essential to tobacco cultivation. The overwhelming majority, however, labored in the fields as indentured servants or, increasingly, as slaves, while white tradesmen performed the more skilled tasks. In the eighteenth century the addition of grains and other crops to the agricultural repertoire, expanding settlement and ever-rising material expectations created more skilled work than the existing labor force could handle. By the second quarter of the century the purposeful training of slaves as craftsmen had been well established. As slaveowners increased the size of their labor forces they found craft instruction for some individuals economically feasible. At the same time there emerged enhanced opportunities for free blacks and a general employment of African-Americans in a far wider range of occupations. As Hugh Jones reported in 1724, "their Work is to take Care of the Stock, plant Corn, Tobacco, Fruits, &c. ... [but] several of them are taught to be Sawyers, Carpenters, Smiths, Coopers, &c. and though for the most Part they be none of the aptest or nicest; yet they ... will perform tolerably well." The versatility exhibited by a typical plantation carpenter and the deft workmanship he and his fellow craftsmen often imparted to barn and courthouse alike challenges Jones's assessment. As the century progressed, it became clear that African-Americans engaged in building could be exceptionally able and the products of their labor very nice indeed.

A Diversity of Work. Regardless of their ancestry, members of the colonial building trades represented every possible level of craft ability and achievement. Some claimed skills they simply did not have, while others never attained any acceptable degree of proficiency in spite of instruction or experience. Some proved better suited to other tasks. Will, in 1770 a Fauquier County runaway, "worked some time at the carpenters and coopers trade, though knows but little of either, but is a tolerable good turner." Phill, who ran away from the same county ten years later, achieved quite different results from a similar situation. He "worked with stone mason and bricklayer, [but] has no particular trade by being capable of doing something at almost every kind of business." Such innate ability was, not surprisingly, greatly valued by slaveowners and the plantation setting in particular fostered the development of diversified building craftsmen. Most frequently those following multiple trades combined carpentry and sawing or carpentry and some other branch of woodworking, usually joinery or coopering. The dual specialty of carpenter and shoemaker was also fairly common. A few remarkable individuals gained competency in a variety of trades, like Peter Deadfoot of Stafford County, described in 1768 as not only an excellent sawyer, but a butcher, carter, ploughman, scytheman, shoemaker and waterman. Specialists in a single trade actually predominated, but even they routinely engaged in a wide variety of craft activities. In 1770 and 1771 Landon Carter's carpenters carried out such diverse tasks as building fences and thatching outbuildings, repairing a carriage and making a wheat cradle. When no immediate need existed for the expertise of certain craftsmen or an extraordinary event called for large numbers of laborers, slaveowners sometimes assigned their building tradesmen to unaccustomed tasks. Thus Washington at times set temporarily unoccupied bricklayers to helping carpenters or carpenters to plant corn and assist with the wheat harvest.

Besides the craftsmen who were proficient in more than one building trade or combined their construction work with other, sometimes quite unrelated activities, there were those for whom building matters remained secondary or incidental. Will, a driver, mower and ploughman in 1784 Fairfax County, was routinely called upon to "do the common carpenter's jobs necessary on a plantation." Both enslaved and free African-Americans, craftsmen and laborers alike, often carried out basic tasks like making ax or hoe handles or replacing the damaged siding of an outbuilding. They were characterized as "part of a carpenter" or able to "do something of the house carpenters work," indicating that they possessed only a few of the skills associated with the true artisan. It should be noted here that the same relatively simple and routine building activities that intermittently occupied the blacksmith or ditcher constituted full-time employment for the workers known as "jobbers." "Jobbing carpenters" and others less specialized provided the semi-skilled labor for all phases of construction, from making bricks to installing interior woodwork. Just as carpenters and other tradesmen occasionally found themselves working in the fields, agricultural workers and domestic servants sometimes labored on construction sites. During the remodelling of Mount Vernon in 1758, Washington's overseer reported that "as to pul[ling] Down the old plastering and leaths [laths] out of the rooms I made the home house people Do and all other work as they could," while the carpenters built scaffolding and salvaged nails from old shingles.

While some craftsmen and laborers qualified as partial carpenters, some carpenters were confined by their training and experience to certain aspects of the trade. The "jobbing carpenters" just mentioned were generalists and displayed varying levels of skill. Eighteenth-century Virginians used a number of other descriptive terms to express the abilities of a carpenter somewhat more precisely. "Coarse" or "rough carpenters" built most of the structures required for domestic, agricultural and even public purposes. Assembling and securing the frame, splitting out and nailing up the clapboards for siding and roofing and finishing the job with simple doors and perhaps a floor did not exceed the capabilities of such craftsmen. Buildings of some scale and solidity could only be created by the "complete carpenter," whose range and level of skill met the challenge of sophisticated structural framing and joinery work like panelling. "House carpenters" usually equalled the "complete carpenters" in achievement and did not always limit themselves to domestic building. These terms described carpenters of all races and social conditions. African-American carpenters acquired two additional terms for specifying the nature and complexity of their work. "Plantation carpenters" seem to have performed the same tasks as the above-mentioned Will--basic carpentry in service to agricultural production, often including clapboard work. In certain contexts "Negro carpenter" appears a straightforward designation for an African-American craftsman. Elsewhere, though, it might pointedly indicate the enslaved condition of a craftsman or even serve as a synonym for "clapboard carpenter." Of all the building trades, only carpentry inspired classification according to skill level. Every trade, however, ventured to assess quality of workmanship. Thus among the African-American building craftsmen of the eighteenth century can be found the ingenious rough carpenter, the good bricklayer, the fine sawyer and "as good a joiner as any in Virginia."

Circumstances. The majority of enslaved African-Americans lived and worked exclusively on plantations. Slave craftsmen in general lived on the larger farms and were owned in disproportionate numbers by the wealthiest planters in Virginia. Building tradesmen virtually always figured in their ranks and usually constituted a sizeable percentage of their numbers. As early as 1757, the six carpenters at William Byrd III's Brunswick County property accounted for roughly 32% of all skilled men present, while at Washington's Mount Vernon six carpenters and two bricklayers made up 21% of the tradesmen in 1799. At the largest establishments, like those of Washington or Robert Carter, carpenters and bricklayers labored in gangs under the direction of a free, white craftsman hired for a specific project or as a resident overseer of all building activities. Particularly after mid-century as more and more African-American craftsmen were trained, some slaves entered into supervisory roles themselves or otherwise worked in a comparatively independent fashion. Thus a craftsman might receive the general instructions of his owner and carry out a job individually or with the help of one or more less-skilled assistants. Just so did Robert Carter dispatch the carpenter Oliver to one of his quarters to make a tobacco house door in January of 1785. Comparably accomplished craftsmen might form working partnerships, like the carpenters Guy and Jimmy at Landon Carter's Sabine Hall in Richmond County. Pit sawing by its very nature was a two person operation, encouraging practiced duos of "top man" and "bottom man."

The white carpenter or bricklayer engaged on the plantation was not always a supervisor, nor was he always free. African-American building tradesmen were often joined in their tasks by indentured servants or convicts of European ancestry. Hired white artisans often took their orders directly from the plantation owner or manager, as did the slaves assigned to work with them. In some instances they brought their own slaves to assist with the job. While most enslaved craftsmen belonged to planters, some were purchased by the more successful white tradesmen. These slaves and their less-skilled brethren constituted the core, if not the entirety, of such a tradesman's workforce. The builder William Buckland's laborers and the joiner Francis Jaram's house carpenters both enhanced and expanded their owners' business possibilities.

The hiring of free white building trades craftsmen for plantation work occurred throughout the eighteenth century, but most routinely in the earlier decades. By contrast, the hiring of enslaved African-American craftsmen became common in the 1760s and intensified both during and immediately after the Revolution. Often a single plantation could not fully employ its artisans, and slaveowners discovered a new source of income in renting out their temporarily unoccupied workers. Ever-present construction needs plus the accelerating incidence and scale of building projects towards the end of the century contributed to the great demand for skilled carpenters, bricklayers, joiners and also general laborers. Slaves were hired for specific periods of time and monetary rates, frequently for work at considerable distances from their home plantations. Usually the hirer assumed responsibility for their housing, clothing and food, while the owner collected their earnings. Newspaper advertisements announced the need or availability of slaves for hire, but most owners seem to have made agreements less formally with family members or neighbors. Sometimes alternative methods of payment were adopted, as when Landon Carter swapped the labor of his carpenter Jimmy for that of the stonecutter

Ralph, one of John Tayloe's slaves, in 1764. A few owners allowed their slaves to retain part or even all of the money they earned as hirelings and sometimes to make their own arrangements with potential employers. Charles, a versatile sawyer, ran away from Norfolk in 1767, perhaps fearing that his new owner would not honor the fact that "he has been used to hire his time, and has a pass of Joseph Jones for that purpose." Most hiring and self-hiring took place in the plantation context, but certain late colonial and early national era industries like mining and founding, as well as ambitious public projects like churches, courthouses and canals, also claimed the labor of African-American building tradesmen. The industries and the canal companies also purchased slaves outright, accounting for most of those few skilled individuals neither free nor owned by the planters and craftsmen.

Very few enslaved African-American craftsmen managed their own hiring and only a slightly greater number shared in the fees they garnered for their owners. Many, however, enjoyed living and working conditions superior to those of fieldworkers and the lesser-skilled. At the more extensive plantations artisans usually lived at the main or home house. Proximity to the owner's immediate domain generally insured fairly well-built housing and sometimes provision of a structure or shop designated for a certain trade. Whether at home house or distant quarter, the building craftsman was particularly well equipped to create, care for and improve his domestic surroundings, as well as fabricate items for personal comfort, barter or sale. In addition to selling chickens or three-legged stools, he might also acquire cash from owners like Francis Taylor of Orange County, who paid "Carpenter Moses for working on Overseers house 1/3 per day in holidays" in 1792. Like most slaves, craftsmen spent whatever money they had almost exclusively on items of clothing. The variety and quality of clothes worn and carried by building trades runaways indicates their enhanced opportunities for personal gain even within the strictures of bondage. Slave carpenters, sawyers and bricklayers benefitted from their status as skilled workers in a number of additional, less tangible ways. Even a rudimentary knowledge of a building trade helped to diversify a slave's work routine and allowed him to develop his intellect and talents. Varied and challenging work, often authority over other slaves and the trust of the manager, overseer or owner endowed the craftsman with a heightened sense of self and some control over his situation. Hiring and self-hiring allowed the craftsman to extend his freedom of movement, meet prospective friends and spouses and, most significantly, experience a world beyond his home environment.

If hiring opened up certain possibilities for a slave, it also closed off other aspects of his life by separating him from his family and accustomed surroundings. Building trades craftsmen, as possessors of highly sought after abilities, were always prime candidates for hiring and also for sale. Some, like the carpenter and sawyer Will in 1758 Halifax County, even became victims of abduction. The circumstances encountered by a slave after he was hired out or sold might prove uncomfortable or even dangerous. In the building trades the threat of injury was always present and many craftsmen lost fingers and toes and bore the scars of ax and saw cuts. Inferior tools or unreasonable demands simply increased the risk. Slave craftsmen were susceptible to an additional psychological burden arising from their comparative material comfort and close working

relationships with whites--a sense of alienation from the majority of the enslaved population. Not only did some craftsmen feel caught between two worlds, but they often wielded even less negotiating power than the field hands with those in authority due to their small numbers and unique status. On the other hand, enslaved building tradesmen were able to express resistance through their skills by employing such tactics as slowing down the pace of work, intentionally misunderstanding directions and deliberately producing work of inferior quality.

The ultimate form of resistance for a slave was running away. Dissatisfaction with their present situation apparently motivated the 1794 flight of Bob and Duke, a house carpenter and sawyer from Richmond County, whose owner believed they ran away "to compel me to hire or sell them, as many applications have been made." Ten years earlier, a Cumberland County carpenter named Jack had offered a more elemental reason when he "was heard to say, since he ran away, that he never intended to serve any person as a slave again." The craftsman was far more likely than the fieldhand to run away, in part because he was better equipped to cope with life beyond the plantation. He possessed readily marketable skills, for the practice of which he usually took his tools away with him. He was often literate or knowledgeable about the working world and sometimes had accumulated cash or acquired other valuables to finance his journey. The practice of hiring out provided the slave with additional opportunities for running away, as Reuben, a carpenter and sawyer from Spotsylvania County, discovered in 1794. Reuben "was hired to Mr. Nicolas Voss in the city of Richmond, last year, and continued till the expiration of his limited time, which was the 25th of December last, from which time and place he eloped."

Most runaway craftsmen, in the words of the advertisements placed by slaveowners seeking their return, intended to "endeavour to pass for a free man." Some, no doubt, successfully entered the ranks of the free black tradesmen. In eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Virginia, unlike Charleston and other places in the north as well as the south, free black carpenters and bricklayers apparently never encountered overt hostility as competitors to the free white members of the building trades. While agricultural tasks divided clearly along racial lines, craft activities developed relatively few such distinctions. The labor shortage that had always afflicted the colony persisted into the new century, and building needs continued or increased in the decades immediately after the Revolution. Jobs, it seems, were not scarce, and one particular inequity awarded to free African-American building tradesmen--less pay for equal work--appears to have forestalled any fears their white counterparts may have been harboring. The role of free blacks in the building trades is certain, but as yet indistinct. There were those who acquired the basic skills to maintain and improve their homes and augment their incomes by supplying the semi-skilled labor always required in construction. Others were accomplished craftsmen, who achieved varying degrees of prosperity. In 1797, Washington asked his nephew George Lewis if he knew "of a good House Joiner (white or black) that could be hired" and was sober, diligent and "capable of making a rich finished pannel Door, Sash, and wainscot." That a craftsman might be judged by his attributes and abilities rather than by his race or social status, suggests that free, as well as

enslaved African-American building tradesmen could sometimes refute the prejudice and oppression of their time.

Selections from the Sourcebook

March 30, 1717
Batteran
carpenter

York County, Va.

Indenture between Mary Cary, widow of Warwick County, and Nathaniel Hook of York County, carpenter: Mrs. Cary binds her mulatto slave Batteran to Hook "with him to dwell and serve ..." for six years "dureing which term the said Apprentice his master faithfully shall serve in the worke and trade of a Carpenter and also tending to Indian Corn and not otherwise according to his wit and ability and honesty ..." Hook was to allow "meat, drink, and apparrell, lodging, washing and all other things necessary"

Source: Warwick County Records, Box II, Folder 7 (College of William and Mary).

1740 to 1745

James City and York Counties, Va.

"Memorandum of Things delivered to the Quarters [1740-45]"
[rugs and caps] to "New Quarter," "Foaces," "Mill Quarter," "Me[rc]h[an]ts Hundred,"
"Black Swamp" and "Carpenters."

Source: Carter Burwell Ledger, 1738-1756, Burwell Papers (CWF).

1745
Sam
carpenter

James City County, Va.

Carter Burwell Cr. "By Cash given to Carpenter Sam - 11.6"

Source: Carter Burwell Ledger 1738-1756, Burwell Papers (CWF).

October 3, 1751

Williamsburg, Va.

"THE Subscriber, intending for England in the Spring, with his family; is willing to dispose of several valuable slaves, among which are Waitingmen, Blacksmiths, Shoemakers, Carpenters, Barbers, and Plasterers, a neat Chariot with front and side Glasses, Six Horses and Harness, all Manner of Household Goods, Plate, China, etc. Also the following Lands, viz. Two Lots in the Town of Newcastle, with a warehouse thereon.

About Three Hundred Acres, within Four Miles of Newcastle, well wooded. One Thousand and Forty Acres on Chicahominy, with a very good Brick House, 60 by 20, in good Repair, a large Brick Dairy, and other necessary Buildings. The Plantation is ready for cropping with Ten Hands. To be dispos'd of with or without the stock. Also, a new Store adjoining the Market Place in Williamsburg, subject to Ground Rent. Any Person inclining to purchase may know the Terms of Sale by applying to me in Williamsburg. John Dixon."

Source: *Virginia Gazette* October 3, 1751, p. 4, col. 2.

May 18, 1752

York County, Va.

Richard Limehouse
carpenter-joiner

"Upon the Complaint of Richard [L]imehouse against his Master John Jones and on hear[ing] [the Parties] It appearing to the Court that the said Jones hath []ed the said Limehouse and this being the third c[om]pl[aint] it is] Ordered that the said Limehouse be discharge from [] Service and that the said Jones suffer him to []oaths now at the Taylors making for him and pay the Costs occasioned by this complaint."

Source: York County Judgments and Orders 2 (1752-1754): 23-4.

June 18, 1753

York County, Va.

Gabriel Muray
carpenter-joiner

"Ann Muray a Mulatto Woman" of Yorktown and York County binds "her Son Gabriel Muray of the Age of Seven Years as an Apprentice" to John Richardson, ca carpenter-joiner of the same place. Gabriel to serve until the age of twenty-one years; Richardson to provide food, lodging and clothing in addition to craft training.

Source: York County Deed Book 5 (1741-1754): 550. See also York County Judgments and Orders 2 (1752-1754): 232 - recording of indenture, June 18, 1753.

August 21, 1753

York County, Va.

John Whitloc[k] Spurlock
carpenter-joiner

"This Indenture made the twenty first day of August In the Year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and fifty three Years Between John Richardson of York Town Carpenter and Joiner on the one part an[d] John Whitloc[k] Spurlock a Mulatto on the other part - Witnesseth that he the said John Whitlock Spurlock of the Age of Eighteen Years doth bind himself as an Apprentice to the said John Richardson his Heirs Executors

to learn his aforesaid Trade of Carpenter and Joiner and with him after the manner of an Apprentice to Serve for the Space of six years from the Date aforesaid" Richardson also to teach Spurlock to read and write, provide him with food, lodging and clothing and allow him freedom dues at the end of the apprenticeship.

Source: York County Deed Book 5 (1741-1754): 558-559. See also York County Judgments and Orders 2 (1752-1754): 320 - recording of indenture, September 18, 1753.

February 1, 1768

York County, Va.

Guy and Jimmy
carpenters

"Guy & Jimmy returned this day from Ring's Neck where they have been building two Negroe quarters 20. by 16. an Overseer's House 20. by 16. & a Corn house 16. by 12."

Source: Diary Robert Wormeley Carter, 1768 (W&M).
(see Landon Carter diary entries, beginning above February 3, March 3 and April 26, 1764)

December 22, 1768

York County, Va.

"To be HIRED at the half-way house between Williamsburg and York, on Monday the 2d of January next, TWENTY likely NEGRO MEN, belonging to the estate of John Brown, deceased, among whom are three pair of extraordinary good sawers, a very good carpenter, and several good watermen. Bond and security will be required. ROBERT NICOLSON, JOHN BROWN, Executors."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 22 December 1768, page 3, column 2.

July 13, 1769

York County, Va.

Sampson
carpenter

"RUN away from the subscriber in York county, the 21st of May last, a Negro man slave named SAMPSON, about six feet high, a remarkable thin face and high forehead; he is a sensible fellow, and can do a little at the carpenter's business; he is thought to be harboured at Cabin Point, on James river. If any one will apprehend the said Negro and secure him so that I can get him, shall have TWENTY SHILLINGS reward, besides what the law allows WILLIAM MOODY, jun."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., 13 July 1769, page 4, column 2.

November 2, 1769

Williamsburg, Va.

"Williamsburg, Nov. 2, 1769. ANY person who has a Negro fellow to dispose of, that is a good clapboard carpenter, may apply to FREDERICK BRYAN. *** who will likewise give ten shillings for a RAM GOAT."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 2 November 1769, page 3, column 1.

February 22, 1770

James City County, Va.

Charles
sawyer

"RUN away from the subscriber, in James City, the latter end of July last, a large black Negro fellow named CHARLES, a sawyer by trade, has a large scar in his face, and straddles much in his walk; he is much addicted to running away, was taken up at Hampton in 1766, where he endeavoured to pass for a freeman, and was lurking, as I suppose, in order to get the opportunity of some vessel to escape out of the country. As he may probably have made that way now with the same design, I forewarn all masters of vessels from harbouring or employing him; and will give the person who takes up and brings him to me, or secures him in any prison, TWENTY SHILLINGS, besides the allowance by law. THOMAS COWLE."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., 22 February 1770, page 3, column 2.

March 22, 1770

York County, Va.

Ben
carpenter; cooper

"Forty Shillings Reward.

RUN away from the subscriber, in York county, about the 11th or 12th of November last, a very black Negro man named BEN, about 5 feet 6 inches high, 35 years old, spare made, by trade a carpenter, and understands something of the coopers business, his upper teeth rotten; he has many clothes, so it is impossible to describe them. He took with him sundry carpenters and coopers tools. I expect he will endeavour to pass for a freeman, as he can read tolerably well, and am doubtful of his obtaining a pass from some evil disposed person, and leave the colony. This is to desire all masters of vessels, and others, from harbouring him; and I will give the above reward to any person that will deliver him to me, at Mr. James Shields's, near Williamsburg. JOSHUA JONES."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 22 March 1770, page 3, column 3.

May 7, 1771

James City County, Va.

Moses
sawyer

"RUN away from Morris Ramsay, in James City county, some time in the year 1769, a mulatto fellow named MOSES, by trade a sawyer, the property of the subscriber; he is about 36 years of age, his size and apparel I cannot describe as he belonged to the estate of Joseph Morton, Gentleman, deceased, and never came to my possession after the division of the said estate. He has a wife named JOAN, the property of Mr. William Morton, that has been out with him almost the whole time, and therefore must necessarily suspect that they are harboured by some ill disposed person in or about Williamsburg. Whoever takes up the said fellow, and conveys him to me in Richmond county, shall receive a reward of SEVEN POUNDS, besides what the law allows; and as such notorious offences are not to be bourn with any degree of patience, I will give a reward of TWENTY POUNDS to any person who will produce the head of the said fellow, severed from his body. NEWMAN B. BARNES. May 7, 1771."

Source: *Virginia Gazette* (R) May 23, 1771, p. 2, col. 2.

June 11, 1772
George and Stepney
carpenters

Williamsburg, Va.

"WILLIAMSBURG, June 11, 1772. RUN away last Night, two Negro Lads named GEORGE and STEPNEY, about eighteen years of Age, the Property of Mr. William Digges, Junior, of York Town, but Apprentices to me from the said Digges for seven Years. I have reason to suspect that Mr. Digges, under Pretence of their Time being expired (which I am ready to dispute to the contrary) sent a Negro in the Night Time to inveigle them away. I hereby forewarn Mr. Digges, or any Person whatever, from harbouring or entertaining them, as they shall answer it at their Peril. Whoever delivers them to me shall have THIRTY SHILLINGS Reward. MATTHEW TUELL."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 11 June 1772, page 3, column 2. Matthew Tuell was a carpenter.

December 23, 1773

Williamsburg, Va.

"To be SOLD, or HIRED, A VERY good Negro CARPENTER. For Terms apply to THOMAS EVERARD."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 23 December 1773, page 2, column 3.

January 5, 1776

Williamsburg, Va.

"To be HIRED, A NEGRO CARPENTER, who has served a regular apprenticeship to a good workman. B. WELDON."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 5 January 1776, supplement, page 2, column 3.

January 10, 1777

Williamsburg, Va.

"WILLIAMSBURG, Jan. 8, 1777. WANTED immediately, three or four SHOP JOINERS, also ten or twelve NEGRO CARPENTERS for six or seven months, for which a good price will be given by FRANCIS JARAM. N.B. Any person who has WHITE OAK TREES to dispose of, near this city, may apply as above."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 10 January 1777, page 4, column 2. Francis Jaram was a carpenter-joiner.

March 21, 1777

Williamsburg, Va.

"WILLIAMSBURG, March 1777. WANTED immediately, four or five good HOUSE CARPENTERS, also five or six NEGRO CARPENTERS, for which a good Price will be given by applying to me. FRANCIS JARAM."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., 21 March 1777, page 1, column 2.

April 25, 1777

Williamsburg, Va.

Harry
carpenter; cooper

"RUN away from the subscriber in Williamsburg, about 8 or 10 weeks ago, a negro fellow named Harry, by trade a cooper and carpenter, and when at a bench he works on the wrong side. I purchased him at the estate of doctor Andrew Anderson, deceased, in New Kent county; and mr. Anderson purchased him of the estate of the late mr. Shermer of James City, where I believe he is now lurking, otherwise in King William at or near one of the plantations of the said mr. Shermer. I will give 40 s. to any person who secures the above slave, so as I get him again, or 3 l. if delivered to me in Williamsburg. FRANCIS JARAM."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., 25 April 1777, page 2. column 2.

July 25, 1777

Williamsburg, Va.

"WANTED immediately, 3 or 4 good HOUSE CARPENTERS, also 4 or 5 NEGRO CARPENTERS; for which good wages will be given by applying to me in Williamsburg. F. JARAM."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 25 July 1777, page 2, column 3.

March 27, 1778

Williamsburg, Va.

"WANTED to hire, a negro gardener, two negro carpenters, and a person capable of driving a charriot. Good wages will be given, and for particulars apply to the printer."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 27 March 1778, page 4, column 2.

July 10, 1778

Williamsburg, Va.

"For SALE, A NEGRO boy between 17 and 18 years of age, who has been upwards of three years at the carpenter's business. He is a very strong healthy lad, and sold for no faults [?]. He may be seen, and his price known, by applying to the Printer."

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 10 July 1778, page 1, column 2.

1780

York County, Va.

Allen Chapman "1 Negro Man Sawyer aged 25 years. 125 - - " [losses total £448.18. -]

Source: York County Claims for Losses.

November 16, 1782

James City County, Va.

George
carpenter; miller

"FORTY DOLLARS REWARD.

RUN away from Mr. Paradise's mill, near Williamsburg, a negro man named GEORGE, a carpenter by trade, but has been miller at the said mill for many years. He is about five feet ten or eleven inches high, and has some defect in one of his eyes. It is thought he will make for the northward, or the Pamunkey indian town. Whoever takes up the said negro and delivers him to me near Jamestown, shall be paid the above reward by CARY WILKINSON."

Source: *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, 16 November 1782, page 3, column 3.

June 28, 1783

James City County, Va.

George
carpenter, sawyer

"TEN POUNDS REWARD.

RAN away from the subscriber in James City County, a negro fellow named George, about 30 years old, 6 feet high, stout and well made; and can read very well, he is a very good sawyer, and clapboard carpenter, and I understand is somewhere about the Long Bridge, or Four-Mile Creek, and hires himself as a freeman to work on vessels; The said fellow being outlawed, I will give five pounds for him delivered to me, or the above reward for his head, separate from his body. JOHN HOLT."

Source: *Virginia Gazette or the American Advertiser*, 28 June 1783, page 1, column 3.

September 6, 1783

James City County, Va.

Jerry

bricklayer, plasterer

Col. Nathaniel Burwell, Dr.

"To 9 Days work of Jerry (at the Grove) Repairg. Store House, Kitchen & Building Steps to the Door of the Store do & Kitchen & plastering a Room in Cellar @ 5 pr. Day 2..5 -"

Source: Humphrey Harwood Account Book, Ledger B (CWF). Harwood was a Williamsburg mason and builder.

July 24, 1786

York County, Va.

Jerry and Nat

bricklayers, plasterers

"Mr. Nathaniel Burwell (York River) Dr."

"To 10 days work of Jerry & Nat at plastering Suky's House & repairing do in dwelling House a 6/" [£ - 3 -]

Source: Humphrey Harwood Account Book, Ledger B (CWF).

December 1788

Williamsburg, Va.

Billy

brickmaker (?)

"Estate of H. Harwood in a/c with W. Harwood the Exor" Dr.

"To pd. negro Billy for burning brick Kiln - 10 - "

Source: Humphrey Harwood Account Book, Ledger D (CWF).

July 22, 1790

Williamsburg, Va.

Nat

bricklayer, plasterer, carpenter (?)

James Anderson Dr.

"To 2 days work of Nat building a Wall putting in a door frame & window frame 8/ -8"

Source: Humphrey Harwood Account Book, Ledger C (CWF).

August 7, 1790

James City County, Va.

Caesar

carpenter

"THE Subscriber has taken up on his plantation, upon the western branch, a Negro BOY, who says he came from James town, that he was born free and was bound apprentice to a Mr. Barrot House, a carpenter near James town: He is about 5 feet high, well made and active, and appears to be about sixteen years of age, he calls himself Caesar; when taken up he was almost naked. The owner of said boy may get him by applying and paying charges. WILLIAM VEALE, Jun. August 7, 1790."

Source: *Norfolk and Portsmouth Chronicle*, 28 August 1790, page 4, column 3.

March 1, 1792

Williamsburg (?), Va.

Jerry and Nat

bricklayers, plasterers

Charles Hunt Dr.

"To 3 days work of Jerry building Cellar Steps & mending plasterg - 12 - "

James Davis Dr.

"To 8 days work of Nat a 4/ whitewashing & mending plaistering, grates &c. 1.12 -"

Source: Humphrey Harwood Account Book, Ledger C (CWF).

November 17, 1793

Williamsburg, Va.

Nat

bricklayer, plasterer

Dr. John Galt Dr.

"To 2 days Hire of Nat in plastering & setting up Grates - 8 - "

Source: Humphrey Harwood Account Book, Ledger D (CWF).

December 11, 1793

James City County, Va.

Jerry
sawyer; blacksmith

"RUN AWAY From the subscriber some time in July last, a Negro man named JERRY, About 28 or 30 years old, WHO I have reason to believe has been lurking about the city of Richmond, as he is related to several negroes living in that place; he is a middle sized well made fellow, rather of a light complexion, and combs his hair neatly back, has a very large navel, and as well as I remember has a scar on one of his thighs occasioned by a burn, and generally of a smiling countenance; he is an excellent sawyer, and can work a little at the blacksmiths trade. I have understood he has obtained by some means, a certificate of manumission, consequently passes as a free man, under a fictitious name. I have understood that he solicited a Captain Potts, for a passage to Philadelphia, where he wishes to go. I will give a reward of five pounds to any person who will deliver the said negro to me at Barretts ferry, on Chickahominy river, if taken in this state, or ten pounds if taken out of the state, or if committed to jail, ten dollars, provided he is so secured that I get him; and do forwarn all masters of vessels from taking the said fellow on board, as well as every other person or persons from carrying him out of the state. ISHAM CHRISTIAN. December 11th, 1793."

Source: *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, 13 December 1793, page 3, column 2.

April 26, 1794
Nat
bricklayer, plasterer

Williamsburg, Va.

St. George Tucker Dr.
"To 1 1/2 days Hire of Nat mending Plastering & Lathing - 6 - "

Source: Humphrey Harwood Account Book, Ledger D (CWF).

May 1, 1794
Nat
bricklayer, plasterer

Williamsburg (?), Va.

James Taylor Dr.
"To 1 days Hire of Nat mending oven a 4/ & 3 Busl. [bushel] Lime a 9d - 6.3"

Source: Humphrey Harwood Account Book, Ledger D (CWF).

May 29, 1794
Nat
bricklayer, plasterer

Williamsburg (?), Va.

Francis Davenport Dr.

"To 1 days Hire of Nat repairing Well & 3 Bushl. [bushel] Lime a 9d. - 6 3"

Source: Humphrey Harwood Account Book, Ledger D (CWF).

March 12, 1796

James City County, Va.

Jerry

sawyer; blacksmith

"Run-away the 13th of February last, a likely young NEGRO FELLOW, NAMED JERRY, about five feet nine or ten inches high, has a remarkable high forehead, thin hair, and of a yellow complexion. He is a remarkable good sawyer, and has worked at the smith's trade. He took with him a variety of cloathing, amongst which is a remarkable suit of green plaid. He is supposed to be in the lower end of New Kent, or the upper end of James City. Whoever will secure him in any jail within this state, shall receive FIVE DOLLARS; and if delivered to me in James City County, shall receive TEN DOLLARS, with an allowance of reasonable expences. JOHN P. SHEILDS. March 12, 1796 ... N.B. I forewarn all persons from carrying the said fellow out of the state, at their peril. J.P.S."

Source: *Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser*, 12 March 1796.

Carter's Grove

The information on Carter's Grove includes selections from Lorena S. Walsh's book, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community*, and an agricultural calendar for Carter's Grove.

My primary focus is on the African Americans who lived at Carter's Grove plantation and on outlying quarters that were part of the Carter's Grove estate. Secondly, I have followed the history of the larger tidewater Burwell slave community, most of whose members resided on adjoining or nearby plantations, into the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Before 1783 most of these slaves shared similar experiences as well as established blood ties and probably also fictive kin ties. For these people home encompassed most of the James-York peninsula between the towns of Williamsburg and Yorktown and adjacent areas to the north in Gloucester County and to the south in Isle of Wight County. The black workers on a given Burwell plantation complex likely did not maintain contact with all of the slaves owned by others of the Burwell tribe, and over time each residential group forged additional ties with other blacks living nearby. Still, prior bonds and continued close residence serve to identify some probably long-term, reasonably regular connections.

...

At Carter's Grove two distinct groups of African Americans were united into one workforce at the home plantation and its associated quarters in 1738, when for the first time there was a white planter family in residence. One group was composed of recently enslaved Africans who, after their forced removal from the Old World, had lived only at Carter's Grove; the others were mostly first- or second-generation native-born Virginians with older and wider-spreading roots in the colony. These two groups brought different experiences and perspectives to bear in their struggle to survive. Together they and their children formed new accommodations to slavery that in turn were dramatically altered by events associated with the American Revolution and the forced westward migration that accelerated during and after the war.

...

Nathaniel Burwell's second son, Carter (1716-1756), inherited Merchant's Hundred from his maternal grandfather, Robert Carter, and 2,140 acres of York County land near the mouth of Queen's Creek that Lewis Burwell II had acquired. Before 1721 either Lewis II or Nathaniel had established an auxiliary farm there called New Quarter. To this was added a second plantation lying between Queen's and King's Creeks, formerly the farm of Stephen Fouace (subsequently Foaces or Fouaces Quarter), which one of the Burwells had purchased sometime in the early eighteenth century. Carter Burwell moved all of his Burwell bondspeople to York County when he set up housekeeping in 1738 at Merchant's Hundred, already outfitted with its own slaves by Robert Carter.

Within a five-mile radius around Carter's Grove, Carter Burwell's home plantation, about 1750, are his ancillary quarters at New Quarter, Foaces, Black Swamp, and Abraham's. Also within the circle is the home house of his cousin Lewis Burwell IV at Kingsmill, the adjacent Kingsmill and North Quarters, and the Bray quarter at Utopia, as well as the King's Creek plantation (and probably other quarters) held by the estate of cousin Nathaniel Bacon Burwell and the Lightfoot quarter on the same creek. On the north bank of the York were his older brother's Fairfield and some outlying quarters; and just across the James to the south were brother Robert's farms in Isle of Wight.

Juxtaposed, this scattering of Burwell plantations translates into a much larger resident community of over three hundred African Americans, some of whom shared family connections as close as those of the Burwell clan on whose land they lived and labored. African forced migrants shared some core beliefs about the centrality of kinship and lineage in ordering relationships between individuals, although actual kinship systems varied widely from one group to another. While they could not re-create any particular West African kinship system in slavery, they adapted some basic beliefs in organizing newly formed families and larger residential groups. Adult migrants could choose to become fictive uncles and aunts to younger migrant children, and Africans of similar ages could act as brothers or sisters. Men and women whose parents and grandparents had lived in the same neighborhood for up to a century had extended families composed of siblings, children, uncles, aunts, and cousins living on the same quarter or on adjacent quarters located within a few miles of each other. The slaves cherished these extended connections, although they often found it difficult to maintain

regular contacts beyond the home plantation. When faced with long-distance separations, some slaves were willing to risk harsh punishments in order to try to remain with their closest kin.

In addition, because many of the slave households on a given quarter were interrelated by blood or marriage, some kin shared household chores, child-rearing duties, and leisure moments on a daily basis. Individual families and sometimes larger kin groups likely worked together in free hours at income-generating projects like gardening. Even forced labor for the master could be mitigated by kinship solidarity, since most of the adults and older children usually worked the fields together. United, the laborers could effectively control the pace of work, and kin often tried—usually with less success—to protect each other from the overseer’s whip.

Extended kin networks also helped to increase the slaves’ control over the local landscape. The cabins and work areas at Carter’s Grove beyond the main house were part of their domain, and wooded ravines adjacent to the quarters afforded somewhat secluded places where they might go to get away from white supervisors or to gather in leisure moments. These were areas the slaves knew more intimately than did their masters. In addition, every time Carter’s Grove workers drove horse or ox carts laden with goods to the ancillary quarters or carted wheat, corn, fodder, straw, meat, butter, milk, cider, or firewood into Williamsburg, they likely encountered kinsmen during their journeys. Gloucester boatmen, ferrying whites across the river, maintained at least a tenuous link between the York-James City County slaves and their kinspeople at Fairfield, as did Isle of Wight men crossing the James. At night Carter’s Grove residents, when they could summon the energy to make a one to two-hour walk to an adjacent Burwell plantation and back home again, could have visited a variety of kin. Come Saturday nights and Sundays, when they had command over their own time, this neighborhood may have been much more Bacon-Burwell slave territory than it was Burwell property.

These African Americans maintained a strong sense of kinship and passed on a knowledge of family history from one generation to another. This is difficult to prove from the contemporary Burwell family records, aside from inferences one can make from the actions of several slaves who ran away. Nor can it be proved from later direct accounts written or narrated by their descendants, since none published an autobiography or were among the former Virginia slaves interviewed during the 1930s. Their collective memory of a family history is, however, powerfully confirmed in the memoirs of a Burwell descendent published at the end of the nineteenth century.

The history of a much better documented group, the Butler family of southern Maryland, provides a model for understanding how slaves maintained kin ties and transmitted family histories across the eighteenth century. I introduce this evidence from another locality only because it provides a rare insight into the circumstances that enabled some enslaved people to preserve and transmit a detailed family history across the two centuries that preceded general emancipation. Recently historians have emphasized the importance of nurturing kin ties—both fictive and blood—within slave communities at particular, unusually well documented points in time. However, surviving written records seldom allow any evaluation of the role that retained knowledge of kin connections, to the dead as well as to the living, played within extended communities over time.

Indeed, this is a question that scholars seldom have considered worthwhile asking. The weight of current interpretations emphasizes the trauma that enslaved men, women,

and children endured in the infamous Middle Passage; multiple and often incongruent African cultural origins; linguistic and residential isolation upon arrival; extraordinarily high mortality; a surplus of males among forced migrants that prevented many men from finding mates and fathering children; continuing impediments to the formation and maintenance of stable family relationships; and, at least in the Chesapeake, the apparent inability of most African Americans to maintain many identifiable elements of African material culture. This terrible litany seems almost to preclude the possibility that ordinary enslaved African Americans might have succeeded in preserving and transmitting knowledge of a “long-tailed” family history over multiple generations.

The Butler family history challenges these assumptions. Unlike most slave genealogies this family’s oral history did become part of the written record as a result of a series of freedom suits initiated in the later eighteenth century. By the 1760s between 120 and 300 southern Maryland bondpeople could trace their origins back to the union in the 1680s of an African man and a white indentured servant woman, and by 1789 as many as 750 claimed descent. Over the years the original couple and their offspring had been parceled out among numerous members of the slave-owning family living in two southern Maryland counties. Although slave families often were split up, they still lived on farms close enough together that many could visit back and forth. Even those sold out of the family to more distant places kept their family history alive in their new homes, and the core group kept track of the whereabouts of separated kinsfolk. Here the enabling conditions for preserving and transmitting the family history were, first, that most remained in the original owner’s family and, second, that most continued to live no more than twenty miles apart, and many, much closer. The Burwell slaves certainly shared these enabling circumstances.

Confirmation that they similarly preserved and passed on a cherished family history is found in the 1895 memoirs of Letitia Burwell, great-great-granddaughter of Lewis Burwell IV of Kingsmill. Burwell related how, as she was growing up in Southside Virginia in the 1840s and early 1850s, she listened to the stories that the older slaves told around their firesides. She recollected especially a conversation with Aunt Christian, cook in her grandfather’s household in Mecklenburg County. Aunt Christian told the young Letitia: “I ’members ’way back yonder in my mammy time fo’ de folks come furn de King’s Mill plantation nigh Williamsbu’g. All our black folks done belonks to de Burl fambly uver sence dey come fum Afiky. My granmammy ’member dern times when black folks lan’ here stark naked, an’ white folks hab to show ’em how to war close.”

Another very old man remembered something of his father: “My daddy tell we chillun how he mammy liv’ in hole in de groun’ in Afiky, an’ when a Englishmun come to buy him, she sell him, she sell him fur a strong o’ beads. An’ ’twas monsus hard when he fus’ come here to war close; ev’y chance he git he pull off he close an’ go naked, kase folks don’t war no close in he country. . . . Sometime he say he gwine sing he country, an’ den he dance an’ jump an howl tell he skeer we chillun to deaf.”

However inaccurately or selectively Letitia Burwell remembered and rendered these stories, they were clearly important to the former Kingsmill slaves. Perhaps the histories of the earliest migrants who had lived on the Bacon plantations in York County and at Fairfield in the 1690s had largely been lost to time by the 1850s. But the last of the newly enslaved Africans had arrived at Kingsmill no later than the early 1740s and most had arrived a decade or two earlier, so that these peoples’ collective memories

encompassed, at the very least, more than a century of Virginia history. Their accounts were so vivid that the white woman remembered parts of them fifty years later. How much richer and more compelling must have been the stories Aunt Christian and other older Burwell slaves retold countless times in quarters scattered across Virginia in the early nineteenth century!

...

The origins of the African-born men, women, and children who at various times were part of the early Bacon-Burwell group are the most obscure. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Africans, like contemporary Europeans, were divided into many “countries” and “nations,” often with different languages, religions, family and communal arrangements, translocal government, and traditional ways for carrying out everyday living. In the last half of the seventeenth century, the English merchants who transported captive Africans to Virginia traded all along the West African coast, from Senegambia in the north to the Kongo region (present-day Angola) in the south, and occasionally to distant Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. Because we know that Lewis Burwell II—as well as Bacon, Cole, Lear, and several others—purchased new Africans singly or at most in twos or threes over a span of sixty years between the 1660s and the 1710s, it seems certain that the group’s collective wisdom was compounded from a mixed West African heritage that drew on the resources of several distinct ethnic and linguistic groups. Over time the content of the group’s knowledge changed as some members died and others coming from different regions were added.

We do not know on what ships any of these captives arrived, so they cannot be traced directly to a West African port of embarkation. Neither Bacon nor Lewis Burwell II noted any ethnic or linguistic affiliations among their African workers. Thus, the only direct evidence about their origins comes from the African names that some retained or chose for their children. These are fragile clues, indeed, since we must rely on English writers’ perhaps inaccurate phonetic transcriptions of names foreign to their language. Moreover, some of the names they did record are shared, at least in this century, by more than one West African language group. Several of the names—Colly, Gaby, Sambo, and Yambo among the men and Sama for a woman—suggest Senegambian origins. One of the Bacon men, Cuffey, bore an Akan day-name, a hint that he may have come from the Gold Coast, an area encompassing present-day Ghana.

...

Thus, it is almost certain that the Bacon-Burwell slaves included some men and women who came from the area of Senegambia, given the predominance of this northernmost region as a source for captives whom the Royal African Company sent to Virginia, Nathaniel Bacon’s close ties to that company, and the internal evidence from the names. After the turn of the century, English slavers concentrated their attentions farther south along the West African coast as these regions began to supply people in greater numbers and at lower prices than the more northerly areas. Most of the new African slaves transported to the Burwell plantations between the 1710s and 1740s, and especially those at Carter’s Grove, came from other parts of West Africa, many from the

Niger Delta. However, Jumper, a man whom Lewis Burwell III of Kingsmill purchased in 1736, was clearly identified as a Mandingo, a group that in the early eighteenth century lived along the Gambia River and in adjacent areas to the south.

A brief survey of the Senegambia region thus can suggest some of the prior experiences and cultural resources that Africans in the Bacon-Burwell group may have brought to Virginia....The region's various peoples shared a relatively homogenous culture and history, reflecting centuries of living together as neighbors and a continual intermixing between members of the various groups. Three of the region's four primary languages—Wolof, Sereer, and Pulaar (or Fuulbe) are closely related, and the fourth, Malinke, the language of Mande-speaking groups who had moved into the area from the east several centuries before, was widely used as a trade language throughout the area. In addition, many African coastal merchants also spoke Arabic and Portuguese, and some knew Dutch, French, and English as well. The great diversity of local resources and Senegambia's strategic location between North Africa, the Central African interior, and forest areas to the south meant that many of its resident peoples had become accustomed to complex economic and cultural exchanges centuries before Europeans arrived on the West African coast.

...

Although tobacco was a product of marginal importance in the overall trade, by the early 1600s the weed was widely grown and consumed throughout Senegambia and in Sierra Leone to the south. This New World plant had been brought from Brazil by the Portuguese and was introduced to the West African mainland from the nearby Portuguese-held Cape Verde Islands sometime in the 1500s. West African farmers in Upper Guinea soon mastered cultivation of this new crop, and local consumers quickly developed a taste for smoking it. As early as 1607 English merchant William Finch found tobacco plants growing around most houses in Sierra Leone; tobacco "seems to be half their food." "Each Man" Finch observed, "carries in his Knapsack, his Pipe, and a small Purse (called *Tuffio*) full of Tobacco. The Women carry their Tobacco in their Wrappers, and the Pipe in their Hands." In 1620 Richard Jobson, an English visitor to the Gambia River, met people who had never before seen white men but were prepared to exchange "Tobacco, and fine neat Canes used for Pipes" for English goods. Between the 1680s and the 1730s, European visitors almost invariably commented that farming families along the Senegal and Gambia Rivers "observe the proper Seasons for Planting, especially Tobacco of which every House has a Patch. In some places farmers also cultivated tobacco on a broader scale, and it figured as a regular article of trade in local and regional markets. In the 1680s John Barbot reported large fields of tobacco at Caffan (Kassan), over two hundred miles up the Gambia, "which makes a great trade there, the Portuguese buying considerable quantities for Juala and Cachau." Similarly, in the 1690s Andre Brue found "whole fields covered with Tobacco" near Biyurt, a town near the mouth of the Senegal.

Tobacco use was even more widely diffused. Clay pipes figured prominently among the catalog of wares that local potters regularly fabricated. Many of the adult men and women living between the Senegal River and the Windward Coast whom Barbot sketched between 1678 and 1682 are pictured tobacco pipes in hand, when walking,

socializing, and even while riding in canoes. Passages noting farmers “never without a pipe in their mouths,” blacksmiths working in company under a tree “each of them a pipe of tobacco in his mouth,” merchants going about with oversized “traveling pipes” holding half a pint of the weed, and family groups staying up to smoke and dance on moonlit nights reinforced the visual images. A contemporary French traveler, Le Maire, similarly noted, “they are always smoaking Tobacco, which serves to amuse them, and deaden the Appetite.” By 1704 the Dutch traveler William Bosman commented on the widespread use of tobacco among children as well as adults, observing “that you may equally entrust Bacon to a Cat” as tobacco to an African.

The likely contributions of enslaved Africans to the development of rice culture in the Carolinas have been argued for years. The possibility of a similar connection between the evolution of Chesapeake tobacco culture and the arrival of slaves from regions of West African where tobacco raising was already well established has so far gone unnoticed, although the evidence is suggestive. On the most basic level, tobacco was peculiarly suited to long fallow, hoe-and-hill culture, a farming technology totally unfamiliar to transplanted Englishmen but one which Africans had mastered over centuries of experience. Moreover, some farmers in Upper Guinea were already raising tobacco when the first English settlers arrived in Virginia. By the 1680s, on family farms in Senegambia and in Sierra Leone, as well as on the Gold Coast, tobacco was widely grown for local consumption. In some parts of Senegambia, West African farmers raised the weed on a larger scale for use in interregional trade. Indeed, in regional markets Senegambian tobacco held its own against New World imports until the end of the eighteenth century. By the early 1700s tobacco was also a common crop in the Niger Delta, and toward the end of the eighteenth century, in parts of Angola, West African entrepreneurs were growing it for export to areas farther in land. Many West Africans brought to work Virginia or Maryland tobacco fields thus could draw on already familiar skills. It is especially likely that Senegambian or Sierra Leonean slaves who came to the Chesapeake before the mid-1680s, when Chesapeake planters were still experimenting intensively with different varieties of tobacco and with new cultivation, curing, and processing techniques, may have contributed know-how in addition to the sheer labor power for which the planters had bought them.

Both sexes were likely familiar with tobacco growing, although perhaps on different scales. Women in Senegambia often tended the tobacco raised in small plots adjoining family compounds, while men likely played a greater role in those areas where the crop was raised on a larger scale. Along the rivers tobacco was planted “as soon as they have cut their Corn,” on floodplains that could be cropped during the dry season. Properties of the leaf were known to vary depending on the soils in which the crop was planted. West African processing techniques were not well documented but apparently varied across time and from place to place. According to a 1607 account, in Sierra Leone they “squeeze the Juice out of the Tobacco when the Leaves are green and fresh, saying that otherwise it would make them drunk: Then they shred it small, and dry it on Coals.” By the third quarter of the seventeenth century, tobacco was sold in markets “in the Leaf which they dry themselves not having the art of making it into rolls” as Brazilian tobacco growers did.

Although most West Africans (in contrast to most European-born laborers) were well versed in tobacco growing, as was the case with rice, contemporary commentators

instead emphasized the particular suitability of supposedly unskilled African labor to the year-round drudgery involved in growing tobacco, and present-day scholars have tended to accept this assessment. Although it was widely recognized that “each step in the annual process required skill, judgement, and luck,” agricultural proficiency in the end was judged solely by how well the crop sold in European markets. Thus, the planters who directed the final processing tended to accumulate all the credit, with the equally critical inputs of skill and judgment that field workers made throughout the growing season devalued or ignored. Indeed, West Africans probably made fewer contributions to evolving colonial technologies for processing and packing of tobacco for shipment overseas, since in Africa there was no need to cure the leaf in such a way that it would keep for a year or more or to pack it tightly for transoceanic carriage.

...

Sometime between his daughter Elizabeth’s marriage to Nathaniel Burwell I in 1709 (and probably after the birth of their first child in 1710) and Nathaniel’s death in 1721, Carter purchased Merchant’s Hundred plantation (later Carter’s Grove), totaling 1,003 acres, on the York-James City County line. In 1732 he bought an additional 397-acre adjacent tract which he incorporated into the plantation. Carter quickly bought new African slaves to work it, intending that the profits of their labor go to his daughter during her lifetime and then to one of her sons; by 1727 he decided that this favored grandchild would be Nathaniel and Elizabeth’s second son and his namesake, Carter Burwell. By the terms of Carter’s will, the numbers of working slaves and livestock were to be kept up to the quantities present at Carter’s death. If some of the slaves died, his executors were to draw upon the proceeds of the tobacco crop to buy new hands to work the land. In 1735 Lewis Burwell of Kingsmill purchased a “Negro boy” for the estate from merchant George Braxton for £14 presumably to replace one of the Merchant’s Hundred workers who had died.

After son-in-law Nathaniel’s death, Robert Carter managed Merchant’s Hundred himself, both as current owner of the plantation and as guardian to his Burwell grandson who would eventually inherit it. Carter disapproved of his daughter’s second marriage, to a Williamsburg doctor of questionable background, and made sure that her new husband had no role in its management. Carter hired a white overseer to run the farm and relied on the estate’s general manager (one Richardson in 1723 and William Camp thereafter) to handle day-to-day concerns. Carter also made frequent visits in person, since he had to travel from his home on the Rappahannock to Williamsburg whenever meetings of the governor’s council or General Court were called.

The general pattern of the transatlantic slave trade to Virginia in the early eighteenth century makes it likely that most of the Merchant’s Hundred slaves were Ibo, Ibibio, Efik, or Moko from the area of present-day Nigeria or adjacent Cameroon on the east. Approximately 60 percent of Africans entering the York River between 1718 and 1726, when Robert Carter was buying slaves for the plantation, came from the Bight of Biafra.

Indeed, there is direct evidence that a number of the slaves came from this area. We can identify the ships on which fourteen of the Carter-Burwell slaves arrived, and all of these sailed from either Old or New Calabar, trading states located in the Niger River

delta. In June 1722 Carter gave two young African girls, Iris and Lettice, whom he had purchased along with twenty-three other slaves from a Bristol agent, to two Burwell grandchildren at Fairfield. They were surely among the 166 slaves arriving in the York River on June 5 in the Bristol ship *Greyhound* from Calabar. Four men and two women whom Carter purchased for the Merchant's Hundred estate on 18 May 1724 were part of a shipment of 231 Africans who were transported on the *Commerce* of Bristol anchoring in York River from one of the Calabars about 30 April. Four more slaves whom Carter sent to Merchant's Hundred in May 1725 came from Calabar with 278 others on the *Commerce's* next voyage. Carter bought four additional slaves for the Burwell estate by June 1727 to compensate for hands who had died over the preceding winter. These slaves must have arrived on one or more of the five Bristol ships that had anchored in the York by mid-June that year, one from Calabar, one from Guinea, and three from unspecified African ports." A £40 payment that Carter made on the account of the Burwell estate to a regular slave dealer in 1728 probably represented one or two additional slaves purchased for the Burwell estate that year, and probably also a slave girl whom he gave as a present to his granddaughter Elizabeth Burwell. Only one ship, the *Castle Gally* of Bristol, is recorded as entering Virginia in that year; she also came from Calabar.

...

Not all of the Merchant's Hundred slaves came from Ibo-speaking groups or shared a similar Niger Delta area culture. Some of those transported in the early 1720s, for example, may have come from the Benin region, just to the west. At the end of the seventeenth century and into the early 1720s, Benin endured a violent civil war. Slaves captured in wars and raids between the various contending parties in that conflict may have passed through the hands of New Calabar slave dealers. Other Burwell family slaves, present in Virginia by the 1730s, definitely came from two other nations. Jumper, purchased by Lewis Burwell of Kingsmill in 1736, was a Mandingo from the Gambia or Sierra Leone area, and others arriving by the 1730s and 1740s—Sambo, Juba, Gaby, and Osman—had names that also hint at Senegambian connections. Cuffee, a runaway in 1736, and another Cuffey living at King's Creek in 1746, like an earlier Cuffey on a Bacon quarter, retained African day-names that signified the day of the week on which they were born and suggest origins on the West African Gold Coast. Between 1728 and 1739, 41 percent of all slaves arriving in the York River were Angolans, and "new Africans" whom the Burwells purchased in the 1730s may have included members of this nation. However, there is no direct evidence that this was the case, and Angolans are difficult to identify from their names, because most Congolese bore Portuguese saints' names that have close English equivalents.

People from three or more different West African cultural and linguistic regions were present on the Burwell plantations in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Such diversity may not, however, have resulted in the masters English language and culture coming, by default, to be the only operative common language and dominant cultural influence. It is probable that the majority of the African-born Burwell slaves, most of whom arrived in the 1720s, rather than being a heterogenous lot of individuals from varying ethnic and linguistic groups as the usual story goes, instead shared a similar cultural and linguistic background. Most of these transported Africans may have spoken

the same language or closely related dialects that some already knew and others could quickly master. If the slaves also shared national identities, which often served in the New World as a sort of substitute kinship, group solidarity would have helped to mitigate their new and unfortunate situation. Thus, they may have experienced a less “rapid and thorough deculturation” than is generally postulated for Chesapeake slaves, who are usually portrayed as isolated individuals with few collective cultural resources left to counter an overwhelming, powerful, alien white presence.

...

The Carter letter books and inventory also suggest something of the material conditions at Merchant’s Hundred in the 1730s. Each slave was issued a new suit of winter clothing annually as well as some lighter summer wear including, for the men, shirts, fustian jackets, and linen breeches and, for the women, shifts, petticoats, and aprons. Children got only a frock. To complete their outfits, the adults also had a pair of imported shoes, Irish stockings or plaid hose, and Kilmarnock milled caps. Bed rugs and blankets or hair coverlets were replaced only when those first issued became threadbare. The Carters shipped new bedding to the quarters with “the names of every negro they are for” attached. The Merchant’s Hundred overseer probably collected the winter clothing at Fairfield each fall, checked the bundles to “see that everything is right,” and then distributed the individually labeled garments. He had orders not to give out the winter clothes until the weather turned cold, as “some of them would destroy [or, perhaps, trade] them before.”

The weekly rations Carter supplied consisted primarily of ground or unground maize. Meat rations were less frequent, with the overseers only occasionally killing an old steer or giving out some preserved pork “that they may have a bit now and then and the fat to grease their Homony.”

...

Carter’s practices represented in part simply the easiest and cheapest method for extracting labor in the Chesapeake in the early eighteenth century. But, while Carter surely demanded more intense labor over a longer portion of the growing season than Africans customarily required of themselves, he and fellow Chesapeake slave owners succeeded in large measure because they incorporated, knowingly or unknowingly, many of the highly efficient African farming practices. Coming largely from areas infested with the tsetse fly, African-born slaves were unaccustomed to the use of plows and draft animals. West African farmers instead were skilled in the bush fallow, hoe-and-hill agriculture that European tobacco and maize farmers had quickly adopted from Native Americans. John Barbot, traveling in West Africa around 1680, had noted that there “two men will dig as much land in a day, as one plow can turn over in England.” Two men required less food than did one man and a horse. The technology, then, was essentially the same, and while tobacco and maize were not staple West African crops, most slaves were well versed in raising them.

...

The climate in the quarters in 1738, whatever their location, may have become tense indeed, and most unusual. Most area planters (like Burwell's uncle James who bought eighteen slaves, almost certainly all newly arrived Africans, over seven years between 1711 and 1718) scattered the newcomers among their older, often creole, workers. Instead, Carter Burwell moved the Gloucester hands that he inherited from his father and grandfather, surely by now almost all first- or second-generation Virginians, onto the Merchant's Hundred Africans' turf.

It is unclear how many family slaves Burwell brought from Gloucester, but there were likely about thirty. His wife, Lucy Grymes Burwell, entered the marriage with a promise of a cash dowry of £1,250 sterling; her portion would have included no bondspeople except possibly a personal servant. The Africans already at Merchant's Hundred numbered between twenty and twenty-five. Cultural conflicts may have been intense as the creole Gloucester slaves sought to maintain privileges and status over the less acculturated Africans, who nonetheless had the advantage of greater familiarity with the plantation itself and whatever rights, such as use of the best garden plots, that longer residence might have conferred. Robert Carter had worried about the tendency for old hands to "crow over" new ones; such conflicts between old and new hands perhaps paled in comparison to those which may have developed between skilled creole Burwell artisans and domestics and the African field workers. The Fairfield creoles may have looked down on the Africans with their unfamiliar languages and different cultures, while some of the forced migrants—especially the Ibos who likely predominated—may have tried to maintain a separate national identity by socializing primarily with each other and seeking out other Ibos for marriage partners. At the same time, the overall shortage of women, especially among the Africans, may have fueled competition between unmarried African men and creole youths, who may have been more successful than Africans in finding mates. On the other hand, some aspects of a shared African cultural heritage may have united the two groups, as did their shared condition of bondage and the need to survive and resist.

These possible reactions emphasize the importance of group identities and origins in shaping behaviors. Interactions of course took place between two or more individuals, each possessed of his or her own unique personality and status within the slave community. While the passage of time has almost entirely erased the individual, we need to keep in mind that group identity was but one of the factors that influenced the outcome of particular exchanges.

That there were cultural differences between the two groups is certain. Many of the Gloucester group had roots in Virginia stretching back at least one generation, and some for two or more. Consequently they had fairly extensive kin connections on several Burwell plantations and doubtless on other neighboring plantations as well. Kin provided comfort and support and occasionally could help mitigate discipline, as well as sheltering temporary runaways. Long-standing service in the Burwell family perhaps also provided a crucial bargaining chip in acquiring or maintaining privileges or preferred work assignments, as would greater fluency in the English language. Creole slaves could combine their own accumulated wisdom and experiences with those of other nearby kin to develop a broader collective knowledge of the local landscape and the surrounding social landscape. These people knew both the local topography and natural resources

intimately. They knew the best places to hunt and fish, the best routes for traveling from one plantation to another, and the location of many secluded spots where they might safely meet in secret. They preserved knowledge of kinship trees and other interconnected relationships within the slave community, past and present. One suspects, for example, that a Kingsmill man named Colly, who was entailed to that estate in 1736, was named either for Colly, an African living at King's Creek in 1694, or for his son, carpenter Will Colly. They also knew something of the family histories and social standing of most of the free householders, white and black, living in the area: who was related to whom, who had influence and who did not, who might share a pipe of tobacco or offer a drink, and who would buy or sell merchandise without asking too many questions, as well as who rode patrol and harassed slaves returning from errands.

It is likely that some of the older Burwell slaves also held out hopes—increasingly doomed by the 1730s—of obtaining a particular kind of freedom, one within rather than outside Anglo-American society. Some blacks escaped slavery in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and their success in carving out niches in the wider Euro-American society afforded hope for others. Most free blacks living in or near the York peninsula just scraped by as laborers or at best tenant farmers, but a handful managed to acquire land and with it the greater security and status that property afforded. The York and Gloucester slaves must have known some free black families in the area (some of them are likely relatives), who like Bacon's Kate had secured their freedom before the turn of the century. Later, as laws regulating manumissions tightened, only a few privileged slaves, most of whom had a white parent, acquired free status. We do not know whether Kate lived long enough to leave free descendants in the area, but some of the York and Gloucester Parratts surely did; several branches of the latter group still appeared on local tax lists in the 1780s.

Among those who arrived in the seventeenth century such aspirations had been reinforced by some understanding of and hopes for securing the basic "rights of Englishmen" in practice extended to all non-English immigrants who acquired free status, although increasingly hedged for people of color. The blacks learned of these rights in the quarters from the more bold and assertive among the indentured white servants. Understanding of such basic rights may have been reinforced or extended through attendance at meetings of county courts and possible participation there as petitioners or witnesses. In the 1730s some slaves still hoped to obtain free status by converting to Christianity, again suggesting a vision of and a desire for freedom within the dominant society.

The recent African migrants, in contrast, had few extended kin and less knowledge of the local topography and social landscape outside the Merchant's Hundred plantation. They relied instead on bonds created during the Middle Passage, associations or marriages reinforced by shared national identities, fictive kin relationships, and very recently formed ties to their spouses and young children. Shared elements of their African childhoods continued to structure much of their world, and Euro-American culture had as yet lesser significance. Wherever possible, they employed traditional African ways in conducting their daily lives, and many continued to mourn for lost kinfolk and country. In addition, they likely had forged fewer close connections with ordinary white folk than had the creoles. Because most arrived in the 1720s, after the enactment of laws restricting slaves' participation in the colony's legal life, their only

experience with Virginia courts probably would have been as defendants accused of serious crimes and in peril for their lives or as conscripted witnesses whom officials hoped would inform against other slaves. They likely also had little knowledge of the Christian religion and little use for it. Any hopes they entertained for freedom envisioned escape from white control and the re-creation of African communities somewhere in the “Back-Woods.”

...

The written records reveal almost nothing of the means young Carter Burwell may have employed to dampen differences between the Gloucester group of slaves and the more recently arrived Africans and to make them work together. He seems generally to have followed a divide and conquer strategy that encouraged cultural merging, assigning a mix of creole and African-born workers to each of the various quarters. By 1740 these included New Quarter, Foaces, Mill Quarter, Black Swamp, and Abraham’s, the latter a small farm managed by a slave, Abraham, with the help of Jenny, his wife. Burwell’s account book shows that between 1740 and 1745 Gloucester Moll lived at Foaces Quarter, probably alongside Africans arriving in the 1720s who may have included the men Cezar, Pompey, and Boatswain. Old Nan and Old Cato, likely members of the York-Gloucester group, were housed at Mill Quarter along with at least two younger women and their several children who may have been related to Nan and Cato, but also with at least one probable African, another Boatswain. Similarly, Old Moll, likely also a former Gloucester worker, shared quarters at Black Swamp with both creoles and Africans.

Former Gloucester laborers and artisans and Merchant’s Hundred Africans also shared work and living spaces in and around the home house. Carpenters Old Dick and the boy Dick (probably Old Dick’s son), Sancho, Sam, and Jack, as also shoemaker Jammy, were likely second-generation artisans and, given Burwell family predilections, probably also of mixed blood. The few female house servants the Burwells employed included Gloster Betty (likely the same woman as Betty “in the house”) and the cook, Molly, who were surely former Gloucester hands rather than Merchant’s Hundred Africans, of whom the whites, and especially the mistress, would have known much less. On the other hand, several of the men who had joined the household staff by 1745—Juba, Cyrus, and Richmond—were likely African-born, as were Carter’s Grove field hands Calabar, Bristol, Nero, and Marcellus.

In general the Burwells had inherited all the workers they could readily employ on their existing quarters, and the family ceased buying new hands after the early 1740s. By then, enough children were likely surviving into their teens and twenties to offset deaths among the older adults.

...

Also by midcentury, as creole children—who ranged from the first to the third or fourth generation born in Virginia—began to replace their African-born elders, any conflicts resulting from the merging of the two groups of creoles and recently arrived Africans faded, and the younger native-born generations adopted more elements of both creolized African-American and white culture. As sex ratios began to even out and

native-born women began bearing children at younger ages than their mothers, family life became possible for more of the slaves, and family size increased. Carter Burwell's workforce grew from roughly 50 in 1738 to 96 at his death in 1756. Thirty years later the family workforce numbered at least 154, although not all were then living at Carter's Grove.

Once the Burwells stopped adding newly imported Africans to their workforces, the demographic profiles of the various plantation communities began to look more like those of stable settle populations that expanded or contracted depending on the balance between births and deaths. Within settled populations where there is little in- or out-migration, sex ratios are relatively even, and the proportions of adult workers and of dependent children too young to make any significant contribution to the local economy are about equal. These changes in the enslaved population had very different consequences for the slaves and their owners. For the slaves, more opportunities for a somewhat more normal family life helped to ease some of the worst deprivations of bondage. For the slave owners, the necessity of supporting a growing proportion of children too young to work, as well as a much smaller but also growing proportion of men and women too old to work, led to diminishing annual profits and falling rates of return on the original investment in prime-age captive African laborers. In this transitional period slave owners likely found that younger women yielded particularly mixed returns. The children they bore eventually would increase the numbers and overall value of their labor forces. But in the short run women well advanced in pregnancy in the growing season or encumbered with "sucking infants" at any point in the agricultural year reduced annual income and increased outlays for food, clothing, and medical attention. Once these growing numbers of children reached their late teens and twenties, profits would cease to fall and begin to rise again. However, it took forty to fifty years for the demographic processes to evolve. Second- and third-generation slave owners who enjoyed good life spans eventually reaped substantial benefits for themselves and their descendents, but creole masters who died young left their heirs with transitional workforces temporarily less productive than those they had inherited.

On the Burwell farms this meant that in the 1750s and 1760s Carter Burwell I and the executors who subsequently managed his estate, as well as his brothers and cousins who came of age in the 1730s and 1740s, were increasingly pressed to manage their plantations more efficiently. They needed to extract ever more work from their slaves of laboring age in order to offset the rising costs that growing numbers of non-working human possessions entailed. It was young Nathaniel Burwell II, rather than his father, who gained most from the peculiar labor system his grandfather King Carter initiated. To his good fortune, Nathaniel came of age at the very time when the Burwells would profit most from the changing composition of their inherited labor force.

...

During his tenure at Carter's Grove between 1738 and 1756, Carter Burwell divided his hands into small work groups. The home house field laborers were quartered somewhere near the whites' dwelling (the location probably changed when the Burwells built their new mansion in the 1750s), as well as on five outlying farms, and a few workers were at the plantation mill. A group of about five carpenters seem to have lived

and worked separately from the other laborers. Three and sometimes four overseers supervised the larger quarters in return for shares of the crops produced. A general manager, who worked for an annual salary, directed the overseers, managed the home farm, and often looked after the mill. While some of the lesser overseers did not remain long at their posts, lasting at best only a year or so, several of them and the manager, too, had longer tenures of five to nine years each.

At this time most large Chesapeake planters paid overseers with annual shares of the major crops, giving them an incentive to drive the slaves hard. Ambitious but inexperienced or less competent overseers usually tried to increase short-term production by attempting to eliminate the slaves' customary privileges and to speed up the work pace, and sometimes by resorting frequently to the whip. Such measures almost always proved self-defeating, and men who employed them usually were soon discharged or else left out of frustration after a year or two. Those with more experience and skill respected whatever customary rights the slaves had already established and found ways to maintain or better production by enlisting the support of the more influential field workers. The managers at Carter's Grove seem usually to have found and retained overseers who could extract acceptable work efforts and maintain relative order in the quarters without, by cruel measures, provoking the slaves into unacceptable levels of resistance.

Tobacco and grain were the major field crops. The slaves produced on average between 725 and 965 pounds of tobacco per hand per year. In bad seasons the output might drop to about 550 pounds, while in favorable years some of the workers made over 1,300 pounds each. In addition, on the home farm and adjacent quarters they raised about 800 barrels of corn annually. Yields per hand ranged from a low of five barrels to a high of twenty-two barrels; the average crop was nine to twelve barrels per hand. Once food for the slaves and corn for fattening livestock was set aside, between a quarter and a half of the crop was marketable surplus. By the late 1740s Burwell also was growing 500 to 800 bushels of wheat a year, almost all of which was sold. Between the early 1740s and mid-1750s, the proportion of crop revenues derived from grains rose from about one-quarter to about one-half. This was more a result of a rise in the price of grains relative to tobacco than shifts in crop mix. The slaves seem to have tended similar amounts of corn and tobacco across Carter Burwell's lifetime, and these crops would have kept them fully occupied throughout the growing season. They could sow the wheat in the fall once the tobacco harvest was completed, but Burwell surely had to hire extra help to manage the wheat harvest at the beginning of July.

While sweet-scented tobacco remained the Burwells' most important single crop, slaves on all the larger quarters produced other goods destined for several markets, and everywhere they pursued somewhat more diversified work than they had in Robert Carter's time. Livestock became an increasingly important part of the operation. Workers at each of Carter Burwell's quarters tended hogs, cattle, and horses, and by 1753 there were at least 250 sheep on two of the farms. There were many more animals than were needed for plantation consumption. Each year excess cattle were sold or older animals slaughtered for butcher's meat. Burwell also marketed as much as 10,000 pounds of pork a year. At an average weight of 100 pounds per animal, this represents as many as 100 surplus hogs a year. In the later 1740s and early 1750s, sales of livestock and meat brought in between £50 and £100 sterling constant value annually. Some of the

meat may have been exported to the West Indies or sold as ships' provisions. The bulk, however, went to residents of the nearby town of Williamsburg.

Burwell was producing for several markets, a strategy that spread risk and minimized the impact of price declines for any one of the three staple crops. Almost invariably he consigned his high-quality tobacco to London factors in return for English goods; in only one year did he choose to sell in the country. For corn and wheat there were several outlets. At least once Burwell sold most of his surplus to a ship captain, presumably bound for the West Indies; often he sold most of the grain in the form of meal and flour processed at the plantation mill. In other years he turned to nearby Williamsburg, which was slowly growing in population. The College of William and Mary was the single best customer, sometimes buying over 500 bushels of wheat in one year. Tavern keepers, the royal governor, and assorted tradespeople and professionals also purchased grain, fodder, and cider.

For the Burwell slaves the main changes in work routines involved greater responsibilities for caring for larger herds of livestock now including sheep, extensive use of horses or oxen for hauling, more responsibility for delivering and perhaps marketing produce, occasional use of plows for putting in wheat and weeding corn, in midsummer a short but arduous wheat harvest, and more time spent collecting corn fodder and processing cider. Late fall and winter workloads also would have increased, as the slaves had to plow and seed the wheat fields, and then thresh and winnow the small grain and shuck the surplus corn before it was sold.

After Carter Burwell's death in 1756, the slaves lived and worked for fifteen years without a resident master. The immediate supervisors remained, with an estate manager directing overall operations and most of Carter Burwell's quarter overseers staying on. One could suppose that the slaves might have managed to carve out more time for themselves and to slow the work pace, but this may not have been the case. By the terms of Carter Burwell's will, all the slaves were to be kept as part of the family estate until the eldest son, Nathaniel II (1750-1814), came of age in 1771. Those purchased from Mann Page and living on Neck of Land Quarter were eventually to go to Carter Burwell II (1754-1776), the second son.

The Burwell family, however, put off settlement of Carter I's estate—including any division of slaves—until Nathaniel II came of age. In 1771 several of Carter and Lucy Burwell's adult daughters and/or their husbands decided to contest his murky written will, hoping to get hold of some share of the slaves, or at least of the profits of their labors. The heirs did not come to a final settlement until 1779. We can only speculate as to what the slaves knew of these family squabbles and how much they worried about the possible implications for their futures. The details of the dispute and the eventual private settlement the various heirs made are not entirely clear, but in the end the eldest son, Nathaniel II, retained almost all of the slaves. The Burwell men appear to have been concerned to keep their slaves together, in part to guarantee family wealth and status and in part out of moral concerns about splitting slave families. After Carter II died the slaves attached to Neck of Land Quarter were sold to the husband of one of his sisters. Eventually Nathaniel II repurchased some of these.

In the interim Nathaniel II's guardian and uncle by marriage, merchant William Nelson of Yorktown, managed the estate until the boy came of age. Although Carter Burwell's wife Lucy survived him, she apparently took no active role in managing the

farms, and she and all the children had moved out of the home house by 1765. Nelson continued Carter I's farming strategies but sought to increase estate profits by putting more emphasis on products for the expanding Williamsburg market. From 1763, when Nelson's surviving accounts for the estate begin, he was allocating somewhat less labor to growing tobacco than had Carter Burwell and was forcing the slaves to put more time into raising corn, wheat, and livestock, processing cider and butter, and cutting firewood. From Nelson's records it appears that in the 1760s tobacco continued to account for about half of the gross plantation revenues, and sales of surplus corn another third. Nelson probably had tobacco raised only on the best lands where quality leaf for the English home market could still be produced. Between 1763 and 1771 tobacco production per hand on the estate's quarters dropped, while that of other products increased. This was almost certainly a result of conscious policy (except in 1766 and 1767 when bad weather shortened crops), rather than of deteriorating soil or of the slaves managing to work less diligently in the absence of a resident owner. The lowland estate tobaccos continued to fetch top prices, albeit by this time animal manure was probably essential for maintaining yields.

Nelson behaved as a typically conservative executor in that he invested little in building repair; made no new investments except for a few head of livestock, primarily horses; and maximized immediate revenues for the support of the Burwell children by hiring out some of the slaves. Many of the domestics were sent to work in Williamsburg households between 1765 and 1771. While these hired slaves might have returned to Carter's Grove late Saturday night and gone back to town early Monday morning, or their kin may have made traveled into town if the Williamsburg domestics had to work on Sundays as well as weekdays, this hiring out clearly imposed hardships upon the affected families. Similarly, to the advantage of the heirs but not that of the resident slaves, Nelson seems to have looked after the farms more closely than the average executor, for under his guardianship levels of salable surpluses increased. Gross revenues per hand in sterling constant value from field crops alone rose from about £12 in the early 1760s to over £18 between 1769 and 1771. These were higher returns than most large planters had achieved in the 1750s (indeed, Carter Burwell had averaged only £10 10s. a hand between 1740 and 1755) and were equal to or better than those most resident owners managed to get in the late 1760s and early 1770s.

Nelson engineered such high returns in part because, like some other large tidewater planters of the period, he paid close attention to exploiting the labor of all the slaves year-round and more often assigned tasks according to gender. The men, for example, cut trees, plowed the fields in the fall and again in the spring, handled the heaviest tasks during the wheat and tobacco harvests, plowed under weeds in the cornfields early in the summer, and put in the wheat in the fall. The women and younger children worked alongside the men in planting the tobacco and corn but often toiled in a separate gang when they hoed the tobacco and corn, manured the fields, put up fences, grubbed out brush from newly cleared fields, and cleaned up pastures. Very likely Nelson required more night work from everyone, such as shucking corn and tying up hands of tobacco, and increased off-season tasks as well. Some activities geared especially to the town market, such as cutting firewood, could be done by the men in the winter. Others, like making butter, drew more women into market production. Here Nelson recruited overseers' wives to supervise dairying and paid the couples a share of the butter the

wives and the slave women made. By the mid-1760s the estate was producing butter on a level equivalent to that of a middling-size Pennsylvania dairy producing for the Philadelphia market in the mid-nineteenth century. Some of the slave women thus acquired new domestic skills usually reserved for whites, while overseers' wives gained an opportunity to supplement family income through production for market.

The shifting demographic makeup of the Carter's Grove slaves surely affected Nelson's management decisions, as it may also have influenced Carter Burwell's strategies toward the end of his life. The younger adult workers were all native-born African Americans, and the creoles' greater command of the English language and greater familiarity with white ways may have made Burwell and then Nelson more confident about their willingness and ability to learn new skills, to accept the addition of more new crops in the annual agricultural cycle, to manage more responsibilities like huckstering produce in town on their own, and generally to adapt more readily to change. Often the economic opportunities that local urban markets afforded must also have meshed with an increasing need to make fuller use of those slaves too old or too young for heavy field work.

Starting in 1771, when Nathaniel Burwell II had turned twenty-one and began active management of the estate, the Carter's Grove slaves had to adapt to the demands of a young and inexperienced owner and, by the end of the next year, to those of a new mistress as well. Nathaniel's first wife, Susannah Grymes Burwell (1752-1788), like most of the Burwell brides, brought a cash dowry rather than slaves to her marriage. She and his second wife, Lucy Page Burwell, seem to have concerned themselves only with running the household, hardly surprising since both bore, many children. Barely twenty when she wed, Susannah Burwell was faced with managing her new domain with the help of older domestics who had become accustomed to her mother-in-law's ways, and some of whom had then worked for assorted temporary masters and mistresses in Williamsburg. The Carter's Grove domestics probably trained the young couple in the ways a white gentry household should operate.

Nathaniel Burwell, directly or through William Graves, his general manager, supervised the work of most of the slaves. He was the sort of man who always put a high priority on the welfare of his own family. While accepting the public duties expected of one of his rank, he never sought a prominent public role in the increasingly turbulent times. Perhaps managing his estate and raising the sixteen children he fathered were enough. Eventually Nathaniel acquired a reputation among his peers as it "one of the most skilful managers in the country, and of untainted integrity." What kind of existence this meant for the slaves is unclear.

Burwell embarked on his career as a great planter with a firm determination to increase estate revenues and to effect general improvements on all his farms. These now included both the older tidewater quarters in James City and York Counties and newer farms in the west in distant Frederick and Prince William Counties. He started out by turning the home farm into a specialized unit geared to the comfortable living of its owners and to the production of specialized crops that required more supervision or expertise than an ordinary overseer could give. Upon his marriage in 1772, most of the hired domestics returned to Carter's Grove. There Burwell also concentrated the artisans, carters, and stock of horses. By 1774 Nathaniel had stopped growing tobacco at the Grove and raised only enough corn for plantation use. Instead, he ordered the slaves to

grow more wheat and large quantities of oats to feed his horses, along with some other small grains. He may also have added improved meadows from which hay was cut for home consumption and for sale. In 1774 the Carter's Grove slaves were tending about 125 acres each year: fifty acres in corn, about thirty-three acres each in wheat and oats, and lesser amounts in barley, peas, and hay. Other Burwell cousins were pursuing a similar course. In 1769 Nathaniel's cousin Lewis of Fairfield, for example, seeking to adopt English-style agricultural improvements based on small grains and pasture, employed Robert Mountain, an English farmer who had earlier worked in New Jersey, for his expertise in raising grain and fattening livestock. And by the early 1760s Lewis IV of Kingsmill, neighboring planter Philip Lightfoot (who had married James Burwell I's widow), and William Nelson were all experimenting with clover meadows.

Such reallocations of the workforce usually have been interpreted as an indulgent shift on the part of the owners from production to consumption, but this scenario is only partly borne out from the evidence of similar operations in the 1780s and 1790s. The handful of very large planters who exempted their home plantation laborers from regular staple crop production did increase the complement of domestic servants, stable hands, ornamental gardeners, and the like to some extent. But more significantly, they redirected most of the former field laborers into long-run improvement projects like replacing traditional temporary worm fences with more permanent (and hopefully less resource-consuming) barriers such as hedges and banks, draining periodically waterlogged fields with a series of permanent ditches, improving storage facilities and housing on both the home farm and outlying quarters, creating and maintaining self-sustaining low-ground meadows, and developing better strains of livestock which could be achieved only with constant tending. Some of the former field hands on the home farm also served as a critical floating temporary workforce who could cut and secure larger crops of small grains than the regular quarter laborers could manage, as well as assist in weeding overgrown cornfields and get in tobacco harvests suddenly threatened by an early frost.

Perhaps anticipating the trade stoppages that growing political difficulties with England would bring, Nathaniel Burwell began to shift more labor into locally tradable products. He continued to make tobacco at Foaces and New Quarter, though in decreasing quantities, and pitched larger crops of corn and wheat. On each of these quarters, the hands worked about 125 acres a year, seventy to eighty acres in corn, twenty in wheat, and twenty-four in tobacco. They also produced surplus pork, beef, wool, cider, and butter. In 1772 Nathaniel built a new plantation mill, and by 1775 he was selling wheat, flour, and cornmeal to rural neighbors and townsfolk in Williamsburg and Yorktown. The grain came mostly from his own farms or was purchased from a few local planters; his was not a large-scale merchant mill geared to the export trade.

The Burwells survived the Revolution better than did many other large Chesapeake slave-owning families, whose heads suffered declining fortunes through some combination of preoccupation with military service and politics, bad management, and sheer bad luck. Whenever masters fell on hard times, their slaves suffered disproportionately. Material hardships, forced migrations, and sales that widely separated family members became increasingly common in tidewater Virginia as the war wore on. Bankrupt planters first mortgaged and then sold off slaves. Many local slave owners moved their wives and children and most of their workers farther west to inland quarters where there was greater safety from British raiders and less chance for slaves to escape to

the enemy in response to promises of freedom. While some slaves ran away during the temporary chaos that always ensued when British soldiers or sailors appeared in the area, many others remained on the quarters, frightened and uncertain. Periodically throughout the war British raiders passed through the Burwell plantations, and in 1781 so did units of the American army, the Virginia militia, and their French allies en route to Yorktown. So too did strange slaves on the run; a man from New York, for example, was taken up near Nathaniel Burwell's mill in the spring of 1782.

Burwell, in contrast to many of his neighbors and his cousins at Kingsmill and in Isle of Wight, chose to ride out the war at home, always keeping a sharp eye open for new opportunities. He further curtailed tobacco crops, which he no longer could be sure of selling, beginning in 1776. His crop allocations later in the war are uncertain, for Nathaniel stopped paying his overseers in shares between 1778 and 1781, but it is likely he planted little tobacco, concentrating instead on surer things. Although imported goods were scarce and expensive throughout most of the Chesapeake during the war, Burwell's location near the entrance to the bay guaranteed him first chance at whatever came in. Access to imported necessities also meant that he could keep the slaves working most of the time at things that would turn a profit, not just something to make do or to get by. Obtaining enough salt to preserve meat, for example, was surely a problem, but he managed to buy it through 1777. By the end of that year he directed his slaves to begin distilling salt from James River water, but only enough for plantation use. Unlike most other large Chesapeake slave owners, Burwell also managed to lay hands on sufficient cloth to clothe the slaves. Before the war few local whites were spinning and weaving for wages; in 1771 and 1772 Nathaniel hauled surplus wool from the peninsula farms west to Frederick County in order to sell it. In 1775 he tried growing some cotton and probably assigned some old slave women and younger girls to spinning that and the plantation's wool. However, his accounts show no sign of the all-out effort, so evident on plantations farther up the bay, to make most or all of the coarse cloth required for home use.

So long as Williamsburg remained the state's capital, the town market was Burwell's first recourse. Nathaniel sold large amounts of meat, fodder, meal, flour, cider, butter, and milk to urban tavern keepers and professionals. In 1776 and 1777 he sold most of the flour his mill ground to two commercial bakers. He began using bran, a by-product of milling, to fatten extra hogs. Responding to an increased demand for firewood, Burwell had his slave men cut down so much timber that one suspects his farms may have been seriously depleted of cover by the end of the war. In 1776 alone the slaves carried into town over two thousand cartloads of firewood, worth over 475 sterling constant value, most of it sold to the state government. Burwell also traded in whiskey, suddenly in great demand as supplies of West Indian rum dried up. He built a distillery in Frederick County in 1776 and by the next year was receiving regular shipments back east. This he retailed, along with locally made cider, in town and at his mill. His gross revenues for 1776 from the tidewater farms exceeded £1,000 sterling constant value, exclusive of the value of foodstuffs consumed on the home farm and quarters. The removal of the state capital from Williamsburg to Richmond must have been a blow, and indeed, Nathaniel's accounts suggest that sales of butter, wood, and fodder declined considerably in 1780 and 1781 when many of his best customers moved away.

The arrival of the French army in 1781 for the campaign against Cornwallis at Yorktown helped to offset these losses, and Burwell was able to sell food and whiskey to

officers and commissary agents for welcome French gold. By 1782 the remaining residents of Williamsburg resumed regular purchases of flour, whiskey, meat, and wood. Williamsburg's mental hospital, on whose board of governors Burwell served, became an additional customer. From firewood alone Burwell grossed between £130 and £150 sterling constant value annually between 1782 and 1784, and the whiskey business also continued brisk. Although Burwell was surely pleased with this peacetime revival of the local produce market, the accompanying postwar reopening of transatlantic tobacco markets promised more lucrative opportunities and, indeed, a rare chance to reap windfall profits from an alluring substance that had been for some years scarce and dear in most European markets.

Overall Nathaniel Burwell's family appears to have suffered remarkably little from the war. Although they could not count on making much from tobacco while hostilities lasted, until the exceptional year of 1781 they could rely on continued sales of grain, firewood, livestock products, and liquor to Williamsburg and Yorktown residents, markets more augmented than curtailed by the conflict. Consequently, the Carter's Grove slaves did not have to worry, as did many others, that their owner's declining fortunes or wartime misfortunes might result in the sale of some family members. In addition, the Burwells usually could buy imported cloth and even for a time could get salt, despite acute shortages elsewhere. Their workers probably did not suffer the shortages of clothing, shoes, salt, and medicines that many bondpeople living farther inland endured during the war.

Even at nearby Kingsmill, where both father and son were in economic and political trouble, the slaves appear to have undergone greater material hardships. A Kingsmill man who ran off in 1779, for example, wore a homespun shirt, patched homespun breeches, and a short jacket without sleeves or buttons which he fastened with a lace, clear evidence of a shortage of cloth and reduced clothing issues. Finally, while many area planters suffered heavy losses to the British in 1781, there is no evidence of enemy depredations at Carter's Grove. Legend has it that Banastre Tarleton occupied the farm that spring, and indeed, recent archaeological excavations uncovered a brass insignia with his family crest in the vegetable garden. But if the enemy did raid the farm, Burwell apparently had ample warning. His accounts suggest no significant damage, and none of the slaves chose or were able to join the British forces. Instead, it was the American army that in 1781 seized corn from Foaces Quarter and from the mill, and the Virginia assembly later compensated Burwell for the loss.

The Burwell family records reveal very little about how the Carter's Grove slaves coped with daily life during the Revolutionary War, nor anything of what they thought of these events. Throughout the South, in the wake of the Stamp Act crisis of 1765, racial tensions had become more strained. As white colonists began to pursue public debate about the meaning of slavery and freedom for free property holders, enslaved African Americans began to hope for some alteration in their condition. Since many of the Carter's Grove domestics worked in Williamsburg households between 1765 and 1771 and other hands carted grain and produce into the town at least once a week from the mid-1760s on, the Carter's Grove community had ready access to current ideas and news and came into contact with literate town slaves and free blacks. Thus, their political education may have begun almost as soon as that of their owners.

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As tensions between the colonists and their British rulers escalated in 1774, the possibility that slaves might also choose armed rebellion increased dramatically. In the spring of 1775, Williamsburg's mayor reported widespread rumors that a local slave revolt was imminent. By May, Governor Dunmore was threatening to arm his and other slaves and to "declare Freedom to the slaves and reduce the City of Williamsburg to Ashes" if local whites continued to foment disorder in the town. By fall the embattled Dunmore, who had first left the capital for the safety of a British ship and later was conducting raids along the James, issued a proclamation promising freedom to any servants or slaves of the opposing rebel faction who would join the army. A military defeat in December, followed the next spring by an outbreak of smallpox decimating the perhaps one thousand slaves who had reached Dunmore's ships, discouraged others from pursuing this possible path to freedom. Although none of the Burwell slaves are known to have cast their lot with Dunmore, they likely knew some who did.

Everywhere in the South slaves followed the progress of the war and "fully appreciated its implications for their own lives." At Carter's Grove there could be no doubt about the outcome; the deciding battle at Yorktown was fought only a few miles away. But even before the war began, the egalitarian political philosophy underpinning the whites' revolution had reached some of the Burwell quarters, and by the war's end, ideas of liberty and equality were surely widely diffused. While almost all of the Burwell slaves were likely illiterate, the transforming power of the revolutionary ideology grounded in universal natural rights could not be confined to the educated and the free.

With the return of peace, tidewater Chesapeake planters turned their energies to recouping their fortunes and making up for economic opportunities absent during the war. This was no easy task, for most found their workers increasingly discontented with their lot and disturbingly insubordinate. Slaves were loath to relinquish the greater control over the work pace that many had won during the unsettled war years. And even ordinary field hands were coming to believe that they, too, had a right to freedom. Masters and overseers alike faced at best increasing daily grumbling and discontent.

Whatever the atmosphere among his own workers, Nathaniel Burwell again turned his energies to tobacco. He began increasing production in the early 1780s, and by 1789 the field hands were making crops as large as those set out before the war. By 1787 revenues per hand from tobacco, sterling constant value, again equaled those of the 1760s. Presumably he cut back some side activities once the laborers returned to full-scale tobacco cropping, but Burwell also may have further increased work requirements. Foaces and New Quarter continued to be highly productive unties because Nathaniel maximized profits there by carefully regulating the number of workers. From the mid-1780s well into the nineteenth century, between thirty and forty adult slaves (about equal numbers of men and women in the 1780s) worked at the two quarters. Young children lived with their parents, but the older children were likely sent west, and men and women too old to work the fields were transferred to Carter's Grove. Tax lists for 1783 through 1786 record a larger and more diverse slave population on the home farm. The forty-three adults and twenty-six children living there in one or more of these years included field hands, domestics, carters, carpenters, gardeners, and old men and women.

Burwell also began renting more land to tenants, and this decision brought about a significant change in the social composition at Carter's Grove and on the adjacent quarters. During Nathaniel's minority four white families had regularly rented tenements. All died or moved on by the early 1770s, and at first Burwell seems to have paid little attention to rental property. Income from rent doubtless became increasingly attractive during the war as other sources of revenue dried up; many other large tidewater planters let more small farms during the war than they had before. Burwell began renting lots in 1779, and by 1782 he had fourteen tenants, many of whom stayed at least into the 1810s.

Burwell's accounts do not indicate the size of the rental tracts or the improvements—dwellings, outbuildings, fences, or orchards—that were on them. Nathaniel let the properties for one year at a time, the rent coming due at the end of the year. Each of the tenants paid either £3 or £5 a year. Three pounds probably bought the use of a house and perhaps two to three acres of land, enough for a garden and pasture for a cow. A yearly rent of £5 likely included another ten or twelve acres on which the tenant could raise enough corn to feed his or her family.

Burwell apparently paid for the initial construction of the rented dwellings and later assumed responsibility for their repair. Between 1777 and 1789, for example, he paid Humphrey Harwood, a local building contractor, for plastering the interiors of several of the tenants' houses and for building or repairing chimney. The dwellings were likely one- or two-room wood structures either laid directly on the ground or underpinned with brick. Most of the chimneys were also built of wood, with hearths and lining of brick to reduce the chance of their catching fire.

Four of the tenants were white shoemakers who paid their rent by making shoes for the Burwell slaves. They, along with other white families who rented from Burwell, were younger members of small planter or tenant farmer families who had lived near Carter's Grove for several generations.

More surprisingly, at least seven of the tenant families—and probably several more—were free blacks. With the exception of Old Tom, who may have been a freed slave, and a tenant of 1803 identified only as “a negro man,” most of the free black tenants were descended from families who had also lived in lower York County for nearly a century, but not on Burwell lands. These free blacks seem to have lived a hand-to-mouth existence, paying small portions of their rents across the year whenever they came into a little cash. Three of them, Israel Olvis (or Alvis) and Anthony and John Roberts, along with Daniel Hughes, a white, were part-time watermen who paid a portion of their rent in oysters for Burwell's table and in oyster shells that were burned to make lime for repairing plantation buildings. A fourth black tenant, William Roberts, had been apprenticed to a white bricklayer in 1754. By 1801-3 six adult male members of the Roberts family—Anthony, Godfrey, James, John, Richard, and Robert—rented lots from Burwell. In addition, a free black woman, Betty Armfield (or Amphill), also rented a house from 1782 to at least 1813. In 1800 Betty, who was a midwife as well as a farmer, was described as a “bright mulatto,” age sixty-six, five feet six inches tall, with long gray hair, who had been born locally of free parents.

How and why these arrangements developed is unclear. Burwell apparently offered the blacks secure homes—so long as they paid their rent on time—while getting income in cash, produce, and services from parcels of marginal land he probably otherwise would not have used. Between 1782 and 1785 these tenants paid nearly £40

sterling constant value annually in rent. However, Burwell surely could have secured white tenants who would likely have been in a better position to pay than the free blacks. Had he chosen to manumit his own slaves, Burwell's decision to rent to local free blacks would make some sense. Since he did not free any of his slaves, his motives remain a mystery. The presence of so many free blacks surely must have increased the slaves' discontent with their lot, and one would suppose that like many other planters, the Burwells would worry about the free blacks harboring runaways or receiving stolen goods from family slaves. Evidence from the York County records suggests that free blacks and white laborers and tenant farmers sometimes traded goods and services and shared occasional leisure hours together. Slaves on the Burwell plantations surely also bartered with the free tenants and perhaps joined from time to time in their recreations and communal celebrations.

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The combined evidence from the demographic models and the particular enumerations of the King's Creek slaves, as well as the more generalized accounts, all lead to the same conclusion. The origins of most adults on the Burwell plantations shifted quickly from African to creole between about 1760 and 1770. By then almost all of the surviving Africans were either rapidly aging or already exceptionally old. The respect and authority accorded elders in West African and also in African-American societies make it likely that these older men and women continued to influence and shape tidewater slave community life to a greater degree than their numbers alone might suggest. But by the 1790s almost all had joined their ancestors in another world. Thereafter, their multiple African heritages would be reflected in the evolving culture only in the selected manners, modes of living, and values that their children and grandchildren recollected and retold to younger generations.

Before the Revolution most of the creole adults were first-generation African Virginians, although some who descended from the Bacon-Burwell group could trace their American ancestry further back to African grandparents and occasionally great-grandparents. By the time the war ended, the youngest cohort of adults included increasing numbers of second-generation creoles. All of these people, who were forming families and raising the upcoming generation, had no direct knowledge of Africa and had experienced life much differently than their elders. To take an extreme example, recall the man who had grown up at Kingsmill in the middle of the eighteenth century with an African-born father and a creole mother. As a child he had huddled in fear with his brothers and sisters whenever his father chose to "sing he country" in an unknown language and to dance and chant in a manner which also seemed to them "outlandish." Inevitably, this boy, and other creole children who grew up in similar situations, did not acquire or intentionally discarded some of the elements of African culture that their parents, often referred to as "salt-water negroes," retained, such as language. They transformed and reinterpreted others, such as body language, foodways, and music. However oppressive the slave system continued to be, these people had not experienced forced transportation across the Atlantic. In addition, while growing up in Virginia, most creoles surely had also absorbed and adopted more elements of Anglo-American culture than had many of their parents. With different perceptions of experienced history, large

and small, and blessed with the energy of relative youth, this generation was likely more open to creative innovation and change, and also to the multiplying expressive possibilities afforded by shifting local fashions in dress, other material goods, music, dance, and the like.

The creole slaves, like their African-born forebears, continued to have limited and highly constrained choices. However, the rules that governed interactions between slaves and slave owners and other controlling whites—or in the terminology favored by some contemporary historical archaeologists, “the context of power”—also changed with the emergence of a creole majority. Early Virginia slave owners like Lewis Burwell, who grew up in the 1640s and 1650s when few blacks lived in Virginia, probably had little contact with black servants or slaves when they were young. Although Robert Carter more likely encountered some black people in his early childhood in the 1660s, he spent most of his impressionable adolescent years in England. Later in life, neither Burwell nor Carter seems to have had much understanding of, or sympathy for, the culturally alien men, women, and children whom they purchased as heritable property. In the absence of some special personal relationship, they, like most other contemporary whites, surely tended to privilege creoles, who at the least were more-fluent in English, over “outlandish” Africans with whom they could sometimes barely communicate.

In contrast, their children, born around the turn of the century, and to an even greater extent their grandchildren and great-grandchildren grew up in households where most of the domestic workers were black slaves, who sometimes wielded considerable authority over youngsters of all races. In their earlier years the whites, especially the boys, shared playtime with black children. These white children came to learn (and at times to speak) African-American English as a normal part of growing up. Although the modes of interaction changed drastically once putative masters and mistresses became aware of their future positions, all entered into the altered relationships with a much more intimate knowledge of each other’s individual character and ways of daily living. Later both would take some advantage, however unequal, of this greater familiarity. Creole slave owners might turn their knowledge of private relations within the slave community to devastating advantage, using threats of family separation to enforce plantation discipline. Increasing family responsibilities clearly diminished available options among the slaves. Mothers were unwilling to desert their children, and fathers more constrained to choose seeming accommodation over overt resistance. But creole slaves sometimes also could employ their knowledge of their owner’s customs and social mores, as well as of individual quirks and foibles, to avoid punishment, to secure minor privileges, and to subvert plantation operations in ways that could not be easily detected or countered.

The situation of the ever-diminishing numbers of African-born men and women—within the slave community and also within the overall plantation power structure—likely also changed in the last third of the eighteenth century. These older people posed much less of a threat to plantation discipline than did the by then more numerous, younger, and physically stronger creole adults. Some small measure of respect for the elders’ age and experience began to color personal interchanges between master and slave, and some of the Burwell owners may have cherished the links to their own pasts that these elders represented and to some extent transmitted. This may have been particularly true for many of the Burwell men who came of age in the first three-quarters

of the century, for most could recall only childhood memories of fathers (and of some mothers), many of whom had died soon after they were born.

In addition, as older slaves became too weak or infirm to keep pace with the majority of younger workers, they gained some exemption from dawn-to-dusk plantation regimens. Although many were likely granted superannuated status only after they were too sick or too feeble to take much advantage of leisure time, some few at last could pursue hunting, trapping, and gardening, use any craft skills they possessed, and practice traditional modes of healing in ways of their own choosing. That these were often African ways is evidenced by the fact that in the last third of the eighteenth century slave owners tended to distinguish “old Africans” from other aging slaves. This greater measure of control over their own time and labor at the end of their lives, as well as a belated grudging modicum of respect from their masters, reinforced their position in the quarters and surely enhanced the influence of the last African migrants within the local “culture world.”

Consequently, for a variety of reasons, some shaped by specific developments on particular plantations and others more characteristic of tidewater populations in general, one would expect to find evidence of increasing cultural change and diminishing African influences in the tidewater Chesapeake beginning in the 1760s and 1770s and accelerating by the 1780s and 1790s. This does not mean that *individuals* were necessarily reshaping their cultural identities, but rather that the makeup of the *group* had profoundly changed, with evolving creole preferences coming suddenly to the forefront.

If the later eighteenth-century Chesapeake had indeed been a closed world for both blacks and whites, charting the course of their shared cultural worlds and of separate developments within the two coexistent colonial societies might be possible. However, external events in the last quarter of the century brought profound change to almost every aspect of daily life and social relations. These events transcended individual contests of power between master and slave and diverted the course of local history into new and unanticipated directions.

The American Revolution upset the established order, at first in specific ways in particular localities but eventually in fundamental ways throughout the new American Republic. Its egalitarian rhetoric provided slaves everywhere with a potent ideological justification for protesting and resisting bondage and for a time led privileged whites to reconsider—and sometimes to reject—their justifications for holding human property. The rapid expansion of geographic territory and the seldom-noticed abolition of special property rights—especially entail—that removed restraints on slave sales that had previously inadvertently protected slave communities shortly overwhelmed humanitarian considerations. The result was a brutal, forced transplantation of African Americans throughout the limits of the new Republic that pales in the levels of suffering it created only in comparison to the initial forced removal across the Atlantic. The Revolution altered some of the basic rules of community organization, and westward migration partially undermined the internal institutional arrangements essential for fostering and sustaining separate cultural developments.

There were also incremental changes in attitudes toward material goods, as well as some real alterations in lifestyles and living standards in the last half of the century. From the 1750s Chesapeake colonists were inundated with an unprecedented flow of nonessential consumer goods, including a wide variety of textiles, ceramic dining wares,

cutlery, mirrors, and timepieces, some of which free families, middling and poor as well as rich, eagerly embraced, for reasons of both practicality and social utility. Such goods began to appear on slave quarters as well, although there is as yet little consensus as to how or why the slaves acquired them.

Across the same years widespread changes in religious expression and belief accompanied the spread of evangelical Protestantism in the Chesapeake backcountry and, to a lesser extent, the tidewater. These developments began to restructure spiritual and material life among the enslaved, the slaveholding elite, and less-privileged free commoners.

Two centuries later there seems no way to disentangle the intertwined consequences of demographic change within local tidewater slave communities from the effects of transforming spiritual, political, and material events and processes that originated far outside these “relatively separate, embryonic communities” but profoundly altered slave societies throughout the American South in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The case for an expanding and relatively stable residential community toward the end of the eighteenth century is much stronger than is clear evidence of a coherent culture, either on the various Burwell plantations or more widely shared with other African Americans on neighboring plantations. Neither documentary nor archaeological records reveal much about the specific elements of African culture that the Burwell family slaves may have preserved and passed on to later generations, about the extent to which they adapted various elements of Anglo-American culture over time, or about the multiple ways in which they combined elements of each into a distinctive creole African-American culture. We are left trying to make some larger sense out of tantalizing but incomplete pieces of evidence of changes in coping strategies, involvement in Christian rituals (although not necessarily in Christian beliefs), choice and significance of names, degrees of autonomy and control in economic matters and health care, and living conditions on various of the Burwell plantations. Much of this evidence cannot be dated very precisely and so cannot be fashioned into a coherent chronological narrative. Nor does it address broad issues of cultural evolution systematically.

The available evidence does suggest that between about 1740 and 1770 Virginia-born Burwell slaves developed ways for coping with their enslaved condition that differed from those of their parents and grandparents. They put more effort into creating and maintaining some autonomous private life within the quarter community and into devising ways to survive as comfortably as possible within the institution of slavery. Hopes for freedom—either by escaping from the colony or by acquiring free status within it—dimmed with each passing year. Almost none of the Burwell slaves ran away for any extended period of time between the mid-1740s and the mid-1760s. Instead, in the middle of the century, the creoles built on a greater understanding of white culture in general and the psychologies of their masters in particular. They developed collective methods of resistance, such as controlling the work pace, and also fashioned public personas that afforded both some measure of protection against discipline and some individual advantage within the system.

We can gain insights into these various adaptations from the descriptions that several of the Burwells gave of slaves born in the 1730s and 1740s who ran away for extended periods of time when faced with new and unacceptable changes in the 1760s

and 1770s. Although the advertisements for runaways only provide information about a few slaves who were likely more privileged and probably more independent than the majority, they are the sole source that reveals anything about the outward behavior or inward motivations of individual slaves. Jack, for example, lived on the Burwell quarters in Isle of Wight County. He was born about 1736 and in 1771 at age thirty-five appeared to his master a “talkative, artful, and very saucy Fellow.” His wife, Venus, three years younger, had worked as a domestic in a gentry house for five years and had mastered enough of white ways so that her owner described her as “very smooth tongued.” Kingsmill Joe, born about 1743, ran off in 1778 when, like Jack, he was in his mid-thirties. In contrast to Jack and Venus, Joe usually displayed “a down look,” spoke in “a rough voice,” and “appeared to be very humble.” Another Kingsmill slave, Johnny—who also used the name Jack Ash—probably resembled Jack and Venus more than Joe. He employed deception when he ran off in 1768, hoping to escape from Virginia by ship, or so his master, Lewis Burwell IV, speculated. “To favour his making his escape out of the colony, as he might think I should suspect he had drowned himself,” Johnny acquired an extra set of clothes and left behind at the river's edge those he had been wearing. Another Johnny, probably born at Fairfield around 1728, lived at Carter's Grove from about 1740 to the 1760s. He was then sent to a frontier quarter in Frederick County from which he ran away repeatedly. He appeared “a cunning sensible fellow” like Johnny from Kingsmill often used an alias, John Turner. This man managed to travel freely through the colony in 1768, convincing a gullible magistrate in Middlesex County of the validity of the forged pass he had somehow obtained. These examples illustrate the broad range of coping strategies the slaves employed: from feigned humility to brash assertiveness and from rather naive deception to a sophisticated understanding of the power of writing, perhaps even extending to acquiring the ability to write.

There is ample evidence of the Burwell slave community's increasing involvement in Christian rituals across the eighteenth century. Yet the extent to which some members were also adopting and possibly adapting Christian beliefs is less certain. Most historians have emphasized the quite small proportions of the enslaved population who surviving records suggest were baptized into the established church, as well as the firmly documented resistance of both the majority of slaves and slaveholders to Anglican missionary efforts, each for quite different reasons. One recent survey concluded: “After nearly three-quarters of a century of itineracy, Christian missionaries had little to show for their efforts. Some slaves had been baptized and some had become communicants, but the mass of slaves were still [in the words of a late eighteenth-century observer] ‘as great strangers to Christianity, and as much under the influence of Pagan darkness, idolatry and superstition, as they were at their first arrival from Africa.’”

Both African-born and creole slaves had abundant reason to reject a foreign religion that preached total obedience to their masters and unquestioning acceptance of perpetual bondage. Moreover, most recent historians argue, Anglican forms of worship could have held little appeal for either forced African migrants or their locally born descendants. Services were conducted in unwelcoming, formally designed buildings where influential white parishioners occupied center stage. Black worshipers either had no assigned place to sit or were relegated to a section set aside for them in the rear that underscored their inferior status and could accommodate only limited numbers. A formal liturgy, devoid of compelling emotional content, was conducted by staid educated

ministers. Reinforcing the social message conveyed by setting and service, the sermons declared that it was the slaves' divinely sanctioned obligation to accept their station, however involuntary, in the local hierarchy and their inescapable duty to give unquestioning obedience to those who claimed dominion over their lives and persons. The established church catered almost exclusively to the needs and expectations of well-connected parishioners. Slaveholding gentlemen dominated local parish vestries that regulated clerical appointments and clerical salaries, and ministers had little choice but to accommodate their views to those of the men who controlled their fortunes.

Although some Anglican clergymen in the Chesapeake transcended the unflattering stereotypes that prevailed even among their contemporaries—ill-trained, ineffectual, sometimes lazy, often greedy, and not infrequently dissolute—even the most energetic could seldom minister effectively to all potential parishioners living isolated lives in large, thinly populated rural parishes. Even the best intentioned could not wiggle around inherent contradictions between Christian doctrines that posited the equality of all souls and a legal system that mandated perpetual bondage for some. In the end, the clergy had no alternative but to uphold the established order.

Despite the fact that beginning in the 1660s both the Virginia and Maryland legislatures repeatedly passed laws affirming that conversion to Christianity in no way changed a slave's hereditary servile status, until about 1740 slave owners continued to worry that a slave's conversion might compromise their property rights. Concomitantly, from the 1660s into the 1730s, many slaves retained the opposing hope that acceptance of the master's religion might offer a route to eventual freedom. Indeed, in 1730 a rumor spread that local authorities were suppressing an order from England to free all Christian slaves, and several hundred blacks living in the Norfolk area planned a widespread, narrowly averted revolt. Thereafter, more systematic surveillance seems to have eliminated any opportunities for tidewater slaves to orchestrate large-scale collective resistance. But for some time thereafter many local slave owners continued to oppose any missionary initiatives that might entail gatherings of more than a few bondpeople, fearing "the Consequences of so many meeting together at one time & one place, might be dangerous."

Thus, the record for the Burwell slave community is both unexpected and difficult to interpret. Between 1721 and 1761 the baptisms of 126 slaves from the Burwell plantations in Gloucester County are entered in the Abingdon Parish church register (their owners were Nathaniel Burwell I and subsequent Lewis Burwells of Fairfield). A few of those baptized were adults, forty-four were children, and an even larger number were of an unspecified age. Registers for Bruton Parish (including the Kingsmill and Bray quarters, some of those attached to Carter's Grove—but not the home plantation—and, officially, none of the King's Creek farms) document a similar story. From 1747, when slave baptisms were first noted in the Bruton register, to 1768 (after which black baptisms were not systematically recorded), 73 Kingsmill slaves, both adults and infants, were baptized at Bruton church, as were 40 from Carter's Grove and Foaces Quarter, and 2 adults from King's Creek. Seven more came either from Kingsmill or Carter's Grove. These totals reflect fewer births than we have reason to suppose occurred over these years at Fairfield, Kingsmill, and Carter's Grove. Nevertheless, for the late 1740s and early 1750s, when the two parish registers cover all three of these plantations, the number of baptisms is substantial—between ten and twenty-seven a year. Moreover, the pattern of

baptisms on the Burwell plantations differs markedly from that found on many other neighboring farms and in nearby households in Williamsburg where few or none of the resident slaves chose or were allowed to profess a new faith or to baptize their children in it.

In contrast to the prevailing view that most slaveowners in the southern colonies were largely indifferent or openly hostile to Anglican missionary efforts among slaves early in the century, Anthony Parent recently has argued that large gentry planters in Virginia turned to Christianity as another means for controlling their bondspeople. When in the 1720s they encountered mounting difficulties controlling increasingly numerous, culturally alien, and rebellious black workers, "Christianizing the slaves was part of a larger attempt to create an acculturated and more servile labor force." Parent concluded that a change of mind among gentry planters, rather than laws (more often ignored than observed) or ministerial zeal, best accounts for the growing numbers of slave baptisms in most Virginia parishes. Certainly various members of the Burwell family appear to have encouraged their bondspeople to attend Anglican services, and they seem to have allowed adults who wanted to become Christians time off to learn the basic catechism that Anglican ministers considered essential for adult baptism. Some may also have stood as sponsors for baptized infants. To the extent that fairly regular church attendance and frequent service in the offices of churchwarden or vestryman provide evidence of a wider commitment to Anglicanism, the Burwell men might be judged committed churchmen. Aside from the numerous baptisms of slaves from their home farms and quarters, however, the owners left no statements about their true intentions.

In the first third of the century, Anglican ministers (and perhaps Anglican masters and mistresses) concentrated their efforts on Virginia-born slaves, considering Africans too "indocile." In addition, as one minister confessed, the Africans "understand not our Language nor me their's." Doubtless many of the African-born clung to traditional African spiritual beliefs and religious practices. They were probably unable, however, to maintain coherent religious systems without a supporting social system or the guidance of priests and wise men. Some of the beliefs they likely retained were those that Olaudah Equiano emphasized: belief in a single creator who lived in the sun and governed human events, transmigration of souls (accepted by some), and the intervention of the dead ("spirits") in the affairs of living friends and relatives. Among his people spirits were honored with libations of food and drink offered before meals and at their graves. A few Burwell bondspeople may have practiced other world religions. The Mandingo, for example, of whom there was at least one at Kingsmill, were Moslems. If any of the slaves came from Angola, they may have embraced Catholicism in their homeland. Not surprisingly then, the first Anglican converts came from the largely creole Gloucester branch.

By 1729 a Williamsburg minister reported to the bishop of London that "the Negroes themselves in our Neighbourhood [including those at Kingsmill and the Bray quarters] are very desirous to become Christians; and in order to it come and give an Account of the Lords prayer, and the Creed and ten Commandments, and so are baptized and frequent the [Bruton] Church; and the Negro children are now commonly baptized." The slaves' reasons for attending catechism and receiving baptism did not always coincide with the aims of the clergy, who hoped, among other things, that they would become better slaves as a consequence of conversion. However, "the greater part," this

minister thought, “little mind the serious part, only are in hopes that they shall meet with so much the more respect, and that some time or other Christianity will help them to their freedom.”

By the middle third of the century, there was a shift in emphasis from conversion and baptism of adults to encouraging primarily the baptism of young children, for whom a profession of Christian belief was not a prerequisite for christening. Clergyman Hugh Jones, for example, argued that baptizing “New Negroes, who have not the least knowledge nor inclination to know and mind our religion, language and customs, but will obstinately persist in their own barbarous ways. . . . [might be] a prostitution of a thing so sacred.” Their children, however, “ought all to be baptized; since it is not out of the power of their masters to take care that they have catechism, and go to church, and not accustom themselves to lie, swear, and steal.” Most adult Africans had proved “indocile” and “obstinately persistent” in traditional beliefs, while many of the more acculturated creole adults had seized equally tenaciously on the most challenging egalitarian implications of Christian doctrine. Consequently, most Virginia slave owners who supposed that religion could have any role in solidifying their heretofore unorthodox social hierarchy concluded that creole children were the only appropriate candidates for instruction in an attenuated creed that preached only acceptance of the inevitable and their duty to obey established authority.

Indeed, at both Carter’s Grove and Kingsmill, baptisms were largely confined to infants rather than to adults by the 1760s. This may have become the general practice several decades earlier, as it was in the neighboring parish of St. Peters. The timing of the change among the Burwell group is uncertain because the Abingdon and Bruton registers do not always indicate the ages of those baptized.

Parish register entries alone do not explain much of the slaves’ experience with Anglican Christianity. The inseparable connections between the established church and the established social order in tidewater Virginia meant that matters of individual faith and conscience were intertwined with contests between slave and master or mistress over larger issues of autonomy and control. After the fact and in the absence of any documentary records that speak to painful internal struggles of faith or morals, these can be abstracted all too readily into a sterile calculus of potential costs and benefits. Although the Burwells indeed may have pursued a strategy of Christianization as one more means of controlling enslaved workers, the slaves, too, were surely making considered choices. If, for example, baptism of slave children became standard practice among area slaveholders and adoption of at least the outward elements of Anglican belief and worship was restricted to a privileged few of the adult slaves, the evidence would reveal more about the religious inclinations of the owners and the aspirations and accommodations of those few domestics in closest contact with the whites than about the religious experience of ordinary enslaved men and women.

However, the record (notably incomplete) is at once less and more revealing. Slave mothers at Fairfield between the 1710s and 1740s, for example, may have had a choice about whether or not their children would be baptized. Their various masters and mistresses began to comply, albeit rather haphazardly, with a law of 1713 that required slave owners to notify parish authorities within twenty days of the birth of every child on their quarters. The Abingdon register notes seventy-two such births at Fairfield between 1714 and 1753, but only twenty-five of these infants were baptized within the following

few months. The birth dates of an additional fourteen children were not recorded, so their age at baptism is uncertain. This group may have included older children whose parents had become Christian converts.

Some aspects of the Christian faith apparently were more appealing initially to enslaved women at Fairfield than to the men. Up to 1750 almost twice as many females were baptized than males. The Abingdon register does not always indicate whether those baptized were infants, older children, or adults, but almost all of the nineteen slaves identified as adults throughout the register were women. These women, perhaps as an outcome of close contact with the owner's family, may have chosen to profess Christian beliefs out of personal conviction, as a protective strategy, or with the hope that conversion to the master's religion might lead to eventual freedom for themselves or their children. Perhaps also they were especially concerned to have their daughters similarly baptized or could exert more influence over the upbringing of their daughters than of their sons. Moreover, the Burwell mistresses may have taken special interest in the spiritual status of their female slaves or have been in a position to influence them more strongly. Another hint that at least one of the parents, more likely the mother, was a practicing Christian is that baptized children, especially those born before 1750, were somewhat more likely than other children on the Burwell quarters to have Biblical names, especially ones taken from the Old Testament....After 1750, when infant baptism became a more standard practice, girls and boys were christened in equal numbers. Subsequent naming patterns show no increased preferences for biblical over common English names through the end of the century, suggesting no pronounced awakening of the spirit on the Burwell quarters.

Many of the slaves at Carter's Grove who chose to attend Christian services seem also to have chosen between churches. Forty-some Carter's Grove blacks, for example, were baptized at the Bruton Parish church in Williamsburg. The home plantation and the outlying quarters were attached to a different parish, Yorkhampton, for which there are no surviving records. The Burwell family appears to have gone either to the main Yorkhampton Parish church in Yorktown or else to the Chiscake Church, a chapel of ease attached to Yorkhampton Parish that was only about two miles from the Grove on the road to Yorktown. Other slaves from Carter's Grove, and perhaps those at New Quarter and King's Creek, may well have been baptized in and later attended one of these Yorkhampton churches. But many of the Carter's Grove people who attended Anglican services, as well as the two men from King's Creek, made the longer journey into Williamsburg, where they could meet with friends or relatives from the neighboring Bray and Kingsmill farms.

Nor did all the adults who chose to profess the Christian religion come from a single occupational or generational group. Some of the Burwell slaves who sought baptism as adults—including Venus, Michael, and Jacob at Kingsmill or Carter's Grove; Juno, Isaac, Hannah, and two Jennys at Kingsmill; Henry at Fairfield; Old Cuffey and Marcus at King's Creek; and George, Mary, Judith, and two women named Jenny from Carter's Grove—may have worked in and around the great houses, but it is unlikely that all were domestic servants. Elizabeth from Foaces Quarter, whose daughter was baptized in 1767, was almost certainly an ordinary field hand. Although many of the professing adults were likely creoles, Marcus at King's Creek was baptized at age twenty-five, twelve years after his forced transportation from West Africa, and Cuffey, an older man

baptized in 1766, was an African migrant who had been in Virginia for at least thirty years.

By the mid-eighteenth century participation in Anglican rituals afforded people from the various Burwell quarters an otherwise rare chance to meet together without fear of their masters or local white slave patrols intervening. “Repairing to and meeting at church to attend divine service” was one of the few occasions for “lawful meetings” recognized in otherwise harshly repressive legislation. On the first Sunday in May 1749, for example, three children from the Carter’s Grove quarters, four from Kingsmill, and four from the adjacent Bray plantation were all baptized at Bruton church; likely many other Burwell workers were present at this christening. Perhaps only blacks witnessed the service; one area minister noted, “As for the negro Children, them I baptize after the Congregation is dismiss’d (that I may give no offence) [to white parishioners].” Some slaves may have garnered material as well as spiritual and social benefits from such gatherings. The Burwells, like the staunch Anglican planter William Lee, who lived at Green Spring plantation just above Jamestown Island not far from Kingsmill, may have promoted the established religion among their slaves by rewarding those who regularly attended Sunday services with incentives to “Make it their interest to do their Duty” similar to those Lee adopted: larger weekly food rations or an annual or twice-annual reward of “an additional shirt, more than the rest.”

While the evidence from the surviving parish registers hints at the possible beginnings of an adaptive and perhaps separate sense of religiosity within the Burwell slave community, the absence of information after the mid-1760s allows only speculation about later developments. Religious awakenings in the 1740s appear to have been confined to areas well to the west or north of the Burwell plantations. By 1771 William Lee of Green Spring reported that “wandering new light preachers from the Northward, have put most of my Negroes crazy with their new light and the New Jerusalem.” Burwell slaves may have attended these and later religious gatherings conducted in and around Williamsburg, often in secret, by black Baptist preachers. Doubtless most of the Burwell slaves who adopted, and over time surely adapted, some elements of their owners’ Anglican Christianity did so for varying, individual reasons. The surviving record is so slight that it seems impossible now to penetrate the pervading silence.

Naming patterns among the Burwell slaves provide a few more bits of evidence about their often forced adoption of one element of Anglo-American culture early in the century and the creative adoptions that preceded and later followed. From the parish registers, account books, wills, inventories, and tax lists of the early 1780s we can identify 964 Burwell slaves who were born on or present at one of the family plantations between 1711 and 1814. The names among this later group show some differences from those found among the York-Gloucester group between 1692 and 1710 and differ also from the list of largely owner-assigned names appearing in Robert Carter’s inventory of 1733.

In the seventeenth century there was no clearly established custom of the country for naming slaves. Masters surely chose names for many of the people they bought or inherited, but others in the Bacon-Burwell group seem to have had the liberty to name themselves. From the outset women apparently had much less bargaining power; with one exception all of the Bacon-Burwell females were accorded English given names. However, over a quarter of the males’ names were of unmistakable African origin, ones

which adult captives managed to retain or which parents were permitted to choose for their sons. Equally telling is that none of the men or boys present before 1711 were saddled with the sorts of classical names or place-names, never used in the free population, that were almost certainly imposed by owners and often were chosen in a chance moment out of whim.

In contrast, by the 1710s and 1720s, slave owners like Robert Carter routinely picked out names for newly arrived Africans and forced the slaves to answer to them. The traumatized captives who disembarked at Corotoman or Fairfield were seldom in any position to bargain over assigned names within a few days of their arrival in Virginia. Likewise, many of the new Africans whom James Burwell I bought between 1711 and 1718—Cato, Caesar, Martius, Juno, and Venus—were victims both of their master's superior power and his recent schooling in the classics. Cato, Caesar, Marcellus, Nero, Paris, and Pompey at Carter's Grove suffered equally from either King Carter's or one of the younger Burwell's classical education.

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While basic shelter remained something of a constant across this period, material conditions in the quarters did improve incrementally from mid to late century in less obvious ways, almost entirely from the slaves' initiatives. At Carter's Grove, where the owner's family lived on the plantation, from 1755 on in a great house, there were more household goods, food, and livestock on hand than at other quarters. As many kinds of European goods became cheaper and more readily available and amenities such as finer fabrics, ceramics, glassware, and mirrors became more widely distributed among white families, one would expect that these things would also begin appearing in slave households. Such goods were becoming so widely available and so much a part of everyday life in ordinary free households that slave owners could not entirely prevent their bondspeople from acquiring some of them. At adjacent Kingsmill, for example, where housing for all the slaves except the domestic servants remained small and spartan across the eighteenth century, by the 1770s and 1780s Burwell field hands had numerous ceramic tablewares including a surprising amount of Chinese porcelain. Archaeologist William Kelso concluded, "House servants and fieldhands were equipped with, or equipped themselves with, a good representative sampling of whatever the owner had on hand."

The slaves acquired such inessentials largely through some combination of recycling, theft, gift, barter, and purchase. As the Burwell slave community grew in numbers and connections increased among those dwelling on the various home farms and quarters, opportunities for movement, sanctioned or not, and for exchange of goods also increased. So too in the third quarter of the eighteenth century did opportunities for making a little money from the sale of poultry or produce raised in free time. Both the various Burwell families and the urban population of Williamsburg afforded slaves new customers for their produce and a greater variety of ways to acquire a broader range of goods. The Burwell owners' redirection of plantation operations away from staple crop production and toward a more diversified output for provisioning local markets unintentionally created conditions that the laborers could turn to their own advantage to develop a separate and increasingly vibrant internal slave economy.

One can get some sense from the Burwell family account books of when, and eventually of how thoroughly, the Carter's Grove slaves took advantage of growing opportunities for petty trade with the master and other neighboring gentry families, and surely also with townspeople, slaves residing on adjacent plantations, and free black and poor white families in the area. The Burwell records are inadequate for tracing the early development of this trade. By the late 1770s and early 1780s, when Nathaniel Burwell II began recording frequent small cash transactions with his bondpeople, it is clear that the slaves were already active and knowledgeable, though still tightly circumscribed, participants in a lively local cash-based trading economy.

This was surely a development that neither Robert ("King") Carter nor even his grandson Carter Burwell envisioned, and one of which they would likely not have approved. Only on rare occasions in the late 1740s and early 1750s did Carter Burwell trust any of his slaves with cash to cover incidental expenses they might incur while traveling or conducting business. The £2. 3d. given to "my Negroes at Shenandoa" in 1745 and 10s. 10d. given to Pompey at Neck of Land in 1749 were exceptional. So were tips of 1s. 3d. paid to "Major Taliaferro's boy" in 1745 and the "governor's coach man" two years later. Burwell also seldom trucked with neighbor's slaves. His accounts record only 7s. 11d. paid to "Potter's Bob" for chickens and ten shillings paid to neighbor William Diggs's blacks for unspecified goods or services. From Carter Burwell's records one would suppose that the slaves seldom if ever managed to trade independently in goods and almost never laid hands on any cash.

Had Lucy Burwell's household accounts survived, however, we might have a somewhat different perspective. The 16s. 1d. Carter Burwell paid to his brother Robert's cook in 1749 and the 3s. 9d. he paid the next year to the Carter's Grove cook to cover her purchases of fowls for the family table are likely the tip of the iceberg. Other period plantation records suggest the beginnings of a regular, owner-sanctioned trade in fowls and eggs between neighborhood slaves and gentry households. The archaeological evidence from Rich Neck and Kingsmill points to the same conclusion: area slaves were acquiring consumer goods and accumulating hard currency by one means or another. Probably the Carter's Grove and Kingsmill workers took advantage of the increasingly frequent trips they made to Williamsburg to deliver or peddle produce for their owner to trade on their own account.

Years of relaxed oversight between Carter Burwell's death and Nathaniel Burwell II's majority likely opened up other opportunities, although executor William Nelson's accounts offer little corroborating evidence. However, even the little suggests much. Would Nelson have handed over cash to Billy, Daniel, Tom, and three unidentified slaves to cover their traveling expenses from Carter's Grove to western quarters on Bull Run in Prince William County or to the Frederick quarters on the Shenandoah if he was not certain that these men already knew the value of a coin and the customary charges they should pay for food, forage, and ferriage along the way? The domestics who were hired out to work in Williamsburg also would have had more opportunities to learn about cash transactions, to earn money by working on their own time, and to collect tips than did those living in the country.

Nathaniel Burwell II's daybooks confirm the extent to which the Carter's Grove slaves became involved in the local economy as the Revolution ended and the relatively sophisticated level of financial knowledge that some had acquired. Between 1775 and

1786 he recorded cash transactions with thirty-four of his own bondsmen and women. Burwell also entrusted cash to Billy and Bristol from King's Creek and to Hugh Nelson's Jack. Almost all of the individuals with whom Nathaniel recorded transactions lived on the home plantation, and most of them were wagoners, millers, artisans, or domestics. Whatever trading networks field workers on outlying quarters developed seem not to have involved many exchanges with the master.

Nathaniel's records provide no more than a glimpse into the home farm workers' trading activities, because he was often absent in the west, and his wives usually handled the housekeeping accounts. From the beginning of their marriage, Nathaniel regularly handed over cash to Susannah to pay for produce and other household goods she purchased from slaves or free peddlers who brought their wares to Carter's Grove. Surely Nathaniel's second wife, Lucy, controlled a similar housekeeping fund, as well as her share of proceeds from the quarter dairies. Susannah's and Lucy's household accounts would likely document an increasing trade between Carter's Grove slaves and others from neighboring farms with the plantation mistress in poultry, eggs, fish and shellfish, fruits, and vegetables.

The master's dealings were not restricted to simple exchanges of a few pence or shillings for produce the slaves sold Burwell or for goods that they bought from him. Hard coin remained in short supply, and Nathaniel sometimes resorted to borrowing money from domestics Nelly, Old Nanny, and Billy to cover small, unexpected household purchases. He also made small loans—usually repaid within a month or two—to Nanny, Sukey, Caesar the barber, and Harry to finance independent purchases. In addition, Burwell regularly trusted some of the men, including Sam, Joe, Tom, and Daniel, with cash to cover their expenses en route when they left the county, sometimes on journeys of several weeks. A few of the slaves began retailing goods for the master, for which the customers paid cash on the spot. Occasionally some of the bondsmen handled several pounds' worth of cash at a time. Amos at Mill Quarter, for example, was selling butter for cash in 1778, and Cyrus collected £5 2s. for cider he marketed in 1783. In addition, in the 1780s, whenever the white miller was absent, miller Gregory collected payments from customers who brought grain to be ground at Burwell's mill or else came to purchase flour, cornmeal, cider, or whisky.

Thus, between the 1740s and 1780s, many of the Burwell slaves had acquired an accurate knowledge of the customary prices of locally traded goods and services, the values of the various denominations of European coins periodically in circulation, and Anglo-American conventions regarding the lending and borrowing of money. For people who theoretically could own nothing, this knowledge surely was gained over the years from some combination of observation, barter transactions sanctioned or at the least tolerated by the owner, and unsanctioned trades in goods or cash negotiated outside the view of owners or supervisors. By the 1780s, Nathaniel Burwell apparently was forced to accept his slaves' incongruent, independent participation in a market economy as an accomplished fact. Perhaps, by becoming more involved in their internal trading, he hoped to maintain some control over it.

The greater availability of a variety of new goods, the gradual redefinition of former amenities into present necessities among the white population, and some increase in slaves' opportunities for buying, selling, and trading all encouraged the acquisition of new goods. Yet these trends were partly offset by the general perception among whites

that a mode of living affording little beyond bare subsistence remained appropriate for people of a different race and status. The composition of the typical owner-supplied issue of housing, food, clothing, bedding, and cooking equipment remained fundamentally unchanged until slavery ended; there was no change at all until about the 1830s. Slaves' material conditions were in theory and in many ways in practice frozen at the spartan levels common among all bound laborers at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The scanty rations, especially those of meat, that most masters doled out forced slaves to put a higher priority on obtaining additional foods than on acquiring personal or household goods.

The ways in which slaves regarded personal or family possessions cannot be separated from their own exceptional status, in which they themselves were considered property. Theoretically they could own nothing, and mere possession of goods outside the standard plantation issue, however managed, might invite ill will, accusations of theft, and at times arbitrary confiscation. Near-paranoid slave owners sometimes ordered overseers to conduct wholesale searches of houses and root cellars for evidence of pilfered pigs or butter pots. Sharp-eyed and suspicious white neighbors sometimes also felt free to intervene. The level of community policing of slave possessions can be glimpsed from scattered records such as a written pass for travel in which the master attested that the old beaver hat and fine yam stockings his carter was wearing were recent gifts and not stolen adornments. Other slaves had to appeal to their master to get back a large iron pot which everyone on the plantation acknowledged to be their property after a neighboring planter had confiscated it because he supposed they must have stolen it.

In such circumstances some slaves may have decided that acquisition of other than owner-supplied European goods was not worth the heightened scrutiny that mere possession might elicit. Others probably concealed whatever items they had acquired when whites were present. Also, people who lived under the threat of arbitrary separation from home and kin had reason to place a higher value on commodities that could be consumed and enjoyed immediately over more durable items whose use they might lose at any time. Still others were well aware that colorful, fashionable clothes and other nonessential goods did indeed convey social messages, and doubtless some gained no small measure of satisfaction from annoying the ruling whites by violating implicit sumptuary rules.

Dress was one of the most readily available means of self-expression, and one probably especially appealing to creoles who had grown up accustomed only to European clothing standards. Various pieces of evidence, runaway advertisements in particular, demonstrate that from the middle of the eighteenth century, some bondsmen and women managed to acquire a range of clothing and headgear of different, more colorful materials and sometimes more fashionably tailored than the dreary standard issue, possessions to which they attached special importance. The clothing that several Burwell runaways wore illustrates this trend. In 1736 Cuffee and Essex left King's Creek attired only in standard-issue white cotton waistcoats, breeches, and oznabrig shirts. Two years later Jumper, an African captive who had been in Virginia for only two years, went off from Kingsmill dressed in the plains jacket and breeches, oznabrig shirt, felt hat, and European-made shoes and stockings that Lewis Burwell III had supplied, but also with a distinctive linen cap bordered with calico. Thirty years later Johnny (Jack Ash) had built up a large enough wardrobe to abandon one set of clothing on the riverbank in the hope

that his master would conclude he had drowned rather than run off. Jack and Venus left their Isle of Wight quarter equipped with “several different Kinds of Apparel.”

Varied clothing offered many advantages for fashioning a distinctive personal identity and enhancing status in the slave community. Even ordinary articles could be decorated or reworked to express individuality. Clothing was highly portable, and it could be readily resold. Also, unlike household goods, which were both more functional and more meaningful when used within a family group, clothing helped to define identity for everyone including single folk forced to live apart from spouses and other kin. Young women and men seeking a mate might improve their outward prospects as well as their personal self-esteem if they could enter courtship with the advantage of distinctive or fine dress.

From the Burwell family accounts, we gain some insight into changes in the nature of the clothing that the various owners chose to provide their slaves across the eighteenth century. This evidence says nothing about the initiatives that the slaves may have taken to rework standard-issue garments or to acquire additional outerwear and accessories that could be used to fashion more personal, individualized identities. Scissors, straight pins, and dozens of discarded buttons found in excavations of the various Burwell quarters provide clear evidence of these activities. Moreover, even the owners' records give some hints about increasing responsibility within the slave community for producing basic clothing and definite evidence for greater variety in owner-issued apparel that, among other things, reinforced status differences within the African-American community.

Carter Burwell likely continued Robert (“King”) Carter’s practice of twice-yearly issues of standardized sets of clothing to all slaves of working age. His accounts do not mention clothing, but there is every reason to suppose that like most other large planters at midcentury, he ordered supplies of British-made caps, stockings, and yard goods from his London factors Edward Athawes and Robert Cary. Someone other than the slaves likely cut out and sewed up the customary complement of shirts, shifts, breeches, coats, and petticoats. There is no evidence that Lucy Burwell took any responsibility for making up the slaves’ clothing while her husband was alive, and she definitely did not do so after his death. The Burwells, however, must have required all the women to make garments for their younger children and perhaps expected some to make clothes for themselves, although not for the menfolk. This is inferred from the fact that after Burwell’s death his executor regularly supplied all the men and boys with ready-made suits, but made no provision for children too young to work, and did not regularly provide clothes for all the adult women.

The account books do relate the annual distribution, between 1740 and 1745, of imported English-made caps to all adult workers, both at the home house and on the various quarters. Carter Burwell also doled out identical imported bed rugs, usually one every other year, to all the working slaves. Women with several young children, including Hester at Foaces and Charlott and Fanny at Mill Quarter, received additional bed coverings for their youngsters, and in 1740 he issued extra bedding to two “sick people” at Carter’s Grove. Although the Burwells almost certainly relied on British imports for most of the slaves’ clothing, by the 1740s there were ample resources and craftsmen on or near the plantations to supply the necessary footwear. The workers’ shoes were entirely of local manufacture. Shoemaker Jammy made up some of the

several dozen pairs required each year, and Burwell purchased the rest from local white artisans.

In the 1760s executor William Nelson continued to clothe most of the resident workers in standard-issue sets of garments fashioned from imported cloth. In 1763, for example, he employed a local free white woman, Mrs. Whidby, to “make negroes Clothing for the year,” and later he paid unnamed seamstresses or tailors for making up between sixty-one and ninety-two suits per year. The white artisans were willing to work for low rates: eighteen pence for cutting and sewing a man’s “suit,” which would have consisted of a shirt and breeches, and fifteen pence for the shift and petticoat supplied each of the women. Nelson undoubtedly found it more cost effective to pay these free artisans to make the clothing, rather than to divert the energies of the slave women from more productive field labor.

Nelson continued to provide ready-made clothing for the women tending tobacco on the quarters in Frederick County. Each year he carefully noted the shipment of both men’s and boys’ and women’s suits “to the mount[ain]s.” However, most of the suits distributed in the tidewater quarters were only for men and boys. Some or all of the tidewater women must have had to sew their own garments. Although most of the slaves, and especially the field workers, continued to wear similar, standardized sets of outerwear, by the later 1760s, on the few occasions when the majority of the home plantation residents managed to come together, their dress would have been much more varied than in earlier years. The domestics who were hired out to work in various Williamsburg households—ranging from the colony’s governor to town doctors, ministers, and tavern keepers—would have arrived wearing the assorted clothing that a dozen different employers had chosen to provide, likely further diversified with garments and lesser accessories that the hired workers had purchased in town.

Once Nathaniel Burwell II took over management of Carter’s Grove, some of the workers’ wardrobes, especially on the home farm, took on a new appearance. As in previous years, all their shoes came from local sources. Burwell rented tenements to several free white shoemakers—Thomas Badgett, George Morris, and William Taylor—and encouraged them to pay most of their rent by making the hundred-odd new pairs of shoes that were needed each year, as well as by repairing old ones. After Burwell moved west, manager John Bryan made similar annual arrangements with other local shoemakers. In the early 1770s Nathaniel also began to pay these artisans to make more individualized footwear for some of the male domestics and carters. Custom-made shoes may thus have come to serve as a mark of status, as well as affording a better fit.

Instead of hiring local white seamstresses or tailors to produce the annual supplies of new clothing, Nathaniel’s wife Susannah (and later Lucy) must have taken on the responsibility for supervising some of the women in the cutting out and sewing of most of the slaves’ clothing. Only in 1784, when Susannah may have been too ill to carry out her regular duties, did Nathaniel turn to tailor John Grymes, who regularly made clothing for the Burwell boys and the male domestics, and pay him £2 12s. 6d. to make thirty-five suits “for crop people,” adding to the pre-war rate of eighteen pence apiece an extra six shillings “for putting pockets in them.” Unlike most rural slaves who were usually issued homespun clothing during and after the Revolution, Burwell laborers living in the tidewater continued to wear English-made fabrics. The Burwells never attempted serious fiber production on the tidewater plantations. While some slaves unable to work the fields

surely spun wool shorn from Burwell's flocks of sheep and then used the yarn to knit stockings and gloves, they never engaged in weaving.

On the other hand, Nathaniel began to pay local tailors John Grymes and later John Baptist to make more fashionable suits for the male domestics at Carter's Grove. Perhaps during his years in town as a student at William and Mary, he had concluded that well-dressed waiting men and coachmen were essential to the overall image he wished to project. Between 1779 and 1783 he paid Grymes and Baptist to make coats, breeches, and more rarely a waistcoat for Joe, Caesar, Harry, Kitt, Bristol, Baron, Jimmy, Michael, and other unspecified servants. By the 1780s between six and nine male domestics received tailor-made clothes as standard issue. If the Burwells followed the practice of other gentry families, they also issued cloth of better quality and brighter colors to women and girls working in the mansion house.

Source: Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community*, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1997), pp. 48-52, 53-54, 56, 61-65, 66-68, 76-77, 89, 93, 115-116, 116-117, 110-113, 119-129, 129-133, 145-159, 182-191.

An Agricultural Calendar for Carter's Grove

Lorena S. Walsh used the Burwell Account Books to develop the agricultural calendar for training sessions for interpreters at Carter's Grove.

WEEK	CORN	WHEAT	OTHER GRAIN	HAY	OTHER CROPS	ORCHARD	LIVESTOCK	TO
JANUARY 1-7	Gather Measure Clear new ground Hoe ground for Plow for, if dry	Thresh Fan, if heating	Thresh oats Plow for oats Plow for barley	Plow ground for Hoe swamp for Grub meadow Sow timothy Sell straw in town	Thresh peas		Calves born Lambs born Pen & feed cattle Kill hogs Fatten beeves Inventory stock Sell hogs Sell muttons	Steer Prize Set hog
JANUARY 8-14	Gather Husk Cut stalks Plow for	Thresh	Thresh oats	Clean meadow Sow timothy Cut up straw for stock	Thresh peas	Cart cider to town	Feed cattle Kill beeves Kill hogs Salt hogs Haul out manure Hunt ducks Sell hogs	Steer Strip Prize Set hog
JANUARY 15-21	Gather Husk Cut stalks Clear new ground Plow for, if dry	Thresh	Thresh oats Clean oats Plow for oats Plow for barley	Sow timothy Sell straw in town	Earth cauliflower Thresh peas	Make persimmon beer Cart cider to town	Kill hogs Fatten beeves Feed stock Haul out manure Hunt ducks Sell hogs	Prize Burr bed Mar bed Sov
FEBRUARY 1-7	Gather Husk Shell Clear new ground Plow & hoe ground Cut stalks Cart to town	Thresh Clean Cart to town	Plow for oats Plow for barley	Grub meadows Ditch meadows Sow timothy Thresh clover seed Clean clover seed Cut up straw for stock Sell straw in town		Plant trees Cart cider to town	Kill hogs Calves born Lambs born Build goose pen Clean stable Heap & cart manure Hunt ducks	Prize Pre Sov Mak
FEBRUARY 8-14	Husk Shell Cut stalks Plow & hoe ground Cart to town	Thresh Cart to town	Plow for oats Plow for barley Clean seed oats	Cut marsh sedge Plow for meadow Sow timothy Sow clover Cut up straw for stock Sell straw, hay in town	Sow early garden veges Plow for turnips	Transplant peach, nut, pear, cherry trees Cart cider to town	Feed cattle Litter penned cattle Heap & cart manure Hunt ducks	Prize Pre bed Sov Mak
FEBRUARY 15-21	Husk Shell Cut stalks	Thresh Clean Cart to town	Plow for oats Plow for barley Sow oats	Sow lucerne Sow burnet Plow for	Set out turnips for seed	Cart cider to town	Heap & cart manure Pen & feed	Pre bed

	Plow & hoe ground Cart to town			meadow Cut up straw for stock Sell straw, hay in town			cattle Litter cattle Kill beeves Fatten sheep Kill weathers Lambs born Hunt ducks Seine fishing	
FEBRUARY 22-29	Shell Grub new ground Plow & hoe ground Cut up stalks Manure fields Cart to town	Thresh Clean Cart to town	Plow for oats Sow oats Harrow in oats Clean seed oats	Sow timothy Sell straw in town		Bottle cider Plant cherries, pears, peaches, plums, apples Cart cider to town	Pen & feed cattle Kill hogs Lambs born Heap & cart manure Kill beeves	Pre Sov
MARCH 1-7	Shell Cut & burn brush Cut stalks Plow & hoe ground Cart to town	Thresh Clean Cart to town	Plow for oats Thresh seed oats Sow oats	Sow timothy, lucerne, orchard & rye grass Plow ground for seed Dung meadows Thresh clover seed Cut up straw for stock Sell straw in town	Sow carrots Prepare vege garden	Bottle cider Plant trees Graft trees Cart cider to town	Heap & turn manure Kill beeves Calves born Lambs born Sell lambs	Sov
MARCH 8-14	Shell Burn brush Cut up stalks Plow ground Lay off fields Cart to town	Thresh Clean Cart to town	Plow for oats Thresh seed oats Sow oats Harrow in oats	Plow meadows Burn brush off meadows Thresh clover seed Sow timothy, orchard grass Sell straw in town	Plow for turnips Plow for peas Sow beans Sow peas	Graft trees Plant trees Plant peach seeds Cart cider to town	Kill beeves Turn manure Lambs born Seine fishing Sell lambs	Tem Sell
MARCH 15-21	Stack stalks Plow & hoe ground Make hills Cart to town	Thresh Clean Roll, if frost heaved Cart to town	Plow for oats Spread manure Clean seed oats Sow oats Roll in oats Sow barley	Sow clover, lucerne, timothy, rye grass, orchard grass Ditch meadow Sell straw in town	Plant veges Sow cabbages	Graft trees Set out grape cuttings Plant nut & fruit trees Cart cider to town	Heap & cart manure Set poultry Lambs born Calves born Kill beeves Seine fishing Sell lambs	Sov
MARCH 22-31	Plow & hoe ground Burn brush Cut stalks Lay off field Cart to town	Clean Plow fallow Cart to town	Plow for oats Plow for barley Sow oats Harrow in oats	Plow meadows Hoe & harrow meadows Manure clover Ditch meadow Sow timothy, trefoil, clover, lucerne Clean pastures Harrow & roll in timothy Thresh clover seed Weed lucerne Sell straw in town Sell hay in town	Plant veges	Graft apple, cherry, apricot, quince, pear, nut trees Transplant seedlings Plant grape seed Cart cider to town	Heap manure Lambs born Calves born Castrate ram lambs Sell lambs	Pre Sov Sell

APRIL 1-7	Plant Plow & hoe for Break new ground Heap stalks Fan, if heated Cart to town Sell extra fodder	Thresh Clean Cart to town Roll Plow fallow	Sow oats Harrow in oats Sow barley	Sow trefoil, clover, timothy, st. foin Plow for lucerne Harrow & roll in Thresh clover seed Sell straw in town	Plant veges Plant pumpkins Plow for turnips & peas Manure turnip plot	Graft fruit trees Cart cider to town	Feed sheep Lambs born Sell lambs Kill beef Calves born Heap manure Make butter Seine fishing	Mak
APRIL 8-14	Plant Manure Plow, hoe & hill Stack stalks Cart to town Sell surplus fodder	Thresh Clean Cart to town	Sow oats Sow barley Manure barley Roll oats	Sow, plow & harrow in & roll clover, orchard grass Manure meadow Sell straw, hay in town	Sow field peas Sow field carrots Plow for peas & pots Plant jerusalem artichokes Plow for turnips Plant pumpkins Plant parsnips Make swt pot hills	Plant grape vines Cart cider to town	Heap & cart manure Kill beef Fatten veal calves Lambs born Calves born Castrate lambs Sell lambs Make butter Seine fishing	Mak Mar
APRIL 15-21	Plant Replant Plow & hoe ground Manure Cut up stalks Cart to town	Thresh Clean Cart to town	Sow oats Harrow in oats Sow barley	Sow lucerne, clover, st. foin, trefoil, burnet, timothy, orchard grass Harrow in seed Sell straw in town	Plant veges Plant Irish & sweet potatoes Sow peas Sow field carrots Plant turnips	Cart cider to town	Heap & cart manure Calves born Sell lambs Make butter Seine fishing	Wee Mak Mar
APRIL 22-30	Plant Replant Plow & hoe ground Cut up stalks	Thresh Cart to town Weed	Sow oats Harrow & roll oats	Sow timothy, orchard grass Harrow & roll in seed Clean meadow Sell straw in town	Plant field beans, peas, parsnips, carrots Plant Irish & sweet potatoes Plant veges		Cart manure Calves born Fatten lambs Castrate lambs Sell lambs Seine fishing Make butter	Wee Rep eate Plan
MAY 1-7	Plow & hoe ground Grub new ground Plant Replant	Clean Cart to town	Sow oats Resow barley	Sow clover, timothy Harrow & roll seed Sell straw in town	Plant pumpkins, peas, potatoes, parsnips, carrots Plant watermelons		Cart manure Castrate & mark sheep Calves born Sell lambs Seine fishing Make butter	Mar Plan
MAY 8-14	Plant Replant Manure Weed		Sow oats	Sow timothy, clover, orchard grass	Plant veges, peas, pots, pumpkins, cabbage, carrots	Weed around young trees	Shear sheep Sell lambs Castrate & mark sheep Calves born Breed horses Fish for sturgeon Make butter	Mak Mar Plan Wee
MAY 15-21	Plant Replant Manure Weed		Harrow & roll oats & barley	Sow lucerne, st. foin, clover, timothy Weed trefoil Harrow & roll clover	Plant peas, beans, carrots, cabbage, turnips, pumpkins, Irish & swt pots		Breed horses Shear sheep	Wee bed Mak Mar Plan

MAY 22-31	Replant Manure Weed with plows & hoes	Plow fallow	Manure barley Sow oats	Ditch meadows Cut clover	Plant peas, pots, Cabbages, turnips Water veges if dry Replant pumpkins, watermelons Plow for turnips		Shear sheep Separate sheep Breed horses Make butter	We Mak Man Plan
JUNE 1-7	Break ground with plow & hoe Make ridges with plow Plant Replant Weed with plow & hoe Cart last year's to ships or town	Cart last year's to ships or town		*cut	Sow turnips Plant peas Replant peas Sow veges Plant potatoes		Shear sheep Make butter Kill muttons for sale Sell wood	We see Plan
JUNE 8-14	Break ground Plant Replant Weed with plow & hoe Thin			Sow alfalfa *cut *cock & turn	Plant peas Replant peas Plant potatoes Weed pumpkins Weed peas		Shear sheep Wean calves Make butter Tend young poultry Kill veals for sale	Plan Rep Wee
JUNE 15-21	Break ground Replant Plow & cross plow Weed and wet with hoes		Cut barley	*Mow meadow hay Sow orchard grass Gather hay seed *Haul in hay	Weed peas Replant potatoes Replant cabbage Weed potatoes Earth potatoes		Make butter	Plan Rep Wee Man
JUNE 22-30	Plant Replant Plow & cross plow Weed and set with hoes	Cut	Cut oats Cut barley	Make meadow hay Cock and stack Cut timothy Haul in hay	Replant potatoes Weed potatoes Weed peas		Make butter	Plan Rep Man Wor Wee
JULY 1-7	Plow & cross plow Hill with hoes Sucker Cart last year's to ships or town	Cut Stack Cart last year's to ships or town Sell straw in town	Cut barley	Cut hay Cut hay seed	Weed peas		Kill beef for sale to ships Make butter Kill mutton, veal for sale	Plan Rep Wee Wor
JULY 8-14	Weed with plows & hoes	Cut Bind & stack	Cut barley Cut oats	Cut clover Cut meadow hay	Weed potatoes Weed peas		Wean calves Make butter	Plan Rep Wee Top
JULY 15-21	Weed with plows & hoes	Cut if late Haul in Thresh for seed Sow	Cut oats Haul in oats Thresh rye	Cut clover Cut meadow hay	Weed & hill peas Sow turnips		Make butter	Wee Rep
JULY 22-31	Weed with plows & hoes	Sow	Cut oats Thresh oats	*make meadow hay	Sow turnips Weed peas		Make butter	Rep Wee

			Thresh barley	cut timothy seed	Weed pumpkins Weed potatoes			Top Suc
AUGUST 1-7	Weed with hoes	Tread Sow Cart straw to town Cart to town or ships		*cut meadow hay cock & stack cut timothy	Sow turnips		Make butter Separate sheep Kill mutton, veal, shotes for sale Sell wool	Wee
AUGUST 8-14	Weed & hill	Sow Tread Haul in		*cut timothy seed *thresh timothy *cut marsh hay	Sow turnips	Make cider Gather peaches	Separate sheep Make butter Choose cattle for fattening	Wee Wor Suc
AUGUST 15-21	Weed	Sow Haul in Tread	Thresh barley Sow barley	*cut hay	Sow turnips Weed turnips Weed peas Weed pumpkins	Make cider	Make butter Separate sheep	Wor Suc
AUGUST 22-31		Sow Plow & harrow in Haul in	Thresh oats Clean oats	Cut meadow Sow clover	Go fishing Sow turnips	Get peaches for brandy Still brandy Press cider	Make butter	Gat Wee Wor Beg
SEPTEMBER 1-7	Weed	Tread Thresh Clean Sow Plow & harrow in	Stack oats Sow oats	Sow timothy Gather clover seed Head clover seed Carry in marsh hay	Weed turnips Resow turnips Gather peas	Make cider Make peach mobby Make pumpkerin	Turn sheep on wheat fields Make butter Sell butter Sell muttons Fish Carry out manure	Wor Suc Top Cut Put scar Put
SEPTEMBER 8-14	Gather tops & blades for fodder Dry fodder	Thresh Clean Sow Plow & harrow in	Sow barley Plow & harrow in barley	Cut 2 nd time Ditch meadow Sow timothy Sow orchard grass	Gather peas Weed turnips Weed cabbages	Gather apples Still brandy	Make butter Fish	Wor Suc Top Cut Put Put
SEPTEMBER 15-22	Cut tops & blades Dry fodder Plow fields for next year	Tread Thresh Clean Sow Plow & harrow in	Thresh barley Plow barley field Tread oats Thresh oats Clean oats		Gather peas Sow turnips Replant turnips	Gather grapes in woods Cart in apple	Make butter Butcher sheep Fish	Wor Suc Top Cut Put scar Put
SEPTEMBER 23-30	Cut tops & blades Dry fodder Haul in fodder Make fodder house Plow fields for next year	Thresh Sow Plow in	Clean oats Plow barley field	Sow timothy Sow sainfoin Transplant alfalfa Cut meadow Mow marsh Sow orchard grass Grub meadows & swamps	Gather peas	Make cider Breed sheep Fatten hogs Make butter Fish	Top Cut Put on scaffolds Put in house	
OCTOBER 1-7	Cut tops & blades Haul in fodder Make fodder house	Tread Thresh Sow Stack straw Cart straw to		Plow meadows Sow trefoil Sow timothy Sow sainfoin Ditch meadows	Gather peas	Gather apples Make cider Still brandy	Fatten forward hogs Make butter Breed sheep Sell sheep	Cut Put scar Put

	Clear fields for next year Cart fodder to town	town for sale Cart wheat to town					Sell shoats Sell butter Hunt ducks	
OCTOBER 8-14	Cut fodder Haul in fodder Pull early corn Husk early corn Clear & plow for next year	Tread Thresh Sow Plow & harrow in Stack straw	Plow barley field Thresh oats	Sow orchard grass Sow clover Sow timothy Mow marsh Cure hay	Gather peas Dig potatoes Pull pumpkins	Make cider Sow apple seeds for new trees	Fatten hogs	Cut Put scal Put Stri
OCTOBER 15-22	Cut fodder Haul in fodder stack fodder Pick up fallen corn Husk	Tread Thresh Sow Plow in	Sow barley	Cut marsh hay Plow new meadow Sow trefoil Sow winter vetch Sow clover & harrow in Stack hay	Gather peas Gather beans Dig potatoes		Fatten hogs Kill forward hogs Make pens for cattle	Reh Stri Stri Tie nigh Pac Priz
OCTOBER 23-31	Stack fodder Haul in fodder Gather corn Husk Plow fields for [next year?]	Tread Thresh Sow Plow in	Sow barley Tread oats Clean oats Measure & store oats	Sow timothy Sow orchard grass Sow clover	Dig turnips Store turnips Gather peas Clean & store peas Dig potatoes [] Sow turnips	Transplant cherries	Fatten hogs on corn & potatoes Fatten beeves Fatten weathers	Stri Stri Tie nigh Priz
NOVEMBER 1-7	Gather corn Haul in corn Husk Plow fields for next year	Tread Thresh Clean Stack straw Sow Cart straw for sale Cart wheat for sale	Sow barley Tread oats Plow oat field	Sow trefoil Sow timothy	Dig potatoes Store potatoes Thresh peas Set turnips for seed Store cabbages	Cart cider for sale	Fatten hogs Kill forward hogs Sell muttons Sell hogs Sell steers	Stri Stri Tie Pac
NOVEMBER 8-14	Gather corn Gather corn stalks Husk Measure Clear new fields Plow fields for next year	Tread Thresh Clean Sow	Tread barley Measure barley	Sow timothy Harrow in timothy Cur marsh hay	Dig potatoes Store potatoes Thresh peas Store peas Gather beans	Sow apple seed Cart cider for sale	Fatten hogs Fatten beeves Build shelters for cattle Feed cattle corn stalks	Stri Bur pat nex Hoe nex
NOVEMBER 15-22	Gather corn Cart in corn Measure & loft corn Husk Clear new fields Plow fields for next year	Clean Plow fields for next year	Tread barley Clean barley Measure barley		Dig turnips Dig potatoes Store potatoes Thresh peas	Plant grapes	Fatten hogs Butcher hogs Fatten cattle	Stri
NOVEMBER 23-30	Gather corn Cart in corn Measure & loft corn Husk Plow fields for next year	Thresh Cart wheat for sale	Thresh oats Clean oats		Dig potatoes Sort & store potatoes Dig carrots	Plant grapes	Rake up dung Fatten hogs Butcher hogs	Stri Ste Bre grou yea Sow

DECEMBER 1-7	Gather corn Cart in corn Measure & loft corn Husk Plow fields for next year	Tread Thresh Clean	Tread oats Clean oats Measure oats		Dig turnips Dig carrots Thresh peas Gather beans Thresh beans Store potatoes	Plant grapes	Butcher hogs Cut up pork & salt Feed cows pumpkins Litter cow pens Turn stock on clover	Stri
DECEMBER 8-14	Gather corn Cart in corn Measure & loft corn Husk Cut stalks Clear new fields Plow fields for next year	Tread Thresh Clean Cart straw for sale	Thresh oats Clean oats	Clean meadows	Dig carrots Dig potatoes Store potatoes	Plant peach trees	Sell muttons Sell hogs Butcher hogs Feed cows potatoes Clean stock yards Count stock	Stri Mak nex
DECEMBER 15-22	Gather corn Cart in corn Measure & loft corn Husk Cut stalks Plow fields for next year	Thresh Clean Store	Clean oats	Clean meadows	Dig potatoes Store potatoes	Plant peach trees	Cart out dung Butcher hogs Sell sheep Fatten steers Litter cattle pens Gather oysters	
DECEMBER 23-31	Cut stalks Measure & loft Husk Plow fields for next year		Thresh oats Clean oats	Cut grass & sedge for litter	Thresh peas		Cart out dung Butcher hogs Smoke bacon Move cowpens Feed cattle Make sheep shelters Hunt game	Mak nex Sov plan Plov mar

The College of William and Mary

Surviving documents indicate that slaves lived and worked at the College of William and Mary by 1702.

Thad W. Tate includes information about the slaves who lived and worked at the College of William and Mary in his book, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*.

A number of Negroes were also employed for various housekeeping tasks at the College of William and Mary, apparently from a very early date. It was a Negro man who went with Commissary Blair to force the doors of the grammar school in the celebrated "barring out" incident of 1702 and Governor Nicholson gave the college a Negro man valued at £30 in 1704. In addition to its slaves in Williamsburg, the college also owned Negroes on its lands along the Nottoway River. Students also occasionally brought personal servants with them to

Williamsburg. In 1754 there were eight slave boys at William and Mary, brought to wait on their young masters.¹

Generally the college's Negroes at Williamsburg worked under the direction of the housekeeper. One housekeeper, whose supervision was not all that the president and masters wished, was ordered in 1763 not to trust the Negroes with keys or to go away from the college too often, "As we all know that Negroes will not perform their Duties without the Mistress's constant Eye especially in so large a Family as the College."

It is not clear how many Negroes were normally used at the college, but in 1768 it was necessary to hire two extra ones for cutting and carting wood. Three years later the college officials planned to purchase a Negro woman from Lord Botetourt's estate for college use. It may have been more or less a regular practice to use some hired Negroes, because in the fall of 1777, when the president and masters decided to sell the land on the Nottoway and the slaves held there, they planned to bring two men and a boy from there to replace hired Negroes at Williamsburg.

More elaborate changes occurred in December 1779, as a result of the discontinuance of the grammar school and the commons. The kitchen Negroes were to be leased to a steward who would contract to provide meals for students, a sufficient number of slaves were to be retained for cleaning, and any surplus ones were to be hired out at public auction. It turned out that the steward was allowed two men and a boy and that five slaves were retained for cleaning. Then in 1782 some of these remaining eight or else some of the ones offered for lease were to be sold to meet the cost of repairing the buildings.

Source: Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, pp. 37-39.

1769 to 1776—Excerpts from the "William and Mary College Historical Notes." This research report includes information from the Journal of the Meetings of the President & Masters of William & Mary College...[1729-1784] and the *Virginia Gazette*.

November 16th, 1769

At a Meeting of the President & Masters of Wm & Mary College.

Present, The Revd Mr Horrocks, President, Mr Camm, E. Jones & Mr Johnson.

John Byrd, after calling for a Servant which was at that time employ'd by the House keeper in the Hall, came into the said Hall with a Horsewhip in his hand and taking hold of his Servant, with his whip lifted up threaten'd to whip him if he did not immediately go with him, the Housekeeper answer'd "that he should not"; upon which the said Byrd replied, "that if she

¹ The students who had slaves with them at William and Mary in 1754 were Mr. Graham, Mr. G[eorge] Braxton, Mr. C[arter] Braxton, Mr. [George] Plater, Mr. [Charles] Carter, Mr. Whiting, Mr. [Severn] Eyre, and Mr. [John] Fox. *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 6 (1897-1898):188.

were in the Boy's Place, he would horsewhip her also"; to which she said, "It was more than he dared to do," she supposing that he threaten'd to horsewhip her.

Upon the above complaint, the President sent for the said Byrd; when he appear'd, he behaved with great rudeness to the President, and made use of many oaths and indecent expressions which evidently show'd a gross contempt of the President, upon which the Society made the following resolution:

Resolved unanimously, that John Byrd, out of regard to his general better deportment be forgiven the above very ill behavior on condition that he ask pardon of the President for the personal affront to him, and of the Society, for disobedience of their order and ill treatment of their Servant; and profess to conduct himself with proper respect to the President & Masters for the future, & that if hereafter he should in practice contradict such professions, he be then immediately expell'd the College as totally unfit to be any longer a Member of that Society.

Source: Journal of the Meetings of the President & Masters of William & Mary College...[1729-1784], pp. 184-185.

* * * *

May 3^d 1771.

At a meeting of the President and Masters of Wm. & Mary College,

Resol: unanimously that a Negro Woman belonging to his late Excellency's Estate be purchas'd for the Use of the College; if to be had at a moderate price.

Source: Journal of the Meetings of the President & Masters of William & Mary College...[1729-1784], p. 203.

February 26th, 1773.

At a meeting of the President and Masters of Wm. & Mary College,

Resol: that four Loads of Wood be sent to Mrs Wager who has the Care of some young Negroes belonging to the College.

Source: Journal of the Meetings of the President & Masters of William & Mary College...[1729-1784], p. 218.

William & Mary College, May 27th, 1775.

James, Innis, William Yates, Joseph Eggleston,)
 John White, William Steptoe, Thomas Evans,) Complts
 Granville Smith, and James Monroe.)

Maria Digges

) Deft

To the Honble & Revd the Commissary, Emmanuel Jones, John Dixon, Samuel Henley, Thomas Gwatkin & James Madison Professors of the College of William & Mary.

The humble Petition of the Ushers & Students of the sd College Sheweth,

Art: 2^d. That she has kept a sumptuous Table at the very time that the Provisions in the Hall were scarce and intolerable, is a Fact too notorious to be deny'd – Her Partiality to her Brother in indulging him in all the Delicacies & Conveniencies of the College is well known. – It can be proved too that he has part of the public Stores, such as Candles.

Art: 4th That she has intrusted the Keys of the Store-Room to the Slaves to which they have been seen to have free Ingress & Egress.

Art: 7th That the Losses in the Laundry have been particularly great since Miss Digge's Management, and for which no Remedy can be obtained.

After mature Consideration of the above Allegations, the President & Professors agreed that the Ushers & Students should be severally sent for to hear what they had to say in Support thereof. The following is a true Copy taken down immediately in their own Words, Vizt

[Included are only those responses that mention slaves, servants, or blacks]

Mr. Innis.

Art: 3^d Has seen Meat Carry'd to [barber George] Lafong's more than a Year ago by a Negro-Boy.

Art: 6th Says nothing to the first part. To the latter part affirms that Servants cannot be had to clean his Rooms...

Mr. Yates –

2^d To the first part says nothing – Heard a Negroe-Boy ask for Candles for Ned Digges. A Woman answer'd, One would do for him.

4th Has seen the Keys entrusted to Negroes frequently.

Mr White.

4th Has seen Slaves go into the Store Room frequently.

Mr Steptoe.

Art: 4th Has seen Servants in the Store-Room.

Source: Journal of the Meetings of the President & Masters of William & Mary College...[1729-1784], pp. 233-245.

[May 27, 1775]

Thomas Gwatkin, Clerk, Professor of Humanity in the College of William and Mary is ready to make Oath to the following Particulars.

Vizt

That Maria Digges housekeeper of the said College keeps a very frugal Table, often dining upon cold Meat; or Meat out of the hall, or a Mutton Chop, or a Beef Steake; and that she does not entertain Company oftener, or in a better manner than the late Mrs Garrett, or what may reasonably [*sic*] allow'd to a Person in her Station....that the Negroes are not often entrusted with the Keys of the Storeroom, and that the College has receiv'd no loss on that Account...

Sign'd,
Thomas Gwatkin.

Source: Journal of the Meetings of the President & Masters of William & Mary College...[1729-1784], pp. 247-249.

THE College of WILLIAM & MARY has been lately cleaned, and will be immediately plastered and whitewashed, to render it fit for the Reception of Professors, Students, Grammar Scholars, and Servants; and the several Schools will be opened at the Beginning of Trinity Term, namely on Monday the 17th of next month.

EMMANUEL JONES, Clk.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon and Hunter, eds., June 1, 1776.

1749 to 1782—Baptism of Slaves Who Belonged to the College of William and Mary.

The College officials sponsored the baptism of seventeen enslaved men, women, and children between 1749 and 1782. They also sent two slave children—Adam and Fanny—to the Bray School in February 1769.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>
[torn], son of Molly	2 October 1763

Andrew, a man	6 May 1754
Andrew, son of Molly	18 November 1782
Antony, son of Franky	[13] April 1785
Elizabeth	7 March 1753
Fanny, daughter of Hannah	[] June 1766
Frank Addison, son of Molly Glasgow	born 4 October 1768; baptized 6 November 1768 7 May 1749
Henry, son of Charlotte	born 23 April 1764; baptized 2 June 1764
James, a man	6 May 1754
Katherine, a woman	6 May 1754
Lucy, daughter of Charlotte	born 9 August 1768; baptized 2 October 1768
Margaret	7 May 1749
Sucky, daughter of Priscilla	13 March 1768
Tom Mask, son of Molly	9 February 1766
Violet, daughter of Epha	born 11 May 1764; baptized 3 June 1764
William, son of Peggy	2 March 1766

Source: Bruton Parish Birth and Baptism Register, original at Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

The Courthouse

In 1692 the colonial legislators established oyer and terminer courts in order to try enslaved men and women who were accused of committing a felony. The law required a “more speedy prosecution of slaves committing Capital Crimes” because it was “absolutely necessarie” to make other slaves “affrighted to commit the like crimes and offenses.” A capital crime was defined as an offense that would be punished by death or “loss of member.” The 1692 statute empowered a sheriff to hold an accused slave in the county gaol “well laden with irons.” The sheriff then notified the governor who issued a commission of oyer and terminer to the justices of the peace in the county in which the crime took place. At least four of a county’s justices of the peace conducted the trial and determined the guilt or innocence of the accused slave. An enslaved man or woman was denied the right of a jury trial.² In 1705 the members of the General Assembly decided that a master would be compensated for the value of any slave who received a death sentence. These laws defined an enslaved person as both an individual who was responsible for his or her own actions and as a master’s property.

The first recorded oyer and terminer trial in York County was on June 30, 1704. The justices convicted Bridgett, a slave owned by John Page, of arson. York County’s justices of the peace attended a total of 115 oyer and terminer trials that examined the actions of 154 slaves between 1704 and 1780. The following discussion of the York County oyer and terminer trials is taken

² Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, vol. 3, pp. 402-403.

from Anne Willis's study "The Master's Mercy: Slave Prosecutions and Punishments in York County, Virginia, 1700-1780." The proceedings of the oyer and terminer cases tried in the York County Court from 1769 to 1776 follow the overview of oyer and terminer trials.

The shifting strategies of the gentlemen justices in reaction to the accelerating rate of slave crime against property can be examined through an analysis of the public punishments given to convicted slave felons after 1750. Public hangings dramatically reflected the gentlemen justices' attitudes towards the persons and crimes they considered most threatening to the safety and security of their slaveholding community.

Forty-four slaves were sentenced to hang for their crimes from 1700 to 1780; seven slaves were convicted of committing violent crimes and sentenced to hang while the remaining 37 slaves had all been convicted of breaking and entering and burglary. From 1750 to 1770 the number of slaves convicted and sentenced to hang for property crimes increased significantly even with the adjustment for the growth of the slave population over time. For the first fifty years from 1700 to 1750 the York County records indicate that eight slaves had been sentenced to be executed; three were convicted of violent crimes while five were convicted of breaking and entering and burglary. For the thirty year period from 1750 to 1780 (which does not include trials held from 1754 to 1759 since the records are missing) 36 slaves had been sentenced to hang; five were convicted of violent crimes and 31 were convicted of breaking and entering and burglary. For the first fifty years three-fifths of the condemned slaves had committed violent crimes as compared with approximately one-sixth of the slaves during the last thirty years from 1750 to 1780. The increase in the number of slaves sentenced to be executed and the proportional decrease in violent crime adjusted to the growth of the slave population in York County suggests that as crimes against property increased after 1750, the gentlemen justices turned to the death penalty with much greater frequency for lesser crimes of breaking and entering and burglary in an effort to purge their communities of threatening convicted slave felons and to establish a strong deterrent for such subsequent behavior among slaves.

...

Governor Francis Fauquier altered the pattern of justice for convicted slave felons long established by the gentlemen justices in York County. In his instructions as royal governor in Virginia from King George II. and Parliament, Fauquier was directed that he

shall endeavor to get a Law passed (if not already done) for the restraining of any inhuman Severity, which by ill Masters or Overseers may be used towards their Christian Servants and their Slaves; and that Provision be made therein, that the willfull killing of Indians and Negroes may be punished with Death. And that a fit Penalty be imposed for the maiming of them.

Governor Fauquier in legislation of 1765, perhaps in a response to his Instructions, modified the punishments for convicted slave felons by outlawing the dismemberment of slaves and liberalizing the slave law by making it impossible for slaves accused of murdering a slave to plead manslaughter. He did not, however, secure legislation that curbed masters from "inhuman Severity" or "the willfull killing of Indians and Negroes" which would make those crimes punishable by death. The law of 1669 remained unchallenged, protecting masters and overseers

from prosecution if they caused the death of their slaves by correction. Fauquier undoubtedly turned to the practice of granting pardons to moderate the barbaric severity of slave punishments in York County.

During his tenure as governor from 1758 to 1768, Governor Fauquier pardoned eight of the eighteen convicted slave felons that the York County Court had sentenced to be hanged. From February 15, 1759, until October 1761, he had pardoned all five slaves who had been tried for breaking and entering and burglary and been condemned.

...

After 1766, however, Fauquier did not pardon the five slaves sentenced to hang for theft crimes which ranged in value from 20 shillings to 226 shillings. The value of the thefts which led to the death penalty during Governor Fauquier's tenure varied from seven shillings to £ 113. Of the convicted felons Governor Fauquier pardoned, the value of their theft varied from seven shillings to £ 6 30 shillings. All pardons with one exception were given to a slave who had acted alone.

...

The great majority of the prosecutions of accused slave felons involved breaking and entering and burglary of personal property. The items stolen and the circumstances under which they were stolen changed over time. The absence of testimony makes it impossible to determine what motivated a slave to commit a particular crime. Considering the items allegedly stolen provides some insights into motivations for committing burglary: subsistence for individual slaves, their families, or friends (foodstuffs, money, and some clothing); pleasure (rum and wine); economic advantage through illegal or underground markets (spirits, linens, textiles, fine pieces of clothing, and luxury goods).

In the late 1740s there was a shift in the items stolen from goods that would have been used by slaves themselves to bolts of textiles and several items of clothing that could be retailed easily which suggests the presence of an underground market in the area. These thefts were often committed by more than one slave. Before 1750 most burglaries were personal, but after 1750 some crimes became more impersonal as the focus shifted to merchant's warehouses, stores, and wealthy households in urban areas suggesting some criminal organization and the theft of more valuable goods.

...

Slaves rarely committed violent crimes in York County and a higher proportion of them were committed before 1750. The one charge of suspected slave rebellion and insurrection resulted in an acquittal.³ Of the 38 accused slave felons tried from 1704 to 1750 10.5% were

³ In April 1753 Harry, a slave owned by John Goodwin Junior of York County, and Tom, the slave of Peter Goodwin of York County, faced the charge that "with force and arms . . . [they] feloniously did consult, advise, and conspire to rebel and make an insurrection and did also plot and conspire the murder of divers of His Majesty's good and faithful subjects in the parish and county." The justices decided that Harry and Tom were not guilty. York County Judgments and Orders (2) 204-205, 4 April 1753.

tried for crimes of violence, two arson cases (convictions), and a murder of a fellow slave (conviction). From 1750 to 1780 5.2% of accused slave felons were tried for committing violent crimes out of 116 persons charged; two rapes (one conviction and one acquittal), one poison and murder (conviction), one case of arson (conviction), one case of mutilation (reduced to a misdemeanor), and one case of murder which was reduced to manslaughter (conviction with a plea for mercy). From 1700 to 1780 there were only six clear convictions, one of the convictions involved a slave victim and another so tentative that the court invited a review and pardon by the governor and Council.

Unlike the growing number of prosecutions for breaking and entering and burglary, slave rebellion and insurrection, as well as criminal violence on the part of slaves against the white community, were not major factors in the life of York County. The threat to slaveholders in York County was against their property not their lives or the stability or survival of their slave system.

Of the 115 cases prosecuted by the justices in York County from 1700 to 1780 the number of accused slave felons involved in the commission of a single crime varied; 72% were committed by a single slave, 22% by two slaves, and 6% by three slaves or more. The percentage of slaves accused of committing crimes together increased and peaked in the 1740s and 1750s suggesting that social cooperation among slaves was stronger at that time. Before 1740 there were only two crimes committed by two slaves, but from 1740 to 1770 there were 32 crimes committed by two or more slaves accused of working together. The different slaves accused of committing a particular crime together were more often not slaves of the same master.

Of those 32 crimes prosecuted that were allegedly committed by two or more slaves, 30 were theft, one was arson, and one was suspected slave rebellion and insurrection. Burglaries ranged from the theft of hogs, turkeys, and sheep to ambitious thefts of expensive clothing and textiles, which probably could not all be used by the slaves committing the crime, but found their way into an underground marketing network. After 1750 more slaves joined together to commit crimes against masters' warehouses, mills, and stores, making the threat to the slave holding community more impersonal and challenging. Preventing the criminal activity of a single slave was difficult enough, but preventing organized crime planned and executed by two or more slaves was daunting, and slaves undoubtedly knew that. Slaves who banded together were able to develop networks that provided them support and far more resources for criminal activity, directly challenging the masters' control of their own property. Crimes that were committed by more than one person also involved more planning and coordination to execute, and thus served to strengthen bonds between perpetrators.

Anticipating the time and place crimes were likely to be committed was of tremendous importance in order to guard against possible crime. Slaves were safer and more mobile at night when they were not under the direct supervision of the master or overseer and when the towns were wrapped in darkness. The law of 1732, extending benefit of clergy, specifically stated that any crime of breaking and entering a house at night committed by a negro, Indian, or mulatto was not eligible for consideration.⁴ Fifty-three cases in the records documented the time of day when the crime was committed—all of them took place at night.

⁴ There were times, however, when slaves were granted benefit of clergy even when the charges read against them exceeded the limits placed upon accused slave felons by the law of 1732.

From 1740 to 1770 there was a growing increase in both the black population of the colony and in the concentration of slaves in the urban areas of Williamsburg and Yorktown which encouraged close associations among slaves and a greater opportunity for criminal behavior. For the decade of 1770 to 1780 there was a decided decrease in the number of slaves accused of committing crimes and 81% of those alleged crimes were committed by a single individual. This phenomenon perhaps reflects the impact of Dunmore's Proclamation and the disruptions of the Revolution both of which decreased the black population of the county from an estimated population of 3,527 in 1775 to 2,864 in 1776.

...

The great majority of accused slave felons were male; only 8% of the 154 slaves arrested and tried from 1704 to 1780 were women. Females made up 38% of all slaves prosecuted before 1735, but from 1735 until 1780 only 5% of accused slave felons tried were women. In spite of the fact that the rate of crime in the county accelerated after 1740 only five female slaves were accused of committing a felony and brought to trial from 1743 to 1780. Four of the five women were prosecuted for theft and the four of them were accused of committing the crime with a male slave. Of the five female slaves brought to trial during those years 40% were acquitted and discharged while 33% of all accused male slave felons were acquitted.

...

This significant difference in the prosecution rate from 1743 to 1780, of male and female slaves tried suggests that powerful cultural influences were exerted on female slaves both from their African heritage and their African-American families and communities in Virginia. Before 1730 family formation was more difficult for slaves in the Colonial Chesapeake. The higher proportion of women who were indicted for felonies in the early years of the eighteenth century may be explained by the fact that they were not as likely to be tied to families and children and could therefore act more independently.

After 1730, however, family formation was more possible and women would have been responsible for their young children. Black women, in their child bearing years, were having children on the average of every two to two and one-half years; consequently many slave women were often pregnant or nursing their infants and caring for young children. The master would also have had a potent weapon in his control of slave women in that he could threaten to sell the children away from their mothers at any time for their misbehavior.⁵

Slave women would have been far less willing to take the risk of committing a felony than many male slaves who were often unable to live with their families. Male slaves often had more freedom of movement. On plantations work assignments in the fields were very similar for both men and women, but male slaves were more mobile as carters or skilled craftsmen. Towns like Williamsburg and Yorktown had concentrated populations of African Americans and offered more opportunities for the theft of valuable goods. In Williamsburg the majority of

⁵ It is interesting to note that about one-tenth of all runaways in Virginia and Maryland before the Revolution were women—the vast majority were men.

slaves in 1775 were female, and many were employed by masters in service-related work in taverns, businesses, and homes where they would have had access to valuable items. Perhaps women could more easily take things from households or businesses over a period of time and not be detected. It is also possible that masters regarded female slaves as less threatening to themselves and their property.

...

Many slaves, especially male slaves, would have been familiar with the landscape, knowing well where a wealthy planter or merchant lived as well as knowing when warehouses were stocked and which mills were unprotected at night. Knowing escape routes and hiding places would have been essential for slaves seeking to exploit their masters.

Slaves knew where valuable objects were to be found in the households of the wealthy or in the storehouses of merchants of Williamsburg and Yorktown. Slaves living in the urban areas would have had much greater access to the goods of other households and businesses. In an urban area, with a higher concentration of slaves, it would have been easier to commit crimes cooperatively and gain assistance for the commission of that crime from others. The county was “home” for the majority of slaves by mid century, and they knew where the opportunities for slave crime were. Dwelling houses, mansion houses, and outbuildings with their valuable and marketable goods were places where most slave crimes were committed. Shops, houses, storehouses, warehouse, and mills were also vulnerable as they held goods that could be easily used or sold by slaves in the underground markets and were more likely to be unprotected at night. Only one alleged crime was committed on shipboard even though Yorktown was a busy commercial port.

...

Thomas Cox, a free white man from Charles Parish, was examined by the York County Court on the “Suspicion of endeavoring to raise a Conspiracy and Insurrection among the Slaves in this County” on July 17, 1775. Cox pled not guilty to the charge, witnesses were examined, and the court decided that he was not guilty of the felony, but guilty of a “misdemeanor lending to a breach of the Peace.” He was ordered to serve one year in prison or give security for one year’s good behavior and to “keep the Peace towards all his Majesty’s Leige People for one Year.”

Thomas Cox’s arrest occurred shortly after Governor Dunmore had seized the gunpowder from the Public Magazine in Williamsburg on April 20, 1775, creating great public fear of slave insurrection and rebellion in Virginia communities from that spring through the Revolution. Ironically the threat in July of 1775 came not from a slave, but from Thomas Cox who was a free white man. Fears of particular persons instigating a slave revolt were now not centered only on the enslaved persons.

...

Despite the acute anxiety of a slave revolt throughout this revolutionary period there was not a single white person who lost his life in a slave rebellion in Virginia. In addition from 1700 to 1780 there was not a single conviction of a slave for instigating a slave rebellion or

insurrection in York County. This fact is especially significant because the county included over half of the city of Williamsburg which was the colonial center for much of the revolutionary activity and home to a large and strong African-American community where property crimes had increased dramatically since the 1750s.

Prosecutions of property crimes adjusted to the population growth of slaves in the county grew substantially during the 1700 to 1780 period. From 1700 to 1729 the rate per 1,000 adults was 0.12, but the rate increased to 2.42 from 1750 to 1780. The security of individual masters and their slave society, however, was not threatened by more violent crime directed against them after 1740. In fact the rate of conviction for violent crimes fell from 8% for the 1700 to 1729 period to 3.5% for the 1750 to 1780 period when there was such a dramatic increase in prosecutions and convictions of slave felons for theft.

Only one white person died as a result of slave crime in York County, and the extenuating circumstances of that case prompted the court to reduce the charge to manslaughter and to issue a plea for mercy for the convicted. The slaveholder's authority in York County, with the possible exception of three cases of arson (two of which occurred before 1730), one case of suspected rape, and one case of attempted poisoning and murder was not challenged by slaves committing violence against those who held them in bondage.

The absence of a single conviction of a slave for suspected insurrection or rebellion in York County from 1700 to 1780 clearly demonstrates that slaves were not attempting to overthrow their masters. It is especially significant because York County embraced two important urban areas where it was more likely for group actions among slaves to be planned and executed.

The white community after 1730, however, was threatened by a significant increase in property crimes—breaking and entering and burglary. Most of that suspected crime was allegedly committed in Williamsburg or Yorktown or by slaves who were owned by Williamsburg masters. The property crime rate increased significantly as Williamsburg doubled its population from 1750 to 1775. The growing opportunity for crime in urban areas where valuable goods were centralized and strategically available for theft and redistribution influenced the increased rate of suspected property crime. The concentration of wealth, the presence of a densely settled black community, which was largely enslaved, and relatively easy access to that wealth offered opportunities to slaves for criminal activity and made whites more vulnerable to crimes against their property in Williamsburg and Yorktown than in the countryside.

The increase in the prosecution rate prompted the gentleman justices after 1750 to condemn to death a proportionally larger number of convicted slave felons charged with breaking and entering and burglary than they had in the preceding fifty years when after 1732 more slaves were granted Benefit of Clergy for similar crimes. Governor Francis Fauquier granted pardons to eight condemned slaves from 1758 through 1768 mediating some of the harsher punishments for slaves. Slave crime, according to the prosecution rate, did not abate as harsher punishments were given by the gentlemen justices. In fact the greater number of hangings seemed to coincide with an ever greater increase of the contradiction in which slaves and masters were caught where a slave was defined as chattel property but held responsible for his behavior as a human being who was denied all natural rights. The experience acted out in the courtroom expressed the terrible “conflict, fear, and accommodation” that existed in all slave societies.

Source: Willis, "The Master's Mercy," pp. 59-60, 70-71, 72-73, 84-85, 88-91, 92-93, 94-95, 100-102, 109-110, 112-115.

* * * *

Oyer and Terminer Cases—1769

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Court house of York County in the Town of York for the Trial of Paul and Peter Negro Slaves belonging to John Chisman for Felony the 1st day of March 1769

Present

Robert Sheild

David Jameson &

Robert Smith

Jaquelin Ambler Gent Justices

The said Paul and Peter were led to the Bar in Custody of the Sherif and Benjamin Waller Esqr the Attorney for our Lord the King in this County comes into Court and Gives the Justices aforesaid to understand and be informed that the aforesaid Paul and Peter the nineteenth day of February in the ninth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the third by the Grace of God of Great Britain France and Ireland King Defender of the faith &c with force and arms at the Parish of York hampton in this County One Sheep of the price of fifteen shillings of the Goods and Chattels of the Honourable William Nelson Esqr then and there found feloniously did take steal and carry away against the Peace of our Lord the King his [torn] and Dignity. An [torn] nd Paul and Peter being thereof arraigned severally Pleaded Not Guilty and for their trial did put themselves upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon divers Witnesses were Sworn and Examined and the Prisoners fully heard in their Defence. On Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that the said Paul and Peter are Guilty in Manner and form as in the Information aforesaid against them is alledged and the said offence being within the benefit of the Act of Assembly It is Considered by the Court that the said Paul and Peter be severally burnt in the left hand which being done It is Ordered that the Sherif give each of them twenty five Lashes at the Public Whipping Post on their bare backs well laid on and then discharge them out of his Custody. The minutes of these Proceedings were signed "Robt Sheild"

Source: York County Judgments and Orders (1768-1770) 214-215.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse of York County in the town of York for the Trial of Allaka a Negro Slave belonging to Benjamin Powell for Felony and Burglary and Jack a Negro Slave belonging to Samuel Johnson for Felony and Burglary the 11th day of October 1769.

Present

Dudley Digges

David Jameson and

Thomas Nelson Junr

Jaquelin Ambler Gent Justices

The said Allaka was led to the Bar in Custody of the Sherif and Benjamin Waller attorney for our Lord the King in this County comes into Court and gives the Justice aforesaid to understand and be Informed that Allaka a Negro Man Slave belonging to Benjamin Powell of the City of Williamsburg the twenty seventh day of September in the ninth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the third by the Grace of God Great Britain France and Ireland King Defender of the faith &c between the hours of nine and twelve in the Night of the same day the Smoke House of William Moody situate in the Parish of Yorkhampton in this County with force and arms feloniously did break and enter and one stone Jug containing five Gallons of Rum of the Value of thirty shillings of the Goods and Chattels of William Baker and four [torn] of twenty shillings Current Money of the Goods and Chattels of the said William Moody in the said House found then and there feloniously did Steal take and carry away against the form of the Act of the General Assembly in such case made and provided and the said Allake being thereof arraigned pleaded Not Guilty and for his trial put himself upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon divers witnesses were sworn and Examined and the Prisoner being heard in his defence On Consideration whereof It is the opinion of the Court that the said Allaka is Guilty of the Felony in the Information aforesaid mentioned but that he is not guilty of the Burglary as his pleading he hath alledged and the said offence being within the benefit of the Act of Assembly in such case made It is considered that the said Allaka be burnt in the left hand which was done in the presence of the Court and It is Ordered that the Sherif give the said Allaka twenty Lashes at the Public Whipping Post on his bare back well laid on and then discharged him out of custody. The said Jack was also set to the bar by the Sherif and the said attorney for our said Lord the King and Gives the Justices aforesd to understand and be informed that the said Jack a Negro Man Slave belonging to Samuel Johnson of the Province of North Carolina the [blank] day of [blank] in the Ninth year of the reign of our said Lord the King with force and arms the dwelling House of John Dunford situate in the Parish of York Hampton in this County between the Hours of Nine and twelve in the night the same day feloniously and burglariously did break and enter and one Mans Rushia Drab coat of the Value of thirty shillings on womans Waistcoat and Petticoat of the value of twenty shillings two Pounds of Spun cotton of the Value of ten shillings and three pieces of Spanish called Silver called Bitts of the Value of one shilling and ten pence half penny of the Goods and Chattels of the said John Dunford in the same dewelling House found then and there feloniously and burglariously did steal take and carry away against the Peace of our said Lord the King his Crown and Dignity and against the form of the Act of the General Assembly in such case made and provided and the said Jack being thereof arraigned pleaded Not Guilty and for trial put himself upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon divers witnesses were Sworn and Examined and the Prisoner heard in his defence [torn] hereof whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that the said Jack is Not Guilty of the Felony and Burglary aforesaid as in pleading he hath alledged but it appearing to the Court that the said Jack is Runaway from his said master who lives out of the Coloy it is ordered that the said Jack be committed to the Goal of the County and that the Sherif advertize his commitment in the Virginia Gazette. The minutes of these proceedings were signed by Dudley Digges Junr.

Source: York County Judgments and Orders (1768-1770) 354-356.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse of York County in the Town of York the 23d day of January 1770 for the Trial of Isaac a Negro Man slave belonging to Catherine Hubard and David a Negro Man Slave belonging to James Hubard for Felony.

Present

Dudley Digges Jaquelin Ambler and
Robert Sheild Augustine Moore Gent Justices.

The said Isaac and David led to the bar in Custody of the Sherif and Benjamin Waller Attorney for our Lord the King in this County comes into Court and gives the Justices aforesaid to understand and be informed that the said Isaac a Negro Man Slave belonging to the said Catherine Hubard of the City of Williamsburg not having the fear of God before his Eyes but being moved and seduced by the Instigation of the Devil the ninth day of January in the tenth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the third by the Grace of God now King of Great Britain &c with force and arms the swelling house of James Hubard situate and being in the Parish of Bruton in the County of York aforesaid feloniously willfully and of his Malace aforethought did set on fire and burn against the Peace of our Lord the King his Crown and Dignity and against the form of the act of the General Assembly in such case made and provided and further the said attorney in formeth the said Justices that the said David a Negro Man Slave belonging to the said James Hubard the day and year aforesaid at the Parish and County aforesaid with force and arms feloniously did comfort and aid abet assist Counsel hire and command the said Isaac feloniously to set on fire and burn the said House against the Peace aforesaid and contrary to the form of the act aforesaid Wherefore &c which Information was read and the said Isaac & David being thereof severally arraigned they pleaded Not Guilty and for their trial put themselves upon the Judgment of the Court whereupon divers witnesses were Sworn and Examined and the said Isaac and David heard in there defence On Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that the said Isaac is Guilty of the Felony aforesaid in manner and form as in the Information aforesaid against hi [torn] red and that the said David is not Guilty as in pleading he hath alledged and it being demanded of the said Isaac if he had any thing to say why the Court should not proceed to pronounce Sentence of death against him upon the Consideration aforesaid he said he had nothing but what he had before said Whereupon It is Considered by the Court that the said Isaac be hanged by the Neck until he be dead and the Sherif is commanded that he cause Execution thereof to be done on Friday the second day of February next and It is further Considered by the Court that the said David be acquitted and discharged of the felony aforesaid But on the motion of the said James Hubard and it appearing to the Court that the said David is a dangerous Person he is committed to the Goal of the County there to remain until he shall be thence discharged with the consent of his master and some Justice of the Peace of this County.

The said Isaac was by the Court Valued at Seventy Pounds Current Money (Certified to the Assembly May 1770) The minutes of these Proceedings were signed Dudley Digges Junr.

Source: York County Judgments and Orders (1768-1770) 419-420.

February 19, 1770

Ben a Negro Man Slave belonging to Thomas Nelson Junr Gent who stands accused of Stealing two Piggs the Property of John Howard was brought into Court and It being demanded of the sd Ben whether he was Guilty thereof he said he was Not Guilty whereupon two Negro witnesses were Sworn and Examined and the said Ben was heard in his defence On Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that he is Guilty of the offence aforesd and It is Ordered that he receive at the Public Whipping Post twenty fine Lashes on his bare back well laid on by the Sherif who is then to discharge him out of Custody.

Source: York County Judgments and Orders (1768-1770) 421.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Court House of York County the 28th day of April 1770 for the Trial of Pant a Negro Man Slave belonging to William Potter on suspicion of Feloniously breaking and Entering in the Night time the House of Severinus Durfey and Stealing thereout a Quantity of Paper Money the Property of the said Durfey.

Present

Dudley Digges

Thomas Nelson Junr

William Digges Junr &

Jaquelin Ambler Gent Justices

The said Pant was set to the bar and it being demanded of him whether he was Guilty of the Felony aforesaid or not he said he was not thereof Guilty whereupon divers Witnesses were sworn and Examined and the sd Pant heard in his defence on Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that he is not thereof Guilty thereupon It is Considered that he be acquitted and discharged of the sd Felony and nothing further appearing against him he is discharged out of Custody. Dudley Digges Junr

Source: York County Judgments and Orders (1768-1770) 462.

Oyer and Terminer Cases—1771

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Court house of York County in the Town of York on the fifth day of January 1771 for the Trial of Scipio and Lucy Negro Slaves belong to Catherine Hubard on suspicion of Feloniusly [*sic*] and Buglariously stealing twenty Pounds Current Money the Property of Robert Hyland.

Present

David Jameson

Jaquelin Ambler

William Digges jr. &

Augustine Moore gent. Justices

The said Scipio and Lucy were set to the Bar and the Attorney for our Lord the King exhibited and Information against the said Scipio and Lucy and they being arraigned Pleaded not Guilty to the said Information and for their Trial put themselves upon the Judgment of the court Whereupon divers Witnesses were Sworn and Examined and the said Scipio and Lucy heard in

their defense on Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the court that the said Scipio and Lucy are Not Guilty of the Felony and Burglary aforesaid as in Pleading they have alledged Therefore It is Considered by the Court that they be acquitted and discharged of the Felony and Burglary aforesaid and nothing further appearing being alledged against them It is Ordered that they be discharged out of Custody. The Minutes of these Proceedings were Signed David Jameson.

Source: York County Judgments and Orders (1770-1772) 155.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Court house of York County in the Town of York the 26th day of June 1771 and in the Eleventh Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King George the Third for the Trial of Paul a negro Slave belonging to George Chaplin and Joe a Negro Slave belonging to Samuel Meredith for Felony and Burglary.

Before Dudly Digges, Robert Shield, Thomas Nelson, David Jameson, and Jaquelin Ambler Gent. Justices.

The said Paul and Joe were set to the Bar and Benjamin Waller Esqr. Attorney for our Lord the king in this County comes into Court before the Justices aforesaid and gives the said Justices to understand and to be informed that the said Paul and Joe the fourteenth day of June aforesaid in the nighttime with force and arms the Warehouse of William Cary Merchant situate and being in the Parish of Yorkhampton in the County of York aforesaid feloniously d[
a]nd five Gallons of Rum of the Value of [
] loaves of Sugar at the Valu[e of] Shalloon of the Value of five shillings five pounds of Shag Tobacco of the value of six shillings one Peice of Woollen Cloth of the Value of twenty shillings and two Peices of Duroy of the Value of four Pounds of the Goods and Chattels of the said William Cary in the same Warehouse found then and there feloniously did take steal and carry away against the Pence of our said Lord the King his Crown and Dignity and against the form of the act of the General Assembly in such Case made and provided and the said Paul and Joe being thereof arraigned they severally pleaded not Guilty and for their trial they put themselves upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon sundry Witnesses were Sworn and examined and the Prisoners were heard what they had to say in their defence On Consideration whereof It is the opinion of the Court that the said Paul is Guilty of the Felony and Burglary aforesaid as in the Information against him is alledged that the said Joe is Guilty of the said Felony but not Guilty of the Burglary [] being severally demanded of the sd. Paul and Joe if they had anything to say why the Court should not proceed to Judgment and Execution against them on the Conditions aforesaid the said Paul said he had nothing but that he had before said and the said Joe Prayed the benefit of the act of Assembly in such cases made to him to be allowed and to him it is granted Therefore It is Considered that the said Paul be hanged by the neck until he be dead and that the said Joe be burnt in the left hand which being done in the Presence of the Court It is Ordered that the Sherif give him thirty nine Lashes at the Public Whipping Post on his Bare back well laid on and then discharge him out of Custody.

The Court Valued the said Paul at Eighty five Pounds Current Money and Ordered him to be Executed by the Sherif at the Usual Place on Saturday the sixth day of July next.

Marginal Note: Cert: delivered to Chaplin.

These Proceedings were Signed Dudley Digges.

Source: York County Judgements and Orders (1770-1772) 311-312.

November 18, 1771

Peter a Negro Man Slave belonging to Robert Howard committed to the Goal of this County on suspicion of Stealing a Hog the property of John Chisman was set to the bar and it being demanded of him if he was Guilty of the said offence he said he was not thereof Guilty whereupon divers Witnesses were Sworn and examined and the said Peter heard in his defence on Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that the said Peter is Guilty of Stealing the said Hog and thereupon It is Ordered [that he] rec[ei]ve twenty Lashes at the Public Whipping Po[st on his ba]ck well laid on and the Sheriff is commanded that he re[ex]ecution thereof to be done.

Source: York County Judgements and Orders (1770-1772) 429.

Oyer and Terminer Cases—1772

At a Court held at the Cour[t house] of York County the fourth day of April, 1772 for the Examination of Jemima a free Mulatta Woman on suspicion of Stealing sundry Goods the Property of Damaris Rogers.

Present Robert Sheild, David Jameson, William Digges Junr. and Augustine Moore Gent Justices.

The Prisoner was set to the Bar and it being demanded of her whether she was Guilty of the Offence aforesaid or not she said she was not thereof Guilty Whereupon divers Witnesses were Sworn and Examined and the Prisoner being heard in her defence It is the Opinion of the Court that she is Guilty of Stealing the said Goods to the Value of Ten Pence and the said Jemima waving any further trial acknowledged herself to be Guilty of the said Offence and put herself upon the Judgment of the Court and thereupon It is Considered by the Court that for the said Offence she receive at the Public Whipping Post twenty five Lashes on her bare back well laid on and It is Ordered that the Sherif cause immediate execution thereof to be done and then discharge her out of Custody.

The Minutes of these Proceedings were Signed

Robert Sheild

Source: York County Judgements and Orders (1770-1772) 513.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Court House of York County the fourth day of April 1772 for the Trial of Moody a Negro Man Slave belonging to Elizabeth Mingham on Suspicion of breaking and entering in the nighttime a House of his Excellencys of the Right Honble John Earl of Dunmore and stealing from thence nin[et]een Turkies the Property of the said John Earl of Dunmore.⁶

Present Robert Sheild, David Jam[eson], Anthony Robinson, William Digges Junr., [Augustine] Moore Gent Justices

The Prison was set to the bar [] Benjamin Waller Esqr. Attorney of Our Lord the King preferred an Information against the said Moody which Infor[] read and the said Moody being thereof arraigned p[lea]ded not Guilty and for his trial put himself upon the Judgment of [the] Court and thereupon divers witnesses were Sworn and examined and the said Moody was heard in his defence on Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that the said Moody is not Guilty of the Burglary but that he is Guilty of Stealing the said Turkies and the said Offence being within the benefit of the Act of Assembly It is Considered by the Court that he be burnt in the left hand which was done in the presence of the Court and it is further Considered that he receive at the public Whipping Post Thirty nine Lashes on his bare back well laid on and It is Ordered that the sherif cause immediate Execution thereof to be done and then discharge him out of Custody.

The minutes of these Proceedings were Signed Robt. Sheild.

Source: York County Judgements and Orders (1770-1772) 513-514.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse of York County in the Town of York the 21st day of July 1772 for the Trial of Mingo a Negro Man slave belonging to Benjamin

⁶ Thomas Everard and John Randolph placed the following announcement in the Virginia Gazette after nineteen turkeys were stolen from Lord Dunmore:

WHEREAS complaint hath been made upon oath that in the night of the 14th of this instant, an outhouse of his Excellency the Lord DUNMORE was broke open, and nineteen TURKIES stolen thereout, and that there is good reason to suspect a Negro man slave named MOODY, belonging to [] Mingham; the said Negro is about 5 feet 9 inches high, a sl[i]m made fellow, and had on when he went away a cotton jacket, and blue breeches: These are therefore, in his Majesty's name, to require and command all sheriffs, constables, and other his Majesty's liege people, to make diligent search and pursuit after the said Negro slave Moody, and him having found, to apprehend and carry him before some Justice of the Peace, in order to be dealt with as the Law directs.

Everard and Randolph also noted that "A reward of FIVE POUNDS will be paid to the person who shall apprehend the thief, upon his conviction of the above offence." *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., 26 March 1772.

Powell on suspicion of stealing a Sheep the property of his Excellency the Right Honourable John Earl of Dunmore

Present Dudley Digges, Thomas Nelson Junr., Starkey Robinson, Augustine Moore,
Dudley Digges Junr., Hugh Nelson and John Dixon Gent Justices.

The said Mingo was set to the Bar and the Attorney of our Lord the King proferred an Information which was read and the said Mingo being thereof arraigned pleaded not Guilty and for Trial put himself upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon divers Witenesses were Sworn and Examined and the Prisoner was heard in his defence on Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that the said Mingo be burnt in the left hand which was done in the presence of the Court and It is Ordered that he receive at the Public Whipping Post twenty five Lashes on his bare Back well laid on and It is Commanded the Sherif that he cause execution thereof immediately to be done and then to discharge the said Mingo out of Custody.

The Minutes of these Proceedings were Signed Dudley Digges.

Source: York County Judgements and Orders (1772-1774) 83.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Court House of York County in the Town of York on Tuesday the 22d day of December 1772 and in the thirteenth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King George the third.

Present

Dudley Digges, Thomas Nelson Junr., Wm. Digges Junr., and John Dixon Gent Justices

Patrick a Negro Man Slave belonging to William Baptist and Moody a Negro Man Slave belonging to Elizabeth Mingham committed to the Goal of this County on suspicion of Felony and Burglary in breaking and entereing in the Night Time a House of Mary Potter and Stealing from thence [] the property of the said Potter were led to the Bar and the Attorney for our Lord the King Exhibited an Information against them for the said Offence which Information was read and the said Patrick and Moody Pleased not Guilty of the Felony aforesaid but not Guilty of the Burglary and that the said Moody is not Guilty as in pleading he hath alledged but that he is Guilty of a Misdemeanor and the said Patricks Offence being within the benefit of the Act It is Considered by the Court that he be burnt in the left Hand which was done in the presence of the Court and It is Ordered that the said Patrick and Moody severally receive at the Public Whipping Post thirty nine Lashes on his bare back well laid on and It is Commanded the Sherif that he cause immediate Execution thereof to be done and that they be then discharged out of Custody.

These Proceedings were Signed Dudley Digges.

Source: York County Judgements and Orders (1772-1774) 193.

Oyer and Terminer Cases—1773

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse of York County in the Town of York on Monday the 18th day of January 1773 and in the thirteenth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King George the Third for the Trial of Sam a Negro Slave belonging to William Eggleston on suspicion of a Rape Committed on the Body of Molly a Mulatto Woman Child under the age of ten Years the property of George Pitt.

Present Peyton Randolph, Dudley Digges, Thos. Nelson Junr. & Hugh Nelson Justices

The said Sam was set to the Bar and the Attorney of our Lord the King Exhibited an Information against the said Sam for the said Felony and he being thereof arraigned Pleaded not Guilty and for his Trial put himself upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon divers Witnesses being Sworn and Examined and Sam was heard in his defence On Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that the said Sam is Not Guilty of the Rape aforesaid as in pleading he hath alledged and nothing further appearing against him It is Ordered that he be discharged out of Custody.

The Minutes of these Proceedings were Signed Peyton Randolph

Source: York County Judgements and Orders (1772-1774) 210.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse of York County in the Town of York on Monday the 18th day of January 1773 and in the thirteenth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King George the Third for the Trial of Jack a Negro Man Slave belonging to John Murray for Felony and Burglary. Present the same Justices as above

(Peyton Randolph, Dudley Digges, Thos. Nelson Junr. & Hugh Nelson Justices).

The said Jack was set to the Bar and the Attorney of our Lord the King preferred an Information against [inst] that he the eighth day of this Instant Jan[uary] the Kitchen of George Riddell between the Hours of ten and twelve in the Night of the same day Situate in the Parish of York- hampton in the County aforesaid did break and enter and one holland Shirt of the Value of twenty shillings one Waistcoat and one pair of Britches of the Value of twenty shillings one Waistcoat and one pair of Britches of the Value of twenty shillings of the goods and Chattels of the said George Riddell then and there being found feloniously did Steal take and Carry away against the Peace of our said Lord the King his Crown and Dignity and against the form of the act of Assembly in such Case made and Provided and the said Jack being thereof arraigned pleaded not Guilty and for his trial put himself upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon sundry Witnesses were Sworn and Examined and the said Jack was heard in his Defence On Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the While Court that the said Jack is Guilty of the Felony and Burglary aforesaid in Manner and form as in the Information aforesaid against him is alledged and it being demanded of him what he had to say why the Court should not proceed to pronounce Sentence of death against him according to Law he said he had nothing beside what he had before said Whereupon It is Considered by the Court that the said Jack be

upon the Judgment of the Court whereupon sundrey Witnesses were Sworn and examined and as well the Attorney of our Lord the King as the said Moody were fully heard on Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that the said Moody is not guilty of willfully and on purpose putting out the Eye of the said Jack Therefore It is Considered by the Court that he be acquitted of the Felony aforesd. But it appearing that the said Moody hath great mesbehaved himself in this matter It is Ordered that he receive thrity nine Lashes at the Public Whipping Post on his bare back well laid on that the Sherif cause the same immediately to be done and then discharge the said Moody out of Custody

The Minutes of these proceedings were Signed Dudley Digges.

Source: York County Judgements and Orders (1772-1774) 362-363.

Oyer and Terminer Cases—1774

An act of Oyer and Terminer held at the cthouse in the town of York the eighth day of March 1774 for the trial of Hannibal a Negro man slave belonging to James Sheilds for felony

Present: Dudley Digges, Thomas Nelson Jr., David Jameson, Jaquelin Ambler, and William Reynolds gent justices

The sd Hannibal was set to the bar and Benajmin Waller attor for our Lord the King comes into ct and gives the justices aforesd to understand and be informed that the sd Hannibal the thirteenth day of February last w/ force and arms at the Psh of Bruton in the cnty of York eight Turkies of the value of twenty five shillgs of the goods and chattels of the right Honourable John Earl of Dunmore his Majestys Lieutenant and Governor General of Virginia then and there found feloniously did take steal and carry away agt the peace of our Lord the King his crown and Dignity to wch the sd Hannibal upon his arraignment pleaded not guilty and of his trial put himself upon the judgmt of the ct whereupon divers witnesses were sworn and examined and the sd Hannibal was heard in his defence on consideration whereof it is the opinion of the whole ct that the sd Hannibal is guilty of the felony aforesd in manner and form as above agt him is alledged and it appearing that the sd Hannibal was at a ct of Oyer & Terminer held in James City Cnty the 4th day of Dec. last convicted of felony and burnt in the hand for the same the record of wch conviction was produced in ct he is now denied the benefit of the act and it being demanded if he had any thing further to say he sd he had nothing. Therefore it is considered by the ct that he be hanged by the neck until he be dead and he is thereupon remanded to goal and it is ordered that the sherif cause execution of this judgment to be done on Tuesday the twenty second day of this instant March. The sd Hannibal is valued by the ct at seventy five pds. current money.

The minutes of these proceedings were signed

Dudley Digges.

Source: York County Judgements and Orders (1772-1774) 529.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse in the Town of York in the County of York on Tuesday the fifteenth day of November 1774 and in the fifteenth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King George the third for the Trial of Ned a Negro Man Slave belonging to John Randolph Esqr for Felony and Burglary.

Present

Dudley Digges Jaquelin Ambler Hug[h] Nelson John Dixon and Joseph Hornsby Gent Justices.

The said Ned was set to the Bar by the Sherif and Benjamin Waller Esqr attorney for our Lord the King in the said County of York comes into Court before the Justices of our said Lord the King and Gives the said Justices to understand and be informed that the said Ned a Negro Male Slave belonging to John Randolph of the city of Williamsburgh Esqr the thirtieth day of October in the fifteenth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the third now King of Great Britain &c with force and arms the dwelling House of Christiana Campbell widow situate and being in the Parish of Bruton in the County of York aforesaid between the Hours of nine and twelve in the Night of the same day feloniously and burglariously did break and enter and two Trunks of the Value of twenty shillings nine shirts of the value of Nine Pounds six pair of Stockings of the value of three Pounds six handkerchiefs of the Value of twenty shillings and sundry Pieces of cut Silver of the Value of twelve pounds ten shillings of the Goods and Chattels of Simon Fraiser merchant nine shirts of the Value of Nine pounds six pair of stockings of the Value of three Pounds and six handkerchiefs of the value of twenty shillings Current Money of the Goods and Chattels of Bennet Brown Merchant in the same dwelling House found then and there feloniously and burglariously did take Steal and Carry away against the Peace of our said Lord the King his Crown and Dignity. And the said Ned being thereof arraigned he Pleaded Not Guilty and for Trial put himself upon the Judgment of the Court and thereupon sundry witnesses were Sworn and Examined and the said Ned was heard in his defence On Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the whole Court that he is Guilty of the felony and burglary aforesaid in manner and form as above against him is alledged And It being demanded of the said Ned if he had anything to say why the Court should not proceed to pronounce the Sentence of Death against him upon the Conviction aforesaid he said he had nothing beside what he had before said Whereupon It is Considered by the Court that he be hanged by the Neck until he be dead and he is remanded to Goal, And It is Commanded the Sherif that he cause Execution of this Judgment to be done on Tuesday the twenty ninth day of this Instant November.

The said Ned was by the Court Valued at Eighty Pounds currt Money

The minutes of these Proceedings were signed Dudley Digges

Source: York County Order Book 4 (1774-1784) 60-61.

At a Court held of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse in the Town of York on Monday the 21st day of November 1774 and in the fifteenth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King George the third.

Present

Dudley Digges Thomas Nelson Junr Hugh Nelson and William Reynold Gent Justices

Ben a negro man Slave belonging to John Toomer committed to the Goal of this County on suspicion of Felony was led to the Bar and Benjamin Waller attorney for our Lord the King in this County comes into Court before the Justices aforesaid and Gives the said justices to Understand and be Informed that Ben a Negro man Slave belonging to John Toomer of the said County the seventh day of October last past with Force and Arms Six Sides and two Skins of Leather out of the Tan Vat of Thomas Pescod of the County aforesaid of the Value of fifty shilling the Property of the said Thomas Pescod in the Parish of Yorkhampton in the County aforesaid then and there being feloniously did steal take and carry away against the Peace of our said Lord the King his Crown and Dignity And the said Ben being thereof arraigned Pleaded not Guilty and for his Trial put himself upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon diverse witnesses were sworn and Examined and the said Ben was heard in his defence On Consideration whereof It is the Opinion of the Court that the said Ben is not Guilty of the felony aforesaid as in pleading he hath alledged and nothing further appearing or being alledged against him Therefore It is Considered by the Court that he be acquitted of the felony aforesaid and discharged out of Custody.

The minutes of these Proceedings were signed Dudley Digges

Source: York County Order Book 4 (1774-1784) 62.

Oyer and Terminer Cases—1775

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse of York County in the Town of York on Wednesday the 29th day of March 1775 and in the fifteenth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King George the third for the Trial of Ned a Negro Slave for Felony.

Before David Jameson Jacquelin Ambler Joseph Hornsby and William Reynolds Gent
Justices

The said Ned being set to the bar by the sherif Benjamin Waller Esqr attorney for our Lord the King comes into Court and Gives the said Justices to understand and be informed that the said Ned a Negro man Slave belonging to Elizabeth Davis orphan of John Davis decd the 20th day of Februrary last past at the Parish of Bruton in this County with force and arms two Turkies of the Value of five shillings of the Goods and Chattels of William Rose then and there found feloniously did take steal and carry away against the Peace of our Lord the King his Crown and Dignity and the said Ned being thereof arraigned pleaded Not Guilty and of his trial put himself upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon divers witnesses were sworn and examined and the said Ned was fully heard in his defence On Consideration whereof It is the opinion of the Court that the said Ned is Guilty of the felony aforesaid in manner and form as in the Information aforesaid against him is alledged and the said offence being within the benefit of the Act of Assembly It is Considered by the Court that the said Ned be burnt in the hand which was accordingly done in the presence of the Court and he is thereupon discharged out of Custody.

The minutes of these Proceedings were signed David Jameson.

Source: York County Order Book 4 (1774-1784) 85.

At a Court of Oyer and terminer held at the Courthouse in the Town of York on Saturday the tenth day of June 1775 for the Trial of Peter and Paul two Negro Slaves belonging to John Chisman on suspicion of stealing a calf the property of William Smith.

Present David Jameson William Nelson Starkey Robinson and Hugh Nelson Gent Justices.

The said Peter and Paul were set to the Bar an Information was exhibited against them and being thereof arraigned Pleaded Not Guilty Whereupon sundry witness were sworn and examined and the sd Peter and Paul heard in their defence On Consideration whereof It is the opinion of the Court that the said Peter and Paul are not Guilty of the felony aforesaid as they in pleading have alledged and nothing further appearing against them It is Ordered that they acquitted and discharged out of Custody

These Proceedings were signed David Jameson

Source: York County Order Book 4 (1774-1784) 88.

Oyer and Terminer Cases—1776

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse of York County in the Town of York the 19th day of August 1776 for the trial of James a Negro Slave belonging to John Mayo for Felony and Burglary.

Present

David Jameson, Starkey Robinson, William Digges Junr, Augustine Moore and William Reynolds Gent Justices.

The said James being set to the bar Edmund Randolph Esqr attorney General for the Commonwealth of Virginia comes into the Court of the said County before the Justices of the said Court and gives them to understand and be informed that he the said James a Negro Man Slave belonging to John Mayo of the County of Cumberland on Tuesday the thirteenth day of this Instant August between the Hours of ten and twelve in the night of the same day with force and arms at the Parish of Bruton in the said County of York the Dwelling House of one Serafino Formicola in the said Parish and first mentioned County scituate feloniously and burglariously did break and enter and one [g]uinea of the value of twenty six shillings and three golden rings of the Value of twenty shillings each of the Goods and Chattels of the said Serafino Formicola in the said Dwelling House then and there being found feloniously and burglariously did steal take and carry away against the Peace and Dignity of the said Commonwealth And the said James being thereof arraigned he said he was not thereof Guilty and for trial put himself upon the Judgment of the Court Whereupon divers witnesses were sworn and Examined and the said

James was heard in his defence On Consideration whereof It is the opinion of the whole court that the said James is guilty in manner and form as in the Information above against him is alledged and it being demanded of the said James if he had any thing to say why the Court should not proceed to pronounce Sentence of death against him upon the conviction aforesaid He said he had nothing besides what he had before said Therefore It is Considered by the Court that he be hanged by the Neck until he be dead and It is Ordered that Execution be done by the Sherif of this County on Friday the 20th day of September next and the Goal of the County being insufficient the said James is remanded to the keeper of the Public Goal in Williamsburgh there to be safely kept until the time of his Execution aforesaid. The said James is valued by the Court at fifty five pounds Current money.

The minutes of these Proceedings were signed David Jameson.

Source: York County Order Book 4 (1774-1784) 125.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Courthouse of York County in the Town of York on Monday the 21st day of October 1776

Present

David Jameson	William Digges Junr
Starkey Robinson	Augustine Moore &
William Graves	William Reynolds Gent Justices

James a Negro Slave belonging to John Mayo convicted of Felony and Burglary before Justices of Oyer and Terminer in a Court held in this County the 19th day of August last past for which Sentence of death was pronounce against him and Execution thereof Ordered by the said Court to be done on the 20th day of September then next following was set to the bar and It appearing to the Court that the said James before the day appained as aforesaid for the Execution of the said Sentence had escaped out of the Public Goal It was demanded of him whether he is the same Person who was Convicted as aforesaid and if he had any thing to say why the Sentence formerly pronounced against him should not be executed He said he is the same Person and that he had nothing to say for himself in bar of the Execution of the said Sentence Whereupon It is Ordered by the Court that the Sherif of this County cause the said James to be hanged by the Neck until he be dead on the second Friday after the next County Court which shall be held for this County and he is remanded to the Public Goal there to be safely kept until the time of his Execution aforesaid.

The minutes of these Proceedings were signed David Jameson.

Source: York County Order Book 4 (1774-1784) 125.

Oyer and Terminer Cases—1777

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer held at the Court House of York County in the Town of York on Monday the 17th day of February 1777

Present

Thomas Nelson Junr Starkey Robinson, William Digges Junr John Dixon William Reynolds & Robert Prentis Gent: Justices

On the motion of Mr attorney General It is Ordered that the Sherif of this County cause James a Negro Slave belonging to John Mayo to be carried to the usual Place of Execution near the City of Williamsburgh on Friday the 21st day of this Instant February there to be hanged by the Neck until he be dead in pursuance of a Judgment passed on him by the Justices of Oyer and Terminer in this County the 19th day of August 1776 for felony and burglary by him committed and of which he stands convicted.

The minutes of these proceedings were signed Thos Nelson Junr

Source: York County Order Book 4 (1774-1784) 136.

The Brush-Everard House

<p>This examination focuses on the slaves who lived and worked in Thomas Everard's Williamsburg household; the enslaved laborers who tended the fields on his plantations in James City and Brunswick counties; the slaves owned by James and Frances (Everard) Horrocks; and the fate of Everard's enslaved men, women, and children after his death in 1781.</p>
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Thomas Everard's Williamsburg Slaves

Thomas Everard was an orphan at Christ Church Hospital, a charity school in London, when he became an apprentice of Matthew Kemp of Virginia at about the age of fifteen. Kemp was a burgess for Middlesex County and a clerk in the Secretary's Office and later for the House of Burgesses. Kemp trained his apprentice in legal procedures and the keeping of legal records. Everard finished his indenture to Kemp and served as clerk of the Elizabeth City County Court from June 16, 1742 to September 19, 1745. He received an appointment as deputy clerk of the York County Court on September 16, 1745 and as clerk of the York County Court in November of the same year. Entries in the Ann Coke Pattison Account Book in August 1745 indicate that Everard stayed at Pattison's tavern before he relocated to Williamsburg. Everard also paid the tavern keeper for the diet of a slave boy on August 17 and August 22 of that year. Unfortunately, the name of this slave boy does not appear in the account book.⁷

⁷Ann Coke Pattison Account Book, p. 65. Virginia Historical Society.

Thomas Everard and Diana Robinson, daughter of Anthony and Diana (Tabb) Robinson of Charles Parish, probably met during the time that he lived in Elizabeth City County. They were married by 1746. Diana Robinson could have received slaves, including her personal maid, from her father as part of her dowry. It is possible that Anthony Robinson's slave Scipio was one of the enslaved laborers who became Everard's property. Scipio was adjudged to be eleven years old in June 1740, a few months after he arrived in the colony on a ship from Africa. He was an adult when he was baptized in Bruton Parish on July 1, 1751. Perhaps Phillis (an adult baptized on May 7, 1749) and Beck (an adult baptized on May 6, 1751) were also a part of Diana Robinson Everard's dowry.

Everard, his wife, and their domestic slaves lived in a dwelling house on Lots 263 and 264 on Nicholson Street that the clerk purchased from John Wall on October 17, 1745. They may have lived on this property until August 28, 1756 when Everard sold Lots 263 and 264 to Anthony Hay. It is likely that Everard purchased Lots 165 and 166 on Palace Green sometime in 1756. However, there is no documentary evidence that places the clerk and his family in the house that bears his name until September 1, 1779, when John and Sarah Tazewell conveyed three lots that adjoined Everard's Palace Green property to Henry Tazewell.

Everard might have moved his family and household slaves to Anthony Robinson's house in Charles Parish during the smallpox epidemic of 1747 and 1748. On August 13, 1747, the York County Court decided to hold their next meeting at the house of William Corridon, a tavern keeper who lived next to the Charles Parish glebe land. The York County Court met at Corridon's in September and November of 1747 and January of the following year. The justices returned to Yorktown for the February 1747/8 session. The fact that Everard's name did not appear on Doctor de Sequeyra's list of Williamsburg households suggests that he and his family were still in Charles Parish in February 1747/8.

The number of slaves owned by the clerk increased during the late 1740s and the early 1750s. Four enslaved individuals belonging to Everard received their baptisms between September 3, 1749 and December 3, 1752: Venus on September 3, 1749; a second slave named Venus on March 4, 1750/1; Charles on June 1, 1752; and Richard on December 3, 1752. The clerk bought a wench named Myrtilla at the sale of Doctor Kenneth McKenzie's personal property on April 30, 1755. Myrtilla was valued at £40 in the 1755 inventory of McKenzie's estate.

The Everard family gained possession of three Robinson slaves after the death of Diana Robinson in early 1762. The widow Robinson left a slave named Nero to her son-in-law. Her granddaughter, Frances Everard, inherited a slave called Beck. This slave girl was valued at £20 when Diana Robinson's estate was settled on August 30, 1764. The York County Clerk paid £70.8 for Cupid at the sale of Robinson's estate. Cupid was likely purchased to work on Everard's plantation in James City County.

Everard enrolled two of his slave children in the Bray School in September 1762. Mary was seven years old and Harry was two years younger when they were students of Mrs. Wager. Mary and Harry were not the only slave children in the Everard household. Beck's son Nero was baptized on June 5, 1763. Elizabeth, daughter of Kate, received her baptism on the same day.

Alan, son of Myrtilla, was baptized on June 3, 1764. Two more children were baptized in 1765: Peter, the son of Kate, on March 3 and Venus' son William on the first day of December. Myrtilla's second son, Tom, received his baptism on October 5, 1766 as did Daniel, Kate's third child, on June 7, 1767.

Everard became the owner of three more slaves, an infant and two adults, in 1768. Kate's son, Watt, received his baptism on the third day of July in that year. Everard purchased two slaves from the estate of Governor Francis Fauquier between March and September 1768: Bristol—an adult who arrived in Virginia from the west coast of Africa by early 1767—and a man called Old John. Everard paid three-quarters of their appraised values—£ 41 for Bristol and £30 for Old John—because they chose him as their new master according to the terms of Fauquier's will. Everard probably was a frequent visitor to the Palace during the governor's lifetime. He witnessed the governor's will and received an appointment to appraise Fauquier's estate. Perhaps Everard bought Bristol and Old John because of their skills as waiting men and the prestige that they would bring to his household. He hired Bristol to Governor Botetourt on several occasions between January 1769 and May 1770. Sarah was a woman whom Everard hired out to the governor from August 1769 to August 1770 for £8. Old John might have been one of the Everard slaves who worked at the Governor's Palace in January 1769. It is possible that Everard decided to sell an enslaved man in June 1769 because he was pleased with the work that Bristol and Old John performed in his household. On June 9, 1769, Jefferson made the following notation in his memorandum book: “Tell G. Jones Everard will sell servt. He cannot shave or dress, and games a little which is cause of selling. He will take 80 £. 20 years old. Sensible enough.”⁸

Determination of how many slaves were in the Everard household in the early 1770s and exactly what kind of work they performed is difficult because that many of his slaves have just one reference in the York County Court records or in the Bruton Parish Birth and Baptism Register. He would have had a household staff that reflected his prominence as clerk of the York County Court, Bruton Parish vestryman, clerk of the House of Burgesses' Committee for Courts and Justice, registrar of the Court of Vice-Admiralty, judge of the Court of Admiralty, trustee for the founding of the Public Hospital, and mayor of Williamsburg (1766 and 1771). Everard remodeled his house in the early 1770s. Mark R. Wenger notes that

His renovation enlarged and transformed the interior of the house—new wainscoting, new wallpaper, and new paint amplified its already genteel character and imparted to the whole a decidedly up-to-date look. The endeavor was almost certainly linked to Everard's growing stature in public affairs in the late 1760s....Looking back on his humble origins, Thomas Everard must have taken some pride in his remarkable ascent. In 1772 he purchased caps for a pair of postilions. Evidently he was now traveling by coach, a manner of conveyance reserved for leading members of the gentry. Like a coach with liveried postilions, Everard's newly adorned house aptly expressed his social attainments.⁹

⁸ James A. Bear, Jr., and Lucia C. Stanton, eds., *Jefferson's Memorandum Books. Accounts, with Legal Records and Miscellany, 1767-1826*, 2 vols., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 1:19.

⁹Mark R. Wenger, "Investigations at the Brush-Everard House," *The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, March 1994, p.

In February 1773, Everard purchased “4 Strong Great Coats for Negros 2 for men about the House and 2 for Lads Postillions” from John Norton and Sons.¹⁰ His footmen wore livery when they opened the front door to his house.

It is likely that Everard’s female slaves played an important part in raising his two daughters, Frances and Martha, after the death of their mother. There is no definitive evidence that an adult white woman was a part of the Everard household during the years between Diana Everard’s death and the marriage of her daughters. The female slaves on the property—Beck, Kate, Myrtilla, and Venus—may have helped one of Diana Everard’s sisters care for Everard’s daughters and teach them housewifery skills. Perhaps Frances Robinson Digges and Martha Robinson Jones looked out for their nieces and namesakes. John and Martha Robinson named their son Everard in May 1769, a sign of a close relationship with the Everard family. Maybe the Robinsons helped care for their nieces. It is also possible that Frances and Martha Everard spent time at the homes of their aunts and uncles. It is likely that one of their father’s slaves would have accompanied them on a trip to Yorkhampton Parish, Charles Parish, or Warwick County.

The marriage of Frances Everard to Reverend James Horrocks in 1765 had an impact on the slaves in the Everard household. Thomas Everard, as was the custom, probably gave his daughter her personal maid and several additional slaves as part of her dowry. Frances Everard Horrocks owned Beck, a slave girl whom she inherited from her grandmother, Diana Tabb Robinson, in 1762. The Everard slaves became a part of a household that included the minister’s waiting man, two women, and three children.¹¹ The President’s house at the College of William and Mary was a short distance from Everard’s house on Palace Green so the slaves who moved with Fanny at the time of her marriage were not far from their families and friends.

Thomas Everard and the Horrocks Slaves

The lives of the Horrocks slaves were disrupted in June 1771 when James and Frances Horrocks decided to go to England and then to Oporto, Portugal, hoping to regain their health. It is possible that their slaves moved to the Everard house when their master and mistress left Williamsburg. The Reverend Horrocks died in Oporto on March 20, 1772 and Frances Horrocks returned to England for several months after his death. In July 1772, Everard wrote John Norton that he could not “sufficiently express my concern and surprise, to hear Mr. Horrocks died

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¹⁰ Frances Norton Mason, ed., *John Norton & Sons Merchants of London and Virginia: Being the Papers from the Counting House for the Years 1750 to 1795*, (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1937), pp. 300-301.

¹¹ John Adam, the son of Aggy, was baptized on September 6, 1767 and Molly’s daughter Sally on October 9, 1768. Horrocks sent a slave named Charlotte to the Bray School in February 1769. The minister’s waiting man ran errands to the Governor’s Palace in April and November 1769. He also hired his waiting man to Governor Botetourt on two occasions in December 1769. Horrocks had an unknown number of slaves who tended the fields on the glebe lands (the property that each parish owned for the minister to plant) in Bruton Parish. In May 1768 the grand jury presented the minister for not keeping an overseer on his plantation.

without making a will, surely he never could intend his Wife should have only what the Law would not suffer him to deprive her of; I cannot entertain such a thought, her conduct deserved much better treatment, and therefore imagine he did not know how the Law would dispose of his Estate." He continued that

A Person dying without Will, leaving no Children, his Widow is entitled to one half of the Personal Estate for ever and to one third of his Slaves for her life only, the rest of the Estate goes to the Heir at Law; so that in this case, Mr. Horrocks's Brother who is his Heir, will after payment of the Debts be entitled to one half the Personal Estate and to two thirds of the Slaves and at the Death of Mrs. Horrocks to the other third of the Slaves this distribution of the Estate I look upon to be extremely unjust and which I am well satisfied Mr. Horrocks could not intend.¹²

Based on Everard's explanation of the dispersal of Horrocks's estate, the minister's brother was entitled to six bond laborers and Frances Horrocks had a lifetime right to three slaves.

It is possible that the widow Horrocks was back in Williamsburg by September 1772 when her father wrote another letter to Norton about her estate. Everard asked the merchant to talk to Horrocks's brother about "his right to the Slaves which lately belonging to Mr. Horrocks." He added "Whatever success you may have in this Matter I shall be glad to be advised of as soon as possible that I may satisfy the poor Negroes what is to become of them as they are very unwilling to part with their Mistress."¹³ It is clear that Everard realized that the Horrocks slaves did not want to become the property of a man in England whom they did not know. In November of the same year the clerk wrote that

I shall be glad as soon as possible to hear the Success of the proposal I desired you to make to Mr. Horrocks's brother for the right to his part of the Negros if he accepts it you will be pleased to pay him £ 100 in part, inclosed you have a Bill drawn by William Randolph on Farrell & Jones of Bristol intended for that purpose and as soon as I can be furnished with the Accounts of what is due from the Estate I will make out a general Account of the whole and remit for Mr. Thomas Horrocks the balance that will be due to him.¹⁴

On October 2, 1773, Everard informed Norton that he had sent an account of the settlement of Reverend Horrocks's estate to his brother. This account would enable him, with Norton's assistance, "to Settle with Mr. Thos. Horrocks for his part of the Estate, and to pay him his part in Signing a Bill of Sale for the Slaves; this I could wish, you would pay some Attention to, and have done without loss of time."¹⁵

¹²Mason, ed., *John Norton & Sons Merchants of London and Virginia*, pp. 260-261.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 273-274.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 282-283.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 353-355.

Thomas Horrocks granted his right to six slaves who had been owned by his brother to Frances Horrocks on December 9, 1773. The widow Horrocks became the owner of three men called Sam, Mingo, and Dick; two women known by the names of Lender and Polly; and Beck, a girl. These six slaves represented two-thirds of the slaves held by Horrocks at the time of his death. Unfortunately, the deed did not note whether these slaves had been in his Williamsburg household or on the glebe land in Bruton Parish. In addition, the deed did not indicate which slaves Horrocks owned before his marriage and which slaves he gained possession of at the time of his marriage in 1765. Frances Everard Horrocks died soon after she became the owner of Sam, Mingo, Dick, Lender, Polly, and Beck. It is possible that her sister Patsy gained possession of some or all of the Horrocks slaves. If so, these enslaved individuals experienced another transition in their lives when Patsy Everard married Doctor Isaac Hall of Petersburg in c. 1774. Hall studied medicine in Scotland, graduated from Edinburgh University, and returned to Virginia in late 1772.

Thomas Everard's Rural Slaves

The 1768 and 1769 Williamsburg-James City County Tax Lists indicate that Everard also had enslaved laborers on 600 acres in James City County. He paid the assessment on nine tithes in both years. Scipio, Charles, and Richard might have been three of the enslaved individuals who worked in the fields on Everard's plantation. A man named William Watts was the clerk's overseer.¹⁶ Perhaps the slave boy named Davy, who ran away in late July 1769, left the clerk's James City County plantation. Everard offered a handsome reward for his return, but did not mention if Davy was an urban or a rural slave. It is possible that the "VERY good Negro CARPENTER" whom Everard was willing to sell or to hire in December 1773 worked on his plantation.¹⁷ An October 1774 advertisement noted that Everard's plantation was near the mouth of Archer's Hope Creek and that he had an overseer on the premises. The presence of an overseer suggests that Everard also had slaves on his rural land in 1774. This is the last reference to his property in James City County.

Everard managed slaves on his plantation in Brunswick County in addition to the enslaved men, women, and children who lived on his Williamsburg property and on his land in James City County. On July 20, 1771, he wrote to John Norton in London that he was sending him five hogsheads of tobacco "made at my own Plantation upon fresh Lands in Brunswick."¹⁸ In September 1772, Everard informed Norton that he had sent four hogsheads of tobacco from his land in Brunswick which "if the Inspectors are proper judges they say it is very good my Overseer by some Accident was prevented from bringing to the Inspection the rest of his Crop or I should have sent you double the quantity."¹⁹ It is possible that his Brunswick slaves wore

¹⁶ In December 1768 Watts informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* that he "Found in the quarter of Mr. Everard that I took over, in November 1767, a brown drab cloth GREAT COAT." *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., December 29, 1768.

¹⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., December 23, 1773.

¹⁸ Mason, ed., *John Norton & Sons*, p. 170.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 273-274.

clothes made out of the "100 yards of blue Plains for Negro" that he had ordered from Norton on March 10, 1771 "for next years Cloathing."²⁰

The following August Everard told Norton that "I have given your son Notes for six hogsheads, made to my Brunswick Plantation, he has put it on board Capt. Power it grew on fresh high Land and is said to be very good; let what you think the Value be Insured on it."²¹ He decided to sell some, if not all, of his land in Brunswick in 1778. In October of that year he announced: "TO BE SOLD Eleven hundred and thirty six ACRES of LAND in Brunswick, with the SLAVES thereon, being ten in number. For terms enquire of Mr. William Withers in Dinwiddie, or the subscriber in Williamsburg."²² Everard apparently sold this property, as he did not place an additional announcement of his intentions to sell the plantation and the ten enslaved laborers who tended tobacco fields.

The Death of Thomas Everard

Thomas Everard died between January 31, 1781 and February 19, 1781. Neither his will, an inventory, nor the settlement of his estate survives. It is likely that Patsy Hall gained possession of several slaves after the death of her father. Isaac Hall became the owner of his father-in-law's Williamsburg property. The doctor sold Lots 165, 166, and 172 to Doctor James Carter in 1788. It is possible that some of the slaves belonging to Everard's estate were also sold at this time.

If any Everard slaves moved to Petersburg with the Halls they might have been reunited with enslaved individuals who had been part of the Horrocks household. The Petersburg Personal Property Tax Lists are extant from 1788 onward. However, these lists do not contain slave names. Isaac Hall's name appeared on the tax lists as a slave owner from 1788 to 1805:

- 1788—nine slaves over sixteen and three slaves under sixteen
- 1789—eleven slaves over sixteen
- 1795—eight slaves over sixteen
- 1796—eight slaves over sixteen
- 1797 to 1799—six slaves over sixteen
- 1800—six slaves over sixteen
- 1801—five slaves over sixteen
- 1802—eight slaves over sixteen and one slave over twelve and under sixteen
- 1803—eight slaves over sixteen and two slaves over twelve and under sixteen
- 1804—nine slaves over sixteen and one slave over twelve and under sixteen

²⁰John Norton and Sons Papers, 1750-1902, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Microfilm M-1485.2, [Folder 37]. See Appendix I, typescript of invoices accompanying letters from Thomas Everard of Williamsburg to John Norton & Sons of London from the Brush-Everard House History, for additional items that Everard bought for his slaves from Norton.

²¹Mason, ed., *John Norton & Sons*, pp. 344-346.

²²*Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., October 16, 1778.

1805—five males over sixteen, four females over sixteen, and one female over twelve and under sixteen.²³

A few documents provide information about the slaves owned by the doctor. In September 1802, Hall emancipated "Milly a Negro woman Slave, late my property, and I do hereby relinquis and renounce all my right and title to the future labour and and [*sic*] services of the said Negro woman Milly & do declare that she shall enjoy her freedom in as full and complete a manner as other free black people."²⁴ The doctor included the names of several slaves in his November 24, 1805 will:

Whereas I have already given to my son Everard Hall five Negroes, Jack Sylvia, two women named Nancy & Billy [*sic*], and as I wish to be altogether fair & equal in the distribution of my small fortune between my two Children, I do hereby give or bequeath to my daughter Dian Robinson Hall the following slaves Sukey Patty Venus Armistead and either Molly or Betty as she may chuse -

All the rest and residue of my estate, real & personal, of whatever nature or kind I give to my beloved wife Martha Hall, to her and to her heirs forever I feel the most perfect Confidence that she will by gift or by Will dispose of it equally and impartially between our Children or their issue -²⁵

Hall's will was probated on February 3, 1806 and his inventory was recorded one month later.²⁶ His personal estate included the following slaves:

Negro Johnny	[£]	180..0..0
" Daniel		195
" Bob		150
" Sipio		60
" Sam (Blacksmith)		210
" old Sam		36
" Thomas		120
" Dick		105
1 boy Armistead		60
1 Woman Polly		90
" Lydia & Child		90
" Molly		36
" Betty		45
" Patty		60
" Sucky		45
" Venus		75

²³ Petersburg Personal Property Tax Lists 1788 to 1805.

²⁴Petersburg Hustings Court Deeds (3) 158, dated September 10, 1802 and recorded April 2, 1804.

²⁵Petersburg Hustings Court Wills (2) f. 4, dated November 24, 1805 and recorded February 3, 1806.

²⁶Petersburg Hustings Court Wills (2) f. 7-8, recorded March 3, 1806.

It is possible that old Sam was the same slave whom Frances Everard Horrocks acquired soon before her death in December 1773. Other names—Dick, Molly, Polly, Scipio, Thomas, and Venus—are names that belonged to Everard and Horrocks slaves. The appearance of these names suggests that some of the bond laborers owned by Isaac Hall at the time of his death were the descendants of enslaved men and women who lived at Lots 165 and 166, on Everard's James City and Brunswick county plantations, with Reverend Horrocks, or on the Bruton Parish glebe.

Martha Hall left Petersburg after her husband's death and settled in Isle of Wight County. Her obituary appeared in the July 28, 1813 issue of the *Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger*: "Departed this life, on Saturday the 24th inst. in the 60th year of her age, Mrs. Martha Hall, Relict of the late Doctor Isaac Hall, of Petersburg. She has left two children to mourn the loss of the best of mothers."²⁷ The inventory of the widow Hall's estate included five slaves: Daniel (valued at \$500), John (valued at \$500), Tom (valued at \$325), Sylvia (valued at \$200), and Sam (valued at \$0.18 $\frac{3}{4}$).²⁸

The First Baptist Church

The following information on the First Baptist Church includes a report of the archaeological excavations on the site and the First Baptist Church Chronology compiled by Linda Rowe.

Introduction

The First Baptist Church stood on Block 14, Colonial Lot M (presently the northwest corner of Nassau and Francis Streets), from 1855 to 1957. While this brick structure dates to the mid-nineteenth century, the congregation appears to have met much earlier--as early as 1776 by some accounts, but at least by 1781 according to John Asplund's register of Baptist congregations in North America. The location of the eighteenth-century meeting is unclear. As the group was quite large (about 500 members), an open-air meeting place is a distinct possibility, and there are reports that the congregation gathered at Raccoon Chase (near Lake Matoaka) on Jamestown Road, and Greenspring Plantation prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Perhaps more interestingly, Lot M may have served as the site of the Baptist meeting long before the construction of the 1855 structure. According to a Williamsbrug Land Tax record, there was a "Baptist Meeting House" on Nassau Street at least as early as 1818, although oral tradition identifies this structure as a carriage house rather than a formal church. Among the primary objectives of an archaeological investigation of Lot M would be to locate this earlier structure, and to explore its potential as a meeting place for the congregation of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century First Baptist Church.

²⁷ *Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger*, ed. William Davis, July 28, 1813.

²⁸ Isle of Wight County Will Book 13 (1809-1815) 342-343, recorded September 18, 1813.

History of Lot M

Little is known about the history or use of Lot M until the end of the eighteenth century. Its location within James City County leaves few documentary avenues to explore, and the available maps provide only the most cursory details. Both the Unknown Draftsman (1782) and the Bucktrout Maps (1800) identify the lot as belonging to Charles Taliaferro, a chairmaker and established businessman by 1761. Taliaferro owned a chairmaking and wheelwright shop and later a store (by 1782) on Block 13, across the street from Lot M, but fronting on Duke of Gloucester Street. The Frenchman's map (1781) indicates that he left Lot M undeveloped, concentrating his house and business on the lots across the street. Jesse Cole bought Taliaferro's Block 13 property after the latter's death in 1803, and is likely to have acquired Lot M in the same transaction.

The use of Lot M by members of the First Baptist Church is believed to have originated during Jesse Cole's ownership. Cole apparently donated a portion of the parcel for the congregation's use, and by 1818, a "Baptist Meeting House" was identified as the southern boundary of the Bryan Lot. The only recorded description of this structure, Eliza Baker's oral history taken by Dr. Goodwin in 1933, suggests that it was a converted brick "carriage house," or "barn" that was in very poor condition by the time it was replaced by the 1855 structure. Excavation following the 1955 razing of that building revealed sections of earlier brickwork below the 1855 church.

Mid to late nineteenth-century use of the property is dominated by construction of a formal brick church in 1855. Measuring 60' east/west by 30' north/south, the church was later expanded through the addition of a small vestibule. A 1887 deed documents the church's \$100 purchase of twenty feet of land for that purpose. Use of the southern portion of the lot--the field that is presently indicated as the site of the First Baptist Church--during this period is unclear. Sanborn maps indicate that there were three small dwellings at the corner of Nassau and Francis Streets during the early twentieth century, but what these structures replace, if anything, is not known.

Previous Archaeology

Previous archaeology on Lot M has focused on the northeastern portion, where the mid-nineteenth century church stood. In 1957, through the use of extensive cross-trenching, the foundation of the recently demolished 1855 church was located and beneath this foundation, sections of an earlier structure measuring 16.1' north/south by 20.1' east/west. Damage to the earlier structure was extensive, and in addition to the many cuts caused by later church construction, the west wall had been entirely robbed of brick. A concentration of brick and mortar near the southwestern corner of this building were interpreted in 1957 as the remains of entrance steps, with brick bat paving extending east toward Nassau Street.

A third foundation was located directly west of the earlier building. Measuring 6.5' east/west by 12.5' north/south, this structure was identified as a privy, although the fact that no underlying pit was mentioned either in field notes or in the Monthly Report would seem to

question this interpretation. All three of these structures--the 1855 church, the earlier brickwork sealed beneath it, and the smaller outbuilding--presently lie under the paved driveway opening onto Nassau Street.

Other archaeological features recorded on the northern half of Lot M include a fenceline along the eastern boundary of the property, and a brick drain. The former may date to the period of the earlier structure as the holes seem to stop at the edge of the fragmented brickwork. Unfortunately it appears that the 1957 excavation may have missed the postholes in which the posts themselves were seated, as only the round holes were recorded. The possibility that these may have been nineteenth or twentieth century posts installed with a posthole digger was considered in an earlier briefing [Samford 1983] and apparently rejected. The east-west running brick box drain overlay the remains of the earlier structure and was probably associated with the 1855 church.

Archaeological Potential

There is no concrete evidence for any eighteenth century structure on Lot M, and the congregation, based on its reported size, may not have met in a building. The earliest reference to any structure on this site is 1818 (making this a nineteenth century structure). Jesse Cole could not have given the land to the congregation before 1804, the documented date of his purchase of it. There is a strong possibility that any earlier structure used as a church, lies beneath the paved driveway along with the 1855 church foundation. Archaeological evidence supports its existence in this location.

Unfortunately, no archaeological excavation has been conducted on the southern portion of the lot--the site of the present field. It is not known whether the three late nineteenth or early twentieth century dwellings recorded on the property had cellars, the excavation of which would certainly have interfered with remaining eighteenth century evidence. If such disturbance is not an issue, archaeological research on this southern section would provide information about the site use over time. This would provide necessary information, in light of the paucity of documentary sources, for the use of the site in the 18th and 19th centuries. Existing documentary evidence (mainly maps and deeds) point only to the owner of the lot, and very little can be gleaned about the life of its occupants from these sources.

With regard to the physical potential of the property, 1957 photographs suggest that about a foot of fill dirt was deposited over the 1855 church site following its destruction. Mechanical grading included in the 1965 driveway construction process may have been less destructive on the northern section of Lot M due to this deposited "buffer." How far south this fill extends is not known at this point, and there is a strong possibility that there are archaeological remains close to or within the subsoil.

In summary, there are many positive reasons to initiate a search for the alleged carriage house/"Baptist Meeting House." The project would underscore the Foundation's commitment to a multi-cultural approach to historical research and interpretation. Present interpretation of African American's religious experiences in the 18th century is already linked to this site.

Archaeological research of Lot M, while providing another perspective and supporting the search for more information about the African-American experience, would further strengthen the relationship with the African-American community in present day Williamsburg.

Unfortunately, based on what is presently known, the earlier meeting house is unlikely to lie in the field to the south, as the marker would indicate, but rather under the 1855 church. Excavation of the southern portion of Lot M may produce a more detailed history of the use of this property (depending on the degree of disturbance caused by later construction), especially during the tenures of Taliaferro and Cole, and it would certainly provide information that would be useful in any decision making process for the future use of the site. However, archaeological investigation is unlikely to produce evidence of a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century meeting house.

Source: Department of Archaeological Research.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH CHRONOLOGY

1776. By tradition, date of the founding of the black Baptist church in Williamsburg. As yet, no documentary evidence supports the claim
1781. John Asplund's register of Baptist congregations in North America published in 1794 gave this as the date the black Baptist church in Williamsburg was "constituted." [An earlier edition (1790) did not list black congregations.]
1791. Baptist historian Robert Semple stated that black Baptists in Williamsburg petitioned the Dover Baptist Association for admittance at the annual meeting in 1791. Minutes of this meeting at the Baptist Historical Society in Richmond do not mention the application. [See Robert B. Semple, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia*, Richmond: 1810, rev. 1894.]
1791. Minutes of the (white) Dover Baptist Association meeting at Glebe-Landing Meeting House in Middlesex County on 12 October state "The Baptist church of black people at Williamsburg, agreeably to their request, was received into this Association, as they could not have done better in their circumstances than they have." Gowan Pamphlet and C. Bryan – delegates from church at Williamsburg.
- 25 September 1793. Gowan Pamphlet manumitted by David Miller of York County.
- 1794-1801. Delegates from church at Williamsburg attended the annual meetings held

at a different church each year. Gowan Pamphlet was always one of the delegates, accompanied by various others, apparently free blacks, from Williamsburg.

1802. Williamsburg listed as a member church of the Dover, but no delegates present at the meeting. This was not unusual – each year there are six or eight member churches that do not send representatives.
- 1803-1807. Pamphlet and other delegates from Williamsburg church attended the annual meetings (absent 1804 but church listed).
1804. Jesse Cole purchased Lot M and Lot 352 in Williamsburg.
1805. Gowan Pamphlet listed as holding ¼ lot (location in town unknown) on Williamsburg Land Tax List. He was taxed for 14 acres in James City County as late as 1819.
1807. Last year Gowan Pamphlet attended the annual Dover meetings.
- 1808-1817. Church at Williamsburg sent delegates to annual meetings or listed as member church if absent (absent 1811, 1815, 1816, 1817).
1818. Williamsburg congregation not listed at annual meeting of Dover. First documentary reference to “Baptist Meeting House” on Nassau Street. Jesse Cole purchased Bryan lot (351–see map). Williamsburg Land Tax records stated boundaries of Bryan lot purchased by Cole as “situated on the Duke of Gloucester Street, bounded on the east by a cross street which divides this lot [351] from Jesse Cole’s lots [Taliaferro – Cole – 352], and on the south by the Baptist Meeting House.” [Lot M]
1818. Two delegates from Williamsburg again in attendance at Dover annual meetings, both of whom had attended previously for the Williamsburg church.
1818. Two Williamsburg delegates in attendance at annual meeting; elders from the Dover Association appointed to visit the Williamsburg church and settle “difference” there [no explanation].
- 1821-1830. Church at Williamsburg sent delegates to annual Dover meetings (absent in 1821 but church appears in list of members). Dover minutes show membership of this congregation to be between 600 and 700 these years.
1828. Zion Baptist [white] of Williamsburg constituted about this date.

1830. Zion Baptist applied for membership to the Dover Association. Mutual Assurance Society policy taken out in May listed southern boundary of Lot 351 as Baptist Meeting House [African Church].
1831. No delegate from African Church (Williamsburg), though listed in Dover Association member list. Their meeting house was closed for at least part of the year October 1831-October 1832 due to the “insurrection in Southampton County” (Nat Turner’s—August 1831).
1832. Delegates from African Church attended Dover meeting. Closure of their meeting house reported. Zion Church accepted into Dover Association (75 members). Zion met in the Powder Magazine.
1833. Dover annual meeting held in Williamsburg. African (400 members) reported they were allowed to meet again. Zion—136 members.
- 1834-1838. African Church delegates attended annual Dover meetings or church listed as member when delegates absent. Membership these years around 400 (all black, or “colored” to quote the minutes). Zion Baptist also attending—membership about 200, well over half black.
- 1839-1842. African Church not listed and no delegates sent. Zion attending (1842—188 black members, 198 white).
1843. African Church, Williamsburg, “recently reorganized,” accepted into Dover Association. It lists membership at 45 total (all black). White persons now representing African Church at Dover meetings. Zion in attendance with 419 members—about half white and half black.
- 1844-1860. African Church and Zion Church were both attending annual Dover meetings. By 1850 Williamsburg African had 298 members (all black); Zion 439 members (168 white, 271 black). Some time after 1845 but before 1860 a brick church was built to replace the carriage house. Eliza Baker, a black woman born in Williamsburg, remembered (in 1933 memoir) attending church first in a carriage house or barn, then in a brick church that slave owners helped build.
- 11 May 1856. African Baptist’s new brick building on Nassau Street dedicated.
- 5 July 1857. Zion Baptist’s new building on Market Square dedicated.
- c. 1860-1861. Memoirs of Mr. John S. Charles and Mrs. Victoria Lee (c. 1933) described African Church as looking in ’33 much as it did in 1860 or ’61.
1866. All black members and churches withdrew from white Baptist associations (Dover included) and formed their own associations.

1867. The minutes of a 1910 session of the Virginia Baptist State Convention (black) recorded this date as the date the First Baptist Church in Williamsburg was admitted to this body.

1872-1910. Printed minutes for the Virginia Baptist State Convention began in 1872; First Baptist represented by J.M. Dawson at 1872 session. Minutes scattered after that and First Baptist not mentioned in extant minutes. J.M. Dawson again listed as delegate from First Baptist at the 1910 session.

1885-1887. Articles of agreement between Robert F.Cole and the trustees of First Baptist Church, dated January 1, 1885, for twenty feet of land running east and west out to Nassau Street. The church paid \$100 for this portion of Lot M (they presumably had title from Jesse Cole for the remainder from an earlier date but no deeds are extant). The purchase price was paid off on June 23, 1887.

1910-present. Not specifically investigated but I believe church continuous these years, meeting on Nassau Street until 1955, then on Scotland Street.

Foodways Programs

The following information about slave cooks is from Pat Gibbs, "Daily Schedule for an Eighteenth-Century Cook," *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, May 1986.

How essential was a good cook to the smooth running of a household? The words of two Williamsburg residents suggest they considered a good cook second only to a good wife. Thomas Jones reported "much disorder with our Servants" in his 1728 letter to his wife who was then visiting in England. Venus, in particular, had become "so incorrigible in her bad Habits" that she would not "send in a dish of Meat fit to Set before any body" and Jones had resolved "to send her up to some of the Quarts."

At the death of his wife Elizabeth in mid-August 1787, George Wythe found that "necessary domestic duties occupied so much of his time....He was irritated and vexed by a thousand little occurances he had never forseen." During this period he became even more dependent on Lydia Broadnax, the Wythes' cook. In recognition of her faithful service, Wythe freed Lydia on August 20, 1787, two days after his wife's death, and testified she was more than forty-five years old. Although free, Lydia continued as Wythe's cook until his death.

We can assume that most black cooks, the vast majority of whom were female slaves, fell somewhere between incorrigible Venus and faithful Lydia. Generally the cook was the most skillful female slave and the one on whom the household was most dependent. She ranked at the top of the domestic hierarchy in well-to-do eighteenth-century Virginia urban households, which were usually staffed by several other black women who cleaned, gardened, laundered, helped care for the children, and did other chores their mistresses ordered them to do.

Preparing food over a hot fire was a hazardous occupation, and alertness was an essential characteristic of a good cook. The register that lists York County free blacks from the late eighteenth through the first quarter of the nineteenth century describes many women with burn scars on their faces, arms, hands, breasts, and legs. Sarah Williams was described as "a dark mulatto about 17 years of age 5 feet 5 Inches high a large scar on the left arm from a burn or

scald & one over the right eye.” “Comfort (alias Comfort James),” was described as “a very black woman about 34 years of age 5 feet 1 ½ inches high has lost several teeth, verry grey, she has a large scar on the breast occasioned (as she says) by her being frequently employed over the fire.”

Cooks worked long hours beginning before sunrise and extending into early evening, and the work was physically demanding. Lifting heavy iron pots and huge brass kettles was tiring, as were carrying wood into the kitchen (30 large pieces a day by conservative estimate), hauling countless buckets of water (wooden buckets full of water weigh about 20 pounds), and bending over fires year-round (recent cooking experiments recorded temperatures over 170 degrees Fahrenheit on the hearth). Although the drudgery continued through the day, there were slack periods, such as after dinner, when cooks could slow their pace. However, watchful mistresses made certain their slaves, unless they were sick, were never idle.

The cook’s work, although often mundane and repetitive, had certain advantages. Cooks tasted foods being prepared and had first call on leftovers returned to the kitchen from the mistress’s table. They often slept in a room adjoining or above the kitchen. Because of their close relationship with their mistresses, the cooks frequently received hand-me-down clothing and household effects. They usually accompanied their mistresses to market, which gave them several opportunities each week to leave the property. The mistresses’ desire to try out new recipes occasionally gave cooks a break in their routine. An elderly Monticello slave named Isaac, interviewed in the 1840s, recalled this scene from his boyhood: “Mrs. Jefferson would come out there with a cookery book in her hand & read out of it to Isaac’s mother how to make cakes, tarts & so on.”

A skilled cook knew more than how to prepare a variety of foods using an assortment of equipment that became more varied as the century progressed. A sense of timing was essential. All parts of a meal had to be ready to send to the table when they were called for. She also needed the ability to make-do and master the art of disguise when the gravy burned, the cake fell, or the carefully garnished platter overturned.

When the master of the household or his dinner guests praised the meal, the mistress took credit but we can only hope, if she was truly a “Lady,” that she complimented the cook at the earliest opportunity.

As you read through the schedule, assume that part of the time the cook was assisted by another slave woman and slave children who—although requiring varying attention depending on their ages—could stir a pot, watch a fire, turn the spit, or haul wood:

About 5:30 A.M. over an hour before most members of the household rise, the cook rekindles the fire, draws water, and puts it on to heat for family and general kitchen use. She feeds any chickens kept in the fattening pen and milks the cow if the family lives on the outskirts of town and has one.

About 6:30 – 7:30 A.M. she kneads dough for the hot bread eaten by the family for breakfast and mixes cornbread for the other house slaves and their children. She preheats the Dutch oven.

During cold weather the family and slaves often breakfast on milk hominy, prepared the previous evening and cooked slowly through the night.

About 7:30 A.M. she bakes the family’s bread in the Dutch oven, makes coffee or tea, sets out milk and butter, and slices ham to be taken into the house for the family’s breakfast.

About 8:00 A.M. she sends breakfast in to the family who generally have the first meal of the day in the dining room. The slaves eat in the kitchen.

About 8:30 A.M. she cleans up the kitchen, puts away breakfast food, and washes pots and pans and dishes used by the slaves.

About 9:00 A.M. the mistress of the house comes to the kitchen, gives orders for dinner, measures out ingredients, recites recipes if the cook is uncertain how to cook something, and instructs the cook on special orders for the day.

On Wednesdays and Saturdays the mistress of the house and the cook go to the market for fresh produce and meat.

About 9:30 A.M. – 2 P.M. the cook begins dinner preparations, attends to or supervises dairying chores, and possibly does some gardening.

During slack periods she may spin or knit, draw more water, and split kindling. Older slave children on the property assist with some of the chores.

Occasional duties include preserving food, making soap and starch (unless purchased), roasting coffee beans, making small beer, and helping with the laundering, sewing, and mending.

About 2 P.M. she has dinner prepared and ready to be taken into the dining room. The slaves eat in the kitchen.

About 2:30 –7:30 P.M. she cleans up the kitchen, prepares dough or pastry, spends time working in the garden, spins, cards, knits, splits kindling, and completes activities begun in the morning.

About 7:30 P.M. she prepares supper.

About 8 P.M. she sends supper into the dining room for the family.

About 8:30 P.M. she cleans up the kitchen and mixes yeast dough for the next day's breakfast bread for the family. Later she banks the kitchen fire.

Only when her work is completed, does the cook have free time to spend with her family and friends. As a much needed member of the household staff, she rarely gets a regular day off each week. When she does, she often prepares some food ahead of time for others to serve.

Source: Pat Gibbs, "Daily Schedule for an Eighteenth-Century Cook," *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, May 1986.

The Geddy House

James Geddy Senior, a gunsmith, and his sons—David, William, and James Junior—lived in and operated shops in Williamsburg from about 1737 to 1777. The inventory of the elder Geddy's estate included brasswork for guns, a turner's lathe, bullet molds, and gunsmith's, cutler's, and founder's tools. In 1751, David and William Geddy advertised that they carried on these trades in their shop on Palace Green. James Geddy Junior worked as a silversmith, goldsmith, and watch repairer from 1760 to 1777. The following discussion focuses on the younger James Geddy.

James Geddy Junior was one of the twelve members of the Geddy household during the 1747/8 Smallpox Epidemic. Doctor de Sequeyra noted that ten individuals recovered from the disease and that an "old Negro Man & Woman" died. The woman was probably the "old Negro woman named Betty" valued at £5 in the November 1744 inventory of James Geddy Senior's estate. It is possible that Jack, a boy worth £30 in 1744 was the only Geddy slave to survive the

epidemic.²⁹ The widow Geddy and her children—David, James, William, John, Ann, Mary, Elizabeth, and Sarah—recovered from the smallpox.

The younger James Geddy purchased Lot 161 on Duke of Gloucester Street and the Palace Green from his mother in August 1760. The following month he entered into a lease with two merchants, Hugh Walker of Williamsburg and Hugh Goode of London. Geddy leased them part of the house on Lot 161 for fifteen years. The first evidence that Geddy owned a slave was in August 1766. The baptism of Christopher, the son of Geddy's slave Grace, was recorded in the Bruton Parish Register. He added to his labor force in 1768 when he purchased Nanny and her daughter Sukey Hinderkin from the estate of Francis Fauquier for £51..05. Sukey Hinderkin died between the time Geddy agreed to the purchase and the time that he gained possession of Nanny. Fauquier's executors deducted £10 from the purchase price after the death of the enslaved girl.

An announcement that Geddy placed in the October 4, 1770 issue of the *Virginia Gazette* indicates that he decided to sell two of his slaves. He noted that he had "a likely Negro Wench, about eighteen years old, with her child, a boy" for sale.³⁰ Geddy probably kept Nanny and Grace in his household and conveyed a third woman. If Grace were the woman in the advertisement, she would have been fourteen years old when her son Christopher was born in 1766. Nanny, Grace, and any additional female slaves helped Elizabeth Geddy with domestic work—cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry.

Geddy failed to turn in a list of his tithes in 1774. The justices of the peace ordered his nine tithes to be added to the list for Bruton Parish in November of the same year. The silversmith neglected to report his nine tithes three years later. Geddy, William Waddill (a journeyman silversmith and engraver), and any apprentices or other journeymen in his shop were part of the group of nine tithes in both 1774 and 1777. His sons were probably too young to be counted as tithable workers on either list. Nanny and Grace continued to work in the house under the supervision of Elizabeth Geddy. There is no evidence that Geddy relied on enslaved men to work in the foundry.

The silversmith decided to sell his Williamsburg house and shop in 1777. He was a resident of a 400-acre plantation in Dinwiddie County by December 1778 when he conveyed Lot 161 to a Williamsburg merchant named Robert Jackson. The move to the Southside might not have broken all of the ties that Geddy's slaves had to other enslaved men, women, and children in Williamsburg. Members of several Williamsburg families—the Blairs, the Burwells, the Powells, and the Everards—also took their enslaved men, women, and children with them to their new homes in Petersburg or to their plantations in Dinwiddie County in the 1770s and the

²⁹ The elder James Geddy also owned an enslaved man named Kircandy. In February 1739/40, the justices of the peace found Kircandy not guilty of breaking into the house of John Coke, a silversmith, and stealing diverse goods from him. Four years later, Kircandy admitted that he broke into Sarah Packe's storehouse and stole "1 peice of Scotch Cambrick of the value of 50 Shillings & 16 Shillings of Spanish coin'd Silver." He denied taking tea from the widow Packe. The justices of the oyer and terminer court decided to sentence Kircandy to death. They allowed £60 to Geddy's estate as compensation for the enslaved man. York County Orders and Wills (19) 310-311, dated August 30, 1744.

³⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., October 4, 1770.

1780s. In addition, Geddy's daughter Ann moved to Mecklenburg County with her husband John Brown in 1775 and to Richmond by December 1781.

The 1782 Dinwiddie County Personal Property Tax List provides the first evidence of Geddy's slaveholding after his move from Williamsburg. This list included the names of sixteen slaves owned by Geddy. Billy, Peter, Cyrus, London, Gregory, Jack, Nanny, Grace, Nan, and Alice were over sixteen years of age. Will, Dick, Will, Clem, Ned, and an unnamed child were less than sixteen years old. The following year Billy, Gregory, Primus, Jack, Nan, Nanny, Grace, Alice, Will, Dick, Kitt, Clem, Ned, and Amy were the eleven adult slaves in Geddy's possession. The names of the six slaves under sixteen were not included on the tax list. Geddy was a resident of Petersburg by October 1783. It is likely that he moved several bond laborers from his plantation to his new home in Petersburg. In 1784 he paid a tithes on seven bond laborers in Dinwiddie: Billy, Carpenter Gregory, Grace, Nan, Nanny, Alice, and Kitt. Geddy had four enslaved children—Lucy, Clem, Ned, and Amy—on his plantation.³¹

The Gunsmith

Virginia's legislators used access to guns as a way to create a distinction between white and black residents of the colony as early as 1640. They decided that all persons, except blacks, were to be provided with guns. However, the law did not prevent a black man—free or enslaved—from owning a firearm. Perhaps the colony's leaders passed this law so that the white men would be able to defend themselves and families against an attack by the Native Americans.

In the aftermath of Bacon's Rebellion the colonial leaders decided that slaves were not to carry guns. The colonial legislators did not prevent free black men from serving in the militia until 1723 when they decided that free men of color could be punished if they attended a muster. Thereafter, only free black men who headed a household on the frontier were allowed to possess a gun, powder, and shot. During the late 1720s and the early 1730s slave unrest caused Virginians to worry about the possibility that free blacks would assist enslaved persons in a rebellion. The members of the General Assembly increased the restrictions on free black men by 1738. If these individuals were still a part of a local militia they were to serve only as a drummer, trumpeter, or pioneer. However, the shot and gun parts excavated from mid-eighteenth century slave quarters demonstrates that the laws were not always observed.

The legislation that prevented slaves and free black from owning guns did not state that they could not learn how to make firearms. However, the fear that whites had of armed blacks and by extension, of slaves having knowledge of gunsmithing and repair, resulted in the fact that there were only a few African-American gunsmiths in colonial Virginia.

* * * *

³¹ Dinwiddie County Personal Property Tax Lists, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. The first extant Petersburg Personal Property Tax List is the roll from 1788; this list does not include the names of bond laborers.

July 5, 1727—Indenture of a Free Black Man to a Gunsmith in Princess Anne County

The Princess Anne County court ordered that “David James a free negro be bound to Mr. James Isdel who is to teach him to read the Bible distinctly also the trade of gunsmith that he carry him to the Clarks office & take Indentures to that purpose.”

Sources: Harold B. Gill Jr., *The Gunsmith in Colonial Virginia*, (Williamsburg, Virginia: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1974), p. 16; see also James B. Whisker, *The Gunsmith's Trade*, (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), p. 109.

1755—Slave Blacksmith to Be Hired

Ephraim Gooseley was a blacksmith and a gunsmith in Yorktown. He had three white servants and one enslaved man at the time of his death in 1751. Four years later his widow, Martha Gooseley, announced that she would hire a slave man “who strikes very well to a Blacksmith.” This slave worked as a blacksmith and it is possible that he also assisted Gooseley when he made and repaired firearms.

To be SOLD, by the subscriber, in York Town, on Monday the 21st Instant, being York Court Day,

A Complete Sett of Black-Smiths and Gun-Smiths Tools, some Bar-Iron and Steel, Lead, Pots, Crucibles, Brass Pump Chambers, Mounting for Harness, &c. &c. Six Month's Credit will be allowed, the Purchasers giving Bond and Security as usual to

Martha Gooseley.

N. B. To be hired at the same Time, a Negro Fellow who strikes very well to a Blacksmith.

Sources: *Virginia Gazette*, July 11, 1755.

1780—Inventory of John Rawlinson

John Rawlinson, a free black shoemaker, died in 1780. Unlike the inventories of two other free black men who lived in York County during the eighteenth century—Matthew Ashby and Edward Berry of Charles Parish—Rawlinson owned a gun.

“1 Gun £ 150”

Source: York County Wills and Inventories (23) 49, dated November 27, 1780 and recorded May 17, 1784.

The Harness and Saddlemaker

In 1775, three of Williamsburg's harness and saddlemakers—Alexander Craig, Gabriel Maupin, and John Sheppard—were slave owners. There were close connections among these men—Maupin married Craig's daughter, and Sheppard worked for Craig before opening his own shop.

Alexander Craig

Alexander Craig purchased Lot 25 in the Waller Subdivision from Benjamin Waller on February 17, 1748/9. He probably established his harness and saddlemaking business on this lot. An apprentice shoemaker named William Welton assisted Craig in his shop before he ran away in 1751. Craig bought a portion of Lot 55 on Duke of Gloucester Street in January 1755. He leased the shop on the property to James Currie, a wigmaker, soon after he acquired it. It is possible that Craig moved his shop to Lot 55. A 1763 entry in his account book indicates that he was building a new shop.

Craig and his partners—Christopher Ford (a carpenter) and Nicholas Sim (a tanner)—established a tannery on Capitol Landing Road in the 1750s. He bought his partners' interest in the operation in 1758. He had "Tan Vatts...New and Old Bark Houses, Mill House and Fleshing House...other houses and buildings...used in the Business of Tanning and making Leather" on the property in 1760. Craig probably hired a tanner named William Pearson to operate the business after Sim moved to Petersburg in 1758.³² Pearson purchased Lots 2 and 3 in the Waller Subdivision from Craig on November 17, 1760. Pearson gained possession of the land on which the tannery was located. Craig retained possession of the buildings "used in the Business of Tanning and making Leather."³³

Craig's account book contains details about his labor force and the items that he and his workers produced. The saddler hired three leather workers: James Hern, a harness maker; and John Sheppard, a harness maker. Craig also turned to James Taylor, a shoemaker, and James Swain, a leather breeches maker, when he needed extra assistance. Robert Nicholson bought shoes made in Craig's shop for his "Man" from Craig in 1751, the same year that blacksmith Hugh Orr purchased shoes for his slave girls. His shop manufactured cushions for couches, chairs, and even billiard tables. Craig also produced leather pipes for a fire engine, razor cases, pistol belts, cartridge boxes, and scabbards in addition to his specialty—saddles and harnesses.³⁴

The saddle maker sent his five-year old slave boy, Aberdeen, to the Bray School in 1762. Three of his enslaved women gave birth to children in the 1760s: Nanny's son Henry was

³² Harold B. Gill, "Leather Workers in Colonial Virginia," (Colonial Williamsburg Research Report, 1966), pp. 65-66.

³³ York County Deeds (6) 294-298, dated and recorded November 17, 1760. Pearson also bought Lots 1, 4, 5, and 6.

³⁴ Gill, "Leather Workers in Colonial Virginia," pp. 68-69.

baptized on April 7, 1765; Alice's son James was baptized on June 5, 1768; and Sarah's child was baptized on January 1, 1769. Craig owned three adult slaves who were baptized: Essex Seth and William on November 3, 1765 and Judith in June 1766. There is no direct evidence that any of Craig's male slaves assisted him in making harnesses or saddles (see below).

Craig died in January 1776. He bequeathed his slave wench, Judy, to his wife, Mary Maupin Craig, during her lifetime. The March 1776 inventory of his personal estate included the following slaves:

Old Will	£15
Aberdeen	£75
Old Judy	£15
Lydia	£25
Alice	£60
Jamie	£25
Patty	£15
Sarah	£50

In addition to Judy (also known as Old Judy), the widow Craig gained possession of her husband's adult female slaves and the slave children. She owned the following slaves in 1783, 1784, and 1786:

1783—Lydia, Alice, and Sarah over sixteen
Jemmy and Patty under sixteen

1784—Alice and Sarah over sixteen
Patty and Jemmy under sixteen

1786—Jamie, Alice, and Sarah over sixteen
Patty under sixteen

Gabriel Maupin

Gabriel Maupin, grandson of the tavern keeper Gabriel Maupin, was both the proprietor of a tavern and a saddler maker. In September 1767 he informed "those Gentlemen who used to frequent the house of Mrs. Mary Page, deceased, and all others who please to favour me with their company, that they may depend on the best accomadations, and other entertainment" from him. He also noted that he planned to continue his saddle and harness making business.³⁵ Maupin moved to the lot where his mother-in-law, Mary Page, had kept her tavern. It is possible that his slave women Nanny and Rachel helped his wife Easter with the cooking and the cleaning at the tavern. Nanny was the mother of Amy who was baptized on December 2, 1764. Rachel's daughter, Judith Bray, received her baptism on November 6, 1768.

³⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., September 24, 1767.

Maupin also owned land in James City County. In 1768 he paid the assessment on nine tithes and 360 acres. The following year the count of his tithes increased to thirteen. He described his plantation as being near Williamsburg in August of 1770. Perhaps Maupin's rural slaves produced the food that his urban slaves cooked and served to the customers at his tavern. It is possible that the enslaved individuals on his James City County plantation included the "valuable Negro Man" who "was waylaid, and stabbed in three different Places, by a Negro of Mr. Saunders's, of which Wounds he died in the Night following" in October 1774.³⁶

Gabriel Maupin bought the Market Square Tavern from Thomas Craig and announced in September of 1771 that he would be ready for business at the next meeting of the General Court. Maupin noted that he was in the process of "making considerable Additions and Improvements, for the purpose of KEEPING TAVERN." He also planned to move his shop "to the above Place, where the SADDLERY and HARNESS MAKING Business will be carried on in all its Branches. Those who please to employ me may be assured of being furnished with neat and substantial Work, at short Notice, and on reasonable Terms."³⁷ In addition to the slaves who worked in his tavern and his shop, Maupin had an indentured servant. John Wilson, a waggoner, ran away from his master in January 1777. It is possible that he carted food items to the Market Square Tavern from the tavern keeper's plantation in James City County. There is no evidence that Maupin operated a tavern after 1777.³⁸ Perhaps Maupin decided to concentrate on his work as a saddle maker after the death of his father-in-law, Alexander Craig, in January 1776.

Maupin had nineteen slaves in Williamsburg in 1783, seventeen enslaved laborers the following year, and eleven slaves in 1786:

1783—Marreah, Beck, Matt, Sall, Tillie, Neator, Charles, and Caesar over sixteen
Judy, Mary, Cloe, Billy, Sam, James, Isham, Fanny, Tillie, Nancy, and
Ariana under sixteen

1784—Charles, Aberdeen, Beck, Judy, Mary, Sam, and Mariah over sixteen
Billy, Moll, Sall, Tillie, James, Isham, Fanny, Cloe, Phillis and Nanny
under sixteen

1786—Charles, Tillie, Beck, Sall, and Meriah over sixteen
Billy, James, Cloe, Nancy, Fanny, and Tillie under sixteen

It is possible that Maupin hired several of his slaves out to residents of Williamsburg and the surrounding rural area each year. The fact that Maupin possessed a slave named Aberdeen in

³⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., October 20, 1774.

³⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., September 26, 1771.

³⁸ Maupin owned a tavern which he insured with the Mutual Assurance Society in 1796. James Moir was the occupant of the tavern.

1784 suggests that he might have inherited this man from Alexander Craig. Perhaps Aberdeen had some training in leather working in addition to the knowledge he gained at the Bray School.

John Sheppard

John Sheppard worked as a journeyman harness maker in Alexander Craig's shop from 1761 to 1762. Sheppard owned a slave man named Paul by 1767. He hired Paul to Lord Botetourt for eighty-two days in 1770. This harness maker established his own business in 1772. Sheppard neglected to list his four tithes—himself and three laborers—in 1772 and 1773.

Sheppard had five slaves in his household in 1783—Hannah and Andrew over sixteen and Betty, Bristol, Clara, Nan, and Joseph under sixteen. In April 1785 he conveyed a girl named Clara to his daughter, Nancy; Betty, a girl about fourteen years old, to his daughter, Elizabeth; and Nan to his son, James.

Market Square

The following information about markets in The Chesapeake is excerpted from "Provisioning Early American Towns. The Chesapeake: A Multidisciplinary Case Study," Final Performance Report, National Endowment for the Humanities Grant RO-22643-93, 1997.

B. MARKETS IN THE CHESAPEAKE

The wealthy planter Robert Carter moved from his plantation to Williamsburg in 1761. Three years later he was forced to purchase a "small settlement" nearby to provision his family. He explained that "every family here have small Farms; which supply them with Articles to be bought in good Markets." He saw the paradox: "such a Custom must inevitably bar every attempt towards improving Markets." Without a good market, town residents had to come up with a system to provision their own households; without demand of these customers, it was difficult to support a good market. Carter reluctantly followed the example of his neighbors and bought a nearby farm.³⁹

We do not know what Carter determined to be a "good market" but no doubt implied good quality food supplied at good price and with predictable supply. The market in eighteenth-century Virginia was a civic institution, part of an economic system, and part of an urban cultural landscape. This section will address the nature of the market, its history in the Chesapeake, and its larger evolution in producers, consumers, and products.

The Nature of Markets

First, the public market was an important symbol of municipal action. Cities were governed by councils, councils established rules of the market, clerks of the market collected fees and monitored activities. (The fees were used to fund civic services from road repair to fire fighting.) These rules insured that people had access to safe food at an affordable price. Municipal rules of the marketplace included 1) setting prices that could be charged for certain commodities, 2)

³⁹ Robert Carter to James Buchanan and Co. May 10, 1764. Letterbook of Robert Carter III of Nominy Hall for the Years 1764-68. Manuscript, Special Collections, Colonial Williamsburg.

ensuring quality of food, 3) controlling times and places of operation, 4) renting out stalls at the market house, and 5) levying fines or other punishments for those that transgressed those laws. The size, number, order, variety and quality of markets were one way that travelers noted and ranked the quality of urban life.

The public market house thus was a visible reminder of the ways in which government intervened for the good of the populace. It needed to be a watchdog because the most important commodities for sale there were perishables sold in measurable units. That meant that meat and vegetables could be spoiled; weights and measures could be slighted. Entrepreneurs needed to be monitored or the customer might be cheated.

Second, public markets were the direct urban symbols of local agricultural productivity and town growth. They were a means to channel food produced in the hinterlands into urban populations. Control was necessary to ensure that food moved from producer to consumer without forestalling (selling food outside of the market) or engrossing (charging exorbitant prices that pushed out the poor). Markets were thus about directing agricultural surplus at set prices and in set places into the hands and mouths of consumers—from craftsmen to government officials—who were involved in other economic activities. In the Chesapeake, the relation between agricultural productivity and town growth was more complex. A critical mass of people was necessary to make feeding nearby towns as profitable as growing export commodities like tobacco. Enough people needed to congregate in one place to make a town market successful. It is this continuing diversification of economic activity that led to a modern economy.

Thus, markets in colonial America were about an evolving economy that looked both forward and backward. They looked backward to tight government controls, from the assize of bread (controlling prices, qualities and sizes) to mercantilism (controlling the colonists' trading partners and products). They simultaneously looked toward a more free market (*laissez-faire*) system of capitalism that moved by the “invisible hand” of supply and demand suggested by Adam Smith in 1776. This more capitalist economy was based on cash and the cash equivalent of commodities in a form of bookkeeping, and included prices based on profit and supply and demand.

Third, public markets were part of an urban cultural landscape. Like courthouses, stores, shops, and taverns, the market was frequented by a broad cross-section of urban society. It was a place usually marked by a particular location in town—often near the courthouse—and a space usually defined by particular uses and peoples. We might think of three groups of people in this space: producers, consumers, and passers-through and passers-by. Producers can be divided into two groups, those that were formally attached to the market through the rental of stalls in the market house and those that vended other forms of produce such as fruits, vegetables, and poultry. The first group—the butchers—were usually wealthy enough to be able to gain the trust of the town council and to pay the rent for the stalls. The second group was far more likely to be the peoples on the margins of society—the enslaved, free blacks, and women (of varying social ranks based on class and marital status). This reflects the buoyancy of the little known informal economy that is only now being studied and understood.

The History of Markets in the Chesapeake

Providing a means of supplying food to townspeople was one of the earliest concerns of Virginia lawmakers, and they followed English custom of ensuring food supply through governmental control. The ideal market in England centralized the supply of food in one place, controlled quality, and ensured a just price to the citizens. An important goal was to prevent the action of middlemen who might buy up local food supply for export or enhanced profit and lead to dearth

and high prices. For instance, the Wiltshire market was regulated in March 1564. Early in the morning, before the market started, grain sellers had to agree to prices with local officials. At 9 a.m. the bell was tolled twenty times and the market was officially open for transactions. For the first two hours, only small purchases could be made (less than two bushels), and the grain was meant to be for the use of the buyer. At 11 a.m. the bell was tolled another twenty times. Grain could then be bought by wholesalers or those who resold it in some form, such as bakers, brewers, and badgers as granted by license from a Justice of the Peace. Grain buying was restricted to market day, and no one was supposed to buy who had sufficient quantities of their own.⁴⁰

These regulations clearly demonstrate how the “ideal” market was no longer reality by the sixteenth century. These measures were to prevent middlemen; they undoubtedly existed or there would be no attempt to disfranchise them. The supply of bread—here in the form of grain to be processed by householder—was the paramount concern. Of course, laws are often only the mirrors by which we see the prevalence of infractions. There is no real sense of how well these regulations were enforced, but probably only time of dearth prompted strict adherence.

As early as 1649, the privilege was granted to Jamestown to hold a weekly market on Wednesday and Saturday and a market place was bounded. All “bonds, bills, or other writings upon any bargains” made between eight a.m. and six p.m. in the market place on market days that were attested under the clerk of the market were considered legal judgements and had special protection at law. The governor appointed the clerks who were paid an annual fee and kept records. In only six years, the markets were considered a failure and all laws were repealed. Nonetheless, the burgesses recognized the value of a good market and optimistically decreed that anyone could solve the problem by settling on a place where merchants would “willingly come for the sale or bring of goods” would be “lookt upon as benefactors to the publique.”⁴¹

This recognition that markets were for public good continued to undergird government action. A proper town should have a proper market. As Virginia officials mulled the movement of the capital from Jamestown in May 1699, a group of savvy students at the College of William and Mary held a celebration attended by the Governor and the Assembly. The speeches pointed out the many reasons that the capital should be moved to the area of Middle Plantation. One declared that a market would be of great assistance to the College because with it “the college itself might be enabled to keep houses, or the neighbours about this place might be better supplyd with all things necessary for our good lodging & Diet.”⁴² The act moving the capital from Jamestown to Williamsburg in 1699 included the right of the governor to grant the liberty and privileges to hold market and fairs. A 1705 act provided for twice-weekly market days in towns.

Government officials continued to stress the importance of establishing markets, but little action seemed to follow. Williamsburg’s town layout in 1705 included a place set out in the middle of town for a market, but no market house was built. The swelling of the population during public times in the capital made a market seem necessary. Governor Spotswood noted the need in 1710 to the Council and the Council recommended weekly markets at Williamsburg as a “great benefit to the said Town, and the Neighbouring Inhabitants, and a Conveniency to the people of the

⁴⁰ Mark Overton, Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy, 1500-1850 (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 135-136.

⁴¹ Hening, Statutes at Large, Vol. I, p. 362, Vol. III, p. 397.

⁴² “Speeches of Students of the College of William and Mary Delivered May 1, 1699,” William and Mary Quarterly 10, 2nd ser., 1930, p. 329.

country who have occasion to resort there.”⁴³

Again, no action seemed to be taken. A decade later the town was incorporated and the charter granted specific privileges to town officials to hold a market twice weekly and charge tolls on all “Cattle, Goods, Wares and Merchandizes and other Commodities as shall be sold in the said Markets . . . as shall be by them thought reasonable.” These taxes were not to exceed “six Pence on every Beast and three Pence on every hogg and the twentieth part of the Value of any such Commodity sold therein.” Town residence was encouraged by cutting the toll in half for the freemen inhabitants.

With the incorporation of Norfolk in 1736, the institutional framework was now in place in Virginia’s two incorporated towns for regular markets to occur. Incentive through taxing power was given to city government officials to make it happen. As most of the city bylaws, ordinances and orders have not survived, little is known of the market’s functioning in Williamsburg. Numerous ordinances are extant for other towns, particularly after the right to hold markets was extended to all towns after the Revolution. It is thus possible to piece together more of the story. The problems experienced in setting up formal institutions and legally dictated behaviors of food provisioning help explain why Robert Carter may have been so inconvenienced as to buy a nearby farm in the middle of the eighteenth century. The major need for a market was at public times; most inhabitants probably managed to somehow provision themselves. Hugh Jones did not detail how or why but nonetheless found the town “well stock’d with rich Stores, of all Sorts of Goods, and well furnished with the best Provisions and Liquors.”⁴⁴ A market house was finally completed in 1757, exactly 150 years after the colony’s founding.

Even after that final action in creating a true marketplace, the market may not have functioned smoothly to ensure good quality foodstuffs. A blistering critique of market quality and prices was published in the *Virginia Gazette* in 1768 by “Timothy Telltruth.” He wrote of “meat for poverty not fit to eat, and sometimes almost spoiled” hanging in the market for hours. Vendors charged what they liked, “which is generally exorbitant enough, especially on publick times, or when little meat is at market.” If a whole side of beef was not desired, the butcher charged an extra penny a pound to cut it. Bakers sold underweight bread with “unwholesome ingredients.” The letter writer complained that “the bread they bake daily, and sell to the inhabitants, justly entitles them to the pillary.” He compared that to the well-functioning market in Norfolk where the magistrates ensured quality and prices and the butcher could only charge a farthing to cut meat into smaller portions.⁴⁵

“Timothy Telltruth’s” complaint, perhaps exaggerated, is one of the few windows we have on the market in Williamsburg. We might infer that his complaint had some cause from the praise that one James City County resident heaped on the market in Baltimore. Jamestown resident Mary Ambler kept a diary of her visit to Baltimore in 1770 to inoculate her children from smallpox. She found the Baltimore market held twice weekly to be “very fine,” and was “surprised to see the nubr of People there & the variety of things for Sale.” She marveled that “they say nothing can be thought of which is not brought in plenty to market.” The townspeople depended on the market for their foodstuff. Whether cause or effect of the quality market, she was told that there was not “seven Gardens in the Whole Town.”⁴⁶

⁴³ *Executive Journals of the Council*, III, p. 251.

⁴⁴ Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia*, pp. 30-32.

⁴⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, July 7, 1768.

⁴⁶ “Diary of M. Ambler, 1770,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* XLV, no. 2 (April

The ability of townspeople to rely on consistent supply at markets for provisions was noted in the same year in Philadelphia. The twice-weekly markets brought country people from surrounding Pennsylvania and New Jersey where “every produce of the season which the country affords” can be found. On the other days, “they are sought for in vain.” Because of the ready supply, town residents only bought what was necessary until the next market. In the summer, a market was held daily to prevent problems with food preservation.⁴⁷

The problems and issues of establishing a market were also felt in Annapolis. When the town was laid out in 1693, a square was left open for a market-house. None was built until at least 1717. In 1716 the corporation decided to outlaw the door to door selling of “flesh or fish, living or dead, eggs, butter or cheese, (oysters excepted)” and build a market house. Until a market house building could be constructed, sellers and buyers should meet at a flag staff on the state house hill. Unlike Williamsburg, however, Annapolis built a market-house before mid-century. This did not turn out to be a convenient location and the market was sold in 1752 and moved to another location. Destroyed in 1775 in a severe thunderstorm, a new markethouse was built in 1784 by a group of wealthy Annapolis businessmen. This was a substantial structure taking seven years to complete and cost over £550.

The Evolution of Markets: Producers, Consumers, and Products

Public markets continued to evolve to provide a wide range of foodstuffs to urban places. Public markets were virtual tourist destinations. Travelers recorded their impressions because they were public institutions to be evaluated to mark the quality of life and the hierarchy of urban amenities. All markets provided meat and seasonal products of garden, orchard, streams, skies, and woods. What differed was the number of days and hours they met, the quality of foods provided, and what part of the population were suppliers. Three components were necessary for a well-functioning public market: producers to bring agricultural foodstuffs, consumers to do the buying, and public monitoring of quality and price for consumer protection. Producers came from multiple walks of life, both rural and urban. Butchers had to pay stall fees and license fees but seemed often to be poorer people. Other vendors were farmers and petty entrepreneurs.

Producers: Farmers and Petty Entrepreneurs

We know little about how farmers allocated their resources and organized their time to send produce to market. Local farmers walked to town. Others had carts with hanging meat, and smaller suppliers used wheelbarrows. Wealthy planters probably sent slaves with any plantation surplus. Yet the large needs of supplying meat to towns could not be met locally, and the roads must have occasionally been filled with livestock. Jacob Engelbrecht of Maryland witnessed a flock of 400 turkeys passing his door on the way to the Washington market on February 3, 1826. He estimated they walked eight miles a day.⁴⁸

By the end of the eighteenth century, truck farming had emerged as a chief means to supply large urban markets. Richard Parkinson described the farmer’s wagon in the Baltimore area in the 1790s as something like a “peddlars pack,” carrying butter, eggs, fruits, potatoes, turnips,

1937), pp. 156, 165-66.

⁴⁷ Adolph B. Benson, ed., Peter Kalm’s Travels in North America...1770 (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964), p. 30.

⁴⁸ William Quinn, ed., The Diary of Jacob Engelbrecht, 1818-1878 (Frederick, Maryland: Historical Society of Frederick County, 1976), vol. 1, n.p.

cucumbers, poultry, multiple kinds of flour, and chopped straw.⁴⁹ Anne Ritson's poetic description of Norfolk in 1809 helps to at least see how some farmers personally attended market in the early morning hours:

*The market chiefly is supply'd,
By those who from the country ride,
Who wish their produce soon to sell,
Making their bargains quick and well,
And back to their plantations go,
To see their negroes dig and hoe.*⁵⁰

A number of petty entrepreneurs helped supply the market. These were most often the fringes of society: slaves, free blacks, impoverished people, and women of varying stations. The crossing of all ranks of society in the public market should come as no surprise as it was the first step into petty capitalism. Because they kept few business records, it is difficult to know these petty suppliers but by their occasional crossings into public record or private account.

The market was an important forum for surplus household production. For example, Norfolk women of all ranks sold extra vegetables from their gardens and milk from their town cows. Personal circumstance could also lead more well-to-do women to produce for the market. A woman near Wilmington, North Carolina had a garden that supplied the town with vegetables, melons, and other fruits. She also made baked goods—"minced pies, cheese-cakes, tarts and little biskets"—which she sent to town once or twice a day, "besides her eggs, poultry, and butter." She would not provide credit and kept her prices low enough (halfpence) to be normal pocket change.⁵¹ Nancy Matthews' regular rounds of selling cakes in Petersburg made her easy target for crime: she left her house in Petersburg to vend her goods and was robbed of all her clothes.⁵² Poorer people also used the market as a way to raise the cash to pay for "necessaries." The wife of the impoverished John Juitt in 1734 "used to raise things of several sorts which she disposed of in town and thereby raised a little money."⁵³

Slaves were common figures in the market place, running errands, carrying baskets, and selling commodities—their own produce of their own labor, most often in the form of agricultural products like poultry and vegetables. West Africans were no strangers to market sales and market relations; Henry Drewal finds the Yoruba expression "the world is a marketplace" (*aye l'oya*) a constructive metaphor for "the dynamics surrounding transactions, the pushes and pulls, the actions and reactions, the negotiations of living life."⁵⁴ But the role of slaves in the constructed economic market of the New World has only recently been understood. We now know that from the Caribbean to the lower South, black men and women were the de facto suppliers of foodstuffs for a broad cross section of the white and black urban population.

⁴⁹ Barbara Sarudy, "The Gardens and Grounds of an Eighteenth-Century Craftsman" (master's thesis, University of Maryland, 1988), pp. 71-72.

⁵⁰ Anne Ritson, *A Poetical Picture of America* (London, 1809), p. 39.

⁵¹ [Janet Shaw], *The Journal of a Lady of Quality*. Ed. Evangelina Walker Andrews (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), pp. 178-179.

⁵² Petersburg Hustings Court, May 6, 1793, p. 77. My thanks to Mick Nichols for this reference.

⁵³ Anne Arundel County Court Judgments 1734: p. 251.

⁵⁴ Henry John Drewal, "Introduction: Yoruba Art and Life as Journeys," in *The Yoruba Artist: New Theoretical Perspectives on African Arts*, ed. by Rowland, Abiodun, Henry J. Drewal, and John Pemberton III (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1994), p. 195.

That system is not so well documented or understood in Virginia. Market regulations, by their very quantity in Virginia towns, imply a strong African American presence. As early as 1764 a committee was appointed in Norfolk to examine the problem of “slaves ... selling Cakes &c and small Beer at the market and other public places.” Nine years later, another law prohibited “Indians, mulattoes or negroes Bound or free from selling any kind of dressed meat, Bread, or bakes, [sic] or retailing any kind of Beer or spiritous Liquors.” That the law was repealed in 1783, nonetheless, suggests that slaves and other marginal entrepreneurs were too important in the supply of food to be prohibited.⁵⁵ Later eighteenth-century regulations of Virginia towns did not prohibit slave activity but tried to regulate it, most commonly through the requirement of written permission by owners to prevent the sale of stolen foods.⁵⁶ In the antebellum period, such economic activity by slaves may have become even more prevalent. One visitor to the Washington markets found that “Negroes are the chief sellers.”⁵⁷

Slaves also frequently sold poultry from their yards and produce from their gardens to their owners and others. The kitchen at Jefferson’s Monticello was well supplied by plantation slaves with chickens, eggs, vegetables and fruits. Jane Francis Walker Page in nearby Albemarle County purchased multiple foodstuffs from slaves. Of the 28 people listed, a third were listed as “old.” Ninety percent of the sales were of poultry and mostly, though not all, made by women. That relation between slaves and the exchanging supply of food expanded to Page’s supplying consumer goods for foodstuffs with several women.⁵⁸

Public markets linked plantation and urban systems of exchange in critical ways. Given permission, slaves traveled freely to carry produce from their owners or to vend their own foodstuffs and poultry. A former slave recorded her memories of life in Franklin County in western Virginia. She described how her former mistress gave her slaves Saturday afternoons free and any of the slaves who chose could go into the town of Lynchburg to sell and purchase: “Merry parties on foot followed the farm wagon, which was loaded with tobacco, brooms, nails, baskets of fruit and vegetables in season, and various articles of domestic manufacture contributed by the women, such as yarn, woolen cloth, sometimes a piece of rag carpeting or a patchwork quilt. Small pigs in boxes, with baskets of eggs and chickens, completed the outfit.”⁵⁹ Market days were times to freely travel, sell, buy, see and be seen. The prevalence of slaves from the country is seen in the new duty of the Alexandria constables appointed in 1810 to disperse

⁵⁵ Norfolk Borough Records, 1 August 1764, 29 June 1773, 30 December 1783, reprinted in Brent Tartar, ed., The Order Book and Related Papers of the Common Hall of the Borough of Norfolk, Virginia, 1736-1798 (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979), pp.142, 175, 217.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Petersburg Common Council Minutes, 16 July 1785, Richmond Common Hall, 2 January 1793.

⁵⁷ Henry Bradshaw Fearon, Sketches of America (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1969), p. 287.

⁵⁸ Anne Cary Randolph Slave Crop Accounts, reprinted in Gerard W. Gawalt, “Jefferson’s Slaves: Crop Accounts at Monticello, 1805-1808,” in Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, vol. 13, nos. 1 and 2, Spring/Fall 1994. Jane Francis Walker Page Commonplace Book, Virginia Historical Society. Amy Rider has recently completed a sophisticated analysis of this book in “The Castle Hill Commonplace Book and the Plantation Mistress’ World, 1802-45” (senior history honors thesis, Princeton 1997), p. 61.

⁵⁹Orra Langhorne, Southern Sketches from Virginia, 1881-1901. Ed. Charles E. Loynes (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964), p. 117.

the slaves from the Sunday market at 9 o'clock. Most specifically, their task was to "see the negroes from Maryland go over the river, to prevent the riotous play of boys of every description, and of negroes on that day, and if country negroes, to cause them to leave town."⁶⁰ But it was not just the physical movement of slaves in and out of towns that provided such linkages. The knowledge of market prices was probably the most important commodity that spread far beyond urban bounds. For instance, Spencer Ball's slave Dick of Prince William County raised corn and watermelons on his truck patch and kept chickens, ducks, turkeys, and geese. He credited the plantation mistress' largesse for she "always gives me the price of the Alexander market for my stock."⁶¹

The Williamsburg market was no different; slaves were common sights, vending produce, fish, and baked goods. Their presence and economic activity were only remarkable when they overreached their bounds of economic freedom and ran away. Robert Wormley Carter's 44-year-old slave Pheby had run away in September 1781. In January he advertised that she had been "seen frequently in Williamsburg, about the market, selling cakes, oysters, &c." Henry Broadnax had a more complicated dilemma. He had purchased a man named Harry from the estate of Nathaniel Crawley at Indianfield in York County at public auction. The slave had escaped and his new owner suspected that he was concealed by some persons nearby. He had been told by his new slave that "he dealt very freely in Williamsburg in the oyster and fish way, in their seasons." Broadnax was posting a warning to "all that deal in that way with Negroes" to observe his lengthy description and "detect the villain if possible."⁶²

Both of these slaves used the relative anonymity of the slave presence at market to escape notice. Slaves commonly ran errands; many are recorded delivering food to the Governor's Palace. The freedom to act as middlemen became even more pronounced in some markets. In Baltimore where truck farming became an important business by the end of the eighteenth century, black middle men were the common buyers and sellers in the wee hours of the morning. Richard Parkinson complained that he could hardly compete within this black system of provisioning, and thought the black entrepreneurs were able to disengage from the real world of enslavement until their owners arrived some hours later.⁶³

The location of markets also continued to evolve with the growth of towns. In smaller towns of the colonial period, markets tended to be placed like their English equivalents: in central places like the public squares of the courthouse. In larger urban cities of the northeast, markets were usually found near water transport. For example, the markets of New York spread along the riverbanks. In 1755, eight markets served an estimated population of 13,000, or about 1600 customers per market. This is similar to Williamsburg's ratio of customers to its single market in 1770. Nonetheless, by 1810 eight markets served 96,000 people, or 12,000 for each point of distribution. These were distributed in a more "rational" system like those described in central-place systems. Market neighborhoods extended from about a quarter-mile to more than a mile.

⁶⁰April 16, 1810. Act published in the Alexandria Daily Gazette, Commercial and Political. My thanks to Mick Nichols for this material.

⁶¹ John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America (London, 1803), p. 388. Cited in Pat Gibbs, "Hominy, Ashcakes, and other 'Belly Timber': Slave Diet in the Early Chesapeake to 1825" (position paper in progress, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).

⁶²Virginia Gazette, or Weekly Advertiser (Richmond) 19 January 1782; Virginia Gazette, Rind, May 26, 1768.

⁶³ Sarudy, "The Gardens and Grounds of an Eighteenth-Century Craftsman," pp. 72-75.

By the early nineteenth century, these markets were no longer under the government control of the earlier period, and may express more free market principals of location.⁶⁴

With the growth of urban markets, the nature of the suppliers themselves had changed. In large towns of the northeast, more people began to step in as middle men, preparing nightly carts for an early morning trek or meeting market boats. On the Hudson River, market sloops brought livestock, butter, eggs and other country produce to market where butchers, grocers, and heads of household eagerly purchased. One Scotsman in 1821 found hucksters to be “cheeky insolent irish” carrying baskets with “eatables,” such as citrus fruit and ginger cakes, anxious to “parcel out bargains.”⁶⁵ Slaves were also common suppliers as far north as New York but increased in frequency down the Atlantic seaboard.

Consumers and the Experience of Marketing

As market exchange evolved from face-to-face business with known tradesmen, local slaves, and rural neighbors, there may have been a change in how household marketing was carried out. The economic transformation of the market both witnessed and produced such a change.

Few colonists recorded the day-to-day workings of marketing, so many questions remain. Who did the marketing? Eighteenth-century published cookbooks were written for women, and several authors (including Hannah Glasse, the most popular cookbook author in the colonies) contain explicit instructions for marketing. When Mary Ambler visited Baltimore in 1770, she found that “Ladys here all go to markt to supply their pantry.”⁶⁶ In the same year in Montreal, a traveler recorded that “the daughters of all ranks, without exception, go to market,” buy vegetables and other food and “carry it home themselves.”⁶⁷

Eighteenth-century women of all classes were engaging in behavior appropriate to a female’s place as household manager. Nonetheless, the household labor of shopping may have shifted to men in some towns during the early nineteenth century. Anne Ritson’s poetical treatment of the Norfolk market indicates that ladies would never go to market, and men spent their morning hours buying the needed foodstuffs. The Scotsman visiting the New York markets in the early 1820s found that “husbands both rich and poor go to market.” He described with some amusement meeting an esteemed merchant with a “plucked goose and some pigeons dangling in one hand and a species of cabbage stocks in the other.” He also recounted the shock of a fashionable young English linen draper who “commenced housekeeping and to market he must go.” Not the custom in England for men to do the marketing, he thought to “dangle a basket with a shoulder of mutton and vegetables home to be indelicate.”⁶⁸ Male heads of household with servants mixed with women in Alexandria and Philadelphia markets in the 1820s.⁶⁹ These men

⁶⁴ Nan A. Rothschild, *New York City Neighborhoods: The Eighteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1990), pp. 57-66.

⁶⁵ “Narrative of the Travels of a Scotsman from Glasgow,” 1821-1824 (New York: New York Historical Society), p. 204.

⁶⁶ “Diary of M. Ambler, 1770,” p. 156.

⁶⁷ Benson, *Peter Kalm’s Travels in North America...1770*, p. 184.

⁶⁸ “Narrative of the Travels of a Scotsman,” p. 43.

⁶⁹ For Alexandria, see Anne Royall, *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners, in the United States. By a Traveller* (New Haven, 1826, reprinted New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970), p. 102. For Philadelphia, see “The Autobiography of S. Dillwyn, Daughter of Dr. Phillip S. Physick and Wife to Commander Conner, UNS, 1826,” Susan Conner Papers, Library, Independence Seaport Museum, p. 39.

may have sent home their early morning purchases with servants and continued on their day's work.

While this deserves much further study, a reorganization of household labor of this magnitude is significant. Why would women in some towns stop doing household marketing? One explanation may be that larger economic shifts in the social class of producers (a shift from farmers to middle men, for example) may have made the markets a less savory place. As early as 1763, a New York lady complained of great rudeness and ill manners in our public markets, particularly in times of scarcity. She described pushing and shoving and concluded that "all that are weak and peaceable like myself, have been excluded from purchasing in the market, by rudeness and force."⁷⁰ The Scotsman in New York was shocked at the insolent saucy behavior of the Irish hucksters. Slaves became the major suppliers in many towns in the South. Anne Ritson pointed out the distinction between women dealing with butchers ("none but of the lowest mein/ are ever with the butchers seen") and other suppliers of foodstuffs, more likely to be women themselves.⁷¹ On the other hand, other cultural changes may have led to a reorientation of affluent women's time to leisure shopping, reading, and other pursuits.

Butchers

Butchers were some of the most important players in the marketplace. In most cities, they were licensed and charged fees to rent stalls in the markethouse. Complaints about the licensed butchers abound; the market regulations in New York in 1782 complained of butchers forestalling meat and other "criminal abuses." They particularly complained that butchers would "blow" meat and stuff and add fat to meat and kidneys to hide poor quality and add weight. The market butcher in Richmond was put on probation for forestalling meat.

Butchering usually took place at town edges, key distribution points for the delivery of rural suppliers and where land was inexpensive for grazing. Town regulations were careful to forbid slaughtering at the market place. Norfolk's slaughterhouses all lay at the edge of town. A plantation on the Western Branch about nine miles from Norfolk was advertised as a prime location for slaughtering. On the main country road from Suffolk to Norfolk and the road from Carolina, it was convenient "for the Carolina drovers to kill beef and pork at, having fine pasturage."⁷² The town edges were also used in Williamsburg for slaughtering; Benjamin Hanson's butchering operation lay west of town.

Less is known of the day-to-day workings of butchering operations. Moreau de St. Mery described the slaughterhouses on the edge of Norfolk. The process was efficient. He wrote that "the beeves are killed with a sledge hammer, their throats cut with a knife, and almost before they have stopped breathing they are skinned."⁷³ As processors, butchers either had to raise large numbers of animals or arrange for their purchase. Most apparently did the latter. Thomas Wilkins advertised that he would be willing to buy "any beef, veal, mutton, lamb, shoat, etc. to dispose of in Williamsburg."⁷⁴ Daniel Wells of Annapolis was imprisoned for debt to another man for calf, deer, and sheep in 1755, perhaps animals purchased but not paid for in his business. The ancillary processing of animals included fat, tallow, and soap. All were found scattered in

⁷⁰ "The Lady," New York Gazette, January 10, 1763. Cited in Thomas F. De Voe, The Market Book (New York, 1862; reprinted Augustus M. Kelley, 1970) p. 139.

⁷¹ Ritson, A Poetical Picture of America, p. 71.

⁷² Virginia Gazette, Purdie and Dixon, July 4, 1766.

⁷³ Moreau de St. Mery's American Journey, p. 61

⁷⁴ York County Biographical files; Virginia Gazette January 30, 1752.

butcher's inventories.

Butchers were lower-level craftsmen, and we know most about them through their debts, crimes, and lack of wealth. Of the eight documented butchers in York County, most seemed to die poor. Thomas Wilkins may have had some problems in his business; his book of debts was taken over by William Cole in 1758. Benjamin Hanson was a free black mulatto of extremely humble family. While the archaeological investigation of his butchery site shows an extensive operation, his estate was so small at his death that the sheriff was ordered to administer. Joseph Vason bought 6 2/3 acres from John Blair in 1764, but at his death his estate was similarly so small that no one would administer. Stephen Brown was marginally much better off: he served in minor country offices, owned two lots, yet his personal estate totaled only £17 in 1737. Richard Smith in Yorktown is a particularly illustrative case of the marginality of butchers in society. He owned lots in Yorktown and purchased livestock. He also received twenty-five lashes in 1739 for stealing a shoat. He was similarly impoverished; his estate was too small to be administered. Just prior to his death, he was accused of neglecting his children's education and they were bound out. What caused that disapprobation is not noted, but it suggests a man without a support network of friends. Only Patrick Matthews of Yorktown seemed to be a successful entrepreneur. He owned multiple inexpensive lots and a warehouse near Yorktown in 1752. Perhaps his success in Yorktown could be partially because he functioned outside of the public market system. There was no regular market at Yorktown. When the Frenchman Rochefoucault-Liancourt visited Yorktown at the end of the eighteenth century, he noted that "each person furnishes himself with meat in the best manner he can; and they are seldom unsupplied with it."⁷⁵ Yorktown was also a bustling port at mid-century and would have needed large supplies of meat to supply taverns and for export.

Most butchers in Annapolis were similarly from the bottom fringes of society. John Cummings had to petition for relief at the age of sixty-two because he was too old to work as a butcher and had no other means of support. William Metcalf was charged with assault. James Topper was bound to Sarah Graham who paid a debt for him while a freeman.

Butchering skills were valuable commodities sought in both servants and slaves. William Naylor's advertisement as a runaway servant paints a good picture: he was a "short thick-set Man, a butcher by Trade, speaks broad English, and is pretty much freckled."⁷⁶ His advertisement was signed by three men: Alexander Craig, Alexander Finnie, and John Mitchelson. The linking of their names to the runaway butcher is perhaps revealing. Two of the men needed the products of animal processing themselves: Craig was a sadler (hides) and Finnie a tavern keeper (meat). Their linkage in business to owning an indentured servant butcher is unknown. Some slaves were also skilled butchers. William Pasteur advertised that he would sell a "very valuable negro fellow" who has been "regularly brought up to the butchering business."⁷⁷ Butchering could also be part of a package of food skills. James Hubbard offered to hire out "either in Williamsburg or the Country" a "likely cook fellow, who is also a good Butcher."

Oystermen

If butchering clustered on the edge of town, the oyster and fish business lay near the waterways. The sale of oysters and fish was an important part of supplying Williamsburg's food. Matthew

⁷⁵ Duke de la "Rochefoucault Liancourt, Travels through the United States of North America. (London: R. Phillips, 1799), p. 22.

⁷⁶ Virginia Gazette, May 24, 1751.

⁷⁷ Virginia Gazette, August 19, 1780.

Moody Jr. was an active waterman who “lived at the lowest house of Capital Landing.” He kept “at all Times, fine Queen’s Creek OYSTERS, fresh from the rocks, which will be dressed agreeable to the Taste of those who may please to favour him with their custom, and with the greatest Expedition.” He also could offer, tea, coffee, and a “good BOWL OF PUNCH.”⁷⁸ Williamsburg merchant William Pasteur advertised that he planned to begin a business as “oyster merchant” in York County. Customers could purchase oysters open or in shells at his landing at King’s Creek.⁷⁹ This business of supplying oysters and fish must have involved numerous watermen. A runaway slave had “dealt very freely in Williamsburg in the oyster and fish way.”⁸⁰

Bakers

The necessity of townspeople to supply themselves with bread was as basic—perhaps more so—than meat. Nonetheless, it was a need that could be met in many different ways. There were multiple levels of the processing in which they could participate—or opt out. Corn could be ground at home into meal. Bread of various forms could be baked on the hearth or in a dutch oven. Large brick ovens could be built at home or a housewife could take her dough to a professional for baking. Professionals could be local women or more well-to-do-artisans. Biscuit could be bought to replace other bread forms. Cakes and confectionaries could be sold at the same place and time or by different providers. All of these choices make the provisioning of bread in urban households more complicated to study.

Six bakers were identified in York County records. Like butchers, we know little about their lives and businesses, but can piece together small biographies. William Sherman was born in Bruton Parish in 1684 and was active in York County, appointed constable in Williamsburg in 1705. Like the many butchers studied, he owned land but was often in debt. A clear spiral to insolvency can be seen. His servant sued for unpaid wages in 1707, in 1708 he sold off lots. In the same year, he was sued for £210 sterling, and by September his estate had been evaluated for debt and valued at £16. Nonetheless, these were not the household furnishings—six cane chairs, a cane couch, and four leather chairs—of an indigent man,. He fled the county to avoid payment. Peter Moyer was active in Williamsburg in the middle of the century and achieved rather marked personal success. He owned five slaves, multiple urban lots, and in 1789, purchased 150 acres of land near Burwell’s mill pond. We can see glimpses of his business: Benjamin Weldon supplied him with large amounts of wood.

The most well-documented Williamsburg baker is Cornelius DeForest and it is in his life that the business of baking begins to emerge in terms of raw materials, equipment and product. He is first noted as “baker near the capitol” in Williamsburg in 1776. In the same year, Humphrey Harwood delivered a large load of bricks and built an oven. While we know little of his earlier life, he was probably a practicing baker elsewhere in Virginia before removing to Williamsburg. Landon Carter sold him a large quantity of wheat in 1758. Carter remarked in his diary that he took special care with what he sold him; he cleaned the wheat, removing twenty bushels of lesser quality. (Carter thought DeForest got a bargain at his price and he ground it for free.)⁸¹ Finally, DeForest was paid £75 by General Nelson for supplying bread for the militia in 1777. He died one of the wealthier men in town in 1782; he owned ten lots, five slaves and his estate was

⁷⁸ Virginia Gazette, Purdie and Dixon, April 21, 1774.

⁷⁹ Virginia Gazette, November 6, 1779.

⁸⁰ Virginia Gazette, Rind, May 26, 1768.

⁸¹ Jack P. Greene, ed., Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778, 2 vols (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1987), p. 230.

valued at £490.

Nicholas Scovemont was another baker in Williamsburg. Born around 1750, he was able to purchase a lot by May 1773 and added another between 1782 and 1787. His slave Bagley (or Bailey) ran away in 1777. He evidently was not returned, as Scovemont was only taxed for a young slave in 1783. While the records do not record his total business across time, records of flour purchase in 1777 from Burwell's mill allow a tiny window on his business. He purchased flour regularly from Burwell's mill in January, February, and March of 1777 and again in August, September, November and December. Cash payments were made quarterly in March for his winter and spring purchases and again in September, October, and December (in full). He also picked up a little business outside baking when possible, advertising in 1779 the recent importation from Hispaniola of rum and sugar. Interested customers could also have a "few cards of neat stone sleeve buttons" at his shop.⁸²

Like the other food trades, baking could be a profession of marginal people with good credit relations and networks. Nonetheless, the growth of commercial mills in the area and the increasing export of biscuit meant that the need for bakers increased and perhaps their wages and profits. Robert Carter built a bakehouse in conjunction with his wheat export business. He wrote to Philadelphia in 1762 that a neighbor wished to hire "a single Man well qualified in ye Bakers Art" and that one who chose to accept the offer "may expect Civil Treatment and receive Wages punctually."⁸³ By 1771, Robert Bolling of Petersburg was also in the market for a baker. His wish to buy a skilled slave baker was rebuffed when the Norfolk slave "made the matter up to his master (who is old and infirm and easily prevailed upon)" not to sell him.⁸⁴ Carter was disappointed in his schemes in 1771 when he complained that "the price of Bisket & flower for some time past, have not yielded any profits to the Makers thereof, and I have done very little in that way." As a result, he had little used the slave of Colonel Lewis (of Gloucester County) in his bakehouse.⁸⁵ Greater profits came to bakers who could increase capitalization and production during the Revolution in supplying the troops. This explains the high average assessed wealth of £300 to £500 for bakers after the Revolution in Annapolis. Frederick Grammar had come to the city in 1777, only two years after emigrating from Germany and spending time in Philadelphia. He provisioned troops and amassed a considerable fortune.⁸⁶

In large urban places, specialized baking emerged for different markets. Bakers could provide baking for households. A bakehouse was advertised in Philadelphia in 1746/7 with two ovens that had "continual employ, by loaf bread, bisket baking, and for dinner baking."⁸⁷ Joseph Calvert in Charleston made a wide range of "Household bread" and cakes. He also heated his oven daily "for the convenience of such Families as shall send Meat, Pies, Puddings, to be bak'd for dinner."⁸⁸ An engraving by Charles Wilson Peale entitled "The Accident in Lombard-Street

⁸² Virginia Gazette, Dixon, 11 December 1779.

⁸³ Robert Carter to Mr. Amos Strettell, Philadelphia, August 16, 1762.

⁸⁴ Thomas Newton, Jr to Colonel Robert Bolling, December 20, 1771. Bolling Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Mss2N4882a!.

⁸⁵ Robert Carter to Col. Warner Lewis, October 16, 1773. Robert Carter Letter Book, Volume II [1774-1775], pp. 54-55. Letterbook. Special Collections, CWF.

⁸⁶ Edward C. Papenfuse, In Pursuit of Profit: The Annapolis Merchants in the Era of the American Revolution, 1763-1805 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 144.

⁸⁷ Pennsylvania Gazette, February 3, 1746/47.

⁸⁸ South-Carolina Gazette, Charleston, 9 September 1745.

Philadelphia 1787” depicts a woman who has just dropped a pie on the street on her way home from the bakehouse. Bakers could also supply dough for baking as recommended in Hannah Glasse’s cookbook. After her discussion of preparing and cooking dumpling dough in the recipe, she adds a hint. “As good a way as any to save Trouble, is to send to the Baker’s for half a quartern of Dough (which will make a great many) and then you have only the trouble of boiling it.”⁸⁹

At the other end of specialization were the bakers who solely made biscuit or supplied ships. Early nineteenth-century Norfolk was home to thirty-eight bakers; three men were designated specifically as “biscuit baker,” one as “ship bread baker.”⁹⁰ As the market for bread continued to specialize, some bakers were careful to note that they carried on all its various forms. Some combined businesses. Hutton and Colston in Baltimore advertised that they carry on the “baking business in all its branches.” They provided ship and pilot bread, but also planned to send a “bread carriage” to the city to supply private families. “Any family, who will send their directions, as customers, shall be supplied regularly.”

Women were also involved in the provisioning of bread. Robert Lyon, the single wigmaker in Williamsburg in 1749, had arrangements with several women in town to supply him with bread, paid on a monthly or sometimes bi-monthly basis. His particular provider varied between several women over the course of the year. One was the wife of a butcher, another of a tavern keeper. Other women sold cakes on the streets, both slave and free. Thomas Jefferson bought “cakes from a woman” on several occasions. Confectioners like Mrs. Stagg in Williamsburg sold fancy baked goods and cookies. One pastry-cook in Charleston not only provided a number of elaborate baked goods on demand, but also “collard and potted beef, and many other articles too tedious to enumerate.”⁹¹

MILLS

The closest town mill was probably Ludwell’s Mill. At least one town resident, St. George Tucker, had an arrangement with the mill to annually supply “Indian Corn, Indian Meal, and Hominy” for family use and settle up at the end of the time. A ticket system based on playing cards was devised as an accounting system so that illiterate people—probably slaves—could carry out the transactions.

Source: “Provisioning Early American Towns. The Chesapeake: A Multidisciplinary Case Study,” (Final Performance Report, National Endowment for the Humanities Grant RO-22643-93, 1997), pp. 83-118.

⁸⁹ Hannah Glasse, The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy (1747 edition) (London: Prospect Books, 1983).

⁹⁰ My thanks to Mary Ferrari for this Norfolk information.

⁹¹ The South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal, Charles Town, S.C., 21 Feb 1769.

The Mary Stith House

Mary Stith was the daughter of William Stith, the President of the College of William and Mary from 1752 to 1755. Stith and her slaves lived on Lot 17 on the south side of Duke of Gloucester Street.

It is possible that Mary Stith was in possession of Lot 17 as early as 1765. In April of that year, Nancy, the daughter of her slave Jenny, was baptized at Bruton Parish. Jenny had two more children whose baptisms were recorded by the clerk of Bruton Parish: Sally in 1766 and William in 1768. Stith had one tith, Jenny, on the 1769 Williamsburg-James City County Tax List.

Stith appeared on the 1786 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List as the owner of six slaves: Ben (over sixteen), Beverley (under sixteen), Bob (under sixteen), Jenny (over sixteen), Nancy (over sixteen), and Sally (over sixteen). Stith emancipated all of her enslaved men, women, and children. The first extant deed of manumission was in 1791. In March of that year she freed William White and Benjamin White, his brother.⁹² Stith noted that William and Benjamin were mulattoes. Benjamin White was able to purchase his son and namesake from his owner, John Blair. One of Blair's female slaves was the mother of the younger Benjamin White. The elder Benjamin White manumitted his two-year old son on December 31, 1793.

In 1793 Mary Stith freed Sally Gillett and her two children, Jane Gillett and Peter Gillett. The fact that Stith referred to Sally as Sally Gillett indicates that Stith acknowledged her former slave's relationship with a man by the name of Gillett. A free mulatto man named Peter Gillett was the father of Sally's children. The Williamsburg Personal Property Tax Lists suggest that several of the individuals whom Stith freed continued to live in her household after their emancipations:

1792—four blacks under [*sic*] sixteen
 1793—three blacks over twelve
 1794—four blacks over sixteen
 1795 to 1797—one black over twelve and three blacks over sixteen
 1798—four blacks over sixteen
 1799—two blacks over sixteen
 1800—one free male and two blacks over sixteen
 1801—one black over twelve and two blacks over sixteen
 1802 to 1807—one black over sixteen
 1809 to 1811—one black over sixteen
 1812 to 1814—no listing for Mary Stith
 1815—one slave over sixteen

Benjamin White owned a lot in Williamsburg by the time that the 1798 Williamsburg Land Tax List was taken.⁹³ The Bucktrout Map of Williamsburg indicates that White held Lot 274 on

⁹² It is likely that Benjamin's mother was also Jenny and that his baptism was not recorded.

⁹³ Williamsburg Land Tax List 1798.

Nicholson Street near the Capitol. White's lot adjoined the urban land in the possession of Wentworth Burwell.

Stith died between December 15, 1813, when she wrote her will, and March 25, 1815, when her executor, Robert Anderson, presented her last testament in court.

All the coloured people in my family being born my slaves, but now liberated, I think it my duty not to leave them destitute nor to leave them unrecompensed for past services rendered to me. As in the cause of humanity I can do but little for so many, and that little my conscience requires me to do, therefore I subject the whole of my estate to the payment of my just debts, and to the provision which I herein make for them. I give and bequeath my dwelling house and lot to Jenny the mother of the family, together with all the furniture as it now stands in the room below stairs, and one third part of all the other goods and chattles and wearing apparel as they stand in my dwelling house at my decease, the whole there of to her and to her heirs and assigns forever. Moreover I give and bequeath to the said Jenny, out of the interest accruing upon the debts due to me, the sum of twenty pounds per year, until my executor shall pay to her the sum of one hundred pounds. I recommend to the said Jenny to take her two grand daughters Jenny Gillet and Patty Gillett under her protection in consideration of which I bequeath to her five pounds more per year for each of them during her lifetime. I give and bequeath to the said Jenny Gillett and Patty Gillett jointly, my house in the yard called the tin shop, together with the other two-thirds of my wearing apparel before mentioned to be divided between them as they shall agree with themselves, to them and their heirs and assigns forever. To the said Patty Gillett I give and bequeath my bed and bedding, together with my chairs, press and dressing table. I give to the said Jenny Gillett twenty five pounds, and to the said Patty twenty five pounds to be paid them by my executor when he can conveniently do so. I give to Peter Gillett the sum of ten pounds to help him in his trade. I give and bequeath to Nelly Bolling and her two sisters Eve and Sally, my house on the main street called Woods shop, with the use of the yard to be held by them in fee simple and by their heirs and assigns forever. I give to the said Nelly Bolling Fifty pounds—to the said Eve and Sally twenty five pounds each, and I give to the three the sum of five pounds per year until they shall receive from my executor the aforesaid sum, which he will pay them when it is convenient for him so to do. I give to Benjamin White Thirty pounds, and to Beverley Rowsay Forty pounds. I give to Rachel White Twenty pounds, and to her sister Fanny White Twenty pounds . . . I give to William White the sum of Ten pounds.⁹⁴

Mary Stith, like Francis Fauquier, felt an obligation to provide for the enslaved men, women, and children who had worked in her household. She believed it was her responsibility to provide for the financial support of the individuals whose labor had made her life more comfortable.

Stith's will also provides information about the family relationships of the free persons of color who had been her slaves. Jenny was the head of the family and the remaining persons

⁹⁴ Will of Mary Stith dated December 15, 1813 and recorded March 25, 1815 in the Robert Anderson Papers, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

mentioned in this document were related to her in some way. Three women—Nelly Bolling, Eve Mitchell, and Sally Skinner—were probably the children of Nancy, Jenny's eldest daughter. There is no evidence that Nancy lived long enough to receive her freedom from Stith. Jenny and Patty Gillett were the daughters of Jenny's daughter, Sally Gillett. She also had a son named Peter. It is likely that Sally Gillett was dead by 1813 because Stith did not mention this woman in her will. William White and Benjamin White had a different father than Nancy and Sally did.⁹⁵ There is not enough information in Stith's will to determine if Rachel and Fanny White were William White or Benjamin White's daughters.

Jenny's name appeared on the 1820 Williamsburg Land Tax List as the owner of the lot that had been Mary Stith's. Jenny, also known as Jenny Rowsay and Jane Lawrence, held the parcel until 1825 when Beverley Rowsay gained possession of the property. It is possible that Rowsay was Jenny's youngest son (born between 1771 and 1781). He made his home on this lot until his death in late 1841 or early 1842. In 1837 he shared the house with "Nelly Boling seamstress, [and] child Mary." Patsy Gillett, also known as Patsy Rowsay, gained the title to the lot "Devised via Mary Styth" in 1820. She lived in the dwelling on the lot until April 1842 when a fire destroyed the building. Gillett sold the lot to Robert Anderson by the spring of 1844.⁹⁶

The two Benjamin Whites also remained in Williamsburg. The elder White served as a delegate to the Dover Baptist Association Meeting in 1809, 1813, 1818, and 1819. He also was the executor of Gowan Pamphlet's estate after his death between 1807 and 1810. The first Benjamin White died some time after 1831. The younger White followed in his father's footsteps and attended meetings of the Dover Baptist Association as a delegate in 1828 and 1833. The 1837 List of Free Negroes and Mulattoes in the City of Williamsburg noted that White was a shoemaker who lived with Zizzi, a free woman of color. White's name was on the 1843 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List when he was fifty-two years old.⁹⁷

The Milliner Shop

There were five milliners in Williamsburg during the 1770s—Margaret Hunter, Jane Hunter Charlton, Katherine Rathell, Margaret Brodie, and Elizabeth Carlos.

Margaret Hunter entered into the millinery business with her sister Jane soon after her arrival in Williamsburg in 1767. In May 1771 she announced that she had a shop located next door to Robert Anderson's tavern. The next month Hunter informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* that she moved her business to the corner store in Doctor Carter's Brick House. This milliner did own slaves by 1783, but there is not clear that they worked in their owner's shop. In 1783 Hunter's slaves included Agga and Jenny who were over sixteen years old and Milly, Sall,

⁹⁵ There is no evidence that Fanny or Sally used the surname White.

⁹⁶ Williamsburg Land Tax Lists 1820-1845; List of Free Negroes and Mulattoes in the City of Williamsburg 1837.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*; see also Williamsburg Personal Property Tax Lists and Minutes from Meetings of the Dover Baptist Association.

and Will Chavers (also known as Billy Chavers) who were less than sixteen years of age. It is possible that Jenny was the mother of an infant born in 1784 and that both the mother and the child died soon after the birth since they did not appear on the 1786 tax list. Agga, Milly, Sall, and Will Chavers were a part of Hunter's household in 1784 and 1786.

Hunter announced the sale of an enslaved woman and her daughter in March 1787. She noted that the woman was "a good washer, ironer and clear starcher, an excellent pastry cook, and is capable of all kinds of household business."⁹⁸ Hunter died on September 28, 1787. Edward Charlton, the administrator of his sister-in-law's estate, decided to sell her estate on November 12th of that year. The property included "two very likely Negro Women, both exceeding good house servants, one is also an excellent washer, ironer, and clear starcher, and a good pastry cook; one of the women has four fine children who will be sold with their mother, the other has two very likely girls, they will be sold with their mother, or separately."⁹⁹ These women probably did not work in Hunter's shop since neither she nor Edward Charlton mentioned sewing skills in their advertisements. In addition, Hunter never advertised that laundry was a branch of the millinery trade that was available for the public. Perhaps Hunter hired out her enslaved women or relied on them to do household chores for her.

There were four other milliners in Williamsburg during the 1770s and each owned at least one slave. Margaret Brodie purchased a slave girl who had been owned by William Digges of York County in March 1774. The York County grand jury presented Elizabeth Carlos for not listing her slave woman as a tithe on November 15, 1773. Katherine Rathell received a similar presentment on November 21, 1774. When Jane Hunter Charlton wrote her will on April 1, 1801 she noted that she had already emancipated two mulatto children—Aggy and Charlotte. Charlton stated that she wanted her two enslaved women—Nanny and Sally—to have their freedom after her death. However, there is no evidence that these milliners received assistance from their enslaved laborers in their business.

The Governor's Palace

The following discussion focuses on the slaves owned and hired by three of Virginia's colonial governors—Francis Fauquier, Lord Botetourt, and Lord Dunmore. One of the duties of the governor (as the representative of the Crown) was to maintain the institution of slavery in the colony. The King and British merchants (after 1732) profited from the duties collected on slaves imported into Virginia and the rest of the colonies.

There were both advantages and disadvantages for the enslaved men, women, and children who lived and worked at the Palace. The governor's domestic slaves had opportunities to see enslaved laborers who accompanied their masters on visits to the governor or who ran errands to the Palace. They also had chances to earn tips and to use this cash to buy personal items or food. However, the Palace slaves lived with the possibility that the governor would sell them if he returned to England. Marshman's Account Book and the Palace Kitchen Account Book indicate

⁹⁸ *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, 8 March 1787.

⁹⁹ *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, 11 October 1787.

that Botetourt's slaves worked under the close direction of white supervisors. The enslaved laborers at the Palace had to perform their duties well because they were part of the display that the governor used to indicate his position in Virginia.

Francis Fauquier, 1758-1768

The details in Francis Fauquier's 1767 will indicate that he believed all men—white and black, free and enslaved—were men. He noted that his slaves were “a part of my Estate in its nature disagreeable to me, but which my situation made necessary for me.” Fauquier continued to say that the disposal of his bond laborers “has constantly given me uneasiness whenever the thought has occurred to me.” He felt a moral obligation to provide for his enslaved men, women, and children at his death “by using my utmost Endeavours that they experience as little Misery during their Lives as their very unhappy and pitiable condition will allow.” Fauquier decided to allow his slaves to choose their next masters within six months of his death. The governor stipulated that anyone selected as a new owner by one of his slaves could purchase the individual (or individuals in the case of a woman with a child or children since he wanted mothers and children to be kept together) for twenty-five percent less than his or her appraised value. He instructed his executors to read and explain his will to all members of his household—his wife, children, white servants, and slaves.¹⁰⁰

Fauquier's legacy to his enslaved men and women was an attempt to secure their family and friendship ties. The governor's slaves used their legacy to try to preserve the family and neighborhood connections that they had created as members of “the Governor's Family.”¹⁰¹ However, the governor could not control the fate of his slaves beyond their first choice of a new master—some of these owners moved Fauquier's slaves to other areas of Virginia and others sold the slaves whom they purchased from the governor. The story of this group of enslaved men, women, and children illustrates the difficulties that slaves faced as they worked to establish and maintain family relationships in Williamsburg and throughout the colonial Chesapeake. Even when Fauquier's slaves had the chance to assert their wishes and to protect family and friendship ties, this opportunity remained within the realities of their life in eighteenth-century Virginia.

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¹⁰⁰ York County Wills and Inventories (21) 396-404, dated March 26, 1767 and recorded March 21, 1768.

For discussion of Fauquier's slaves and his will see also Thad W. Tate, *The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg*, (Williamsburg, Virginia: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1965), pp. 30, 31, 35, 36, 74, 115; and Michael L. Nicholls, “Aspects of the African American Experience in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg and Norfolk,” (unpublished report, 1990), pp. 16-18, 87.

¹⁰¹ This phrase was used in reference to the slaves owned by Governor William Gooch. See *Virginia Gazette*, February 14, 1750/1.

When Francis Fauquier wrote his will on March 26, 1767 he expressed his dislike of the institution of slavery in a way that set him apart from most of his Virginia contemporaries.¹⁰² His experiences in England influenced the way he thought about people. Fauquier lived in London and was exposed to the ideas of the Enlightenment. He became one of the thirty directors of the South Sea Company in February 1748 and served until February 1757. In 1751, Fauquier was elected a governor of the Foundling Hospital in London. The following year he received a nomination for membership in the Royal Society of London. The proposal described him as “A Gentleman of great merit, well versed in Philosophical & Mathematical inquiries, and a great promoter of usefull Learning, & the Advancement of Natural Knowledge.” He became a member of the Society in February 1753. A short time before his departure for Virginia, Fauquier was named a corresponding member of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce (commonly called the Society of Arts and now known as the Royal Society of Arts). Corresponding members “were men distinguished in various ways or men who had rendered services to the society and were usually foreigners or residents abroad.”¹⁰³

Fauquier balanced his view of his slaves as people with the realities of life in eighteenth-century Virginia. He decided not to free his seventeen enslaved men, women, and children in spite of his feelings. Fauquier could have petitioned the Council to emancipate any or all of his slaves for meritorious service. There was a precedent for this action: Governor William Gooch decided to manumit a slave named Captain Jack when he left Virginia in 1749.¹⁰⁴ However, Gooch secured Captain Jack’s manumission as a living governor. In addition, it would have been difficult for Fauquier to prove that all of his slaves (especially the children) deserved freedom based on meritorious service, the requirement for manumission since 1723. Fauquier also decided against choosing a new master for each of his enslaved men, women, and children or asking his executors to sell these individuals after his death.

Instead, Fauquier was one of a small number of men and women in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Virginia to allow his slaves to select their next masters. The governor’s legacy was a conscious statement of his belief that his bond laborers could choose a new owner. Fauquier’s bequest indicates his acknowledgment that his enslaved men and women, like white men and women, had the ability to think critically and make decisions that would affect their lives for the better. Fauquier demonstrated his belief that members of

¹⁰² See the following wills: John Prentis of Williamsburg in York County Wills and Inventories (22) 310-311, dated August 19, 1773, codicil dated January 2, 1774, and recorded November 20, 1775; Martha C. Ginter of Yorktown in York County Wills and Inventories (23) 776, dated May 20, 1809 and recorded October 15, 1810; Ebenezer Cowan of Norfolk in Norfolk City Will Book (1) f. 203, dated October 25, 1799 and recorded October 29, 1799; Alexander McNabb of Petersburg in Petersburg Hustings Court Will Book (1) 91-92, dated July 18, 1787 and recorded March 5, 1788; Thomas Hope of Petersburg in *ibid.*, p. 196, dated March 14, 1791 and recorded April 1, 1793; and Elizabeth Peachey of Petersburg in *ibid.*, p. 293, dated July 20, 1795 and recorded February 4, 1800.

¹⁰³ George Reese, ed., *The Official Papers of Francis Fauquier, Lieutenant Governor of Virginia 1758-1768*, 3 vols., (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia for the Virginia Historical Society, 1983), I:xxxvi.

¹⁰⁴ H. R. McIlwaine et al., eds., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, 6 vols., (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1927-1966), V:298.

all races deserved to be treated fairly in an October 5, 1760 letter to Jeffery Amherst. The governor noted

I most sincerely wish it had been the policy of these Colonies to treat Indians with that Justice and Humanity you show to them. This and this alone, (if any thing can do it) must make them our Friends. White, Red, or Black; polished or unpolished Men are Men.¹⁰⁵

Fauquier's legacy also indicates that he knew that his bond laborers had information about the qualities and personality of potential masters from direct contact with these individuals and from conversations with other people. Enslaved men and women saw and perhaps waited on men who visited the governor at the Palace. In addition, his slaves had knowledge about the characteristics of prospective owners from family and friends, enslaved and free, who lived in Williamsburg and on nearby plantations.

Although Fauquier did not give his slaves their freedom, he allowed them the autonomy to make an important decision. There were three possible choices for these men and women. First, they could run away. However, only a small number of enslaved individuals in Virginia chose freedom in the eighteenth century. Extant documents indicate that about one percent of the colony's slaves decided to run away between the 1720s and 1790. One-third of the runaways left their masters in order to see family and friends and to return to places where they once lived. Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls attribute the low rate of recorded absenteeism in Virginia to the large proportion of creole slaves in the colony.¹⁰⁶ Second, these enslaved individuals could select a new master who lived in another part of Virginia. It would have been more difficult for a slave who lived on a quarter in the Piedmont to sustain ties to family and friends than it would have been for his or her counterpart who lived in or near the colonial capital. Neither of these options would have made it easy for Fauquier's enslaved men, women, and children to have maintained the bonds to their "family" at the Governor's Palace.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Reese, ed., *The Official Papers of Francis Fauquier*, 1:xlvi, 418.

See the section on the Courthouse in this resource book for information about Fauquier and the pardons he granted to eight of the eighteen York County slaves sentenced to death during his administration.

¹⁰⁶ Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls, "Runaway Slaves in Virginia," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Washington, D.C., 1990.

It is likely that two slaves who had once belonged to Governor Gooch chose to return to Williamsburg. In February 1750/1 Warner Lewis of Gloucester County noted that his woman named Kitty was "supposed to be about Williamsburg." Seventeen years later Peter Wagener informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* that Jack Yarmouth had run away. Wagener observed that "As he formerly belonged to the late Governor Gooch, 'tis likely he may be harboured by some of the Negroes in Williamsburg." See *Virginia Gazette*, February 14, 1750/1 and *ibid.*, Rind, ed., June 16, 1768.

¹⁰⁷ Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls, "Slaves in Piedmont Virginia, 1720-1790," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XLVI (1989):211-251.

Details in the inventory of Fauquier's personal property indicate that his bond laborers selected the third option available to them: they chose to stay in Williamsburg with family and friends. The men who appraised Fauquier's estate recorded the names of the nine individuals who became the new masters of the deceased governor's slaves. The choices that Fauquier's seventeen bond laborers made reveal the strength of the family and friendship ties that joined those who lived at the Governor's Palace to one another and to other individuals in Williamsburg.

* * * *

Fauquier's inventory reveals that three slaves—Young John and a woman named Sall and her son Harry—were unable to find anyone willing to purchase them.¹⁰⁸ The appraisers of the governor's estate valued Young John at £60. Sall and Harry were worth £70. The discounted price for the three slaves was £97.10, £6.10 less than the £104 that George Gilmer of Williamsburg paid for the three slaves. Perhaps Gilmer purchased these individuals because he wanted a domestic worker, someone who could serve as a waiting man, and a boy who could run errands for him in Williamsburg. If Young John was the slave named Jack whom Fauquier sent to the *Virginia Gazette* office in March 1764, Gilmer might have known about it.¹⁰⁹ In the Gilmer household, Sall, Harry, and Young John joined two adult females and three children who ranged in age from three to thirteen years. Doctor Gilmer lived on the James City County side of Williamsburg until he moved to Albemarle County by October 1771. He may have taken Sall, Harry, and Young John with him when he left Williamsburg. Gilmer had twenty-nine slaves on his plantation in Albemarle County in 1782. Unfortunately, the Albemarle County Personal Property Tax Lists do not include the names of slaves in the 1780s.¹¹⁰ Gilmer lived in Albemarle County until the time of his death in 1795. The doctor owned slaves when he died, but he did not include their names in the bequests in his will.¹¹¹

The remaining five men, five women, and four children in Fauquier's Virginia household became the property of the masters they chose. Bristol and Old John selected Thomas Everard as their new owner. Everard, the clerk of the York County Court, lived on Palace Green. He might have had as many as twenty-one slaves—seven women, three men, and eleven children—in Williamsburg when he bought Bristol and Old John. Bristol and Old John probably had seen Everard often, because he was a frequent visitor to the Palace. Everard witnessed Fauquier's will and received an appointment to appraise his estate. The proximity of Everard's house to the Palace may have been especially important to Bristol. He was described as a "new negro" when the vestry clerk for Bruton Parish recorded his baptism in the parish register in early 1767.

¹⁰⁸ York County Wills and Inventories (22) 83-89, recorded July 20, 1772.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Royle, ed., *Virginia Gazette Journals, 1764-1766*, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

¹¹⁰ Albemarle County Personal Property Tax Lists, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

¹¹¹ Albemarle County Will Book 3 (1785-1798) 265-266, dated March 7, 1795 and recorded December 1795. See Albemarle County Will Book 4 (1798-1809) 219-229, dated July 5, 1806 and recorded July 1806 for the account of the estate of George Gilmer and *ibid.*, pp. 340-344, dated August 6, 1801 and recorded March 19, 1806 for the division of the real property of George Gilmer.

Bristol's first friendship ties after he arrived in Virginia from West Africa would have been with those individuals he met while at the Palace. These people included Fauquier's other slaves and white indentured servants, bond laborers who ran errands to the Palace for their masters, enslaved men and women hired out to Fauquier by their masters, and free blacks. It is possible that Old John was one of Fauquier's slaves in 1760 when the governor ordered two enslaved men and a boy to keep the Reverend John Camm from entering the Governor's Palace.¹¹² If so, Old John had been a part of Fauquier's household for at least eight years. His selection of Everard as his new master would have enabled him to maintain ties to blacks, free and enslaved, who traveled to and from the Palace.

Perhaps Everard bought Bristol and Old John because of their skills as waiting men and the distinction they would add to his household. Everard was an orphan at Christ Church Hospital in London when he became an apprentice to Matthew Kemp of Virginia, in 1735. Everard became an important local official and it is likely that he had acquired a household staff that reflected his prominence as clerk of the York County Court, Bruton Parish vestryman, clerk of the House of Burgesses' Committee for Courts and Justice, registrar of the Court of Vice-Admiralty, judge of the Court of Admiralty, trustee for the founding of the Public Hospital, and mayor of Williamsburg in 1766 and in 1771. Everard hired Bristol to Governor Botetourt on several occasions between January 1769 and May 1770. He may have done the same with Old John in January 1769. Everard died in 1781 and, unfortunately, no probate documents concerning his estate survive. Everard's slaves were sold or became the property of his daughter, Martha, and her husband, Isaac Hall. Isaac and Martha Hall lived in Petersburg in the 1780s.¹¹³

Fauquier's Sukey chose the Reverend James Horrocks, the President of William and Mary and Thomas Everard's son-in-law, as the new master for herself and her two daughters, Mary and Sall. Perhaps Sukey turned to the Reverend Horrocks because of his position in the colony and as a way to maintain ties to Bristol and Old John. The price that Horrocks paid—£105—for the three slaves reflects Sukey's skill as a cook and the fact that she was of child-bearing age. Sukey and her two daughters joined seven other slaves—four women and three children—in the Horrocks household. However, by November of 1768, Horrocks decided to sell Sukey, also known as Sukey Hamilton, and one of her daughters. An advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* announced that "SUKEY HAMILTON, cook to the late Governor, with her youngest daughter, 7 years old, will be sold before Mr. Hay's door on Thursday the 15th of December next. Credit will be allowed for six months, bond and proper security being given."¹¹⁴

¹¹² William Stevens Perry, ed., *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church*, 2 vols., (Hartford, 1870; reprint, New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1969), 1:463-464. The dispute between Fauquier and Camm dated to 1758 when the governor signed a bill that allowed Virginians to pay their taxes at the rate of two pence per pound of tobacco, well below the market value. Fauquier's instructions prevented him from approving the bill. Camm represented the clergy who saw their salaries reduced as a result of the lower tax payments. The minister traveled to England where he persuaded the King to disallow the bill. The Crown also warned Fauquier that he would face a recall if he disobeyed his instructions a second time. See Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, *Colonial Virginia—A History*, (White Plains, New York: KTO Press, 1986), pp. 257-259.

¹¹³ See the section on the Brush-Everard House.

¹¹⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., November 24, 1768.

Sall's baptism on July 4, 1762, suggests that she was the daughter sold with her mother. Mary might have died by the time Horrocks decided to sell her mother and sister, or perhaps she was old enough to be separated from her mother. Why would Horrocks agree to purchase these slaves and then decide to sell two of them a few months later? Perhaps the minister found that he did not need a cook, or he may have calculated that he could make a tidy profit by selling a skilled slave woman and her child whom he had purchased at a discount. In any case, Horrocks' decision severed ties Sukey believed she had secured when she chose him as her master.

Lancaster asked Christopher Ayscough to purchase him. The two men had worked together as gardeners at the Governor's Palace. Ayscough and his wife were two of Fauquier's white servants. Perhaps Lancaster and Ayscough developed a friendship based on the type of work they performed at the Governor's Palace. Ann Ayscough received £250 for her "Fidelity & Attention" and her economy in managing the kitchen at the Palace from Fauquier.¹¹⁵ Ayscough probably used part of his wife's legacy to purchase Lancaster, a slave woman named Lucy, and five other slaves. He also bought a house and lot on the James City County side of Williamsburg. In October 1768 he announced that he had opened a tavern that faced the south side of the Capitol.¹¹⁶ Lancaster probably tended the garden on Ayscough's lot. It is possible that he served food and drink in addition to looking after the horses that belonged to his master's customers. Ayscough decided to leave the tavern keeping business in 1770. In September of that year he informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* of his decision and of the sale he planned to have at his house on the 27th of that month. Ayscough noted that he would sell "nine Negroes, one an exceeding good cook wench, and a fellow who is a fine gardener."¹¹⁷ Perhaps the tavern keeper had purchased Sukey from the Reverend Horrocks in an attempt to attract more customers to his establishment. There is no information about the person who purchased Lancaster at Ayscough's sale.

Nanny selected the silversmith James Geddy as the new master for herself and her daughter, Sukey Hinderkin. Geddy lived on Lots 161 and 162 on the corner of Duke of Gloucester Street and the Palace Green. Sukey Hinderkin died between the time that Geddy agreed to purchase the two slaves and the time that he became Nanny's master. Fauquier's executors deducted £10 off the price of £51.05 that Geddy was to pay for the mother and daughter. Geddy owned several slaves in 1768, including a young slave woman. Two years later he announced that he had "a likely Negro Wench, about eighteen years old, with her child, a boy" for sale.¹¹⁸ Perhaps the silversmith did not need this woman after he added Nanny to his household. Geddy took Nanny and his other slaves with him when he moved his family to

¹¹⁵ York County Wills and Inventories (21) 396-404, dated March 26, 1767 and recorded March 21, 1768. Sukey, the governor's cook, did not choose Ann Ayscough as her next owner, an indication that they did not have a close relationship.

¹¹⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., October 6, 1768.

¹¹⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., September 20, 1770.

¹¹⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., October 4, 1770.

Dinwiddie County in 1777. Nanny's name appeared on the 1782, 1783, and 1784 Dinwiddie County Personal Property Tax Lists. The move to the Southside may not have broken all of Nanny's ties to other Williamsburg slaves. Members of several Williamsburg families—the Blairs, the Burwells, the Powells, and the Everards—also took their enslaved men, women, and children with them to their new homes in Petersburg or to their plantations in Dinwiddie County in the 1770s and the 1780s. Geddy's daughter, Ann, and her husband, John Brown, made their home in Richmond. Nanny's name did not appear on the 1785 Dinwiddie County Personal Property Tax List. It is possible that she died, had been sold to a new owner, or lived in Geddy's house in Petersburg by the time that the commissioner recorded the 1785 Personal Property Tax List.¹¹⁹

Fauquier's Titus selected Robert Carter Nicholas, the Treasurer of the Colony of Virginia, as his new master. Perhaps the role that Nicholas played as a trustee for the charity school established in Williamsburg by the Associates of the Reverend Thomas Bray for black children, slave and free, influenced Titus's decision.¹²⁰ Nicholas portrayed himself as a kind master in a January 1767 announcement for two runaway slaves. He informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* that "As I have been always tender of my slaves, and particularly attentive to the good usage of them, I hope wherever these fellows may be apprehended that they will receive such moderate correction as will deter them from running away for the future."¹²¹ Titus joined a household of twelve tithable slaves in 1768. He was one of nineteen tithes in Nicholas's house in the James City County portion of Williamsburg.¹²² It is possible that Nicholas moved Titus to his property in Hanover County when he left Williamsburg in 1777. Nicholas died at his plantation known as "The Retreat" in Hanover County on September 8, 1780. His widow, Ann, and their underage children moved to Albemarle County where they remained until the end of the Revolution. Titus might have been one of 120 slaves belonging to the estate of Robert Carter Nicholas in Albemarle County in 1782. The widow Nicholas had returned to Williamsburg by late 1783.¹²³ There is no evidence that Ann Nicholas brought Titus with her, so perhaps Nicholas gave Titus to his daughter, Sally, when she married John Hatley Norton in 1772.¹²⁴ A clue to Titus's whereabouts turned up in a letter John Hatley Norton received from Charles Payne, the overseer of his Fauquier County plantation, on September 22, 1789. Payne enclosed "A List of the people that will want clothing this fall" with his letter. This list included a slave named "Tetus," possibly a variation of "Titus." The position of Tetus in Payne's list suggests that he

¹¹⁹ Dinwiddie County Personal Property Tax Lists, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

¹²⁰ John C. VanHorne, ed., *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery: The American Correspondence of the Associates of Dr. Bray, 1717-1777*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

¹²¹ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., January 15, 1767.

¹²² Williamsburg-James City County Tax Book 1768-1769.

¹²³ Victor Dennis Golladay, "The Nicholas Family of Virginia, 1722-1820," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1973); Albemarle County Personal Property Tax Lists.

¹²⁴ Nicholas did not mention Titus by name in his will. See the will of Robert Carter Nicholas in the Carter-Smith Papers, Mss 1729, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

may have been the husband of Jane and that they had two children, Let and “Tetus Child.”¹²⁵ Norton paid the annual assessment on five slaves over the age of sixteen in 1789. This merchant died in Winchester by July 3, 1797. Norton did not include the names of his house servants whom he left to his second wife, Catherine, during her lifetime.¹²⁶

Three slaves—Mary and her daughter Jemima and Tom—turned to John Dixon as their next master. Evidence in the York County Court records suggests that they moved to the household of the printer John Dixon. Perhaps Tom and Mary were married and the printer agreed to buy them because he needed a slave to do household work and another to work in his shop. Dixon had his house and business on Lot 48, a short distance from the Capitol on Duke of Gloucester Street. Dixon may have left Jemima in Williamsburg when he moved to Richmond in 1780 because he had hired her out to a resident in the city. Jemima appeared on the 1783 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List as a slave under sixteen years of age who belonged to John Dixon. Perhaps Jemima joined Mary and Tom in Richmond before the 1784 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List was taken.¹²⁷ These three slaves either died or were sold to a new master before John Dixon died in Richmond on April 27, 1791. Tom, Mary, and Jemima were not among the seven slaves who appeared in the May 1792 inventory of the printer’s estate.¹²⁸

There is little information about the man whom Doll selected as her master. He was one Richard Johnson, possibly a resident of nearby New Kent County, or maybe he was a part of the Johnson family who lived on the James City County side of Williamsburg. Johnson died sometime before 1773, and the executors of his estate might have sold Doll to Governor Botetourt. The inventory of Botetourt’s estate in October 1770 included a slave named Doll.¹²⁹ It is also possible that Doll became the property of Philip Johnson of Williamsburg after the death of Richard Johnson. In October 1774, Thomas Skinner offered a reward for the return of Dolly, a woman hired to him by the trustees of Philip Johnson’s estate. Skinner, a shoemaker, noted that he had hired Dolly for almost four years.

If Doll returned to the Palace she would have been reunited with Hannah. It is likely that Hannah asked one of Fauquier’s executors to purchase her for the next governor so that she could remain at the Palace. It is also possible that Hannah had worked at the Palace during the administrations of William Gooch (1727-1749) and Robert Dinwiddie (1751-1758). A woman

¹²⁵ Charles Payne to John Hatley Norton in Frances Norton Mason, ed., *John Norton & Sons Merchants of London and Virginia. Being the Papers from their Counting House for the Years 1750 to 1795*, (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1939), pp. 488-489.

¹²⁶ Frederick County Personal Property Tax List, 1789; Frederick County Wills (6) 283-285, dated November 19, 1792, codicils dated January 6, 1794 and October 13, 1795, and recorded February 6, 1798.

¹²⁷ Williamsburg Personal Property Tax Lists 1783 and 1784.

¹²⁸ Richmond City Personal Property Tax Lists; Richmond Hustings Court Deeds No. 1 (1782-1792) 616-617, dated May 10, 1792 and recorded May 15, 1792. The Richmond City Personal Property Tax Lists do not include slave names.

¹²⁹ A copy of Governor Botetourt’s inventory can be found in Graham Hood, *The Governor’s Palace in Williamsburg: A Cultural Study*, (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1991).

named Hannah was baptized on May 6, 1754. The fact that the Bruton Parish vestry clerk noted that this woman belonged to the Honorable William Gooch suggests that Hannah had been a part of Gooch's household for a long time and that she was still associated with the former governor. Perhaps Gooch appointed a member of the Council to sell Hannah to his successor when he returned to England in May 1749, and Dinwiddie may have done the same when he left Virginia in 1758. If Hannah had been at the Palace since 1749 (and possibly earlier), it is likely that Fauquier's executors bought Hannah for the new governor because of her knowledge of daily work at the Palace. Hannah was one of the eight slaves who appeared in the inventory of Botetourt's estate. She either worked in the garden at the Palace or helped the butler, William Marshman, with the day-to-day work at the Palace. After Botetourt's death John Randolph informed the Duke of Beaufort that the deceased governor's personal property included "several Negroes accustom'd to work in the Gardens and Park."¹³⁰ Randolph and Botetourt's other executors also noted that "The Slaves are reckon'd orderly & valuable, and perhaps may be convenient to our next Governor. His Lordship brought over with him a good many white Servants, and, after a short Trial, found it convenient & necessary to purchase & hire Negroes to assist in the business of his Family, and do the Drudgery without doors."¹³¹ Perhaps Hannah and Doll remained at the Governor's Palace and became a part of the household of Governor Dunmore who followed Botetourt.

* * * *

Francis Fauquier's legacy to his enslaved men, women, and children provides an opportunity to examine the interconnected world of whites and their slaves and to learn about the impact of masters' actions upon the lives of their bond laborers. Initially, Fauquier's passing did not loosen the ties his slaves had to each other and to other slaves in Williamsburg. The governor's legacy gave his bond laborers the rare chance to maintain their connections to kin, neighbors, and friends. His slaves were among a small number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century enslaved men and women who could control the destiny of their own families. In addition to proximity to family, it is likely that Fauquier's bond laborers took a potential owner's reputation and treatment of slaves, the type of work to be done, and a previous connection with an individual into consideration when making their selection of a new master. It is known that sixteen of Fauquier's seventeen slaves became the property of men who lived in Williamsburg.

However, Fauquier could not predict how the actions of the nine subsequent owners would affect the lives of this group. The Reverend James Horrocks sold Sall and Sukey a few months after he purchased them. Christopher Ayscough did not need Lancaster after he left the tavern keeping business. James Geddy took Nanny to Dinwiddie County in 1777. It is possible that George Gilmer moved Sall, Harry, and Young John to Albemarle County. Titus might have

¹³⁰ John Randolph to the Duke of Beaufort, October 15, 1770, Personal Collection of His Grace the Duke of Beaufort, Badminton, Gloucestershire, England; transcript, Special Collections, Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

¹³¹ William Nelson, John Randolph, Robert Carter Nicholas, John Blair Junior, and George Wythe to the Duke of Beaufort, October 30, 1770, Personal Collection of His Grace the Duke of Beaufort, Badminton, Gloucestershire, England; transcript, Special Collections, Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

ended up at Robert Carter Nicholas's plantation in Hanover County in the late 1770s, in Albemarle County in the early 1780s, and in Fauquier County by the end of the 1780s. Jemima probably was in Richmond with John Dixon's other slaves by 1784. Fauquier's legacy did not protect the majority of his seventeen slaves from the instability and uncertainty that characterized the lives of slaves in eighteenth-century Virginia. The actions of most of the new owners disrupted the kin and personal connections that Fauquier and his slaves had tried to preserve. Ultimately, these men, women, and children—like other bond laborers in eighteenth-century Virginia—experienced the misery of separation from family and friends that Fauquier had hoped to spare them.

Lord Botetourt, 1768-1770

Details in the account book kept by William Marshman, the Palace Kitchen Account Book, the Accounts of Botetourt's estate kept by Robert Carter Nicholas, the Botetourt Papers at Badminton in Gloucestershire, England, and the inventory of Lord Botetourt's estate provide a window on the governor's household and its operation during his administration. Between twenty and thirty individuals—male and female, black and white, enslaved and free—lived and worked in the sixty-one interconnected areas at the Palace. Botetourt brought twelve white male servants with him to Virginia:

Silas Blandford	land steward
John Cook	under cook
John Draper	smith
Thomas Fuller	under butler
Thomas Gale	coachman and carter
James Kendall	carpenter
Joseph Kidd	groom of the chambers
Samuel King	postilion and groom
William Knight	footman
William Marshman	butler
James Simpson	gardener
Thomas Towse	cook

These men were accustomed to social differences among members of a household staff. They were not, however, used to slaves and distinctions based on race instead of social rank or class. Botetourt counted on William Marshman to manage a diverse staff of permanent and temporary workers who came from a variety of backgrounds and performed a wide range of jobs at the Governor's Palace. Marshman's task of managing the white and black laborers might have been easier if he was familiar with a statement that William Robinson of Williamsburg made in 1763. Robinson observed that "It is the greatest affront that can be put upon a free man here to give orders concerning him to the slaves, it is what a white servant would not endure with any patience."¹³²

¹³² Graham Hood, *The Governor's Palace in Williamsburg: A Cultural Study*, (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1991), pp. 25, 230, 246.

It is possible that Botetourt originally planned to have only white servants in his household in Virginia even though he knew that members of the gentry depended on slave laborers. On October 30, 1772 William Nelson told the Duke of Beaufort that “His Lordship brought over with him a good many white Servants, and, after a short Trial, found it convenient and necessary to purchase and hire Negroes to assist in the business of his Family, and do the Drudgery without Doors.”¹³³ Botetourt’s “short Trial” did not last long. He arrived in Williamsburg on October 26, 1768 and six days later Botetourt paid the estate of Francis Fauquier £45 for Hannah, one of the deceased governor’s enslaved women. It is likely that Fauquier’s executors purchased Hannah because they needed an experienced slave to work at the Palace until the next governor arrived. Botetourt must have realized within a few days of his arrival that she would be essential to the success of his new household.¹³⁴

Botetourt did not leave any papers in which he discussed his feelings about slavery and the treatment of enslaved individuals as Fauquier did in his will. It is likely that the governor, not Marshman, ordered the whippings that several bond laborers (both those owned by Botetourt and those hired to work at the Palace) endured in 1770. Marshman noted that he paid one shilling and six pence “to flogging Matt” on January 30 of that year. On May 2, 1770 James Lebee received two shillings for flogging Sarah.¹³⁵ It is possible that Sarah was the woman whom Thomas Everard hired to Botetourt or that she was the governor’s laundry maid, Sally. Lebee charged Marshman three shillings and nine pence to administer punishment to Matt and Doll on June 21, 1770. The fact that Marshman gave Lebee three shillings and nine pence on August 3, 1770 when he flogged Phillis suggests that he flogged another unnamed slave on the same day. The punishment of Will on September 1, 1770 added two shillings to Lebee’s pocket. Marshman made no mention of how he felt about the punishment or the reasons why bond laborers received physical punishment. Perhaps the concentration of the floggings between late January and early September 1770 was connected to the arrival of Rosanna Wilson as head cook at the Palace. Mrs. Wilson, a native Virginian, could have persuaded the governor that several of the enslaved laborers needed to be punished.¹³⁶

Enslaved individuals owned and hired by Lord Botetourt worked alongside white Englishmen and free persons of color in the three principal areas of the Palace: the main house; the kitchen and related areas; and the stables, coach house, garden, and park. Each of the three spaces had one person who supervised the men, women, and children who performed the work essential for both the day-to-day operation of the Palace and the special events hosted by

¹³³ Nelson’s description of the governor’s twelve white servants as “a good many” indicates that most Virginians did not own a large number of slaves. In the 1780s five-sixths of Williamsburg households (83.3%) had at least one slave and eighteen of the 178 households (10.1%) had ten or more slaves. See Michael L. Nicholls, “Aspects of the African American Experience in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg and Norfolk,” (unpublished report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990), pp. 3-5, 12-13.

¹³⁴ Robert Carter Nicholas Accounts of Lord Botetourt Estate; Botetourt Manuscripts at Badminton.

¹³⁵ It is interesting that James Lebee, a former keeper of the public gaol, administered the punishment instead of Edward Westmore who kept the public gaol during Botetourt’s tenure as governor.

¹³⁶ Hood, *The Governor’s Palace*, pp. 243-244.

Botetourt. William Marshman, the butler, managed the work in the main house; Thomas Towse (followed by John Cook, William Sparrow, and Rosanna Wilson) directed the preparation of food; and Silas Blandford assigned work to Botetourt's slaves who did "the Drudgery without Doors."

Main House

William Marshman functioned as the house steward, butler, valet, housekeeper, and secretary for Botetourt. His "principal work area at the Palace was strategically (and symbolically) located adjacent to the hall and next to the service entrance. Here he could keep track of visitors entering both front and side doors, the latter being tradesmen and servants. Here he coordinated the accounts from both sides of the Palace compound, the kitchen to the west and the stables, garden, and park to the east."¹³⁷ The butler's duties also included summoning doctors for servants; securing a midwife and a nurse for the laundry maid; and giving money to impoverished men and women. Marshman also paid men for killing hogs in January 1769 and for filling the icehouse in February of the same year.

Botetourt's butler supervised the white servants, slaves, and free persons of color who worked in the main house. The household servants included Thomas Fuller, the under butler; Joseph Kidd, the groom of the chambers; and William Knight, the footman. John Draper (a blacksmith), Joshua Kendall (a carpenter), John Rogers, and possibly Thomas Gale (a coachman) waited on guests at several functions at the Palace. Enslaved men served as under footmen in the public areas of the Palace. Robert Nicholson's bill for clothes that he made for Caesar, Isham, Michael, and Will suggests that they were among the footmen and under footmen.¹³⁸

It is likely that Botetourt stationed both liveried footmen and under footmen in the hall at the Palace. Fauquier had two men and a boy stationed in the hall when he and Reverend Camm argued in 1760. Fauquier's command to Edward Westmore to summon "all" of his slaves suggests that he had more than three individuals who stood near the doorway to the Palace. Graham Hood notes that since Westmore

was on call outside the room in which the governor and Camm met implies that the visitor also had to pass by him in order to be admitted to the lieutenant governor's presence. If Fauquier observed this ritual, we may be sure that the aristocratic Botetourt did as well, and with greater ceremony. He kept at least four footmen, perhaps more, white as well as black. Evidently they were not only ornamental but also necessary, for the custom of visitors coming to the Palace without appointments seems to have been well established.

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 236, 238, 239.

¹³⁸ Robert Carter Nicholas Accounts of Lord Botetourt's Estate.

In addition to guarding the entrance to the Palace, footmen carried a wide range of food from the kitchen and wine from the cellars to the dining room at mealtime.¹³⁹

Marshman was responsible for hiring slaves and free blacks when extra help was needed in all three areas at the Palace. Slaves, male and female, who belonged to Peyton Randolph, John Randolph, Robert Carter Nicholas, Thomas Nelson, the Reverend James Horrocks, Robert Carter, Thomas Everard, the estate of Carter Burwell, George Wythe, Mrs. Dawson, Mr. Tazewell, and William Byrd III worked at the Palace during Botetourt's administration. Marshman supervised the men he hired to wait, to cart goods to and from the Palace, and to serve as postilions. The butler usually employed women to labor in the house and the kitchen area.

The balls that Botetourt gave required additional labor on the night of the event. Marshman made arrangements for musicians, a barber to dress the hair of slaves, sentinels and porters to guard the doors at the Palace, slaves to light candles, men to wait on the governor's guests, and women to help with the preparation of food.¹⁴⁰ The head cook had the responsibility for the enslaved cooks, under cook, and pastry maid whose skills in the kitchen made the meals at the balls more elegant.

Marshman also had contact with the slaves who ran errands to the Palace for their masters. Ann Smart Martin notes that a number of prominent residents of Williamsburg and the surrounding rural area

such as the Speaker of the House or the President of the Council curried favor by sending special foods, usually carried by their slaves. These slaves were tipped well for their services. The generosity of the Governor meant that the value of the tips in some cases equaled the value of the foods themselves. This regular movement of cash into the slave economy ensured that the power of the governor to command attention rested at the top and bottom of the Williamsburg hierarchy. The provisioning of the colony's most important political leader took on special significance. One group gained or buttressed political patronage, the other added to pocket change.

This ability to reach in multiple directions for supply of a large variety of specialty foods to fit the special cuisine of Virginia's governor is a large metaphor. The governor hosted large entertainments, dispensing food and drink to curry favor. Townspeople reciprocated with small treats of special luxuries, a tasty bird, a few luscious berries. If food greased the machine of the town, the governor was a master mechanic.

The tips that slaves received for delivering food and drink to the Governor's Palace meant that they had cash to purchase goods and to participate in the local economy. Marshman also

¹³⁹ Hood, *The Governor's Palace*, pp. 93, 94 (quote), 131.

¹⁴⁰ It is possible that the sentinels and porters were men of color because they wore livery. The pay for sentinels and porters ranged from five shillings to ten shillings in contrast to the usual sum of one shilling and three pence per day. In addition, sentinels or porters had the opportunity to earn tips because they came into contact with members of the gentry who attended the balls at the Palace.

purchased earthenware pans and wildfowl from Native Americans, including members of the Pamunkey tribe and one whom he described as “belonging to the Colledge.”¹⁴¹

Botetourt’s butler noted that he gave tips on two occasions to several slaves who lived at the Palace. First, he rewarded four unnamed slave men seven shillings and six pence “for taking the thief” on November 1, 1769. In April of the following year Marshman gave Ben, Michael, Will, Abraham, and Isham two shillings and six pence each for “aiding to catch racoon.” It is likely that Marshman called upon slaves to run errands for him in and around Williamsburg. He tipped bond laborers who belonged to Mr. Belford, Colonel Burwell, Robert Carter, Colonel Cary, Mr. Foxcroft, Captain Gell, Anthony Hay, Grissell Hay, James Horrocks, Mr. Johnson, Colonel Lewis, Thomas Nelson, William Nelson, John Norton, Mr. Page, Mrs. Pitt, John Randolph, Peyton Randolph, Richard Taliaferro, Mr. Tonny, Jane Vobe, Mrs. Walter, Mr. Winston, George Wythe, and Mr. Younghusband. An Indian owned by the College of William and Mary received a tip on Christmas Eve, 1768.

Marshman gave Christmas boxes to the slaves who delivered gifts of food and who worked at the Palace.¹⁴² The butler’s notation “to the black servants” on Christmas Day 1768 is probably a reference to the box that he gave to Botetourt’s slaves. Marshman gave a box to Mr. Graves’s man and to Purdie and Dixon’s slave on December 30, 1768. Doctor George Gilmer’s man received a Christmas box on January 7, 1769. Between January 14, 1769 and February 7, 1769 Marshman prepared a box valued at £2 for slaves who belonged to Mrs. Dawson, Robert Carter Nicholas, Thomas Everard, George Wythe, Mr. Tazewell, James Horrocks, John Randolph, and Peyton Randolph. The butler also gave a Christmas box to the wood man and to the carter’s men. Marshman delivered a greater number of Christmas boxes in 1769. The butler gave a box to William Rind’s enslaved boy two days before the holiday. Three days after Christmas he noted that he presented Christmas boxes to Botetourt’s slaves, Jane Vobe’s carter, and Anthony Hay’s waiting man. Marshman’s list included “the Taylor’s boys,” the woodman, and slaves who belonged to Colonel Burwell, John Carter, Robert Carter, Mrs. Dawson, Thomas Everard, Mr. Graves, James Horrocks, William Nelson, Mr. Kemp, Robert Carter Nicholas, Peyton Randolph, and George Wythe. The governor’s butler delivered his final Christmas box to John Randolph’s enslaved men, women, and children on March 25, 1770.

Marshman’s entries in his account book suggest that he became acclimated to life in a slave owning society after spending his early years in England where one did not see as many slaves. The butler’s early notes include payments and tips to the “black servants,” a “black woman,” and a “black man.” Within six months of his arrival in Virginia, Marshman used the

¹⁴¹ Ann Smart Martin, “Consumption Patterns in Individual Households,” in “Provisioning Early American Towns. The Chesapeake: A Multidisciplinary Case Study,” (Final Performance Report, National Endowment for the Humanities Grant RO-22643-93, 1997), pp. 145-146.

¹⁴² In the eighteenth-century, a “Christmas Box” was a gift of money, a tip, given during the forty-day Christmas season. Traditionally, a master gave a “Christmas Box” to an inferior—a servant, a slave, an apprentice, or a tradesman. See David DeSimone, “The Christmas Box Tradition,” *The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, Winter 1997, pp. 1-4; Hood, *The Governor’s Palace*, pp. 241-242; and *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish, (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Incorporated, 1943), pp. 40, 54.

word “negro” to describe African Americans who worked at the Palace.¹⁴³ The amount of payments to white men who worked as waiting men and to the masters of enslaved men who performed the same work also hint at a change in Marshman’s outlook. In December 1769, the butler noted that he paid Joseph Kidd (the groom of the chambers), James Kendall (a carpenter), and John Draper (a blacksmith) five shillings and nine pence for their attendance as waiting men. James Horrocks’s man and the man who belonged to John Randolph took the same amount home to their owners. However, in April of the following year Marshman gave Kidd, Kendall, and Draper five shillings for one day of waiting. The two enslaved men who waited at the Palace on the same day gained two shillings and six pence for their masters, Robert Carter and Thomas Everard. The butler probably realized that he needed to pay Kidd, Kendall, and Draper at a higher rate than he paid the owners of hired slaves.

Marshman’s account book indicates that he ran Botetourt’s household in an efficient manner by hiring men, women, and children when he needed extra help at the Palace. The butler quickly learned about the skills of the enslaved men, women, and children who lived in and near Williamsburg. His detailed accounts provide a window on the many roles filled by slaves and free blacks at the Palace during Botetourt’s administration. In addition, the document reveals the opportunities that the governor’s slaves had to make connections to enslaved persons who ran errands to the Palace for their owners, slaves who were hired to work at the Palace, and free blacks who labored in the governor’s house.

The Kitchen

Botetourt’s cook, Thomas Towse, died within two months of his arrival in Virginia. John Cook, the under cook, became the head cook, a position he held until he returned to England in July 1769. The next head cook was a man named William Sparrow who managed the kitchen and the related areas between July 1769 and February 1770 when he went back to England. Mrs. Rosanna Wilson, mother of gardener James Wilson, served as the cook until Botetourt’s death on October 15, 1770.¹⁴⁴

The head cook was the supervisor of the under cook, the pastry cook, the baker, kitchen maids, the scullery maid, the laundry maid, and any slaves hired to work in the kitchen area. This individual oversaw all activities in the supply and storage areas (the larder, the coalhouse, the charcoal house, the glass and linen cupboards or closets, and the cook’s cellar), the scullery, and the servants’ hall.¹⁴⁵

The Kitchen Account Book indicates that William Sparrow and Rosanna Wilson hired men and women to work in the kitchen area when they needed extra help.

¹⁴³ Hood, *The Governor’s Palace*, p. 243.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

Sparrow paid an “assistance woman” for five days of labor on July 12, 1769; one day of work on August 8, 1769; and for labor at “different times” on September 9, 1769. The head cook employed a “chair woman” who worked for him during a ten-day period in October of 1769. Sparrow’s “chair woman” was probably a charwoman, a laborer who was hired by the day to do odd household jobs. It is likely that the “assistance woman” did the same type of work. She and the charwoman might have been free women of color. Sparrow tipped Edward Westmore’s slave, Wentworth, in January 1770; and a slave who belonged to a Mr. Williams also received a tip from the head cook in the same month.

The fact that Sparrow gave three men one shilling and three pence each “for cleaning the yard” on Sunday, September 17, 1769 suggests that he paid slaves who worked in the Palace Gardens or Park during the week to labor for him on their day off. The two sentinels whom Sparrow paid to stand by the kitchen door during the ball on December 26, 1769 might have been enslaved men who usually labored in the governor’s gardens, stable, or park.

A free black woman named Lydia Cooper received wages for work she performed at the Palace Kitchen on two occasions in 1769. First, she gained £1.17.6 on October 2, 1769. This amount indicates that she labored for almost two months. William Sparrow hired Lydia Cooper by the middle of October and paid her £1.5 for a month and a half of work on November 27, 1769. Lydia Cooper was at the Palace when Sparrow hired Rosanna Wilson to work in the kitchen for two days.

Lydia Cooper hired her enslaved man, Mann, to Rosanna Wilson (when she was head cook at the Palace) three times in the spring and summer of 1770. Lydia Cooper received £1.5 for Mann’s wages for a month of labor on May 12, 1770. Mann probably worked elsewhere in Williamsburg for six weeks before he returned to the Palace Kitchen. He earned the sum of £2 for his mistress for two months of work that ended on July 6, 1770. Nine days later Mann was back at the Palace. Mrs. Wilson paid Lydia Cooper £1 for a month of Mann’s labor on August 15, 1770. Mann probably returned to the Williamsburg house that his mistress rented from Thomas Hornsby at the end of each day.¹⁴⁶

Rosanna Wilson hired Grissell Hay’s man, Dick, for a day in March 1770. Unfortunately, the head cook did not include the names of the “negro woman” whom she paid for three days of labor or the “negro man” who worked in the kitchen area for two days in April of 1770. Mrs. Wilson hired a free black woman named Betty three times in 1770. Betty earned twelve shillings and six pence for a month’s work on May 25, 1770. Mrs. Wilson needed Betty’s labor the next four days and paid her five shillings. Betty returned to the Palace Kitchen in early June and worked six days for seven shillings and six pence.

John Cook and William Sparrow also supervised the work of the slaves whom Marshman hired to help prepare food for large dinners and balls at the Palace. John Randolph’s cook joined the kitchen staff for balls on November 22, 1768; December 26, 1768, and May 27, 1769. She

¹⁴⁶ Lydia Cooper owned Mann and Doctor on November 15, 1773 when she received a presentment from the grand jury for not listing her men as tithes. Perhaps she hired Mann to work in the Palace Kitchen during Dunmore’s administration.

also was at the Palace on April 10, 1769, possibly for a dinner after the opening of a general court session. The under cook from the Attorney General's household, who worked the ball on December 26, 1768, might have been the girl who was at the Palace Kitchen for the ball on November 22, 1768. Randolph's under cook worked during the ball in celebration of the Queen's birthday on May 19, 1769, as did his pastry maid. William Byrd's cook assisted in food preparation for the ball that honored the Queen and again on July 18, 1769. Sparrow turned to Rosanna Wilson and Anthony Hay's cook at the Raleigh instead of hiring Randolph's cook, under cook, and pastry maid for the ball that celebrated the King's birthday on October 25, 1769. He paid Rosanna Wilson £1.1.6 for two days of work and Hay for one day of his cook's labor. The head cook paid Mrs. Wilson the sum of £2.13.9 on January 10, 1770, so it is possible that she was in the Palace Kitchen during the ball on December 26, 1769.

Rosanna Wilson's experience in the Palace Kitchen qualified her to replace Sparrow as the head cook when he decided to return to England in February 1770. Entries in the Kitchen Account Book indicate that she did not hire a cook from John Randolph, William Byrd, or Anthony Hay between February and October of 1770. Instead, she had the free black woman named Betty, Lydia Cooper's Mann, a "negro man," or a "negro woman" assist her in the kitchen area for the ball held on May 21, 1770 and on other occasions when she needed extra help.

John Cook, William Sparrow, and Rosanna Wilson paid for the various foods that they purchased from whites and free men of color for use in Botetourt's household. The cooks also tipped slaves for gifts of food and drink that they carried to the Palace on behalf of their owners. Enslaved individuals who belonged to Jacquelin Ambler, William Byrd III, Robert and Frances Carter, Christiana Campbell, Thomas Everard, George Gilmer, Anthony Hay, Grissel Hay, James Horrocks, Joseph Kidd, Matthew Moody, William and Thomas Nelson, Robert Carter Nicholas, Robert Nicholson, John Randolph, Peyton Randolph, Richard Taliaferro, Edward Westmore, and George Wythe delivered food and drink that the cooks used in the dishes that enslaved men served to Botetourt and his guests.

The Palace Stables, Coach House, Garden, Park, and Lands

Silas Blandford managed the people who worked in the third service area at the Palace—the stables, the coach house, the garden, the park, and lands. Like Marshman and the cooks, Blandford supervised the labor of white servants, black slaves, and free persons of color. The permanent staff included Thomas Gale, a coachman and carter; James Simpson and James Wilson, the gardeners; a blacksmith named John Draper; Joshua Kendall, the carpenter; and a groom by the name of Samuel King. Draper, Kendall, and possibly Gale also worked as waiters when Marshman needed extra help in the Palace.¹⁴⁷

Marshman's accounts indicate that James Simpson supervised the slaves whom the butler hired to work in the Palace Gardens, Park, and Lands. In March and April of 1769 Marshman noted that he paid at least four of the gardener's men—Bacchus, Will, Jack, and Tom—for work

¹⁴⁷ Hood, *The Governor's Palace*, pp. 250, 253.

that they performed in the Palace. Marshman did not include the name of the slave who labored for him on two occasions. The butler needed additional assistance to get the Palace ready for spring or for the ball that Botetourt gave on May 19, 1769 to celebrate Queen Charlotte's birthday.

In addition to Bacchus, Will, Jack, and Tom, James Simpson (and later, James Wilson) oversaw the slaves who worked at the Palace for a few days, a few months, or a year. John Randolph's gardener worked at the Palace for two days in April of 1769. Mrs. Wray's July 1769 bill of £5.1.8 for men in the garden suggests that two of her enslaved men tended plants in Botetourt's garden for several months. It is likely that Abraham (hired from William Presson), Ben, Billy (hired from Sarah Crawley), Lewis (hired from Mary Tabb), and Nat (hired from Grissel Hay) labored under the direction of Simpson and Wilson. Billy and Nat probably returned to their owners' homes at the end of the day, since the widow Crawley lived near Williamsburg and Grissel Hay made her home in a dwelling on Market Square. William Presson and Mary Tabb were residents of Charles Parish and it is likely that Abraham and Lewis slept in the stables, the coach house, or an outbuilding. The contents of a "Small Room Adjoyning to Poultry House"—"1 Old Mattrass" and "2 Old Blankets"—suggests that the slave who watched over the livestock and poultry used this space for sleeping.¹⁴⁸ This enslaved laborer, like others who did not come into daily contact with whites who visited the Palace, probably wore clothing similar to that worn by slaves who tended crops on plantations.¹⁴⁹ These slaves also had fewer opportunities to earn tips than did the enslaved men and women who worked in the Palace.

James, a slave belonging to the estate of Carter Burwell, worked in the Palace Gardens during Botetourt's administration. William Nelson, Burwell's executor, also hired James to Governors Fauquier and Dunmore. James was a skilled gardener who had the privilege of tending some land on his own time. On October 12, 1769, Marshman paid him for fifty-eight pounds of hops at one shilling per pound. He received forty-four shillings from Botetourt's butler for forty-four pounds of hops on September 7, 1770.

Blandford also managed the enslaved men he hired to work in the coach house and to drive Botetourt's carriage. John Randolph hired his coachman and postilion to the governor in November 1768. Robert Carter's postilion accompanied Botetourt's carriage in May of the following year. William Nelson received seven shillings and six pence when his coachman and postilion carried lemons from Yorktown to the Palace in May 1770. The Attorney General's postilion rode one of the horses that pulled the governor's carriage twice in September of 1770.

The Impact of the Death of Lord Botetourt on his Slaves

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁴⁹ The first store room at the Palace contained material at the time of Botetourt's inventory. A tailor might have used the "2 p[iece]s Oznabrigs" and the "37 yds Oznabrigs – 76 & ¼ do [ditto]" to make shirts or summer suits for the slaves who worked in the Palace Stables, Coach House, Garden, and Park. The material might have been used for slave bedding. The "8 ¼ yds brown Holland – 5 ½ yds printed Cotton – 1 Woman's Cotton Gown" in the store room might have been for Sally, the laundry maid. The "26 pr plain Negroes Shoes" were for the bond laborers who worked outside. Hood, *The Governor's Palace*, p. 290.

After the death of Lord Botetourt on October 15, 1770, William Nelson, John Randolph, Robert Carter Nicholas, John Blair Junior, and George Wythe wrote the Duke of Beaufort about the deceased governor's estate. Nelson and the others noted that the "Slaves are reckon'd orderly & valuable, and perhaps may be Convenient to our next Governor."¹⁵⁰ On May 3, 1771, the President and Masters of the College of William and Mary resolved "unanimously that a Negro Woman belonging to his late Excellency's Estate be purchas'd for the Use of the College; if to be had at a moderate price."¹⁵¹ However, Robert Carter Nicholas's account of the sale of the estate of Lord Botetourt in 1771 indicates that the President and Masters did not purchase one of Botetourt's enslaved women:

The Estate of Lord Botetourt for Cash recd. Of Sundries for Goods purchas'd by them at the Sale of his Lordships Estate

1771

August 3	By Cash of Mr. Nathl Burwell	1..10..-
	By Ditto of the Revd. Mr. Fountaine	-.7..-
	By Ditto of Mr. William Digges	-.6..3
	By Ditto of Mr. William Griffin	-.10..-
	By Ditto of Mr. William Keen	-.9..-
	By Ditto of Mr. George Mitchell	-.6..-
	By Ditto of Mr. Blair jr	6..13..6
Octr. 22	By Ditto of Joseph Kidd	29..4..5 ½
29	By Ditto of Mr. James Mercer	11..9..6
Novr. 1	By Ditto of Thomas Bolling	2..3..-
2	By Ditto of Benja. Harrison	57..18..-
	By Ditto of Meriwether Smith	2..18..-
	By Ditto of Thos. M. Randolph	9..12..6
4	By Ditto of Doctr. Griffin	46..2..6
5	By Ditto of Colo. Bassett	17..15..6
	By Ditto of William Fitzhugh	10..12..6
	By Ditto of Cuthbert Hubbard	13..13..-
	By Ditto of Colo Byrd	31...-.-
	By Ditto of Jno. Byrd	21...-.-
	By Ditto of Doctr. Pope	6..6..-
7	By Ditto of the Honble. Jno. Page esqr	4..2..6
	By Ditto of Wilson Cary esqr	12..10..-
	By Ditto of Richard Adams	43..10..2
	By Ditto of Mann Page jr	131..16..6
	By Ditto of Colo. Corbin for sundries sold the Country	306..6..-
	By Ditto of John Lewis	48..1..3

¹⁵⁰ Nelson, Randolph, Nicholas, Blair, and Wythe to the Duke of Beaufort, October 30, 1770.

¹⁵¹ "Journals of the Meetings of the President & Masters of William & Mary College [1729-1784]," p. 203 quoted in "William and Mary College Historical Notes," p. 202.

	By Ditto of Mr. Secretary	101..8.-
11	By Ditto of Ralph Wormeley jr. esqr	2..12..6
	By Ditto of Peterfd. Trent	142..10.-
	By Ditto of Robt. C. Nicholas	95..12..3
	By Ditto of Mr. President Nelson	<u>800..9..9</u>
		<u>£1958..15..7 ½</u>

It is possible that Joseph Kidd, Benjamin Harrison, Doctor Corbin Griffin, Colonel William Byrd, Richard Adams, Mann Page Junior, Colonel Corbin, John Lewis, Thomas “Secretary” Nelson, Peterfield Trent, Robert Carter Nicholas, and William “President” Nelson purchased an enslaved man, woman, or child who had been owned by Lord Botetourt.¹⁵² William Nelson, one of the executors of Botetourt’s estate, might have purchased the eight slaves for the next governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore. Unfortunately, most of the extant documents concerning Dunmore’s slaves do not include the names of these men, women, and children.

Lord Dunmore, 1771-1775

It is likely that the executors of Botetourt’s estate purchased several slaves owned by the deceased governor so that they could do the necessary work about the Palace until Dunmore arrived in September 1771. Virginia’s new governor added to the number of enslaved laborers once he took up residence in Williamsburg because of the large size of his family—Lord and Lady Dunmore had nine children—and the fact that he purchased a York County plantation known as Porto Bello and land in Berkeley County. The governor claimed that he left behind fifty-seven slaves and four indentured servants when he boarded the *Fowey*. Unfortunately, Dunmore left few details about when he acquired his laborers and the work they performed at the Governor’s Palace.

Dunmore’s Loyalist Claim indicates that he purchased 597 acres of land “called Porto Bello & the Old ffarm in the County of York” between May 20, 1772 and November 19, 1773. He produced the following documents to support his claim:

Indenture dated 20. May 1772 whereby Robt. Carter Esqr in Considin of 727.10 Curry Conveys to Lord Dunmore 250 Acres of Land in the Parish of Bruton & County of York.

Indenture dated 19th. Novr 1773 whereby Rachael Drummond Widow conveys to Lord Dunmore 319 Acres of Land called Porto Bello [in the] parish of Bruton & County of York Cons[]n 650 Curry.

Indenture dated 29th. Novr 1773 whereby Dr. James Carter & Hester his Wife in Consn. Of 100 Curry convey to Lord Dunmore 10 Acres of Land in the County of York. He says all the Consideration Money was actually & bona fide paid.

Most of this was cultivated when he bought it. There was a good House upon it for which he paid over & above the purchase of the land £ 205.12 Sterlg & says the other

¹⁵² Robert Carter Nicholas Accounts of Lord Botetourt’s Estate.

Buildings which he erected on the ffarm & which he but charged together 960 Sterlg cost him three times as much.

He was at great Expençe in clearing the Lands & grubbing up the Roots of Trees. He had from 100 to 150 Negroes constantly at work upon the ffarm

He says that he inclosed near 80 Acres of Meadow which used to be overflowed & which is not set down in him Memorial which cost him near 300 Sterlg;

Lord Dunmore says he has not the least doubt but he should have found many purchasers for this Estate at 2500 in the year 1775. He thinks it is greatly undervalued in the Schedules.¹⁵³

The governor probably purchased enslaved laborers in 1772 to clear the land and to plant the fields at the Old Farm and Porto Bello. It is possible that Dunmore purchased several slaves from Rachel Drummond when he purchased Porto Bello. The widow Drummond noted that she had “several likely young Negroes, which I would willingly sell” in Rind’s November 4, 1773 issue of the *Virginia Gazette*.¹⁵⁴ His statement that he “had from 100 to 150 Negroes constantly at work upon the ffarm” suggests that he also hired enslaved laborers to work on his plantations.

An order that Dunmore placed with John Norton and Sons on June 12, 1773 provides information about the clothes that the enslaved workers at Porto Bello and the Old Farm wore. The governor asked Norton to send “100 pair Strong large Shoes for Negroes,” “100 do. [pair] Strong Coarse Stockings for do. [Negroes],” and “50 Coarse hats for do. [Negroes].” Dunmore’s order suggests that he supplied each of the slaves who tended fields on his York County plantations with two pairs of shoes, two pairs of stockings, and one hat. A tailor probably used the “12 pieces Ozabrigs” to make shirts. He made winter clothes for the slaves who tended the governor’s plantations from the “150 Yds. blue plains.” Blue plains was a coarser, nappier material than that used for livery. A male slave had a jacket and a pair of breeches made of this material. An enslaved woman wore a jacket and a petticoat made from blue plains.

Dunmore’s order also contains some details about the number of slaves who worked as footmen at the Palace and the livery they wore. The governor’s list of desired items included the following material:

30 Yds. Blue Cloath for foot-Men
 30 Do. Brown do. for do.
 6 Pieces of Brown Jeans for do.
 1 Piece of Green Shag for do.
 1 Do. Blue do. for do.

The governor probably ordered enough broad cloth for a tailor to make nine suits of each color for his footmen. The tailor might have used the brown jeans, green shag, and blue shag to make sturdy breeches for the enslaved men who stood by the doors at the Palace. Dunmore’s order for

¹⁵³ Loyalist Claims, Series I—Evidence, Virginia, 1783-1786 in Public Records Office A.O. 12/54, pp. 118-134, dated July 9, 1784.

¹⁵⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., November 4, 1773.

six postilion whips and an equal number of caps indicates that he had six enslaved laborers who could accompany his coach.¹⁵⁵

Dunmore's Loyalist Claim includes the number of slaves and indentured servants that he had when he fled Williamsburg:

Lord Dunmore says he left behind when he went on board the Fowey 57 Negroes which he has lost.
46 of them charged at £ 2461.12 & 2 charged at £ 72 are charged at their prime Cost.
The other 9 charged at 32 each being the [illeg] the Virginia Committee set upon Negroes he having lost the Bills of Sale for these.

Charges 288 for 12 indented Servants lost being 24 each wch[?] & nearly what the Purchase of their Indentures cost him.

James Minzies, the man who served as Dunmore's Secretary in Williamsburg, agreed with the number of bond laborers and indentured servants that the governor claimed to have in his possession. According to Dunmore's Loyalist Claim, Minzies

is shown a List of 46 Negroes produced by Lord Dunmore with prices charged against them amounting to £ 2491.12 Sterling. He says he made out this List & it consists with his Knowledge what Lord Dunmore paid the Sums set against them for these Negroes as they were either bought or paid for by himself on Lord Dunmore's Account.
He also knew the 9 Slaves charged at 32 each & says he thinks them charged under their Value.

The Negro Woman & child he knows to have been purchased of Mr Wormley & he understood Lord Dunmore paid for them in England as also appears by Mr Wormley's Receipt for 108 produced.

Says that indented Servants commonly sold from 20 to 30 a piece if they had 4 years to serve. the charge of 24 a head is moderate.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Mason, ed., *John Norton & Sons: Merchants of London and Virginia*, pp. 328-331. A tailor needed 10 yards of material to make a suit of livery for a man and 2 ¾ yards to make a suit of livery for a boy. Each suit of livery usually had two colors. My thanks to Linda Baumgarten and Kim Ivey for their help in interpreting Dunmore's order.

¹⁵⁶ Minzies also noted that "The Goods imported from England consisted of Cloathing for the Family & Negroes & other Articles very few of them were used. The charge is made from the Invoice which amounted to upwards of £600 Sterling, but the round Sum only was set down."

"Schedule of Losses sustained by the Earl of Dunmore His Majestys late Governor of the Colony of Virginia" included the value of his property:

No. 1 579 Acres of Land in high Cultivation with valuable Orchards, known by the Names of Porto Bello & the Old ffarm in the County of York @ 48/ pr Acre } 1389.12

46 Negro Slaves at the price Lord Dumore gave for them } 2491.12

9 do. the prices not known at present @ 32 288

A Negro woman & child purchased from Ralph Wormeley Esqr } 72

Neither Dunmore nor Minzies provided many details about the work that the bond laborers performed at the Palace, the ages of the enslaved individuals, or the number of males and females. It is clear that Dunmore viewed the slaves he left in Virginia as his property.

Dunmore's opinion that slaves were property can also be seen in the proclamation he issued in November 1775. The governor carefully worded his proclamation to offer freedom only to those slaves who belonged to his political opponents and who were able-bodied. Under the terms of the proclamation, Dunmore's own slaves could not join his "Ethiopian Regiment." An entry in Purdie's January 12, 1776 issue of the *Virginia Gazette* noted that Dunmore's slaves at his Berkeley County plantation did not know about the proclamation:

NOTWITHSTANDING lord Dunmore's late proclamation for emancipating such slaves as should repair to his standard, we are informed, by a correspondent, that two of his own negroes, with an overseer, passed through Fredericksburg, one day last week, on their way to his Berkeley plantation; so that it should seem his lordship has not been so very generous to his own bondmen as he wished to be to those who were the property of others, but whom neither he, nor even his august master, have the smallest right to intermeddle with.¹⁵⁷

However, it is known that at least five of Dunmore's slaves ran away in 1775. It is possible that Robin took advantage of the turmoil caused by the Gunpowder Incident in April 1775 to run in August of the same year. William Mitchell described him as "a likely negro man named ROBIN, 5 feet 7 inches high, slender made, has on an osnabrug shirt, blue breeches, and a blue jacket, and says he ran away from the palace at Williamsburg."¹⁵⁸ The account of Robin's clothing indicates that he worked in the fields at one of Dunmore's plantations.

In December 1775 John Pendleton "Ordered that Colonel [Patrick] Henry be at Liberty to give direction to the Keeper of the public Gaol for the discharge of James a Mulatto slave belonging to Lord Dunmore."¹⁵⁹ It is not known if James ran to join Dunmore or not. Entries in the *Black Loyalist Directory* indicate that three of the governor's slaves were evacuated with the British from New York in 1783. Sarah stated that she left the Palace in 1776. Roger Scott claimed that Dunmore freed him before he left Williamsburg and Catherine Scott did not note when she left the governor.¹⁶⁰

12 Indented Servants, mostly tradesmen who had about 4 years to serve @ 24 each } 288"

Loyalist Claims, Series I—Evidence, Virginia, 1783-1786 in Public Records Office A.O. 12/54, pp. 118-134, dated July 9, 1784.

¹⁵⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., January 12, 1776.

¹⁵⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., August 25, 1775.

¹⁵⁹ Robert L. Scribner et al., eds., *Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence. A Documentary Record*, 7 vols., (Charlottesville: Published for the Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission by the University Press of Virginia, 1973-1983), 5:144.

¹⁶⁰ Graham Russell Hodges, ed., *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans*

Purdie's July 14, 1775 issue of the *Virginia Gazette* noted that "All his Lordship's domesticks have now left the palace, and are gone, bag and baggage, to his farm at Porto Bello, about six miles from town."¹⁶¹ The rest of Dunmore's slaves were at the Palace in early January 1776 when the colony's leaders moved to secure the property that he left at the Governor's Palace. They decided "*that no person be allowed to make reprisal on the property of lord Dunmore, in this colony, for their property seized by him, or the navy, without the order of this Convention.*"¹⁶² On February 22, 1776, Benjamin Powell, Richard Morris and Lieutenant Goodrich Crump received an appointment to "examine the several Effects in the Palace, contained in the Inventory formerly ret'd, and report to this comm'ee whether any or what part are missing."¹⁶³ Powell and James Southall viewed and appraised "such articles of furniture at the palace as the General [Lee] may want (which will be considered purchased by him) and make report to the comm'ee" on April 2nd of that year.¹⁶⁴

The claims that John Ferguson, the public gardener, submitted to the Committee of Safety indicate that slaves (both Dunmore's and those whom Ferguson hired) continued to work at the Palace in the first half of 1776. On February 16, 1776, the Convention ordered the Commissary of Provisions to deliver rations to Ferguson for himself and "the slaves employed in the Publick service." The gardener also received £7.15.8 to cover his expences. On April 9, 1776, the members of the convention gave Ferguson a warrant "for £18.16.5 services and negro hire in the Palace Gardens." Two months later Ferguson presented his account of £16.8.4 "for negro hire and attendance, &c., in the Palace Garden as public Gardener."¹⁶⁵

On June 15, 1776, the Virginia Convention appointed Edmund Randolph, Thomas Everard, Robert Prentis, James Cocke, and John Blair commissioners "to rent out the Lands and to sell at Public Auction the slaves and personal Estate of Lord Dunmore at or in the neighbourhood of the City of Williamsburg." The commissioners announced the sale of Dunmore's property on June 21, 1776:

THE commissioners appointed by Convention to lease the lands of lord Dunmore within the county of York, and to sell his slaves and personal estate within this city, and the neighbourhood thereof, will, at the palace, on Tuesday the 25th instant, proceed to expose the said slaves and personal estate to sale, by way of auction; the purchasers to be allowed a year's credit, on giving bond and approved security. They also give notice,

in Exile After the American Revolution, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., in Association with the New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1996), pp. 134, 162, 173.

¹⁶¹ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., July 14, 1775 (supplement).

¹⁶² *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 5 January 1776.

¹⁶³ *Calendar of State Papers*, 8:95.

¹⁶⁴ *Calendar of State Papers*, 8:150.

¹⁶⁵ *Calendar of State Papers*, 8:85, 159, 193.

that they will attend at Porto Bello on Monday the first of next month, at 10 o'clock in the morning, to execute the other part of their commission.¹⁶⁶

Unfortunately, a list of the people who purchased Dunmore's slaves does not survive. Six weeks after the sale of the former governor's real and personal estate the commissioners announced that

ALL persons who have bought goods at the sale of lord Dunmore's estate, and have not already given bond, in those instances where credit was allowed, or paid the money, where prompt payment was requirable, are desired to comply with the terms of the sale, without farther delay. The commissioners will attend for that purpose at the house of the Attorney-General on Saturday the 24th of this month. Such of the purchasers as live too remote to comply with this request are earnestly desired to save the commissioners all farther trouble, by sending their bonds as soon as possible.¹⁶⁷

On December 22, 1777, Randolph and Blair informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* that

As the Lease formerly made by the Subscribers, of the Earl of Dunmore's Lands in York County, will expire at Christmas, they hereby give Notice, that they will again lease the same for a Year, to the highest Bidder, on Wednesday the last of this Month, before the Raleigh Door.¹⁶⁸

Perhaps Randolph and Blair found someone to purchase Dunmore's plantations or to enter into a long-term lease because they placed no further announcement about this property in the *Virginia Gazette*.

The Powell House

This examination focuses on the slaves who lived and worked in Benjamin Powell's Williamsburg household; the enslaved men who assisted their master in building projects in Williamsburg; the slaves whom Powell gave to his daughters, Ann and Hannah, as their dower slaves; and the fate of Powell's enslaved men, women, and children after his death in 1790.

Benjamin Powell left his native Warwick County and moved to Williamsburg in the early 1750s. He bought Lot 30 in the Waller Subdivision from Benjamin Waller on November 19, 1753. The deed noted that he had to build on the property within three years, a requirement that posed no problem for Powell, who was a carpenter. The 1753 purchase was the first of several deeds that Powell entered into during the 1750s and the 1760s. Powell did not buy the lots that bear his name today until May 1, 1763, when he purchased Lots 19 and 43 in the Waller Subdivision from Waller. The deed stipulated that he must build on each of the lots within three years. The structures had to

¹⁶⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., June 21, 1776; see also *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., June 22, 1776.

¹⁶⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., August 16, 1776; *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., August 17, 1776.

¹⁶⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., December 26, 1776.

be in line with the other lots on the street at the extreme west bounds of the lot. It is possible that Powell bought lots, built on the parcels, and sold the urban property as a way to establish his reputation in Williamsburg as a skilled carpenter who helped develop a new section of the city.

Powell relied on the labor of white apprentices in the 1750s. Daniel Hoye entered into an indenture with Powell in Warwick County in 1752. Hoye moved to Williamsburg with his master and practiced as a wheelwright in the colonial capital after he finished his term of service. On December 5, 1755, an orphan named William Hyde apprenticed himself to Powell for six years to learn the trade of carpenter. Soon thereafter, on the first day of 1756, Powell apprenticed Frederick Bryan, the orphan of William Bryan, for eight years. However, Bryan's guardian removed him from Powell's household and indentured him to a carpenter named Matthew Hatton in 1759. Thomas Mountfort's orphan, Wade Mountfort, became an apprentice to Powell in May 1764. Mountfort agreed to serve for five years and seven months in order to learn the skills of a carpenter and a joiner.

The first evidence that Powell relied on the labor of enslaved men appeared in September 1762 when he paid for three slaves he had hired the previous year from John Moss, the orphan of Edward Moss of Charles Parish. He paid £8.12.6 for Charles, £7.2.6 for George, and £ 4..6..0 for Sam. Powell hired George and Sam the following year for £16.1.0 and he gave John Moss the sum of £7.10.0 to cover Sam's labor in September 1764. Powell also paid Carter Burwell's estate for the hire of an enslaved woman and three male slaves during the 1760s. Judith, who was described as a domestic at Carter's Grove in the 1740s, worked in the Powell house from 1766 to 1769. Harry labored for Powell in 1765, 1766, and 1767. Manuel and Joe left Carter's Grove and worked for the carpenter in 1766 and 1767.¹⁶⁹

A close examination of five documents provides some clues about the size of Powell's labor force between 1765 and 1770 as well as the work that he had slaves perform. First, in 1765, 1768, and 1770, the carpenter failed to turn in a list of his tithes in the part of Bruton Parish that lay in York County. Thomas Everard, the York County clerk, noted that Powell's thirteen tithes needed to be added to the list in September 1765. Three years later he had eleven tithes that did not appear on the 1768 list. In September of 1770, Powell neglected to list eighteen tithes that labored in Bruton Parish. It is probable that all of Powell's tithes were in Williamsburg because he did not own rural land in Bruton Parish until 1774. The urban tithes included Powell, the women who labored in his house, and the men—white apprentices and slaves—who assisted Powell in the various building projects he secured. Wade Mountfort was one of the tithes in 1765 and 1768. The three different numbers of tithes—thirteen in 1765, eleven in 1768, and eighteen in 1770—probably reflect fluctuations in Powell's building and repair business.¹⁷⁰ It is likely that Powell hired Harry, Manuel, Joe, and other enslaved men when he needed additional labor.

¹⁶⁹ Burwell Ledger 2 (1764-1776) f. 1.

¹⁷⁰ Powell's public projects included repairing the Public Gaol (1765), building the steeple at Bruton Parish Church (1769), repairing the Capitol (1769), enlarging the living quarters at the Palace (1771), agreeing to build the Public Hospital (1772), repairing the Powder Magazine (1772), building a dwelling house at the Public Vineyard (1772), working on the soldiers' barracks (1776), and building a hospital at the Public Vineyard (1778).

With the exception of Judith, the domestic slaves managed by Annabelle Powell were enslaved women who were part of the Powell household. Nanny was a Powell slave by October 19, 1757, when she gave birth to her son, Charles. Jacob, the second son born to Nanny, was baptized on July 3, 176[3]. Charles received his baptism on September 1, 1765, almost eight years after his birth. Kate was the mother of two children baptized in the 1760s: Hannah on August 5, 1764 and John in early 1767. Sarah and Benjamin, the children of Rose, also had their baptisms recorded in 1767. Benjamin was described as a little boy in the Bruton Parish Register at the time of his baptism. It is possible that Kate, Nanny, and Rose were three of the tithes to be added to the list for Bruton Parish in 1765, 1768, and 1770.

The 1768 and 1769 Williamsburg-James City Tax Lists indicate that Powell had tithes in two locations in James City County. The 1768 Williamsburg-James City Tax List noted that he paid an assessment of five pounds of tobacco for each of six tithes and an assessment of forty-six pounds of tobacco on a second group of eight tithes. Powell also had 460 acres of land in James City County in 1768. The following year Powell's seventeen tithes were divided into groups of six and eleven. He paid an assessment of seven pounds of tobacco and forty-seven pounds of tobacco, respectively, for these laborers. The carpenter added 552 acres to the 460 acres that he already owned for a plantation of 1,012 acres.¹⁷¹ A comparison of the assessment rates suggests that Powell had six tithes on the James City County side of Williamsburg and another group of tithes on his plantation. Perhaps Powell had enslaved men cut timbers and frame structures on a lot in the James City County portion of Williamsburg. On March 23, 1772, he received a payment of £36.14 "for the Balance of his Account, for Building a Dwelling House at the public Vineyard, and furnishing Materials for the same."¹⁷² It is possible that the materials furnished by Powell included timbers cut by enslaved sawyers.

Two of Powell's enslaved men committed crimes. In October 1769, Allaka appeared before an oyer and terminer court to answer the charge of felony and burglary. The justices found him guilty of stealing rum from William Moody's smokehouse in Yorkhampton Parish. Allaka was burnt in the left hand because the justices found him guilty of the felony but not guilty of the burglary. Powell's man Mingo was the defendant in an oyer and terminer trial on July 21, 1772. The oyer and terminer justices tried him for stealing a sheep from Governor Dunmore. Mingo was burnt on his left hand and received twenty-five lashes on his bare back at the public whipping post. Neither Allaka nor Mingo were charged with committing another crime.

The marriage of Powell's younger daughter, Ann, to John Burwell in December 1771 probably caused some disruption in the lives of the Powell bond laborers because her dower included slaves. A comparison of the list of slaves Burwell inherited from the estate of his father, Armistead Burwell, and the "Account of Negros given by B Powell & L Burwell to A Burwell & her Children 26 November 1789" provides some clues about the identity of Ann Powell's dower

¹⁷¹ In 1768, the mean number of tithes per household was 6.2 and the median was 3 tithes. Approximately 85% of the households in the county had a smaller number of tithes than Powell. The average tract was 424 acres in size and the median was 200 acres. Powell's 460 acres placed him in the top quarter of the landholders. The following year, Powell held 1,012 acres. Ninety percent of the landholders in James City County had smaller tracts.

¹⁷² McIlwaine et al., eds., *Journal of the House of Burgesses*, 12:266.

slaves.¹⁷³ John Burwell gained possession of men named Robin, Sam, Michael, and Ephraim at his majority. There is no evidence that the other slaves on the 1789 list—Kit, Lucy, Kate, Lizzy, Will Pigeon, Billy, and Betty—were owned by the Burwell family before the 1780s. Powell purchased Kit, Will Pigeon, Billy, and Betty at the sale of John Burwell's estate and lent them to his daughter during her lifetime. Perhaps he bought these slaves to make sure that Ann Burwell had some of her dower slaves in her household. Powell's elder daughter Hannah married William Drew in November 1776. It is likely that he also gave Hannah slaves as part of her dower.

In May 1776, Powell gained additional labor. The Committee of Safety “On the representations of Mr. Benjamin Powell, the Comm’ee agree that six slaves now in the public jail, the property of certain Tories, may be employed under the direction of Mr. Powell upon the prison lot for the use of the public, they being confined under a sufficient guard to prevent their escape.”¹⁷⁴ It is likely that these six slaves labored under better conditions than did their contemporaries who were sent to work in the lead mines in Fincastle County.

Powell decided to leave Williamsburg and to move to his 600-acre plantation in Bruton Parish in 1780. On January 29 of that year he announced "To be SOLD, or RENTED for three years. THE HOUSES and TENEMENTS where I at present live, just below the capitol in the city of Williamsburg. The lots are well enclosed, and the houses in good repair, and every conveniency for the reception of a large family."¹⁷⁵ Powell sold his house and tenements on Lots 19 and 43 to Zachariah Rowland, a resident of Henrico County, on June 17, 1782.

Powell’s move to Bruton Parish may have reunited the slaves who worked in his Williamsburg household and who helped to build and repair structures in the colonial capital with family members who tended the fields on his James City County plantation. In 1782, the former resident of Williamsburg paid taxes on nineteen tithes and 600 acres of land. The following year Powell had fourteen tithes and five slaves under sixteen years old in Bruton Parish. The 1784 York County Personal Property Tax List included the names of sixteen bond laborers over sixteen years of age and eight slaves under sixteen years of age. Powell also paid the tithe for Charles Graves who probably worked as his overseer. In 1785, Powell had sixteen slaves over sixteen years old and seven slaves who were not tithable. The following year the number of his slaves increased to nineteen who were tithes and twelve who were under sixteen years old.¹⁷⁶ One of the new slaves was Alice, the daughter of Priscilla, who was baptized on September 11, 1785. Charles Graves was also on Powell's list of tithes in 1786.

¹⁷³ Ann Powell Burwell Commonplace Book, Virginia Historical Society, Mss5:589585:1.

¹⁷⁴ Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 8:173.

¹⁷⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., January 29, 1780.

¹⁷⁶ Powell's thirty-one tithes placed him in the top five percent of slaveholders in York County. Only six men, including Nathaniel Burwell with 117 slaves, held a greater number of enslaved persons. In contrast, one-fifth of the households did not have any slaves. The mean number of slaves (among slave owners) was eight and the median was five. Powell's 697 acres of land ranked him in the top ten percent of real property holders.

The order in which the names of Powell's enslaved men and women appeared on the 1784 York County Personal Property Tax List may provide information about husbands and wives. Instead of listing the slaves in the typical order—males over sixteen, females over sixteen, males under sixteen, and females under sixteen—Powell's 1784 roll recorded the adult names in the following arrangement:

Dublin, Milly, Charles, Rose, Elgin [Allaka], Milly, Jeffery, Rose, Ben, Priscilla, Jacob, Peg, Moses, Esther, Frank, and Mingo.

Frank and Mingo were the only men who did not have a woman's name after their name. Charles and Rose, Allaka and Milly, Jeffery and Rose, and Jacob and Peg appeared on all three tax lists. Powell paid Priscilla's title from 1784 to 1786 and the assessment for Ben in 1784 and 1786. Moses was just on the 1784 list and Esther was on all three rolls. Perhaps he hired out Ben in 1785 and Moses in 1785 and 1786. Dublin and Milly were the only couple to disappear after 1784. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine which of the younger slaves (other than Alice) might have been the children of any of the adults on the list.

A comparison of the names of Powell's slaves on the York County Personal Property Tax Lists between 1784 and 1786 indicates that eighteen of the thirty-six enslaved men, women, and children appeared on all three lists. It is possible that Powell hired out the slaves who appeared on just one or two of the lists. Perhaps Alice was just one of several slave children born during 1785, and Betty, James, and Phil were also infants in 1786.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>1784</u>	<u>1785</u>	<u>1786</u>
Aaron	-16	X	X	X
Alice	-16			X
Allaka	16+	X	X	X
Ben	16+	X		X
Betty	16+			X
Betty	-16			X
Charles	16+	X	X	X
Charles	-16	X	X	X
Demous	16+			X
Dublin	16+	X		
Esther	16+	X	X	X
Frank	16+	X	X	X
Giles	16+		X	X
Jack	16+		X	X
Jacob	16+	X	X	X
James	-16	X	X	X
James	-16	X		X
James	-16			X
Jeffery	16+	X	X	X
Milly	16+	X		
Milly	16+	X	X	X
Mingo	16+	X	X	X

Moses	16+	X		
Patty	-16	X		
Peg	16+	X	X	X
Phil	-16	X	X	X
Phil	-16			X
Phillis	-16	X	X	X
Priscilla	16+	X	X	X
Priss	-16		X	X
Rose	16+	X	X	X
Rose	16+	X	X	X
Sally	-16	X	X	X
Sam	16+		X	
Tom	16+			X
Will	16+		X	X

Demous traveled to Williamsburg after the death of William Drew in 1785, indicating that he had been one of Hannah Drew's dower slaves. A look at the changing number of tithes between 1782 and 1789 also suggests that Powell hired out adult slaves.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tax List</u>	<u>Slaves 16+</u>	<u>Slaves -16</u>
1782	York County	19	not given
1783	York County	14	5
1784	York County	16	8
1785	York County	16	7
1786	York County	19	12
1788	York County	13	4
	Williamsburg	8	
1789	York County	18	3 ¹⁷⁷
	Williamsburg	3 slaves 12+	
1790	York County	16	4
	Williamsburg	1	
	James City	3	
1791	Williamsburg	2 slaves 12+ (estate)	
1792	Williamsburg	2 slaves 12+ (estate)	
1793	Williamsburg	3 slaves 12+ (Hannah Drew)	

Hannah Drew lived on a lot that her father rented from William Bland by the time of the 1788 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List.

In his will which he wrote on November 17, 1790, Powell took great care to provide for his second wife, Fanny, and both of his widowed daughters and their children. First, he lent to Ann Burwell

¹⁷⁷ In 1789 and 1790, the York County Personal Property Tax List included slaves who were between twelve and sixteen years old.

all the Slaves and personal Estate which I purchased at the sale of her late Husband John Burwell deceased (except a Negro Girl named Pegg and a Bay Horse called Stephen) which I have now in my Possession, during her natural life and after the death of my said Daughter Anne I give and bequeath the said Slaves and personal Estate to be equally Divided among the Children of the said Anne Burwell or the survivors of them and should any of the children of the said Anne Burwell die in the lifetime of their said mother leaving a Child or Children, I direct that such child or children may take what his or their Father or mother would have been entitled to.

Next, he gave Hannah Drew

the Following Slaves to wit, Betty, Boy Phil, Boy James, Boy called Billy Drew, Hannah and all her Increase (Except her Child Charles and after the death of my said Daughter Hannah, I give the said Slaves to my Grandson Benjamin Drew, but should my said Grandson Benjamin die before he attains the age of twenty one years, I give the said Slaves to be equally divided among the other children of my said Daughter Hannah if any there be but if not then and in that case I desire the said slaves may be equally divided among the Children of my Daughter Anne Burwell.

He wanted his "Land, Slaves, and Stocks in the Counties of York and James City be kept together and managed as heretofore under the directions of my Executors." He decided that "the profits arising yearly be equally divided between my Wife Fanny my Daughter Hannah and my Daughter Anne which said Lands and Plantations, I direct may be so kept until my said Grand son Benjamin attains the age of twenty one years as well as the slaves and personal estate, and then I give and bequeath the said Lands and Plantations unto my said Grandson Benjamin Drew and his Heirs forever." The slaves on Powell's "York Plantation" were to be kept together until Drew's twenty-first birthday. Then they were to be divided in "the following manner that is to say, one half of the said Slaves I give to my Grandson Armistead Burwell and the other half to be equally divided among the other children of my said Daughter Anne Burwell." However, if Drew died before he reached his majority, the land, slaves, and personal estate in York and James City counties were to be divided between Hannah Drew and Ann Burwell and their heirs after the death of Fanny Powell. In addition, Powell gave his executors the power to "dispose of at their descretion any of the Slaves belonging to and remaining on my said York Plantation for misbehavior or other good cause and lay out the money arising from the sale of such Slave or Slaves in the purchase of the Slaves for the House of the said Plantation."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ York County Wills and Inventories (22) 222-225, dated November 17, 1790, codicil dated November 19, 1790, and recorded January 17, 1791.

Printing Office

This section includes details about the slaves owned by William Parks, William Hunter Senior, William and Clementina Rind, Joseph Royle, Alexander Purdie, John Dixon, and William Hunter Junior. Only John Pinkney was not a slaveowner.

Each of the printers included notices concerning slave sales and advertisements for runaway slaves in their newspaper. The October 1748 statute entitled *An Act concerning Servants, and Slaves* directed the Keeper of the Public Gaol to place a description of each runaway slave held in the Public Gaol in the *Virginia Gazette* for three months. The legislation required the announcement to include details about the runaway slave's appearance and clothes.

William Parks

It is known that William Parks had two slaves in his Williamsburg household, three slaves on a plantation called Thomas's near Williamsburg, and fifteen enslaved laborers in Hanover County at the time of his death on June 18, 1750. The printer left all of his property, real and personal, to his daughter, Eleanor Shelton, and nothing to his wife. John Shelton of Hanover County served as the executor of his father-in-law's estate.

Details in the settlement of Parks's estate suggest that the enslaved individuals in Hanover County and a Williamsburg slave played a role in his printing operation. Parks owned a paper mill and fifteen enslaved persons—nine men, four women, and two children—in Hanover. The female slaves might have worked in the paper mill.¹⁷⁹ One of the Hanover slaves died before his executor sold the remaining fourteen laborers. Shelton also sold “seven White Servants Men & Women.” Unfortunately, Shelton did not note where all of these men and women labored. The entry “To the white Servants Expences from Wmsburg to Hanover Court” suggests that several indentured servants were part of Parks's labor force in Williamsburg and that Shelton sold the remainder of their indentures at a sale in Hanover.

Shelton included the sale of the printer's Williamsburg slaves in his account. William Hunter Senior paid the sum of £69.10 for a man named Caesar. The high purchase price indicates that Caesar was a skilled slave and that Hunter (who followed in Parks's footsteps as public printer) needed him to continue to work in the printing office. Shelton sold Bridget and her child to a resident of the Williamsburg area for £53.10. The clerk of the Bruton Parish vestry noted Bridget's baptism on May 6, 1751. The fact that the clerk described Bridget as a slave who belonged to William Parks suggests that she had been a part of the Parks household for a number of years and that Parks's widow Eleanor bought this woman and her child at the sale of her husband's estate.¹⁸⁰ It is possible that Caesar and Bridget were a part of the Parks household as early as 1742 when

¹⁷⁹ Michael L. Nicholls notes that “In Europe, papermaking was conducted in a highly gender segregated manner with men and women performing very specific tasks.” See Michael L. Nicholls, “Aspects of the African American Experience in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg and Norfolk,” (unpublished report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990), p. 45.

¹⁸⁰ York County Wills and Inventories (20) 255, recorded 18 May 1752; *ibid.*, pp. 323-326, dated 17 June 1754 and recorded 25 April 1754.

the printer paid the annual assessment on four tithes. Parks had five tithable persons over the age of sixteen in 1745. Thirteen of the fourteen members of the Parks household survived the 1747/8 Smallpox Epidemic; his store keeper did not. William Hunter Senior was Parks's assistant by May 11, 1749 when an entry in the *Journal of the House of Burgesses* mentioned Hunter and Parks's "Servants."

William Hunter Senior

William Hunter Senior purchased the printing office from the estate of William Parks. Hunter also hired and then bought the enslaved man named Caesar. On July 23, 1751, Hunter paid John Shelton, the executor of Parks, the sum of £10 for the hire of Caesar for one year. Hunter's decision to hire and to purchase Caesar for £69.10 is an indication that this slave played an important role in the printing office. It is possible that Matt, another slave owned by Hunter, also worked in the printing office. Unfortunately, there is no evidence about the duties that Caesar and Matt performed. It is possible that they operated the presses. They might have received payments from Hunter's customers for books, supplies, or the advertisements that they placed in the *Virginia Gazette*. Perhaps Hunter, one of the original trustees of the Bray School, taught Caesar and Matt how to read and write.

Hunter's extant account book for 1750-1752 indicates that residents of Williamsburg and all parts of Virginia placed advertisements for runaway slaves and for the sales of enslaved men, women, and children. Perhaps Caesar and Matt had the opportunity to learn the names of the masters who placed advertisements for runaways and the identity of the persons who intended to sell one or more slaves. These two slaves might also had the chance to pass on the information they learned about runaways and sales to the enslaved persons who ran errands to the printing office for their masters.

The elder Hunter operated his business until his death on August 14, 1761. He left half of his business to his brother-in-law, Joseph Royle, and the other half of his business in a trust for his son, William. The inventory of the printer's estate included four slaves. The appraisers did not value James, a blind man, or a wench named Diana who probably cooked and cleaned for the printer. Caesar was valued at £75 and the appraisers noted that Matt was worth £80.¹⁸¹ The high values assigned to Caesar and Matt indicate that they played an important role in the day-to-day operation of the printing office.

Joseph Royle

Joseph Royle operated the printing office for his nephew, William Hunter Junior, between 1761 and his death in 1766. Royle's ledger book survives for the years 1764 to 1766. The entries in this book indicate that Williamsburg masters and mistresses sent their slaves on errands to the printing office. In addition, colonial leaders in the city for meetings of the House of Burgesses and the Council also had enslaved men and boys purchase items from Royle. Men and women also paid

¹⁸¹ York County Wills and Inventories (21) 79-82, dated 24 August 1761 and recorded [16 November 1761].

Royle for announcements of slave sales. Matt and Aberdeen, another Royle slave who worked in the printing office, might have been in a position to learn and to pass on information about slaves that they heard as they performed their duties.

The inventory of Royle's estate included "One half the Stock in Partnership with William Hunter, Infant at the Printing Office in Williamsburgh including Account of Books, Stationary, Printing, Materials, & two Negro Men named Matt, and Aberdeen." The appraisers of Royle's estate valued at £1265.12.10.¹⁸² The fact that the appraisers included Matt and Aberdeen with the items related to the Printing Office indicates that they assisted Royle with his work. Unfortunately they did not provide details about the duties that Matt and Aberdeen had in Royle's business.

William and Clementina Rind

William Rind printed the first issue of his *Virginia Gazette* on May 9, 1766. His slave man Dick was one of the ten tithes to be added to the printer's list of tithables in August 1768. It is possible that the other eight laborers in Rind's printing office and bindery were white apprentices. Rind died on August 19, 1773 and Dick was the only slave included in the September 1773 inventory of his estate. The appraisers noted that Dick was worth £30. Clementina Rind paid £22 for Dick at the sale of her deceased husband's estate. It is possible that Dick assisted the widow Rind in the production of the *Virginia Gazette*. The justices of the peace ordered Clementina Rind's five tithes to be added to the list for Bruton Parish in the fall of 1774. It is likely that her tithes included Dick and four white journey men or apprentices. The widow Rind continued her husband's business until the time of her death on September 25, 1774.

Alexander Purdie

Alexander Purdie entered into a partnership with John Dixon in 1766. Purdie and Dixon operated their printing office until December 1774. After the end of their partnership, Purdie continued to operate a printing office until his death in April 1779. Purdie owned slaves who worked the presses in his shop and enslaved persons who assisted his wives—Mary and Peachy—with the domestic work and raising his children.

Purdie and Dixon relied on the labor of white apprentices, white indentured servants, and black slaves. In July 1766 they announced that they wanted "an apprentice to the Printing Business."¹⁸³ Purdie hired Cyrus from the estate of Mrs. Webb. In November 1768 he offered a reward for the return of Cyrus. It is possible that Cyrus, who was about thirty years old, worked in the printing office or ran errands in Williamsburg.¹⁸⁴ A young male slave by the name of Jordan

¹⁸² York County Wills and Inventories (21) 271-276, dated 26 May 1766 and recorded 16 June 1766.

¹⁸³ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 25 July 1766.

¹⁸⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 24 November 1768.

operated the presses.¹⁸⁵ An advertisement that the printers placed in their paper on January 24, 1771 indicates that there was a hierarchy among the workers in their shop:

RUN AWAY from the Printing Office, last Saturday Night, JAMES CAREY, a Lad about seventeen years of Age, whom (out of compassion, and through his Importunity) we paid thirteen Pounds for, to release him from being sent to Maryland and sold as a servant. Although he might have been held as a Servant here, we rather chose to get him bound as an Apprentice, to put him on a Footing with the other Lads in our Office. He has been well used, and genteely clothed, which any One will easily discover from the Goodness and Quality of the Clothes he has taken with him. He has ten Shirts, four of them quite new; a new Suit of Clothers, of a dark coloured German Serge, with yellow gilt Buttons; a new fine Hat, several Pair of wool Worsted and other Stockings, new Shoes, and wears a black Silk Cravat. He has, besides, a good suit of Fustian, a light coloured Cloth Coat and red Flannel Jacket, and sundry other Wearing Apparel. He is fresh coloured, wears his own Hair, generally tied behind, which is dark coloured, walks short and quick, is stout made, speaks thick, and much on the Brogue, he being a native of Ireland. Whoever secures the said Apprentice, so as we get him again, shall have FORTY SHILLINGS Reward, besides what the Law allows. He is supposed to be gone to the Southward.¹⁸⁶

Purdie's slave Jordan and any other enslaved men who worked in the printing office were not on the same social footing "with the other Lads" as was James Carey. It is possible that Jordan had greater skills than did Carey or "the other Lads" in Purdie's printing office.

It is possible that the experience of child birth created a bond between Mary Purdie and two of her slave women. Mary Purdie, Alice, and Esther¹⁸⁷ experienced childbirth in 1765 and 1767. Alexander and Mary Purdie's daughter Janet was born in 1765. Alice's daughter [Bet]ty was baptized in April of the same year. Betsy, the daughter of Esther, received her baptism on July 7, 1765. The Purdies welcomed a son on March 17, 1767. The baptism of William, the son of Alice, took place on June 7, 1767. These women also shared the sorrow of the death of a young child. Janet Purdie died before her second birthday and Esther's daughter, Betsy, also died at a young age.

Purdie's household experienced several changes in 1772. Mary Purdie was twenty-seven years old at the time of her death on March 28th of that year. Alice and Esther helped to care for the printer's sons James, Hugh, Alexander, and William after the death of their mother. Perhaps the fact that he had four young sons influenced Purdie's decision to remarry. The printer married Peachy Davenport, the daughter of Joseph and Margaret Davenport, on December 31, 1772. Purdie's son gained a step-mother and the domestic slaves had a new mistress to supervise their daily work. If Peachy Davenport owned one or more slaves at the time of her marriage to Purdie, the arrival of these persons might have caused additional turmoil in this household.

¹⁸⁵An October 10, 1778 letter from Alexander Purdie to George Webb indicated that black men were often employed as pressmen. See Earl Gregg Swem, *A Bibliography of Virginia*, Appendix I: *Documents Relating to Alexander Purdie, Public Printer*, p. 1064.

¹⁸⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 24 January 1771.

¹⁸⁷ Alice's name also appeared as Ealice and Ell's. Esther was also referred to as Easter.

The printer paid the taxes on fifteen tithes on October 1776. Purdie's workers included himself, his apprentices, his slaves, and a woman named Beck whom he hired from the estate of Edward Nicholson.¹⁸⁸ He had at least seven enslaved men and women over the age of sixteen in 1776—Jordan, John, Harry, Jack Booker, Esther, Judy, and Alice. Jack Booker (also known as Jack) was one of merchant Joseph Scrivener's slaves. The appraisers of Scrivener's estate valued Jack at £80. Purdie purchased Jack—one of four valuable slaves—at the September 1772 sale of the merchant's estate. Jack was about twenty-six years old when he ran away from the printer in early 1776. Purdie noted that Jack was born at Capitol Landing and was a very good carter in a March 8, 1776 advertisement.¹⁸⁹

Purdie died in April 1779. The printer bequeathed four slaves—Jack Booker (also known as Jack), Betty, and Alice and her child Billy—to his wife Peachy and her heirs. He noted that “It is my desire that my wife & children remain in my dwelling house during the term of six months at the expence of my estate & that the servants or a sufficient number of them be kept there during that term to attend my sd children but in case my sd exrs. shall think proper to dispose of my sd children otherwise during that term they are to have power so to do & in that case they may proceed to the sale of the slaves as is before directed but my sd wife shall have the use of the dwelling outhouses & lotss during the sd term clear of any rent.”¹⁹⁰ The April 28, 1779 appraisal of Purdie's estate included thirteen slaves: Jordan valued at £825, John valued at £500, Sally valued at £400, Harry valued at £1000, Jenny valued at £300, Sukey valued at £300, Arthur valued at £200, Esther valued at £200, Judy valued at £600, Jack Booker valued at £1000, Alice valued at £800, Billy valued at £500, and Betty valued at £800.¹⁹¹ Peachy Purdie might have lived on Lot 24 until February 1780 when her husband's executors sold the property to Thomas Cartwright. The widow Purdie married William Holt by January 11, 1791 and Elias Wills by 1799.

On May 8, 1779 the executors of Purdie's estate announced that his estate would be sold on May 18, 1779. They also noted that they would lease the adjoining house which Purdie had used as a composing and press room. The executors informed the public that nine slaves—including a carpenter, a gardener, and a cook—could be purchased on that day. A second announcement informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* that the sale would be postponed until June 8, 1779.¹⁹² A man named John Harvie bought Jordan. It is unknown who gained possession of the remainder of Purdie's enslaved men, women, and children. In January 1782 John Harvie placed the following notice in the *Virginia Gazette, or, The American Advertiser*:

¹⁸⁸ Benjamin Weldon was the guardian of Henry Wetherburn Nicholson, the orphan of Edward Nicholson (one of the heirs of Henry Wetherburn).

¹⁸⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 8 March 1776.

¹⁹⁰ York County Wills and Inventories (22) 419-421, dated 12 April 1779 and recorded 19 April 1779.

¹⁹¹ York County Wills and Inventories (22) 437-442, dated 28 April 1779 and recorded 21 June 1779.

¹⁹² *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., 8 May 1779; *ibid.*, 29 May 1779.

Five Guineas Reward, To any person who will secure, so that I get him again, a young Negro Man named Jordan, raised in the city of Williamsburg, and who worked at the Press for some time in Mr. Purdie's Printing-Office in that city, and, after the decease of Mr. Purdie, was purchased of his estate by the Subscriber. This fellow went off with Tarlton's Light-horse from Charlottesville, and after the capture of the British army at York, obtained a pass from Mr. Nicholson to come up to Albemarle, since which time I have not heard of him, but suspect he is still skulking about the neighbourhood of Williamsburg. If he is delivered in Richmond, Mr. Lewis, of the Land Office, will pay the above reward; or I will do the same, upon receiving him at the gaol of any county in the State wherein he may be secured.¹⁹³

There is no additional information about Jordan.

John Pinkney

On September 29, 1774 John Pinkney announced that he would continue to print the *Virginia Gazette* for the benefit of the estate of William and Clementina Rind. There is no evidence that Pinkney owned or hired a slave to assist him in his printing business before he received an appointment as the printer for North Carolina in May 1777.

John Dixon

John Dixon served as the executor of Joseph Royle's estate in 1766. He also entered into a partnership with Alexander Purdie in that year. It is possible that Tom, a slave whom Dixon agreed to purchase from the estate of Francis Fauquier in 1768, worked in the printing office. Dixon also bought Fauquier's Mary and her daughter Jemima. Perhaps Tom and Mary were married and the printer decided to buy them because he needed a slave to do household work and another to work in the printing office. Dixon married Rosanna Royle, the widow of Joseph Royle, so it is possible that he gained possession of a slave or slaves at the time of his marriage.

Purdie and Dixon operated their printing office until December 1774. After the end of their partnership, Dixon went into business with William Hunter Junior. Dixon might have left Jemima in Williamsburg when he moved to Richmond in 1780 because he had hired her to a resident in the city. Jemima appeared on the 1783 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List as a slave under sixteen years of age who belonged to John Dixon. Dixon had three other slaves on the 1783 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List—Peg over sixteen and Dinah (over sixteen) and her son, Samuel Sims. Perhaps Jemima, Peg, Dinah, and Samuel Sims joined Mary and Tom in Richmond before the 1784 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List was taken.¹⁹⁴ John Dixon died in Richmond on April 27, 1791. Tom, Mary, Jemima, and Peg were not among the seven

¹⁹³ *Virginia Gazette, or, The American Advertiser*, 26 January 1782.

¹⁹⁴ Williamsburg Personal Property Tax Lists, 1783 and 1784.

slaves who appeared in the May 1792 inventory of the printer's estate. A slave named Dinah (valued at £30) and a slave named Sam (also valued at £30) appeared in Dixon's inventory.¹⁹⁵

William Hunter Junior

John Dixon and William Hunter Junior printed their first issue of the *Virginia Gazette* on January 1, 1775. Matt and Aberdeen, the enslaved men whom the younger Hunter inherited from his uncle, Joseph Royle, in 1766, would have worked in the Dixon and Hunter office if they were still alive. Perhaps George, a seventeen-year old slave, assisted the printers or ran errands for them before he ran away in late 1777.¹⁹⁶

Hunter was a Loyalist who left Williamsburg during the Revolution. Additional details about the enslaved men, women, and children whom he owned appear in a 1782 deed. In July of that year the printer conveyed eight slaves to his father-in-law, Joseph Davenport, in trust for the benefit of his children, William and Joseph. The deed conveyed Peter (commonly called Peter Bracy), Peter (commonly called Peter Russell), Toby, Grace, Nelly, Molly, Tom, and Moses. Hunter also submitted a Loyalist Claim on September 2, 1784 and June 21, 1787. He stated that he lost four men valued at £75 each, five women worth £60 each, and six children (between the ages of two and ten years) valued at £30 each. Hunter failed to note if any of the enslaved persons worked in his printing business.¹⁹⁷

The Public Gaol

The first section of the discussion of slaves at the Public Gaol includes information about the enslaved laborers owned by Edward Westmore (Keeper of the Public Gaol from 1766 to 1771) and Peter Pelham (Keeper of the Public Gaol from 1771 to 1780). The second section contains a list of the slaves held in the Public Gaol between 1769 and 1776.

There was a connection between the Public Gaol and the institution of slavery in Virginia. First, the duties collected on slaves imported into the colony helped to pay for the construction of the building. Second, after the passage of a statute entitled *An act concerning Servants and Slaves* in 1705, a runaway slave who could not or would not give the name of his or her master was to be taken to the Public Gaol in Williamsburg. The 1726 law—*An Act for amending the Act concerning Servants and Slaves; and for the further preventing the clandestine transportation of Persons out of this Colony*—noted that a runaway slave was to be held in the jail of the county in which he or she had been captured for two months. If the slave's master did not claim the

¹⁹⁵ Richmond City Personal Property Tax Lists; Richmond Hustings Court Deeds No. 1 (1782-1792) 616-617, dated 10 May 1792 and recorded 15 May 1792. The Richmond City Personal Property Tax Lists do not include slave names.

¹⁹⁶ It is possible that Hunter sold George before he ran away since the printer described him as "LATE the Property of William Hunter of this City." *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., 5 December 1777.

¹⁹⁷ Loyalist Claim of William Hunter in Public Records Office AO 12/56, pp. 352-356.

runaway, the slave was to be sent to the Public Gaol. The Keeper of the Public Gaol was allowed to hire out a runaway who wore an iron collar (stamped with the initials "P. G.") around his or her neck. After Dunmore issued his Proclamation on November 16, 1775, a number of slaves who were captured while trying to join Dunmore's "Ethiopian Regiment" were held as prisoners in the Public Gaol.

Edward Westmore

Edward Westmore served as Keeper of the Public Gaol from 1766 to 1771.¹⁹⁸ Westmore became the owner of an enslaved man named Wentworth in April 1768. Wentworth probably ran errands in Williamsburg for Westmore and brought straw and firewood to the Public Gaol. It is likely that Wentworth also cleaned the cells. He might have taken food to the prisoners, black and white, in the Public Gaol. There were three slaves in the Public Gaol during Westmore's tenure as Keeper: a fellow born in Virginia who belonged to George Berry of Albemarle County; Bobo, the slave of John Ellis of Amelia County; and Caesar, the property of William Wharton of Amherst County.

Wentworth saw that it was difficult to convict a white man of the murder of a black person in April 1770. David Ferguson, a white man, was a prisoner in the Public Gaol before his murder trial. The April 19, 1770 issue of Rind's *Virginia Gazette* reported that "On Monday and Tuesday last the following criminals took their trials at the capitol, viz. . . . David Ferguson, from Norfolk, for the murder of a Negro boy, acquitted; but remanded back to prison for farther trial by a commission from the Board of Admiralty of Great Britain, for the murder of three white men, part of his crew, upon the High seas."¹⁹⁹ It is likely that any witnesses to the murder of the slave boy were also enslaved persons and unable to testify in court against a white man.

Westmore had financial problems during the time that he was Keeper of the Public Gaol. He described Wentworth as a mulatto man when he used his slave and other personal property to guarantee the payment of debts in January, May, and September of 1770. Westmore did not meet the terms of his obligations and he sold Wentworth, livestock, and furniture to Thomas Brammer for £50 on October 6, 1770.²⁰⁰ Westmore resigned as Keeper of the Public Gaol in 1771.

¹⁹⁸ His wife was Martha Wyatt, daughter of William and Elizabeth Wyatt. William Wyatt was the Keeper of the Public Gaol between 1745 and 1749[50]. After Wyatt died on March 22, 1749[50], his widow gained possession of his slave woman, Ciss. It is possible that Westmore inherited Ciss after the death of Elizabeth Wyatt in late 1770 or early 1771. Ciss probably helped William Wyatt's wife with the cooking and the cleaning at his tavern in 1745. She appeared in the York County Court on August 15, 1748 to provide testimony in an oyer and terminer trial. Juba, a slave belonging to James Shields, was found not guilty of breaking into the house of Thomas Penman and stealing clothing. Ciss was described as a wench in November 1748 when the grand jury presented Wyatt for not listing himself and his slave as tithes. Elizabeth Wyatt mortgaged her to John Prentis and Company on April 14, 1769 to secure a debt of £29..16..7 plus interest on a bond dated August 30, 1762. The widow Wyatt managed to pay the debt and retained possession of Ciss. The York County grand jury presented Elizabeth Wyatt for not listing Ciss as a tithe in September 1770.

¹⁹⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., April 19, 1770

²⁰⁰ Thomas Brammer sold Wentworth to Doctor William Pasteur in January 1771. See the biography of Wentworth, also known as Wentworth Burwell, in the Biography section of this resource book.

Peter Pelham

Peter Pelham became the Keeper of the Public Gaol in July 1771. He served in this position until 1780. Pelham had one slave, a man named Ben, by 1768. Ben ran away in the summer of 1774. The Keeper of the Public Gaol placed the following announcement in the August 4, 1774 issue of Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*:

RUN away from the Subscriber, a Negro man named BEN, middle sized, well set, very black, has lost his right Eye, stoops a little when he walks, appears to be about 50 years old, and speaks such broken English that it is scarce possible to understand what he says; had on, when he went away, an Osnabrug shirt, and an old Pair of white Russia Drab Breeches pretty much torn. Whoever apprehends the said Slave, and conveys him to me in Williamsburg, shall be rewarded for their Troubles, besides being paid what the Law allows.²⁰¹

There is no evidence that Pelham regained possession of Ben.

Pelham asked Doctor James Carter and Doctor William Carter to treat the prisoners at the Public Gaol in 1773 and 1774. The following selections from the accounts that the Carters submitted to the colony indicate that they attended the medical needs of several slaves:

The Country for the Prisoners Dr. To James & Wm: Carter		
1773		
Augst	5 th	To a Visit 10/. an Emetic Potion 2/6. for Tom 12.6
		To a Cordial Draught 2/. a Cathartic Bolus 2/6 do 4.6
	6th	To a Visit 10/. 8 ozs. astringent Mixture 4/. for do 14.-
	18th	To a Visit 10/. a Cathartic Bolus 2/6 for do. 12.6
	19th	To a Visit 10/. a Cordial Anodyne Draught 2/. for Tom
	12.-	
Octobr.		
	13th	To Bleeding 2/6. a Paragoric Draught 2/. Tom 4.6
	14th	To a Cathartic Potion 2/6. Tretham a qut. Bitter Tinchure 10/. Tom 12.6
	21st	To Turner's Cerate 1/. Tom a Paragoric Draught 2/. do: 3.-
The Country for the Prisoners Dr. To James Carter & Co.		
1774		
Jan:	20th	To a Visit 10/. an Embrocation 2/6. a Collyrium 2/6. Ben 15.-
		To a Liniment 2/6. McLure 21st To a Visit 10/. Ben 12.6
Febry:	13th.	To Visit 10/. Riggs A Vomit 2/6. for Ben 12.6
March	23d.	To a Vomit 2/6. Stepney A Draught repted 2/. Patterson 4.6. ²⁰²

²⁰¹ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., August 4, 1774.

²⁰² Brock Collection, Box 40—Virginia Treasury Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

The advertisements that Pelham placed in the various issues of the *Virginia Gazette* indicate that there were five slaves in the Public Gaol in 1773—Jeffrey, Tom from Chesterfield County, Tom from Cumberland County, Harry, and Stepney. Ben and Charles were prisoners the following year. The Doctors Carter treated one, and possibly both, of the men named Tom, Stepney, and Ben.

Both the slaves owned by Pelham and the slaves held in the Public Gaol might have come into contact with enslaved laborers in 1773 and 1774. Samuel Spurr made repairs to the Public Gaol on several occasions between May 25, 1773 and October 8, 1774. Spurr's slaves and those he hired laid brick and whitewashed²⁰³

A number of slaves who tried to join Dunmore's "Ethiopian Regiment" were captured and sent to the Public Gaol. Pelham maintained these slaves until the colonial (and later, state) leaders sent them to work in the lead mines.²⁰⁴ The Keeper of the Public Gaol needed additional money to feed a greater number of prisoners than usual. On April 1, 1776 the Committee of Safety decided to give Pelham £168.1.1 to support the prisoners in the Public Gaol.²⁰⁵

Several people questioned Pelham's conduct as Keeper of the Public Gaol in 1777. On June 26, 1777, the committee appointed to "inquire into the conduct of the Keeper of the public jail" gave their report to the House of Delegates:

...It appears to your committee, from the testimony of Capt. John Morton, that having once an order to take prisoners out of the public jail, he came to the prison, and presenting it, a son of Mr. Pelham's directed a negro to take the keys and fetch the prisoner; that there were at that time, other prisoners in confinement, and that a son of Mr. Pelham's was in the outer room.

It also appears to your committee, from the information of Mr. Strother (one of the committee) that on Sunday se'nnight last, sometime before sunset, he came to the public jail, in company with with the treasurer, and some other gentlemen, when sending to desire admittance to see a prisoner there, they were informed by the messenger (a little boy) he would be glad they would defer seeing him that day, and come some other time; but they desiring to be admitted, the boy returned, brought the keys, and they were accordingly let in.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Members of the Committee of Safety and later, the members of the House of Delegates, sent slaves to the lead mines in Montgomery County in the southwestern part of the state. The mining of lead began in 1759 by a company organized by John Robinson, Francis Fauquier, William Byrd III, and John Chiswell. The state operated the mines during the Revolution. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson noted that the lead mines could employ thirty men per year and they could produce up to sixty tons of lead per year. The mines became important when the fighting shifted to the South since the Montgomery County mines were the only major source of lead in the region. See James A. Mulholland, *A History of Metals in Colonial America*, pp. 137-139.

²⁰⁵ Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 8:146.

It likewise appears to your committee, from the testimony of Mr. Benjamin Powell, that . . . before as well as since Mr. Pelham became jailer, and never discovered any deficiency in his management, or a negro employed or entrusted with the keys. . . .

. . . from the testimony of Mr. Bartlett Williams. . . and that he does not recollect ever to have seen a negro entrusted with the keys.

The members of the House of Delegates decided to continue Pelham in his position as Keeper of the Public Gaol.²⁰⁶

* * * *

Slaves Held in the Public Gaol, 1769-1776

October 26, 1769

COMMITTED to the publick jail in Williamsburg, a *Virginia* born Negro fellow, about 28 years of age, 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, well made, has a remarkable bald place on his head, which he says was occasioned by a scald when he was a child; says he belongs to George Berry, on Meacham river, in *Albemarle* county, within 3 or 4 miles of the Blue Ridge, and was bought from Col. Landon Carter, in *Richmond* county, has been run away since March last, and was some time since confined in *James City* prison, in Williamsburg, and made his escape from John Carter, brother in law to the said George Berry, as he was conveying him to his master. The owner is desired to send for the said slave, and pay the charges to

EDWARD WESTMORE, K.P.G.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., November 2, 1769.

August 30, 1770

THERE is now in the public prison, in Williamsburg, a Negro fellow named BOBO, who says he belongs to John Ellis in *Amelia*, and was formerly the property of one Lindsay Jarvis in *Gloucester* county. His master is desired to fetch him away, and pay charges.

WILLIAM KEEN.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., August 30, 1770.

October 22, 1770

²⁰⁶ Harris, ed., *Journals of the House of Delegates, 1777-1780*, p. 101.

COMMITTED to the public prison, a Negro fellow named CESAR, about 5 feet 8 inches high, by trade a shoe-maker, and is a smart sensible fellow. He was formerly the property of Mr. Bartholomew Dandridge of *New Kent*, by whom he was sold to Mr. William Wharton of *Amherst*; he made his escape as he was carrying home to his master about a year and a half ago, after being redeemed from the public gaol. His owner is desired to send for him to
 WILLIAM KEEN.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., November 1, 1770.

October 15, 1771

COMMITTED to the publick Jail, from *Buckingham* Prison, a Negro Man named SHARPER, a likely well made Fellow, who seems to be about twenty two Years of Age, speaks broken *English*, and either cannot or will not tell his Owner's Names, or from what Part of the Colony he came. Whoever has a just Claim to him is desired to take him away and pay Charges.
 PETER PELHAM, K.P.G.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., January 2, 1772.

October 15, 1771

COMMITTED to the publick Jail, from *Gloucester* Prison, a Negro Fellow who appears to be between forty and fifty Years of Age, about five Feet nine or ten Inches high, a thin Visage, has lost his left Eye, and is clothed in Negro Cotton. As he cannot speak a Word of *English*, he is incapable of telling either his own or Owner's Name. Also another Negro named SHARPER, a likely well made Fellow, who seems to be about twenty two Years of Age, speaks broken *English*, and either cannot or will not tell his Owner's Name, or from what Part of the Colony he came. Whoever has a just Claim to them are desired to take them away and pay charges.
 PETER PELHAM, K.P.G.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., October 17, 1771.

December 9, 1771

COMMITTED to the publick Jail, from *Surry* County, a Runaway Negro named BOB, who appears to be two or three and twenty years of age, about five Feet six Inches high, marked with three Gashes on each temple, agreeable to the *African* Custom, has lost one of his fore Teeth from the upper Jaw, and is of a black complexion. The Owner is desired to prove his Property, pay charges, and take him away.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., December 12, 1771.

September 24, 1772

COMMITTED to the Publick Jail, from *James City* prison, a Runaway Woman named MOLLY, who says she belongs to Charles Budd, of Charles City County. She is five Feet two inches high, and appears to be about forty Years old, has a prominent Nose, and by her Complexion would pass for one of the Indian Race. Her Owner is desired to apply for her, prove his Property, and pay Charges.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., September 24, 1772.

November 19, 1772

The Utility of Watchmen was very visible last Monday Night, for had not that measure been lately adopted the Jail of this City would have been burnt to the Ground, and in all Likelihood some of the adjoining Buildings; a Negro Fellow who was committed there that Day having found Means to set the Floor on Fire, and, having Accomplices without, escaped through a Hole made in the Underpinning. The People upon Duty that Night have had each a Reward of five Pounds, which we hope will encourage them to use the same care and vigilance in future.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., November 19, 1772.

March 11, 1773

COMMITTED to the publick Jail, from *Orange County*, a Negro Man named JEFFREY, five Feet six inches high, about twenty two Years old, pretty black, has a pleasant Countenance, is bow-legged, and such a Stranger to *English* that he cannot give any Account of either his Owner or the Place from whence he came. It is needless to describe his Dress, as that has undergone many Changes in the County from whence he was brought. The Owner is desired to apply for him, and pay Charges.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, March 11, 1773.

July 8, 1773

COMMITTED to the publick Jail, from *Chesterfield*, a Negro Fellow named TOM, who either knows not or will not tell to whom he belongs. As there is reason to believe he has not the

Clothes on in which he made his Elopement, a Description of them is unnecessary. He is about five Feet eight Inches high, appears to be about twenty five Years of Age, of a pretty dark Complexion, with a Scar deeply impressed in his forehead resembling a Hook, and being a new Negro, cannot speak to be understood. The owner is desired to pay Charges, and take him away.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., July 8, 1773.

September 10, 1773

COMMITTED to the publick Jail, from *Cumberland*, a Runaway Negro Man called TOM five Feet ten Inches high, remarkably black, his Face much scarified with his County Marks, both Ears bored, his right with four Holes and his left five, appears to be upwards of forty Years old, and cannot speak to be understood, had on a Crocus Shirt and Trowsers. His Owner is desired to take him away and pay Charges.

PETER PELHAM

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., September 16, 1773.

December 23, 1773

COMMITTED to the Publick Jail, two Runaway Negroes, viz. HARRY, from Elizabeth City, an outlandish Fellow, about five feet eight Inches high, appears to be above 30 years old, branded on the left Breast with a P, his right Hand has been burnt, and occasioned a white Spot on his Wrist. As he cannot speak one Word of English, he is not able to give the least Account of himself or his Owner. STEPNEY, a short Fellow, Virginia born, of a yellow Complexion, is 53 Years old, and says he belongs to the Estate of Benjamin Baker of Gloucester. Their Owners are desired to apply for them, pay charges, and take them away.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., December 23, 1773.

February 3, 1774

COMMITTED to the publick Jail, a Runaway Negro Man named BEN, middle sized, very black, has lost his right Eye, stoops a little when he walks, and appears to be above forty Years old; being an African, he speaks bad English, but gives me to understand that he belongs to the Estate of William Smith, deceased, whose Widow used him ill, which induced him to run away, but he cannot, or will not, inform where she lives. His Owner is desired to take him away, and pay charges.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., February 3, 1774.

September 29, 1774

COMMITTED to the Publick Jail, on the 3d Instant, a Negro Man named CHARLES, who told me he belonged to the Doctor Corbin Griffin, of York, which I have repeatedly notified to the Doctor; but no application having been made from him for the said fellow, it is probable he has told me a Falsity. From his own Story, he was lately the Property of Mr. James Pride, from whom Doctor Griffin received him last February, and kept him in Possession till the July following, at which Time he eloped. He is about 25 years old, five Feet nine inches high, slim made, well dressed, and fit to act in the Capacity of a Waiting Man. His owner is desired to take him away, and pay charges.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., October 6, 1774.

February 3, 1775

COMMITTED to the publick jail, a runaway negro man named Goliah. He says he belongs to Mr. John Jones of Hampton, is about 23 years old, middle size, and his clothing such as field negroes commonly wear. His owner is desired to apply for him, and pay charges.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., February 3, 1775.

November 15, 1775

BROKE jail on Monday the 13th instant (November) a remarkable light mulatto slave, named DICK, the property of mr. Anthony Lamb of Amelia, about 20 years old, 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, has a down look, a scar in his upper lip, short dark hair, and dark eyes; had on, a red lappelled sailor's waistcoat, narrow osnabrug trousers and shirt, a cocked hat, and shoes and stockings. He has been run away for 18 months past, and went by water as a freeman, till last summer, when he enlisted as a soldier, in Princess Anne county, under capt. Davis, by the name of Will. Thompson, and came to this city, where he was taken up, and committed to jail. I imagine he will again try to pass for a freeman, and endeavour to get on board some vessel, or return to Princess Anne, where I hear he left a crop of corn. Whoever secures him in any jail, so that I get him again, shall have 40s. and if brought home to me 3 l. reward.

JOHN LAMB.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., November 17, 1775.

December 4, 1775

The Negroes we have divers quarters found going over to the Governor and secured, are become too numerous as our Goal [Hampton] is at present very insufficient; We therefore wish they may be sent for - there are 14 in Confinement.

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5:46.

December 13, 1775

Ordered, that the Slaves taken and confined at the Town of Hampton be sent to the publick Gaol in the City of Williamsburg.

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5:127.

December 14, 1775

Ordered, that the slaves taken and confined at the Town of Hampton be sent to the publick Gaol in the City of Williamsburg.

Ordered, that the Committee of Safety do cause so many of the Captive Slaves as they shall think necessary to be employed in working in the lead Mines.

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5:127, 140.

December 1775

Ordered that Colonel [Patrick] Henry be at Liberty to give direction to the Keeper of the public Gaol for the discharge of James a Mulatto slave belonging to Lord Dunmore.

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5:144.

December 24, 1775

Mr. Edmund Ruffin [Jr.] appeared [before the Committee of Safety] & claimed a negro man named Joe, now in the public Jail, who with 5 others belonging to himself & father went of in a boat to go to Lord Dunmore, but before they reached him, this Slave as he declared repented of the expedition & found means to make his escape leaving the others at Mulberry Island, & was soon after taken up on land & brought to this City; Mr. Ruffin thinks him Sincerely penitent & wishes to have him restored, which the Committee allow of upon his paying charges of Imprisonment. Mr. Ruffin also claims another negro man in the public Jail named Dick, but as

he appears incorrigible the Commee cannot consent to his being delivered at present, & as Mr. Ruffin does not desire him to be delivered, he is to remain in the public Jail till further orders.

Note: According to Ruffin, the Committee of Safety “refused to discharge” Dick, “intending as a Terrour to others to send the said Slave to the West Indies or Lead Mines.” That design was frustrated by the death of Dick “before such Step was taken.”

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5:239, 240.

December 29, 1775

Last Monday night arrived in town, from Hampton, under a strong guard 33 black and white prisoners, coupled together, who were committed to the publick jail; since which a vessel was drove ashore near Hampton, in the late snow storm, going on a pirating voyage to the Eastern Shore for provisions, which had on board 14 whites and two black.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., December 29, 1775 supplement.

January 3, 1776

TAKEN up at sea on the 5th of December, about seven leagues from Cape Henry, a YAWL without either oar, mast or sail, and has a white bottom, with top sides painted green. There was a negro man in her who says his name is Dick, and that he belongs to mr. Ruffin on James river, whom I sent to the publick jail. The boat is now at York, and the owner may have it on proving his property and paying salvage.

JAMES DUNSLEY

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., January 12, 1776.

January 17, 1776

Mr. [Henry] King, from the committee appointed to inquire into the several cases of the prisoners confined in the publick jail, reported, that the committee had, according to order, had the same under their consideration; and that it appeared to them, that *Henry Crouch* was a serjeant in capt. [John] *Saunders's* company. That it farther appeared to them, that negro *Tom*, belonging to the estate of *Joseph Selden*; and *Tawley*, belonging to *Edward Hack Moseley*; *Dick*, belonging to *Edmund Ruffin* [Jr.]; *Lewis* and *Bob*, belonging to *Jacob Keeling*; *Dick*, to *James Legate*; *Harry*, to *Joel Cornick*; *George*, to *Elizabeth Woodhouse*; *Jemmy* to *Thomas Banks*; *Jasper* and *Luke*, to *William Keeling*; *Tom* and *Roger*, to *Mary Jones*; *Europe*, to *William Haynes*; *Romeo*, to *Lemuel Cornick*; *Frank*, to *John Henley*; *Peter*, to *William Keeling*; *Will*, to *Joel Cornick*; *Africa*, to *Charles Sayer* [Sayes]; *Harry*, to *Arthur Boush*; that *George*, belonging to *Samuel Donaldson*; *Ishmael*, to *Geoge Gaskin*; *Cuff*, to *Willis Wilkinson*; *Ned*, to *William Forsyth[e]*; *Cato*, to *Stephen Tankard*; *Lewis*, to *Robert Langley*; *Michael*, to *Robert Boush*;

were taken at the *Great Bridge*. That *Derry*, belonging to *Edward Cooper*; and *Bob*, belonging to *John Shedden*, have been active, and some of them born arms, under Lord *Dunmore*. That it appeared to them, that *Charles*, belonging to *John Poole*; *Cuffy*, to *Charles Boush*; *Davy*, to *Charles Jenkins*; *Poole*, to *Willis Hoslin*; *Dennis*, to the widow *Hodges*; were also taken at the *Great Bridge*. That *Billy*, belonging to *Anthony Robinson*; *Tom*, *Will*, and *Jemmy*, belonging to *Mer[r]it[t] Moore*; *Anthony*, to *Henry Howard*; *Ned* and *Sam*, to *Bennett Tomkins*; in attempting to run away from their several masters, were by them pursued and taken at *Point Comfort*. That it does not appear that the said *Charles*, *Cuffey*, *Davy*, *Poole*, *Dennis*, *Billy*, *Tom*, *Will*, *Jemmy*, and *Anthony*, have ever born arms, or been active in the service of lord *Dunmore*. That it also appeared, that *Rachel* and *Amy*, belonging to *Bennett Tomkins*, have been guilty of a robbery in the county of *York*; and that *Neptune*, belonging to *George Wythe*, esq; was taken up as a runaway. And that they had come to the following resolutions thereupon, which he read in his place, and afterwards delivered in at the clerk's table, where the same were again twice read, and agreed to.

Resolved, that the said *Henry Crouch* be detained as a prisoner.

Resolved, that the said several slaves, who have been active under lord *Dunmore*, or have born arms in his service, be detained in jail until the Committee of Safety shall procure them to be properly valued, and sent to the foreign *West India* islands, or the *Bay of Honduras*, there to be sold, and the money arising therefrom, after deducting the charges, be paid to the treasurer of the colony, to be repaid to their respective owners, provided they are not unfriendly to *American* liberty.

Resolved, that such of the said slaves who have not born arms, or been active in the service of lord *Dunmore*, be delivered to their respective owners, on their paying the expenses which have accrued, or shall accrue, from the time of their being taken, till the time of their delivery; and that a list of the said negroes, with the names of their several owners, be inserted in the *Virginia Gazette*. And if the owners do not apply within two months from the date of the advertisement, that such thereof as may then remain be sold at publick auction, and the balance, after deducting the expenses aforesaid, be lodged in the hands of the treasurer of this colony, to be paid to the owners, when demanded.

Resolved, that the said *Rachel* and *Amy* be committed to the jail of the proper county, there to remain till discharged by the due course of law.

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5:423-424; see p. 426 n. 14, 15, and 16 for information on the fate of several of this group of slaves.

January 19, 1776

AGREEABLE to an order of the General Convention, I do hereby give notice, that *Tom*, *Will*, and *Jemmy*, negro slaves belonging to *Merritt Moore*; *Anthony*, to *Henry Howard*; *Charles* to *John Poole*; *Cuffey*, to *Charles Boush*; *Davy*, to *Charles Jenkins*; *Poole*, to *Willis Hoslin*; *Dennis*, to the widow *Hodges*; are now confined in the publick jail, and directed to be delivered to their respective owners on their paying the expenses which have accrued, or shall accrue, from the time of their being taken to the time of their delivery.

Peter Pelham, jailer.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., January 19, 1776.

February 7, 1776

Caesar, a negro man slave belonging to Jno. Hancock, a prisoner taken at the Great Bridge, was brought before this comm'ee [Committee of Safety] and ex'd. On his ex'n declares that his mas—, having joyned L'd Dunmore, sent and ordered the Dep't and another slave to go to the Fort at the Great Bridge, from whence he was sent with a party, who, being attacked by the Provincials, left him, and he was runing to the provin's when he was shott by one of them. Mr. Seymour Hoe, being swo. and ex'd, saith that he went with to the party under Lt Colonel Scott just after his engagem't below the Great bridge, and found our party in possession of the Prisoner, whom they had wounded and taken. On considera.—Ordered, that he be valued by Doct'r Galt, Ben. Powell, Ro. Nicholas, and Humphrey Harwood, or any 3, being 1st swo., and so report to this comm'e. That the s'd slave be taken—employed for the benefit of this colony in the Lead Mi— under the direction of Mr. James Calloway.

Source: *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 8:77.

February 8, 1776

Ordered that Dr. Galt, Benjamin Powell, Robert Nicolson and Humphrey Harwood or any 3, being first swo. do appraise, Will, a negro man belonging to Andrew Sprowle, and Dick, belonging to Hezekiah Halder, and return their appraisements to this committee.

Source: *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 8:78-79.

March 8, 1776

Same [a warrant] to Wm. Bibb for use John Watson for £1.13.0 for the Escort of slaves from W'msburg to the Lead Mines.

Source: *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 8:113.

March 22, 1776

COMMITTED to the publick jail, a runaway boy named CHARLES, who says he belongs to mr. Richard Hanson of Petersburg. He was formerly the property of mr. James Burwell, of whom mr. Hanson purchased him. He is about 5 feet 5 inches high, has a remarkable prominent mouth, a slight scar, or scratch, across his forehead, and a little black bump on his right cheek, near his nose, much like a wart. His owner is desired to apply for him, pay charges, and take him away.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., March 22, 1776.

March 29, 1776

Three runaway negroes are now lodged in the publick jail, who last Sunday evening came on board one of our armed vessels, supposing her to be a tender, as they had heard her fire some guns. Before they were undeceived, they declared their resolution to spend the last drop of *their blood* in lord Dunmore's service.—What a hopeful crew has his lordship invited to become his life-guards! Many *a less noble man* would hardly have admitted such caitiffs into his service as *shoe-blacks*. But, considering *these hard times*, it is something fortunate that his lordship is content to put up with so miserable a set of attendants. It is to be hoped, however, that general Lee, so soon as he finds it convenient, will take care to provide *our governour* with a more suitable household, agreeable to his *high birth*, and *distinguished merit*.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., March 29, 1776.

April 3, 1776

The Commee having considered the Impracticability of transporting the following Slaves, vizt. Dick belonging to Edmd Ruffin [Jr.] George to Elizabeth Woodhouse Dick to James Legat, Jasper to Wm Keeling, Africa to Charles Sayes George to Samuel Donaldson, Lewis to Robt Langely Deny to Edwd Cooper & Will to Robt Shedden to the West Indies, according to a former Order of the Commee, and that they may be Employed more beneficially for the Interest of the Colony, by working at the Lead Mines do order that the said Slaves be sent under a proper Guard to sd. Mines in Fincastle County to be delivered to Mr. James Calloway & Employed under his direction.

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 6:317.

April 12, 1776

COMMITTED to the publick jail in Williamsburg, a runaway negro man named WILL, who says he belongs to Richard Batte in Chesterfield county. He is 6 feet high, of a yellowish complexion, about 30 years old, and has worked at the carpenter's trade. His owner is desired to apply for him, and pay charges.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., April 12, 1776.

April 13, 1776

Two of the Negroes who mistook one of our armed vessels at Jamestown for a tender, and expressed their inclination to serve Lord Dunmore, are under sentence of death, and will be executed in a few days as an example to others.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., April 13, 1776.

May 1776

A memorial of Charles Lynch . . . setting forth, that in may of 1776, this House ordered that the negroes then in the public jail to be delivered to him for the purpose of make saltpetre, and that he should receive any sum of money out of the public treasury not exceeding 500 [pounds] which, together with a reasonable hire of negroes, he was to pay in gunpowder at 6 s. per pound; that he now hath a sufficient quantity of saltpetre, which soon be manufactured into gunpowder, and is desirous to know what the hire of the negroes is to be, also what further quantity will be taken of him, as he can have it ready.

Source: Scribner and Tarter, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 7:179-180.

May 3, 1776

COMMITTED to the publick jail in Williamsburg, a runaway negro man named Tobit, who says he belongs to Winfield Cosby in Hanover county, but eloped from Giles Harding, in Goochland county, to whom he was hired by his master. He is a tall well made fellow, thin visage, and is blind in his left eye. His master is desired to apply for him, pay charges, and take him away.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., May 3, 1776.

May 8, 1776

On the representations of Mr. Benjamin Powell, the Comm'ee [Committee of Safety] agree that six slaves now in the public jail, the property of certain Tories, may be employed under the direction of Mr. Powell upon the prison lot for the use of the public, they being confined under a sufficient guard to prevent their escape.

Source: *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 8:173.

June 28, 1776

COMMITTED to the publick jail in Williamsburg, a runaway negro man who calls himself PHILL, and says he belongs to George Slackum of Dorset county on the Eastern Shore, Maryland. His master is desired to make application for the said fellow, pay charges, and take him away.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., June 28, 1776.

July 13, 1776

Ordered, that John Minson Galt, Robert Nicolson, & James Southall, Gentlemen; be appointed to examine the Negroes now in the Public Jail; and report their opinion what their yearly hire ought to be.

The Gentlemen appointed to examine the Negroes in the public Jail, according to order, made an estimate of their yearly value and returned the following report, to wit;

In obedience to an Order of the Honble Privy Council We have made an estimate of ye yearly hire of the Negroes at the Public Jail & the return as follows,

Joachim		12 Sawyer & Shoemaker
Joe	} belonging to Edmund Bailey	15
Luke	William Bailey	10
Peter	Thomas Jacobs	10
Charles	George Wythe Esqr	9
Jamie		8
Reubin	{ Mr Bowdoin	10
Ned		8
Juba	William Maury	9
Peter	Mrs Reade	8
Gilbert, belonging to Mrs Roan		9
James		8
Fielding		9
David	} Baleigh Dolman	9
Hercules		10
Bristol	William Montague	8

Aaron	Thomas Parramore	9
James	} William B. Brown	8
Prince		<u>8</u>
		£ 167

J. M. Galt
 Robt Nicolson
 James Southall

Ordered, that the Keeper of the Public Jail, do deliver the Negroes in his custody to Mr Peter Terrel, to be by him carried to the Lead Mines, and there delivered to Mr James Calloway; and that Mr Terrel give his Receipt to the Jailor for the same

Ordered, that the General be requested to order a Waggon to assist in removing the Slaves up to the Lead Mines, and that he be informed it is expected, Mr Calloway will have a Load of Lead ready to send down by the return of the Waggon

Ordered that Mr Terrel be empowered to hire a Guard of four Men, to assist in removing the above slaves; and in case he shall not be able to procure the same—that he then apply to the Lieutenants of the several Counties, through which, he is to pass, who are requested to order a proper Guard to attend him to the next County.

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Journal of the Council of the State of Virginia*, 1:70-71.

July 29, 1776

COMMITTED TO the publick jail, a likely young negro woman named SALLY, who says she belongs to James Perkins of Charles City county, and was purchased by him of col. Lewis Burwell of King's Mill. Her master is desired to apply for her, pay charges, and take her away.
 PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., August 2, 1776.

August 21, 1776

MADE his escape from the publick jail a negro boy named JAMES, formerly the property of George Thomas of Hampton, but lately purchased by mr. John Mayo. He is small, appears to be about 15 years old, and has round his neck an iron collar with G. Thomas inscribed on it. He was tried last Monday, by a court of Oyer and Terminer at York, for a felony committed by him in this town, and being convicted of the same, is now under sentence of death. Whoever apprehends the said boy, and recommits him to the publick jail in this city, shall be reasonably rewarded.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., August 23, 1776.

November 1, 1776

COMMITTED to the publick jail in Williamsburg, a runaway negro man named CHARLES, who says he belongs to Henry Lyne of Halifax county, North Carolina, whose overseer is named John Jeter. He appears to be between 20 and 30 years old, is 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, and has a thin visage. It is need less to describe his dress, as he has changed it since his elopement. His master is desired to apply for him, pay charges, and take him away.

PETER PELHAM.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., November 1, 1776.

The Raleigh Tavern

Letters, diaries, newspaper advertisements, and other primary documents indicate that the Raleigh was one of the most important taverns in colonial Virginia. It served as a center for social, commercial, and political gatherings, small private and large public dinners, lectures and exhibits, and auctions of merchandise, property, and slaves.

The Raleigh's location, its convenient meeting rooms, and (possibly) its proprietors' sympathy for the colonists' cause made it a center of political activities in Williamsburg during the 1760s and 1770s. In 1769, when Governor Botetourt dissolved the General Assembly because of its protest against the Townshend Acts, many of the burgesses gathered at the Raleigh and approved the Association of 1769. Five years later, the Assembly again being dissolved, other non-importation measures were agreed upon at the Raleigh after the news reached Virginia that Great Britain had ordered the port of Boston closed. The "late representatives of the people" issued the call for delegates from all the colonies to meet in the first Continental Congress.

The Raleigh Tavern also served as a center of activity for slaves who lived in Williamsburg and for slaves who accompanied their masters to the colonial capital. Slaves owned by Anthony Hay and James Southall had the opportunity to gather information about other enslaved laborers and to hear the Burgesses discuss legislation that placed restrictions on slaves and free blacks. In addition, the tavern keepers' slaves might have listened to colonial legislators as they decided to end the importation of slaves from Africa. The slaves who lived and worked at the Raleigh also witnessed sales of enslaved men, women, and children on the steps of the tavern. In May 1771, Anthony Hay's executors sold the tavern keeper's slaves during a public auction at the Raleigh.

This section includes information on the enslaved laborers owned by Alexander Finnie, William Trebell, Anthony Hay, and James Southall.

Alexander Finnie

Alexander Finnie first appeared in the York County records on November 19, 1744 when he was presented for not listing three tithes. It is possible that the tithes were journeymen who helped Finnie in his business of wig making and barbering. In September 1745, Finnie announced that he was "in want of Two or Three Journeymen, that understand the Business of a Barber and Peruke-Maker."²⁰⁷ Finnie probably had several journeymen in his employment when his seven tithes were to be added to the list for Bruton Parish in August 1747. His labor force included an old woman named Jenny whom he hired from the estate of John Burdett. Perhaps Finnie needed a female slave to perform domestic duties while he ran his wig making and barbering businesses.

Finnie bought the Raleigh Tavern from Alexander McKenzie, John Dixon, Patrick Barclay, David Mead, and James Murray on June 15, 1749. He received his first license to operate a tavern on the same day. Finnie had two slave men—both named William—and at least one indentured white servant at the Raleigh in 1751. In May of that year, Finnie, Alexander Craig, and John Mitchelson offered a reward for the return of the following runaway servants: William Welton, a shoemaker; Nicholas Foster; James Seayres, a gardener; William Nailor, a butcher; John Ashwell, a barber; and Thomas Alley, a baker. Perhaps Seayres, Nailor, Ashwell, and Alley worked for Finnie; he could have used the services of a gardener, a butcher, a barber, and a baker at the Raleigh. Finnie acquired twenty acres adjoining Williamsburg and a slave man named Prince from Andrew Anderson, a barber and a peruke maker, in December 1751. Finnie's customers left their horses on the land that became known as the Raleigh Lot. Prince might have dressed the wigs of the men who stayed at his master's tavern.

In February 1752 Finnie announced that he intended "to have a BALL, at the Apollo in Williamsburg, once every Week, during the sitting of the General Assembly and Court."²⁰⁸ Five months later, in July 1752, he informed the public that he planned on leaving for Great Britain and that he would "sell the Raleigh Tavern, to be enter'd on in December next. Any Person that has a Mind to purchase it privately, may apply to me."²⁰⁹ Finnie and his wife Sarah sold the Raleigh Tavern and the Raleigh Lot to John Chiswell and George Gilmer on August 17, 1752. Finnie's December 1, 1752 advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* noted that "He will dispose of sundry Houshold and Kitchen Furniture, and several valuable Slaves, particularly a good House-Wench, that understands Cooking, Washing, and Ironing, which he will sell either privately, or at public Sale, at the Court of Oyer & Terminer, in December."²¹⁰ Mary, a slave who was baptized on August 2, 175[2], might have been the "good House-Wench" in Finnie's advertisement.

Evidence in the York County records and other primary documents indicates that Finnie did not leave for Great Britain. He stayed in Williamsburg and he continued to operate his

²⁰⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, September 12, 1745.

²⁰⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, February 27, 1752.

²⁰⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, July 24, 1752.

²¹⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, December 1, 1752.

tavern at the Raleigh. George Washington paid five shillings, three pence for "Dinner and Club at Finnie's" in the fall of 1754.²¹¹ The following spring Finnie noted that he would soon head to the Ohio and that "My House will be kept in my Absence, as usual, by my Wife."²¹² Sarah Finnie operated the Raleigh with the help of the family slaves and the enslaved laborers whom her husband hired. Four months later, in December 1755, Finnie stated his intention "to leave the Raleigh Tavern, about the 25th of July next."²¹³

Once again, it appears that Finnie stayed at the Raleigh in spite of his plan to leave. Perhaps Finnie continued to operate a tavern so that he would be able to pay his many debts. If so, his efforts were not successful. In May 1761, Finnie mortgaged two slaves, John and Will, to John Prentis, his security on a bond for £156.05. It is likely that he operated the Raleigh until May 1763 when William Trebell bought the tavern from John Robinson, John Blair Junior, and Thomas Walker, the executors of George Gilmer.²¹⁴

After he left the Raleigh, Finnie moved to the eight lots in the Moody Subdivision that he purchased in June 1762. He made his home in this section of Williamsburg until October 1765 when he sold his Moody Subdivision lots to John Blair. Finnie relocated to his Bruton Parish plantation—"Portobello"—that he bought from John James Hulett sometime before January 17, 1763. Finnie's slaves might have found it difficult to maintain ties to some of their friends after their master moved them from Williamsburg to "Portobello." In addition, the work that Finnie assigned his slaves probably changed after he moved them to his plantation. His slaves might have found themselves tending fields on their master's plantation instead of running errands in Williamsburg, cooking for customers at the Raleigh, or caring for the horses owned by men who stayed in the tavern.

Finnie's financial problems continued after he left the Raleigh. He mortgaged slaves Tom, Will, Juba, and Mars to Nathaniel Walthoe to secure a payment of £110. In February 1767 the justices of the peace decided that Walthoe was to recover Tom valued at £50, Will valued at £50, Juba valued at £15, and Mars valued at £15 from Finnie or their value. Finnie entered into another mortgage with Jerman Baker, William Prentis, Robert Prentis, Frederick Bryan (all of York County), and William Trebell of James City County on December 19, 1767. He conveyed Tom, Will, Juba, Mars, and "3 Negroes named Jack, Fortune, & Sharper" to this group of five men in trust.

Finnie announced a sale of real and personal property in an advertisement in the March 9, 1769 issue of the *Virginia Gazette*. He added that he would sell "several valuable slaves" after he had sold Portobello.²¹⁵ Finnie died on May 2, 1769 and his administrators informed the public

²¹¹ Gibbs, "Taverns in Tidewater Virginia."

²¹² *Virginia Gazette*, April 25, 1755.

²¹³ *Virginia Gazette*, December 26, 1755.

²¹⁴ John Chiswell sold his share of the Raleigh and the adjoining rural land to George Gilmer on May 8, 1758.

²¹⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., March 9, 1769.

that Portobello could be purchased at a sale on December 15, 1769. His administrators also noted that "a likely young NEGRO fellow, who has been used to wait on a Gentleman" was to be sold.²¹⁶ Nathaniel Walthoe became the owner of Juba, the slave who waited on Finnie. Walthoe held Juba until his death in 1770. Frederick Bryan owned Juba when he died in January 1771. James Finnie, son of Alexander Finnie, gained possession of Juba in November 1771. It is likely that most of Finnie's slaves were sold to raise money to pay his debts.

William Trebell

William Trebell was a resident of Williamsburg when he bought a lot in the Moody Subdivision in December 1761. It is possible that he kept an ordinary in his house because George Washington noted that he stopped at Trebell's tavern in June 1761. Trebell depended on the labor of slaves, a free black woman, and a white apprentice in his tavern. Edy Cumbo, a free woman of color, and two enslaved women—Lydia and Violet—probably helped Sarah Trebell with the cooking and cleaning. Lydia and Violet also spent time raising their children. Lydia was an adult when she was baptized on July 6, 1760. Her three sons—George (July 1, 1764), James Doonda (June 7, 1767), and Henry (October 2, 1768)—were also baptized. Violet's daughter (name torn) was baptized on December 4, 1763. Trebell sent a three-year old girl named Phoebe to the Bray School in 1762.

Trebell was called an ordinary keeper on May 2, 1763 when he bought the Raleigh Tavern and twenty acres adjoining Williamsburg. Washington was one of Trebell's first customers at the Raleigh—he paid for "Club at Trebell's" on May 2, and 3, 1763. He frequented Trebell's establishment through 1766.²¹⁷

Between February 2, 1764 and January 10, 1766 the tavern keeper sent five slaves to Joseph Royle's printing office to pick up books, playing cards, quills, and writing paper. Billy carried items back to the Raleigh on fifteen occasions and Jimmy made eleven trips to Royle's establishment. Austin made five stops at the printing office for Trebell and one stop for George Johnson, one of his master's customers. Perhaps Harry and Primus spent most of their time caring for the horses owned by Trebell's customers instead of running errands. Harry and Primus made one trip each to the printing office. Edy Cumbo carried paper back to the Raleigh in October 1764.

Trebell decided to leave the Raleigh and he sold the tavern and the adjoining twenty-acre tract to Anthony Hay on January 1, 1767. Sarah Trebell informed her brother, John Galt, of their move in a letter she wrote from their plantation at Martin's Hundred on January 16, 1767:

Doctr Pasteur writes to you by this opportunity. he says he shall tell you all the news, but I suppose he will not be so minute in our little concerns as [illeg] you all I can remember; There has been many changes [torn] time since you left it. I dare say none will surprize you more then our [torn] Mr Trebell has sold the Raligh to A. Hay who now lives there & all his little family. he has made a nurssery of Jamies Shop I sincerely wish them success. he gives Mr. Trebell £ [torn]00 for it & Wall-Hill he takes the store of

²¹⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., December 7, 1769.

²¹⁷ Gibbs, "Taverns in Tidewater Virginia."

Liquor & all the Furniture [torn] which I imagine will amount near to £ 1000 more. Austin continues [illeg] they have Lydie till after the April court, I cant judg of their management yet as they have been there but a week. we are living at the place Mr Trebell purchased of Mr Lester.²¹⁸

Sarah Trebell's letter indicates that she had played a role in the management of the Raleigh Tavern. She also noted that Austin continued to work at the tavern, as did Lydia. Trebell allowed Anthony Hay to hire Lydia until April 1767 so that she could show Hay's enslaved women around the Raleigh. When Lydia left Williamsburg for rural James City County after the April meeting of the court, she experienced the changes that Trebell's other slaves went through earlier in the year. The move took Trebell's slaves from an urban area where it was easier to develop ties to other slaves and where they could hear news of slaves, perhaps family members, who lived in other areas of the colony.

Trebell paid taxes on sixteen tithes and 107 acres of land in James City County in 1768. The former tavern keeper was assessed for nineteen tithes and the same number of acres the following year. Trebell had twenty-eight slaves in 1783, twenty-five slaves in 1784, twenty-six slaves in 1785, and twenty-nine slaves in 1786. He lived in the Yorkhampton section of James City County until his death in October 1789.

Anthony Hay

Anthony Hay worked as a cabinetmaker when he first arrived in Williamsburg. In November 1751 he placed an advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* for a journeyman and a servant. He and Christopher Ford Junior sold carpenter's, joiner's, and cabinetmakers tools in 1755. A carver named James Wilson also worked in Hay's shop in 1755. It is possible that Hay conducted his business and lived on Lots 263 and 264 on Nicholson Street before he bought them from Thomas Everard in August 1756.

The cabinetmaker's household included journeymen and slaves. Hay's son Thomas inherited a slave woman named Elizabeth from his grandfather, Thomas Penman, in September 1759. A child named Jeremiah was baptized on January 7, 1759 and another child, Tom, was baptized on June 7, 1761. The baptism of Ben, the son of his slave woman Peg, was recorded in 1762. Hay sent Rippon, age three, to the Bray School in September of 1762. Two more slave children—Richard, the son of Nanny, and Peg's daughter Lucy—were baptized in April and June of 1765, respectively. Jenny, another one of Peg's daughters, attended the Bray School in November of 1765.

Hay decided to give up his cabinetmaking business in 1767. He purchased the Raleigh Tavern and the twenty-acre parcel of land adjoining Williamsburg from William Trebell on January 1, 1767. A week later he announced these changes in the *Virginia Gazette*. Hay informed "The Gentlemen who have bespoke work of the subscriber may depend upon having it

²¹⁸ Sarah Trebell to John Galt, January 16, 1767, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Special Collections, Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

made in the best manner by Mr. Benjamin Bucktrout, to whom he has given up his business."²¹⁹ Benjamin Bucktrout's announcement noted that Hay had moved to the Raleigh Tavern.

Hay's labor force continued to grow. Peg's son James was baptized in early 1767. Thomas Hay's slave woman Elizabeth gave birth to a son in 1768. Henry was baptized on April 10th of that year. The proprietor of the Raleigh continued to send slave children to the Bray School—Jerry, Joseph, and Dick were among Ann Wager's students in February 1769.

The proprietor of the Raleigh Tavern died between November 19, 1770 and December 17, 1770. Hay left his whole estate (after the payment of his debts) to his widow, Elizabeth, for her support and for the maintenance and education of his children. After her death, all of his children (except Thomas who had been provided for by his grandfather) were to share the estate. The February 2, 1771 inventory of Hay's estate listed twenty slaves and their appraised values:

Lucy £25
 Peggy and her children Ben, Lucy, Jimmy, and Jenny £125
 Caesar £45
 Gaby £60
 Rachel £30
 Rippon £60
 Jerry £50
 Wiltshire £65
 Sarah and her child Mary £70
 Will £60
 Tom £50
 Kate £50
 Betty £50
 Nancy and her child Edmund £60

On January 17, 1771, William Trebell and Robert Nicholson, the executors of Hay's estate, announced two sales of his real and personal property. The first was to be on March 6, 1771 and included

THAT noted and well accustomed Tavern in Williamsburg, called the RALEIGH, which has every Convenience to it, and an exceeding fine stable and Pasture adjoining. At the same Time will be sold the Stock of LIQUORS, a great Quantity of HOUSEHOLD and KITCHEN FURNITURE, some CHAIRS and HARNESS, CARTS and HORSES, CATTLE, SHEEP, &c.-----Also a very good DWELLINGHOUSE on the back street, where Mr. Hay formerly lived, with large Cabinet Maker's Shop and Timber yard, and all necessary Out houses for a Family.

The second sale was to be on May 7, 1771 before the door of the Raleigh. People would have the opportunity to buy "nineteen NEGROES belonging to the said Estate among them a very

²¹⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., January 8, 1767.

good Cabinet Maker, a good Coachman and Carter, some fine Waiting Boys, good Cooks, Washers, &c."²²⁰

Elizabeth Hay renounced the will of her deceased husband on March 20, 1771. She bought Lots 263 and 264 at the March 6, 1771 sale and received a deed for this property on January 18, 1772. The widow Hay also bought two slaves—Sarah and her daughter Mary—on May 7, 1771. Elizabeth Hay paid the assessment on Sarah and Mary (both over sixteen years old) in 1784 and 1786. The widow Hay's household also included Judith (under sixteen years old in 1786), Nelly (under sixteen in 1784 and over sixteen in 1786), and Sall (under sixteen in 1784 and 1786).

James Southall paid £101 for a negro fellow named Will whom purchased at the sale of Anthony Hay's estate on November 6, 1771. Edmund Dickenson gained possession of Wiltshire, a cabinetmaker. It is likely that Hay hired Wiltshire to Dickenson after he gave up his cabinetmaking business in 1767. The settlement of Hay's estate noted that Corbin Griffin paid a portion of the money that he owed for a slave whom he purchased. Unfortunately, the slave's name was not included.

James Southall

James Southall was a tavern keeper in Williamsburg by May 17, 1757 when George Washington noted the following expenditures: "By Supper and Club at Southalls 2/6 Expences ditto 1/0."²²¹ There is no information about the location of his establishment. It is possible that James Southall operated his business in a building that he rented from Edward Charlton in 1759. In April of that year Southall's ax was stolen when Isaac, a slave belonging to Samuel Spurr, broke into Charlton's kitchen. Southall was at Wetherburn's Tavern by June 1767 and it is possible that he was the proprietor of this tavern as early as 1763.

Southall had both slaves and apprentices to help him in his tavern in the 1760s. On September 15, 1760 the justices of the peace ordered that Southall's two tithes to be added to list for Bruton Parish. It is possible he had an adult slave or an apprentice. Southall's slave Flora had three children—a son baptized on December 4, 1763; a daughter Celia baptized on April 7, 1765; and a second daughter, Amy, baptized on December 6, 1767. Southall employed William Rawlinson Drinkard as a waiter in 1765. The following year Southall announced that he "Wanted, a young man qualified to act as bar-keeper, that can write a tolerable hand, and understands something of accounts."²²²

This tavern keeper took the opportunity to move his business to a well-known location in early 1771 and he purchased the Raleigh from the executors of Anthony Hay. On March 7,

²²⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., January 17, 1771.

²²¹ Gibbs, "Taverns in Tidewater Virginia."

²²² *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., August 29, 1766; *ibid.*, Rind, ed., September 5, 1766.

1771, the new proprietor of the Raleigh begged "Leave to solicit the Customers of that House for a Continuance of their Favours, and he hereby acquaints the Gentlemen who lodged there in publick Times that their Rooms will be still kept in Order to receive them. He flatters himself that he will be able to give Satisfaction; as no Pains, nor Cost, shall be spared for that end."²²³

Southall's receipt book provides some information about his slave holding. The keeper of the Raleigh bought Will, a coachman and a carter, from Hay's estate on November 6, 1771. Southall might have sent Will to his nearby plantations in Warwick, James City, and Charles City counties for meat, produce, and fodder to be used at the Raleigh. The proprietor of the Raleigh purchased two slaves in 1773: Juba from Maurice Langhorne of Cumberland County and a woman named Phillis from John Earnshaw.

The tavern keeper's records suggest that he preferred to have ten adult tithes at the Raleigh. William Russell noted that he "Recvd of Mr Jas. Southall five pounds for the Tax of the Corporation on Ten Tithables" on January 12, 1773. Two years later, Southall also paid the annual assessment for ten tithes. He rented slaves when he needed extra help at the tavern. Southall hired a male slave from Lockey Collier of Elizabeth City County and from William Sheldon Sclater of Charles Parish in 1771. John Earnshaw rented his slave woman Phillis to Southall in the same year. Southall might have hired Joe, a slave belonging to Thomas Cowles, to work at his tavern in that year. He hired Thomas Carter's slave woman in December of 1773. Southall hired a slave named Nanny Trail from Robert Evans, a free black man, in July 1775.

Southall operated the Raleigh after the Revolution. He had either nine or ten adult slaves who worked at his tavern in 1783, 1784, and 1786.

1783—Will, Will, Jemmy, Davy, Betty, Fanny, Kate, Venus, Celia and Dinah over sixteen

Luke, Nan, Sarah, Milly, Phebe, Mary, Billy, Peg, and Jenny under sixteen

1784—Will, Will, Davy, Marcus, Betty, Fanny, Kate, Venus, and Dinah over sixteen

Luke, Harry, Nanny, Moll, Betty, Billy, Jenny, Lucy, and Peg under sixteen

1786—Will, Will, Marcus, Davie, Venus, Betty, Fanny, Cate, and Dinah over sixteen

Luke, Nan, Janey, Peg, Lucy, Mical, Edith, and Mary under sixteen

Southall advertised the Raleigh Tavern for rent on September 20, 1797. He noted that "THE RAWLEIGH TAVERN, in the city of Williamsburg, at present occupied by Mr. Gabriel Maupin, which, in point of situation, as a public house, is inferior to none in the place. The yard and garden belonging thereto are just newly enclosed, and the houses will be put in repair as soon as possible. Very conveniently situated to the tavern, lies an extensive pasture, containing about fourteen acres of land, under a good post and rail fence, and on which stands a large and spacious stable, sufficient for the accomodation of thirty horses. If agreeable, an extraordinary good BILLIARD TABLE may be had with the said house. Any further description is deemed unnecessary, as it is supposed that any person inclined to rent the above tenement, would wish

²²³ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., March 7, 1771; *ibid.*, Rind, ed., March 7, 1771.

first to view the premises thereof. Bond with approved security will be required, and the terms may be known by application to the subscriber."²²⁴

The Randolph House

Four members of the Randolph family—Sir John Randolph, Lady Susannah Randolph, Peyton Randolph, and Betty Randolph—were slaveowners. This examination of the enslaved men, women, and children who worked for the Randolphs begins with a look at John and Susannah Randolph's slaves. Next, the study turns to Peyton Randolph's urban slaves, the enslaved laborers on his plantations in James City County, differences between his urban and rural slaves, the impact of Randolph's death on his slaves, the decision of enslaved individuals to run to the British, and Randolph's thoughts on slavery.

Sir John Randolph

John Randolph was a member of a prominent and influential family. The son of William Randolph of Turkey Island in Charles City County, John Randolph attended William and Mary from 1709 to 1711. He also studied law in England between 1715 and 1717. When he returned to Virginia he was appointed clerk of the House of Burgesses and also served as agent for the colony for many years. In 1732, he became the only colonial Virginian to be knighted.²²⁵ Two years later he was elected Speaker of the House of Burgesses, a position he held until his death on February 27, 1736/7.

Randolph lived on Lots 207 and 237 on the north side of Market Square with his wife, Susannah, and their children, Beverley, Peyton, John, and Mary. This household also included white indentured servants and slaves. In November 1733 the grand jury presented John Randolph for not listing his tithes. Unfortunately, the York County clerk did not specify the number of tithes that Randolph had on his urban property, the number of indentured servants, or the number of bond laborers. The first evidence of slaves in Randolph's Williamsburg household is contained in his will which he wrote on December 23, 1735 and to which he added a codicil on February 17, 1736/7. His last testament was recorded in the General Court on April 28, 1737. He left to his wife during her lifetime

all my houses and lots in the city of Williamsburgh and the plantation and lands adjoining to the town which I purchased of Mr. Thomas Corbin and Mr. Thomas Bray with the appurtenances and also my household servants and slaves and the slaves living and residing upon the said plantation. . . . I also give her the profits of all my other plantations and negros or other slaves until my several sons shall respectively attain the age of

²²⁴ *Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser*, September 20, 1797.

²²⁵ Randolph relied on John Custis to inform him about activities on his plantations while he was in England. On December 4, 1732, Custis wrote Randolph that "Your plantation business goes on tolerably well; only some of the Negros, and particularly Simon at Chicohominy has bin a little [illeg] sunnen and run away, haveing a notion he had no master; but upon complaint of the overseer, I went immediately up; and undeceived him to his cost." John Custis Letter Book, 1717-1741, Library of Congress.

twenty four years. . . . And after that my will is that she shall receive of my sons one third part of the profits of my said plantations and slaves for her dower.

After his mother's death Peyton Randolph would gain possession of

all my said houses and lots in Williamsburg and at the college landing and the said plantation and lands lying near or adjoining to the town upon Archers hope creek [College Creek] which I purchased of the said Thomas Corbin and Thomas Bray and my household servants and slaves and slaves belonging to the said plantation I also give unto my said son Peyton his heirs and assigns all my lands tenements and hereditaments with the appurtenances lying and being in Martin's hundred in the county of James City and all the slaves horses hogs cattle sheep and other goods and chattles belonging to the said lands or at the time of my death living residing or being upon the same.

John Randolph noted that "Whereas my negroes Peter and Hull do not live constantly at any plantation I give Hull to my son Beverley and Peter to my son John. I also give unto my son Beverley the mulatto boy Billy and all the rest of my estate both real and personal."²²⁶ This bequest suggests that most of Randolph's enslaved laborers lived at a specific plantation. It is possible that Peter and Hull ran errands between Randolph's properties for their master.

The elder Randolph made some additional gifts of slaves in his codicil. He gave Beverley "a negro girl named Ffrank who lives with Mr. Pasteur a negro girl Lucy who lives with Mr. Bridges a mulatto girl called Nanny who lives at my quarters at Archer's house and a negro girl called Easter." Peyton received a mulatto boy named Lewey.²²⁷ Randolph's codicil indicates that he took advantage of the opportunity to add to his income by hiring out enslaved girls to Williamsburg residents. Frank and Lucy probably performed domestic duties for Pasteur and Bridges, respectively. Jean Pasteur was a barber and a wigmaker who lived on Lot 27 on Duke of Gloucester Street. Perhaps Pasteur hired Frank to help his wife, Martha, with work in their household. Lucy worked in the dwelling that the painter Charles Bridges rented from the estate of Richard King. On Christmas Day 1736, Bridges decided to lease Lots 319-328 on Prince George Street from King's executor, Thomas Jones, for one year.

Lady Susannah Randolph

The widow Randolph inherited a life right to her husband's Williamsburg property and his plantation at Archer's Hope Creek. As a result, Lady Randolph managed the labor force at Archer's Hope Creek in addition to the household servants and slaves whose work she already supervised.²²⁸ It is known that she lost one of her household servants at the end of 1737. In November of that year a white indentured servant named Esther Pugh petitioned the York

²²⁶*Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 36 (1928): 376-381.

²²⁷*Ibid.*

²²⁸It is likely that John and Susannah Randolph employed an overseer at the Martin's Hundred Plantation in James City County and at the plantation in Gloucester County (Sir John Randolph left this land to his son, Beverley).

County Court. Pugh wanted to be discharged from her service to the estate of Sir John Randolph. Two of Randolph's executors, Richard Randolph and Henry Whiting, gave their consent to Pugh's request. It is unknown if there were other white indentured servants in the Randolph household in the late 1730s.

Susannah Randolph directed a number of her own affairs after her husband's death. On May 26, 1740, she petitioned the House of Burgesses as guardian of her son Peyton, the proprietor of the public warehouses at the College Landing. The widow Randolph informed the Burgesses that

since the last Session of Assembly, the Warehouses, at the Place aforesaid, being too small to receive the Tobacco brought there, another Warehouse 40 Feet long, and 20 Feet wide, was obliged to be built, at a considerable Expence. And praying some Allowance for the same, and an Increase of the Rent of the said Warehouses.

Four days later the Burgesses granted an increase of £4.10 for the rent of the warehouses.²²⁹ Peyton Randolph reached the age of twenty-four in 1745 and took over management of his estate from his mother. However, Lady Randolph's name continued to be associated with a portion of her husband's real property. On September 26, 1745, William Newell offered a reward for a horse that strayed from the College Landing. He wanted the horse returned to him "at the Lady Randolph's Quarter, near the said Landing."²³⁰

It is possible that Susannah Randolph moved from the main house to another structure on the property after Peyton and Betty married. The building identified as Structure A might have served as John Randolph's law office during his lifetime. Perhaps it was converted into a dower house for Lady Randolph in the mid-1740s. The building was demolished during Peyton Randolph's lifetime—most likely between 1755 and 1765—after his mother's death.²³¹ Susannah Randolph's dower slaves who lived in and worked in Williamsburg probably stayed with their mistress during her lifetime, and later became a part of the household headed by Peyton Randolph.

Peyton Randolph's Urban Slaves

Peyton Randolph followed in his father's footsteps when he attended William and Mary and traveled to England to study law. Randolph received an appointment as Virginia's Attorney General in May 1744. He married Betty Harrison, the daughter of Benjamin Harrison of

²²⁹H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia 1727-1734, 1736-1740*, (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1910), pp. 399-400, 409.

²³⁰*Virginia Gazette*, September 26, 1745.

²³¹Willie Graham, "Building an Image: An Architectural Report on the Peyton Randolph Site," (unpublished report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1985) and Department of Archaeological Research, "View from the Top: Archaeological Investigations of Peyton Randolph's Urban Plantation," (unpublished report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988).

Berkeley Plantation in Charles City County, in March 1745/6. It is likely that Peyton and Betty Randolph lived in the family house after their marriage. Betty brought three slaves to Williamsburg with her—Liddy, Kate (the daughter of Aggy), and Charlotte. She inherited the enslaved females from her father when he died in July 1745. It is possible that Betty lived with her sister, Ann Harrison Randolph, in Goochland County after the death of their father and before her marriage to Peyton Randolph. If so, Liddy, Kate, and Charlotte had their lives disrupted twice within one year. The move to Williamsburg was a big change because they went from the rural house of a Burgess to the urban household of the colony's Attorney General. In addition, Betty took Liddy, Kate, and Charlotte from their families in Charles City County.

The Smallpox List provides some clues about the individuals who lived at the Randolph house in February 1747/8. Dr. John de Sequeyra noted that nineteen members of this household had recovered, one had not caught the disease, and four were dead. Evidence from the York County Court records, the Bruton Parish Birth Register, and other primary sources further reveals individuals, white and black, who might have lived on this property during the epidemic.

- Susannah Randolph and her slaves Ann, Frank, and Yarrow. It is likely that Ann, Frank, and Yarrow were in Williamsburg in 1747/8 because they were adults when they were baptized—Ann (“woman”) and Frank (“man”) in November 1750 and Yarrow (“man”) in July 1754. Ann, Frank, and Yarrow were three of Lady Randolph’s dower slaves.
- Peyton and Betty Randolph and their slaves. It is possible that the three Harrison slaves from Charles City County—Charlotte, Kate, and Liddy—were still alive in early 1747/8. Lewey, a boy when John Randolph bequeathed him to Peyton in 1736/7, would have been in his twenties during the Smallpox Epidemic. It is likely that five slaves baptized between 1747 and 1767 were part of the Randolph household at that time: Mourning Frances, an infant, on August 2, 1747; James, an adult, on May 7, 1749; Denbo, an adult on July 1, 1751; Humphrey, an “old man,” on March 2, 1766; and Sarah an “old woman” on May 3, 1767. Sukey, baptized on February 4, 1753, and the mother of Lewis who was baptized on December 6, 1767 might also have been part of this household in 1747/8. It is possible that the four people who had died by the time that Dr. John de Sequeyra wrote his list and the one who had not caught the disease were also bond laborers.
- It is likely that one or more of Betty Randolph's brothers and sisters lived in Williamsburg at the Randolph House in the late 1740s and 1750s. Betty and Ann Harrison Randolph probably shared the responsibility of raising their younger brothers and sisters after the deaths of their parents, Benjamin and Ann Harrison. If one of Betty Randolph’s siblings was in Williamsburg during the Smallpox Epidemic, it is likely that he or she had a waiting boy or a maid with them. The trip to Williamsburg enabled a Harrison slave from Charles City County to visit with Kate, Liddy, and Charlotte and to tell them about friends and family.

The records indicate that the Randolph household included as many as twenty-one bond laborers at the time of the Smallpox Epidemic.

The Randolphs owned slaves who were at different stages of the life cycle in 1747/8. Humphrey and Sarah might have taught their skills to younger slaves and looked after boys and girls while their parents worked. The Randolph slaves came from a variety of backgrounds. It is possible that several of the Randolph slaves had spent a large part of their lives in this Williamsburg household. In contrast, the Harrison slaves were accustomed to life in a rural area. There might have been tensions between the two groups as Kate, Charlotte, and Liddy grew familiar with the routines of an urban household and as Betty Randolph assumed management of domestic matters from her mother-in-law. The names of two men—Yarrow and Denbo—suggest that the labor force at the Randolph House in 1747/8 included at least two individuals who had been born in Africa. Perhaps Kate, Charlotte, Liddy, and Lewey were natives of Virginia. They might have learned about life and customs in Africa from Yarrow and Denbo.

The number of Virginia-born slaves who lived and worked on the Randolph property increased between the late 1740s and late 1760s. Evidence from the York County records indicates that Randolph did not purchase any slaves during this twenty-year period. However, it is possible that he bought an enslaved laborer a deed that was recorded in the records of the General Court, the Williamsburg Hustings Court, or the James City County Court. The following individuals received their baptism between February 1748/9 and January 1769:

Effy and Charlie, infants, on February 5, 1748/9
 William on July 2, 1749
 Lucy, an infant, on April 1, 1751
 Mars on May 6, 1751
 Robert on November 5, 1751
 Dabney on February 4, 1753
 Charles on March 7, 1753
 Aggy and Coy on July 1, 1753
 Betty, a child belonging to Susannah Randolph, on June 3, 1754
 William, the son of Succordia, on November 6, 1763
 George, the son of Eve, on July 6, 1766
 Lewis, the son of Sukey, on December 6, 1767
 Henry, the son of Agnes, on August 14, 1768
 Robert, the son of Elizabeth, on January 1, 1769

Unfortunately, the Bruton Parish vestry clerk did not always include the name of the child's mother in the register.

Surviving documents provide information about the activities of several of the younger slaves in the Randolph household. Three enslaved individuals attended the Bray School. In September 1762, Aggy and Roger, both age seven, were pupils of Ann Wager. Three years later, Sam joined Roger at the Bray School. In February 1769, Sam was described as Betty Randolph's slave when his name appeared on the list of students at the school. This entry suggests that Sam was the son of one of the enslaved females whom Betty Randolph inherited from her father.

Randolph had his male slaves run errands for him. In February 1764, he sent Johnny to the Printing Office to buy a stick of the best Dutch sealing wax. The next month Johnny

purchased a quire of post paper. He also purchased a stick of the best Dutch sealing wax for Randolph in November 1765. Governor Botetourt's butler, William Marshman, referred to Johnny as the "Speaker's Man" when he gave him a tip of £0.3.9 in April of 1769.²³² Watt returned from the Printing Office with a tobacco pamphlet in June 1764. Randolph entrusted Ned to purchase a stick of sealing wax in August of the same year. Billy made two trips to the Printing Office in 1764: he bought a dozen packs of the best "Harry" cards in September and a stick of sealing wax in October.²³³

Johnny served as Randolph's waiting man by 1769. It is likely that the Speaker had a coachman and postilion who accompanied him on journeys. Perhaps a gardener tended the planting beds located on Randolph's "urban plantation." Like his brother, Peyton Randolph had male slaves who worked as footmen and waiting men. The Speaker's female slaves worked at domestic tasks in his urban household. Betty Randolph supervised the enslaved women and girls as they cooked, cleaned, laundered clothes, and worked in the dairy. Sarah and other older women looked after the sons and daughters of the younger females. Unfortunately, the extant records do not indicate which enslaved woman or women prepared the food. Perhaps Peyton Randolph had a cook, an under cook, and a pastry maid as did his brother John. It is likely that Betty Randolph had a personal maid. Perhaps one of the enslaved girls who she inherited from her father served in this position at the time of Peyton and Betty Randolph's marriage.

Peyton Randolph's Slaves in James City County

The Reverend John Camm's list of tithables in Yorkhampton Parish in 1758 and the Williamsburg-James City County Tax List for 1768 and 1769 provide information about Randolph's slave holdings on the two James City County properties that he inherited from his father. Randolph had fifteen tithes at the Martin's Hundred plantation in 1758. Ten years later the Speaker paid the assessment for 1671 acres in James City. He had seventeen tithes at Martin's Hundred and six laborers over the age of sixteen at Archer's Hope Creek. The following year Randolph had sixteen tithes who worked in the fields at Martin's Hundred. Seven tithes tended the crops at the Rock Spring Farm on Archer's Hope Creek.

Both of Randolph's James City County plantations were within walking distance of Williamsburg. Sir John Randolph described the Archer's Hope Creek "plantation and land adjoining to the town" in his will.²³⁴ It is likely that the Rock Spring Farm was about two to three miles from the colonial capital. Martin's Hundred was approximately five to eight miles from Randolph's urban property. The proximity of the Speaker's James City County property to Williamsburg suggests that his urban and rural slaves had opportunities to interact and to establish family and friendship ties to each other and to other slaves who lived in or near Williamsburg.

²³²Joseph Royle, *Virginia Gazette Journals, 1764-1766*, pp. 12, 27, 213; "Dayly Account of Expenses" kept by William Marshman at the Governor's Palace, f. 16.

²³³Joseph Royle, *Virginia Gazette Journals, 1764-1766*, pp. 73 (Watt), 93 (Ned), 97 (Billy), and 110 (Billy).

²³⁴*Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 36 (1928): 376-381.

Randolph. Like his father, relied on his rural slaves, males and females, in James City County to produce some of the food that he needed to feed members of his urban household. Sir John Randolph had “horses hogs cattle sheep and other goods and chattles” on his Martin’s Hundred plantation in December 1735. The elder Randolph also noted that there were cattle and sheep on the Rock Spring Farm. Enslaved men probably cut firewood for Sir John Randolph’s urban home from the land near Archer’s Hope Creek.²³⁵ Randolph’s contemporaries also depended on plantations located a short distance from town to provision their urban households. In May 1764, Robert Carter informed James Buchanan that “every family here have small Farms; which supply them with Articles to be bought in good Markets.” Carter and other residents of Williamsburg did not think that the market in the colonial capital provided them with enough good food at the right price.²³⁶

Documents recorded after the death of Peyton Randolph provide information about crops that his enslaved workers produced on his plantations in James City County. On July 19, 1776, Landon Carter noted in his diary that

Nat brought me from town a handful of thrashed barley, very large grain indeed, which he says he got of the late Speaker's people. It seems that gentleman had a small vial given him from which he raised four, if not five, bushels of seed. I will endeavour to do the same, but then it must be in my garden or I am certain it will be destroyed as was my Sicilian wheat and Polant oates this year.²³⁷

Records pertaining to the settlement of Peyton Randolph’s estate indicate that his bond laborers grew corn, wheat, cotton, oats, and tobacco under the supervision of an overseer at Martin’s Hundred in 1783 and 1784. Randolph’s enslaved men also cut timber on his plantation. On August 13, 1776, James Roan received £ 13.19 for carrying 196 posts and 2,300 rails from Martin’s Hundred to Williamsburg. John Greenhow used the posts and rails to enclose his meadow.²³⁸

Peyton Randolph managed his plantations in James City County and Charlotte County from his house in the colonial capital.²³⁹ It is possible that he stored equipment in outbuildings in Williamsburg until the tools were needed on his rural properties. If Randolph followed this

²³⁵Ibid.

²³⁶ Robert Carter to James Buchanan and Co., May 10, 1764, in the Letterbook of Robert Carter III of Nominy Hall for the Years 1764-1768, Special Collections, Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Provisioning Report.

²³⁷*Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778*, ed. Jack P. Greene, 2 vols., (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1987), p. 1060.

²³⁸Estate Papers of Peyton Randolph, Library of Congress.

²³⁹ Randolph received a patent for 400 acres of land in Lunenburg County on June 10, 1760. Charlotte County was formed from of Lunenburg County in 1764. Nell Marion Nugent et al., eds., *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants*, 6 vols., (Richmond: Virginia Genealogical Society, 1934-1998), 6:369.

practice, he probably intended to send the “5 Flax Wheels 2 Check Reels & 2 Common Reels [£] 5” in his York County inventory to his plantation in Charlotte County. On September 25, 1784, Edmund Randolph made a list of his slaves on his plantations in Charlotte, Albemarle, Henrico, and James City counties. Seven enslaved women in Charlotte County produced cloth. Randolph noted that Dilce was a “sempstress and spinner” and that Aby was a “Spinner in the house.” Frank, Lydia, and Nell worked as spinners. Nanny received assistance from Judy as she wove cloth.²⁴⁰ It is unlikely that Randolph depended on the enslaved men, women, and children on his Charlotte County property to provide provisions for his urban household because of the distance between this plantation and Williamsburg.

Connections and Differences between Randolph’s Urban and Rural Slaves

The short distances between Randolph’s Williamsburg home and his plantations in James City County suggest that the Speaker’s enslaved laborers had opportunities to interact with each other, to establish family and friendship ties, and to share information. An advertisement indicates that an enslaved man named Moses traveled between Williamsburg and the Martin’s Hundred quarter. On January 27, 1774, Williamsburg’s John Lewis informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* that he had “great Reason to suspect” that his runaway mulatto slave girl Fanny had been “harboured by a Negroe Fellow named Moses, belonging to Peyton Randolph, Esq; about his Quarter of Martin's Hundred, from whence I suppose, she will endeavour to cross the York to go to her relations in Middlesex.”²⁴¹ Randolph probably sent Johnny, Watt, Ned, and Billy on errands to Martin’s Hundred and the Rockspring Farm. The fact that both urban and rural slaves decided to join the enemy suggests that slaves from the Speaker’s house and plantations discussed whether or not to take their chances with the British.

The Bruton Parish Birth/Baptism Register provides evidence of differences between Randolph’s urban and rural slaves. Twenty-five of the bond laborers in the Speaker’s household received their baptism between August 2, 1747 and January 1, 1769.²⁴² Just three—Denbo, Sukey, and Lewis—lived at Martin’s Hundred at some point in their lives. Perhaps Peyton and Betty Randolph encouraged adult slaves to be baptized or persuaded mothers to have their infants baptized. It is possible that the urban slaves hoped that their baptism or the baptism of their children would yield more favorable treatment from their master and mistress. The Speaker’s slaves might have drawn strength to endure slavery when they heard words from the Bible spoken each Sunday. Attendance at Bruton Parish Church also enabled enslaved men, women, and children to maintain ties to others who accompanied their masters and mistresses.

²⁴⁰York County Wills and Inventories (22) 337-341, ordered November 20, 1775, dated January 5, 1776, and recorded July 15, 1776; Estate Papers of Peyton Randolph, Library of Congress.

²⁴¹*Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., January 27, 1774. Fanny probably ran from Lewis’s plantation in New Kent County. It is possible that Moses met a woman named Elizabeth Maloney on one of his journeys. The clerk of the Bruton Parish vestry noted that Moses was the father of Jane, the illegitimate daughter of Elizabeth Maloney. Jane Maloney was born on December 14, 1768 and baptized on January 2, 1769. It is likely that Moses was also the father of Maloney's illegitimate son, Moses Carter, born in January 1767.

²⁴²This number includes Lady Susannah Randolph’s slaves who were baptized.

The Death of Peyton Randolph

Peyton Randolph died in Philadelphia on October 22, 1775. The widow Randolph returned to Williamsburg on November 6, 1775 with Johnny and an unidentified slave boy.²⁴³ Randolph's executors, Betty Randolph and James Cocke, took his will to be probated in the York County Court on November 20, 1775. The Speaker left Little Aggy and her children, Great Aggy and her children, Eve and her children, and Lucy and her children to his wife Betty. Randolph bequeathed a boy called Caesar, the son of Sue, to his nephew, Harrison Randolph. His brother John was to gain possession of two boys of his choice and all his estate real and personal after Betty's death with the exception of "my man Johnny" who was to go to his nephew Edmund Randolph. He also empowered his "exrs. to sell my books & presses to pay my debts & if that is not sufficient to sell so many of the negroes as they think can be best spared from the use of the plantations to answer that purpose."²⁴⁴ Randolph's bequests reflected a division between the urban slaves and those who tended the fields on his plantations. Betty Randolph gained possession of the domestic workers and Edmund Randolph became the owner of his uncle's rural laborers after his father (John Randolph, a Loyalist) left for England.

The January 5, 1776 inventory of Randolph's estate in York County included the names of twenty-seven slaves. A close examination of the order in which the names of the Randolph slaves appeared in the inventory of the Speaker's estate provides some clues about the ages of his enslaved laborers, their family relationships, and possible responsibilities in the household.²⁴⁵

Johnny £100	Jack £25
gone to the enemy	
Billy £100	Watt £100
dead	
Breeches £10	Ben £80
sold	gone to the enemy
Caesar £25	George £30
gone to the enemy	gone to the enemy
Henry £30	Sam £40
William £30	Bob £25

²⁴³ *Virginia Gazette*, Pinkney, ed., November 9, 1775.

²⁴⁴ York County Wills and Inventories (22) 309-310, dated August 18, 1774 and recorded November 20, 1775.

²⁴⁵ York County Wills and Inventories (22) 337-341, ordered November 20, 1775, dated January 5, 1776, and recorded July 15, 1776; Estate Papers of Peyton Randolph, Library of Congress. The note above an individual's name can be found on the copy of Randolph's inventory at the Library of Congress.

Caesar £30	Watt £25
gone to the enemy Eve £100	Charlotte £80
gone to the enemy Aggy £60	Succordia £10
Little Aggy £60	Kitty £20
Betsy £10	gone to the enemy Lucy £60
Katy £20	gone to the enemy Peter £15
Betty £100	sold Roger £60
Moses £60	

The appraisers began the list of slaves with Johnny whom they deemed worth £100. This valuation indicated the important role that the “Speaker’s Man” played in the Randolph household and that he was in the prime of his working years. Billy (approximately twenty-seven years old in 1776), Watt, and Ben might have had skills in addition to being young adults. The position of Jack’s name on the list suggests that he was an adult who could not perform as much work as he had done when he was younger or that he was young and in the process of learning how to be a waiting man from Johnny. Breeches died a short time after the appraisers tallied Randolph’s personal possessions, an indication that he was sick, old, or both in early 1776.

The next eight names are those of boys who were old enough to perform some work around the household. Entries in the Bruton Parish Register provide approximate ages for five of this group in 1776: George was ten years old, Henry was eight years old, Sam was fourteen years old, William was thirteen years old, and Bob was seven years old. The valuations in the inventory suggest that Caesar, Sue’s son Caesar, and Watt were also between the ages of seven and fourteen.

Eve was the first female to appear on the list of Randolph’s personal property. Her value of £100 indicates that she was an important part of the day-to-day activities in the household and that she might have been Betty Randolph’s personal maid. Charlotte and Great Aggy also provided necessary labor. It is probable that Succordia (valued at £10 in 1776 and described as an “old woman” in 1783) looked after the young children while their mothers cooked and cleaned. Little Aggy’s name is followed by Kitty valued at £20 and Betsy who was worth £10. The arrangement of these names suggests that Kitty and Betsy were the daughters of Little Aggy. Lucy was the mother of two children, Peter and Katy. Peter, who was worth £15, was young and

not able to do much work. Katy was a few years older than her brother. The final three names on the list—Betty, Roger, and Moses—were adults. Betty’s valuation at £100 indicates that she played an important role in the Randolph household. It is possible that the education that Roger received at the Bray School influenced David Ross’s decision to buy him in 1779. Moses ran errands for the Speaker between his Williamsburg home and his plantations in James City County.

Randolph’s inventory included eight men, seven women, nine boys, and three girls. It is likely that all twenty-seven individuals were able to do some work around the house; none of the older slaves were described as “infirm” and none of the children were listed with their mothers. The females—women and girls—had domestic responsibilities. Great Aggy, Little Aggy, Charlotte, Lucy, and Betty worked in the kitchen, the dairy, and the laundry that stood behind the house. Perhaps these women and their children slept in the buildings in which they worked. Betty Randolph’s personal maid—possibly Eve—spent most of her time in the dwelling house. She was in closer contact with her mistress than were the women who worked in the outbuildings. The widow Randolph’s sale of Eve indicates that she took greater offense to Eve’s decision to join the British during the Revolution than she did to the departure of the other slaves who ran to the enemy.

The enslaved men and boys had a greater number of opportunities to move about Williamsburg and the surrounding countryside than did the females who worked in the Randolph household. Caesar, George, Henry, Sam, William, Bob, Caesar, and Watt might have run errands to the Printing Office in the 1770s as Johnny, Billy, Watt, and Ned had done in the 1760s. It is likely that one of the men was Randolph’s postilion when the Speaker rode in his chariot. Others might have been responsible for carrying food produced at Martin’s Hundred and Archer’s Hope Creek to Williamsburg on a cart. It is likely that the Speaker had at least one enslaved man dressed in livery to open his door for important guests. The Randolph household had more male slaves than did the typical Williamsburg household.²⁴⁶ Perhaps the Speaker relied on enslaved men and boys to run a greater number of errands in town, to his plantations, and to his warehouses at College Landing as his health declined. It is possible that Randolph hired out several of his male slaves to Williamsburg residents as his father had done in the 1730s.

When Did the Randolph Slaves Run to the British?

Peyton Randolph’s will was probated on November 20, 1775, four days after Lord Dunmore issued the proclamation in which he decreed martial law and declared “all indented Servants, Negroes, or others (appertaining to the Rebels) free, that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining His Majesty’s forces.”²⁴⁷ Dunmore’s offer of freedom might have been especially appealing to the Randolph slaves because of the disruption caused by their master’s death. The copy of Randolph’s York County and James City County inventories at the Library

²⁴⁶Michael L. Nicholls, “Aspects of the African American Experience in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg and Norfolk,” (unpublished report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990), pp. 3-5, 12-13.

²⁴⁷Dunmore signed his proclamation on November 7, 1775.

of Congress includes the notation “gone to the enemy” above the names of thirteen Randolph slaves. Eight of the urban slaves—Billy, George, Henry, Sam, Eve, Great Aggy, Lucy, and Peter—ran to the British. Denbo, Roger, Dick, Jimmy, and Nanny left James City County and joined the enemy. However, the person who added the notes did not mention when the thirteen men, women, and children ran or when he or she made the notations on the inventories. An examination of Randolph’s inventories and the three opportunities that Virginia slaves had to run to the enemy during the Revolution provide some clues about when the Speaker’s slaves decided to run to the British.

First, it is likely that the person who added the notes to his or her copy of the inventories was someone financially responsible for the estate. The executors of Randolph’s estate—Betty Randolph and James Cocke—needed to account for all property when the estate was settled. A comparison of Betty Randolph’s handwriting in a letter she wrote to her uncle Landon Carter on September 16, 1776 with the Speaker’s inventories indicates that the widow Randolph added “gone to the enemy” to her copy of the inventories soon after the slaves departed as a way to account for the value of the missing slaves.²⁴⁸ In addition, Betty Randolph managed the settlement of her deceased husband’s estate until the time of her death on January 31, 1783. Edmund Randolph took over the management of his uncle’s estate after the death of his aunt.

Enslaved men, women, and children in Virginia had three chances to join the British troops between 1775 and 1782. The first opportunity was between the spring of 1775, when Dunmore began to consider the emancipation of slaves owned by Patriots, and the summer of 1776, when he left Virginia for New York. Dunmore turned away the slaves who traveled to the Palace before he issued his proclamation. The majority of enslaved individuals who joined Dunmore did so after November 16, 1775. However, it would have been difficult, but not impossible, for Randolph’s slaves to become a part of the Ethiopian Regiment in late 1775 or early 1776 because they had to travel to Norfolk to join Dunmore. The majority of the slaves whom Dunmore left behind on Gwynn’s Island in August 1776 ran from owners who lived in the city of Norfolk, Nansemond County, Norfolk County, and Princess Anne County.²⁴⁹ If Randolph’s slaves decided to join Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment in late 1775 or early 1776, Betty Randolph had time to ask Thomas Everard to add the notation “gone to the enemy” to the copy of the Speaker’s inventory that he recorded in the York County Court records on July 15, 1776.

It is possible that Johnny was the first Randolph slave to run from Williamsburg. In December 1777, Edmund Randolph noted that he would

give a reward of five dollars, besides what the law allows, to any person who will apprehend Johnny, otherwise called John Harris, a mulatto man slave who formerly waited upon my uncle, the late Peyton Randolph, Esq; and secure him, so that I may get

²⁴⁸ Betty Randolph to Landon Carter, September 16, 1776, Sabine Hall Papers, Mss 1959a-2658, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia; Estate Papers of Peyton Randolph.

²⁴⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., August 31, 1776. Americans drove the British and Dunmore’s followers off Gwynn’s Island on July 9, 1776.

him again. He took with him, when he went away, a green broadcloth coat, and a new crimson waistcoat and breeches, a light coloured Bath coating great coat, a London brown bath coating close bodied coat, a pair of old crimson cloth breeches, and some changes of clothes. He is about five feet seven or eight inches high, wears straight hair, cut in his neck, is much addicted to drinking, has grey eyes, can read and write tolerably well, and may probably endeavour to pass for a freeman. The above reward of five dollars will be given if he is taken in Virginia, but five pounds, besides what the law allows, will be paid to any person who apprehends him out of Virginia, and conveys him to me.²⁵⁰

Betty Randolph did not note on her copy of her husband's inventory that Johnny ran. Perhaps she did not need to account for Johnny because Edmund Randolph had possession of his uncle's waiting man. The fact that the younger Randolph mentioned a reward for someone who found Johnny in a place other than Virginia suggests that he believed his slave might try to leave the state. The trip that Johnny took (with the Randolphs) to Philadelphia in 1775 exposed him to life in the largest city in North America, a city with a large, thriving free black population. It is possible that Johnny returned to Philadelphia to renew contacts with friends and to try to pass as a free man. There is no evidence that Randolph regained possession of him.

The second possibility for Virginia slaves to join the enemy was in 1778, when the British returned to Norfolk. Again, the distance between Williamsburg and Norfolk made it unlikely that the Speaker's slaves took this opportunity to seek their freedom. The best chance that bond laborers in the Old Dominion had to make it to the British was in 1780 and 1781. Perhaps the presence of the enemy in locations that were closer to Williamsburg helped thirteen Randolph slaves to decide to run away. It would have been easier for Eve and her son George, Great Aggy and her son Henry, and Lucy and her son Peter to travel to Yorktown than it would have been to journey to Norfolk. The short distance between the Randolph slaves in Williamsburg and on the James City County plantations and the British in Yorktown meant that there was a realistic chance for families to run together.

Several documents suggest that the widow Randolph's slaves ran in 1781. Bequests in the will that Betty Randolph wrote on June 1, 1780 imply that the Randolph slaves had not yet joined the British. She left her mulatto woman Little Aggy and Aggy's daughter Betsy and son Nathan to her nephew, Benjamin Harrison of Berkeley. Another nephew, Carter Harrison of Berkeley, gained possession of a mulatto boy named Wat. Randolph bequeathed her enslaved woman Eve and her son George to niece Ann Copeland. The woman called Great Aggy and her son Henry were to become the property of her niece, Elizabeth Rickman. She left her mulatto girl Charlotte to niece Lucy Randolph. A third nephew, Harrison Randolph, inherited a slave woman, Lucy, and her children. In August 1780, the justices of the peace noted that Betty

²⁵⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., December 12, 1777. Some of the clothing that Johnny took with him might have been made out of the material in one of Randolph's outbuildings in 1775. Randolph's inventory included thirty-five yards of green cloth and ten yards of crimson cloth. The Speaker also had forty yards of cotton, about thirty yards of green "planes," twenty "Ells Oznr.," and four pairs of coarse shoes.

Randolph's nineteen tithes were to be added to the list for Bruton Parish, an indication that her bond laborers were still in Williamsburg.²⁵¹

The British troops occupied Williamsburg for two days in April 1781 and also between June 25 and July 4 of that year. A letter from St. George Tucker to his wife Fanny on July 11, 1781 reveals that several Williamsburg slaves joined Cornwallis in June and July of 1781. Tucker also informed his wife that Betty Randolph did not have any slaves in her household. Tucker wrote that

The small-pox, which the hellish polling of these infamous wretches has spread in every place through which they have passed has now obtained a crisis throughout the place so that there is scarcely a person to be found to nurse those who are most afflicted by it. Your old friend Aunt Betty is in that situation. A child of Sir Peyton Skipwith's who is with her, was deserted by its nurse, and the good lady was left without a human being to assist her in any respect for some days.²⁵²

Perhaps the thirteen enslaved men, women, and children ran to the enemy in the spring of 1781 and Betty Randolph moved the remaining household slaves to Berkeley Plantation in Charles City County so that they would not get exposed to smallpox.

The codicil that the widow Randolph wrote to her will on July 20, 1782 hints that at least one slave had left her. She explained that she had been forced to sell Eve because of bad behavior. Randolph wanted the money from this sale to be used to buy a girl for her niece, Ann Copeland, and a boy for her nephew, Peyton Harrison.²⁵³ Perhaps Eve remained with the British and the other Randolph slaves returned to Williamsburg.²⁵⁴ An advertisement placed by Harrison Randolph in the *Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser* in 1782 suggests that he purchased Eve from his aunt:

²⁵¹ Peyton Randolph had fifteen tithes in September 1775.

²⁵² St. George Tucker to Fanny Tucker, July 11, 1781, in Mary Haldane Coleman, ed., *St. George Tucker: Citizen of No Mean City*, (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1938), pp. 66-67.

²⁵³ York County Wills and Inventories (23) 4-5, dated 1 June 1780, codicil dated July 20, 1782, and recorded February 17, 1783. The widow also noted that she had lent Charlotte to Harrison Randolph during the rest of her own lifetime. She decided that Harrison Randolph should gain possession of Charlotte's son, Thomas Prouce, to cover his expenses in providing for Charlotte and any other children she might bear.

²⁵⁴ The slaves who joined the British in 1781 did not leave with the British officers and the few Loyalist families after the surrender of Cornwallis. The bond laborers who had not died of the smallpox were returned to their owners. It is possible that the Randolph slaves who did not return to Williamsburg died of the smallpox in Yorktown. Slaves from Virginia accounted for one-third of the approximately 3,000 slaves evacuated with the British from New York in 1783. This list did not include an enslaved man, woman, or child owned by Peyton or Betty Randolph. See Edward M. Riley, ed., "St. George Tucker's Journal of the Siege of Yorktown, 1781," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., VI (1948): 375-395; Billy Harbin, ed., "Letters from John Parke Custis to George and Martha Washington, 1778-1781," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XLIII (1986): 267-293; and Graham Hodges, ed., *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile After the American Revolution*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996).

TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD,

FOR apprehending EVE, Negro woman slave, who left York after the surrender; she is about forty years old, very black and slender, has a small mouth for a Negro, and a remarkable mole on her nose: She has since been seen on her way to Hampton. She carried with her a variety of striped and checked Virginia cloth cloathes. Whoever delivers her to the subscriber in Richmond, shall receive the above reward.²⁵⁵

Perhaps the “bad behavior” that Betty Randolph mentioned in the codicil to her will was Eve’s decision to stay with the British. Harrison Randolph might have purchased Eve from his aunt because of Eve’s skills. The appraisers of Peyton Randolph’s estate valued this woman at £100 in January 1776.

It is possible that the death of Betty Randolph on January 31, 1783 had a greater impact on the Randolph slaves than the passing of Peyton Randolph. The widow Randolph’s will was probated on February 17, 1783. The enslaved women and children who had spent their entire lives in Williamsburg became the property of Betty Randolph’s nieces and nephews who lived in Charles City and Henrico counties. The domestic slaves who interacted with the widow Randolph each day might have known about the provisions for their futures in her will. Knowledge that they would be moved away from family members and friends who labored on the Randolph plantations in James City County might have provided the impetus for the Randolph slaves to run in 1780-1781 instead of in 1775-1776. Unfortunately, the exact time that the Randolph slaves took advantage of the opportunity presented by the Revolution will never be known. What is known is that Betty Randolph’s note—“gone to the enemy”—indicates that these enslaved men, women, and children decided to run to the British and acknowledges their ability to make a decision that affected their lives.

Peyton Randolph’s Thoughts on Slavery

Peyton Randolph did not leave a letter or diary that reveal his thoughts about slavery. However, extant court records contain some clues about his opinions on the institution. Randolph took an active role in administering punishments to slaves who had committed crimes. He was one of the twelve York County justices who sat on at least fifteen oyer & terminer cases between 1751 and 1773. The Speaker was one of the few justices of the peace from Williamsburg or Bruton Parish who traveled to Yorktown to be a part of the proceedings. Magistrates from the area around Yorktown attended most of the oyer & terminer trials in spite of the fact that much of the crime was committed in and around Williamsburg.²⁵⁶ Perhaps Randolph took an active role in the proceedings of the oyer and terminer court because two slaves had stolen items from him. On October 25, 1752, Essex, a slave owned by Matthew

²⁵⁵ *Virginia Gazette or American Advertiser*, Hayes, ed., February 9, 1782 in Lathan A. Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790*, 4 vols., (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 1:336.

²⁵⁶ Anne R. Willis, "The Master's Mercy: Slave Prosecutions and Punishments in York County Virginia 1700 to 1780," (M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1995), pp. 42, 44.

Pierce, and Nat, a mulatto slave who belonged to William Drummond of James City County, stole "3 damask tablecloaths of the value of 8 £ and one diaper table cloath of the value of 10 s current money of the proper goods and chattels of Peyton Randolph esq."²⁵⁷ It is also possible that he believed it was necessary for slave owners to maintain control of their enslaved laborers in order to avoid the possibility of slave unrest.

There is evidence that the Speaker, like his father before him, kept slave families together. Sir John Randolph's will suggests that most of his bond laborers lived at a specific plantation. Peyton Randolph appears to have kept one group of slaves at Martin's Hundred and another group at the Rockspring Farm. He also kept enslaved mothers and their children together when he wrote his will in August 1774. Betty Randolph's nieces and nephews inherited mothers and their young children after her death in 1783. It is possible that slave fathers on Randolph's rural plantations stayed closer to their children (whether at Martin's Hundred, Rockspring Farm, or a nearby quarter) because Edmund Randolph gained possession of all the slaves in James City County, not just the women and their sons and daughters. Edmund Randolph's notes in the Peyton Randolph Estate Papers indicate an awareness of slave families and a concern to keep mothers with their children.

The Windmill, The Cooper, and Rural Trades

Slaves and free blacks in Williamsburg and the surrounding rural area received training and worked at rural trades in the eighteenth century. This section includes information on an enslaved miller, a free black cooper, two enslaved coopers, and two free black planters.

The Windmill

Slaves worked as millers and operated mills for their masters by October 1705 when the colonial legislators passed a law entitled *An act for encouragement of building Water-mills*. Enslaved millers knew how to grind grain and collected a toll from each customer at their masters' mill. If a mill operated by a slave did have the appropriate measures or toll-dish, the master was at fault. However, if a slave ground grain out of turn, ground grain insufficiently, or charged a customer more than the fee specified by law, he was responsible for his actions and would be punished for his first two offenses. If a slave was found guilty a third time, his master had to pay a fine.

Lorena S. Walsh notes that there was an enslaved miller named Gregory at Nathaniel Burwell's Mill Quarter in the 1780s. When Burwell's "white miller was absent, miller Gregory collected payments from customers who brought grain to be ground at Burwell's mill or else came to purchase flour, cornmeal, cider, or whiskey."

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:403-404; Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove*, pp. 185-186

²⁵⁷Essex was found guilty, and as his punishment he was burnt in his left hand and received twenty-five lashes. The justices decided that Nat was not guilty. York County Judgments and Orders (2) 173-174, January 31, 1753.

The Cooper

A cooper named Adam Waterford was one of the free black residents of Williamsburg. Waterford's skills were in great demand in tidewater Virginia. People used casks—firkins, hogsheads, rundlets, and tuns, to name just a few of the different sizes and shapes of barrels—to transport all sorts of goods. Surviving accounts from the 1770s and 1780s indicate that Waterford provided casks for the Palace, the Public Gaol, and the quartermaster general of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The 1769 Williamsburg-James City County Tax List indicates that Waterford paid taxes for two adults, himself and perhaps his wife, in 1769. It is also possible that he owned or hired a slave in that year. Waterford was able to purchase a lot at the southeast edge of the city (behind Providence Hall House of the Williamsburg Inn). Waterford owned this lot until his death in the late 1780s.

* * * *

Two Williamsburg residents owned slaves who received training as coopers. In April 1766, John Greenhow placed the following announcement in the *Virginia Gazette*:

Run away, last December, from the said Greenhow, an ole Negro man named Harry, by trade a cooper; he did belong to Col. Moseley of Princess Anne, and lived many years at Hampton, where he has children. It is supposed he is either about Hampton, Norfolk or Newtown. He is a sly thief, few locks or doors will turn him, and is seldom long in a place before he puts his ingenuity in practice. Whoever conveys him to me shall be paid as the law directs. He is outlawed.²⁵⁸

There is no evidence that Greenhow regained possession of Harry.

Francis Jaram, a carpenter, had an enslaved cooper who ran away in the spring of 1777. Jaram noted

RUN away from the Subscriber, about 8 or 10 weeks ago, a Negro Fellow named HARRY, about 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, by Trade a Cooper and carpenter, and when he works at a Bench he works on the wrong side. The above slave I purchased of the estate of the late Dr. Andrew Anderson, in New Kent county. Mr. Anderson purchased him of the Estate of the late Mr. Shermer of James City County, where I believe he is now lurking, otherwise at one of the Plantations of the said Mr. Shermer in King William County. I will give 40 s. to any Person who will secure the said slave, so as I get him again, or 3 £. if delivered to me in Williamsburg.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., April 11, 1766.

²⁵⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., April 25, 1777.

It is likely that Harry was not returned to Williamsburg. Jaram paid the tithe on an enslaved man named London in 1783.

Rural Trades

A free black woman named Katherine Alvis apprenticed her nine-year old son, William, to Robert Crawley of Bruton Parish on May 21, 1750. William Alvis was to serve Crawley until May of 1762. Crawley agreed to teach Alvis how to plant and how to read. Katherine Alvis might have entered into this agreement with Crawley because her son's father was a slave and she wanted to make sure that William learned a skill.

Crawley placed the following advertisement in the November 14, 1751 issue of the *Virginia Gazette*:

Ran away from the Subscriber, living in York County, on the 28th Day of February last, a Negroe Boy, named William Alvis, about 12 Years old; he has a very sly roughish Look, and had on when he went away a blue Half-thick Waistcoat and Breeches. Whoever brings him to me, shall have a Pistole Reward, besides what the Law allows.

Documents indicate that Crawley regained possession of Alvis and that he finished his apprenticeship. Alvis appeared on the York County Personal Property Tax List in 1784 and from 1789 to 1794. It is likely that he rented a tract of land in Bruton Parish.

* * * *

Moll Banks, a free black woman, apprenticed her son, Peter, to Thomas Wootten Senior of Yorkhampton Parish on July 16, 1753. The elder Wootten agreed to teach Banks the skills of a planter and to instruct him in reading and writing. Banks consented to serve the elder Wootten until his twenty-first birthday. Moll Banks, like Katherine Alvis, wanted her son to have a skill that he could use to support himself.

It is likely that Peter Banks rented a small plantation from a York County planter after finished his apprenticeship. The fact that Banks failed to list himself as a tithe in November 1770, July 1771, November 1772, and November 1773 implies that he had a hard time making ends meet.

The Shoemaker

There is evidence that slaves in Williamsburg and the surrounding rural area worked as shoemakers in the eighteenth century. William Pearson had an enslaved shoemaker who worked at his tan yard and a man named Jammy made shoes at Carter's Grove. John Rawlinson, a free black man, and his son, Hulett, also supported themselves and their families as shoemakers.

This section focuses on three white shoemakers—Robert Gilbert, Thomas Skinner, and James Taylor—and an enslaved shoemaker owned by John Greenhow. See the “Enslaving Virginia Biographies” in Appendix 4 for information about John Rawlinson.

Robert Gilbert

Robert Gilbert opened a shop near the Capitol in June 1768 where he carried on his business of boot and shoemaking. He advertised for journeymen shoemakers to assist him in May 1769 and August 1772. Gilbert hired a slave man named Jack from a resident of Gloucester County named Mr. Stubbs to assist him in his business. A runaway advertisement in Rind's May 20, 1773 issue of the *Virginia Gazette* indicates that Jack was trained as a shoemaker:

RUN away from the subscriber, on the 15th of April, a negro man named JACK, belonging to Mr. John Fox, of Gloucester county . . . He is by trade a shoemaker, and once worked with Mr. Robert Gilbert in Williamsburg, is fond of the violin, and has taken with him a new one, which his master lately gave him . . . His cloathing was the same as that of other labouring Negroes . . . He is well acquainted in Williamsburg, and Gloucester, and in many other places in this colony.²⁶⁰

In May 1773 Gilbert informed the public that he would be forced to go out of business because he was having a hard time collecting his debts. It is likely that several of the persons indebted to Gilbert paid their obligations because he stayed in business through February 1783 when he moved to Richmond. Gilbert also operated a lodging house in 1777. In October of that year he announced "To be RENTED, Seven neat rooms, in the house occupied by Mr. Richard Charleton, in the back street, opposite to Mrs. Starke's to gentlemen who choose to live private and furnish their own rooms. A good stable belonging to the premises and immediate possession given at the meeting of the Assembly."²⁶¹

Thomas Skinner

There is no evidence that Thomas Skinner had a slave who worked in his shoemaking operation. He advertised for journeymen shoemakers in January 1771 and June 1775. Skinner

²⁶⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., May 20, 1773.

²⁶¹ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., October 10, 1777.

gained an apprentice in 1776 when the churchwardens of Bruton Parish bound out a poor orphan named Francis Driver to him.

In October 1774 Skinner offered a reward for the return of Dolly, a woman hired to him by the trustees of Philip Johnson's estate. Johnson was a resident of the James City County side of Williamsburg before his death in 1770. The shoemaker noted that he had hired Dolly for almost four years. It is possible that Skinner relied on Dolly to do the cooking, cleaning, and laundry.

James Taylor

A Williamsburg shoemaker named James Taylor paid for the hire of a slave from Benjamin Weldon, a planter of James City County, on two occasions: December 25, 1772 and December 25, 1773.

Billy

John Greenhow owned an enslaved shoemaker named Billy. The Williamsburg merchant sold Billy to Joseph Penn of Amherst County sometime before August 1779. Billy ran away from Penn's plantation in August 1779. Penn placed the following announcement in the *Virginia Gazette* in October of the same year:

Sixty DOLLARS Reward.

RUN away from the subscriber in Amherst county, about the middle of August last, two negro fellows, viz. Billy, about twenty years old, Virginia born, well made, rather tall than otherwise, and is much marked on his legs with a breaking cut, which is but largely healed up. He has served at the trade of shoemaking some years in Williamsburg, where he was brought up, and belonged to Mr. John Greenhow of the same place, where I expect he will endeavour to get to again. SAM, about nineteen years old, Virginia born, middlesized, of yellow complexion, and likely. I must believe he was carried off by Billy. I will give a reward of thirty dollars for each to any person that will apprehend the said runaways, and have them confined in any publick jail, or for delivering to me, one hundred dollars each.²⁶²

²⁶² *Virginia Gazette*, Clarkson, ed., October 30, 1779.

The Silversmith

Six of the silversmiths who lived in Williamsburg in 1775 were slaveowners—James Craig, James Galt, James Geddy Junior²⁶³, Blovet Pasteur, William Rowsay, and Anthony Singleton. There is no evidence that these men relied upon the labor of their slaves in their business as did silversmiths in Charleston, South Carolina.²⁶⁴ However, the financial success that each man enjoyed might have enabled him to purchase slaves to perform domestic work and to run errands in and around Williamsburg.

James Craig

James Craig, a London jeweler, arrived in Williamsburg in the 1740s. He had a shop on Francis Street by September 1746. Craig taught Blovet Pasteur the skill of a silversmith and jeweler between 1752 and 1760 (see below). He married Ann Stevenson by October 1759 when their first child, Adam, was born. A slave woman named Sukey assisted in the domestic work in the Craig household. Ann Craig and Sukey gave birth to a child in 1764: Sukey's daughter, Letty, was baptized on May 6, 1764 and Ann Craig was born on May 21, 1764. Craig's namesake was born on December 23, 1766.

Craig purchased part of Lot 53 from James Carter in August 1765. The jeweler bought the remainder of the lot from Carter in June of the following year. In 1772 Craig announced that a watchmaker worked in his shop. He also began to refer to his shop as "The Golden Ball," a trademark commonly used by jewelers and goldsmiths.²⁶⁵

Craig's property on Duke of Gloucester Street also served as his home. In June 1779, he included a description of the buildings on Lot 53 when he announced that he would sell his house and shop: "To be sold to the highest bidder for ready money, before the Raleigh door, on Thursday the 10th of June, the house and shop where the subscriber now lives in, with a garden, kitchen, stable, chairhouse, smokehouse, and dairy."²⁶⁶ Craig retained ownership of 1/3 of a lot. He had slaves in his household in 1783, 1784, and 1786:

1783—Stepney, Kate, and Nan over sixteen
Kitt and Billy under sixteen

1784—Stepney, Kate, and Nan over sixteen
Kate and Billy under sixteen

1786—Stepney, Kate, Nan, and Billy over sixteen

²⁶³ See the section on the Geddy House for information about the slaves owned by James Geddy Junior.

²⁶⁴ See E. Milby Burton, *South Carolina Silversmiths 1690-1860*, Contributions from The Charleston Museum X (Charleston: The Charleston Museum, 1942).

²⁶⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., October 10, 1772.

²⁶⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., June 5, 1779.

Kitty and Joe under sixteen

Unfortunately, there is no information about the work that Craig had his slaves perform. It is likely that the female slaves served as domestics. Perhaps Stepney and Billy ran errands for their master. Craig did not mention slaves in his 1793 will. He might have given his daughter Ann several slaves when she married David Miller. The jeweler's will was probated on June 16, 1794. The June 1794 inventory of his estate included his slave woman, Nan, valued at £45.

James Galt

James Galt, the son of Samuel Galt, was a watchmaker in Williamsburg in 1751. He followed his father as Keeper of the Public Gaol and served in this position from 1761 to 1766. Galt noted that he was a clockmaker, a watchmaker, a goldsmith, and a silversmith when he informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* that he intended to move his business to Richmond in June 1766. It is possible that Galt had property and a slave in Richmond by 1761. The clerk of the Bruton Parish vestry noted that Peg's son George was born in Henrico Parish and County on January 18, 1761. Samuel was born to Peg in Henrico Parish and County on April 1, 1764. However, Peg was in Williamsburg when her daughter, Grace, was baptized in March 1766. The movement between Richmond and Williamsburg might have strained the ties that Peg had to slaves in both places.

This silversmith gained possession of five slaves by right of his wife, Mary, in 1767. Mary Galt's brother, William English of Charles Parish, owned the enslaved laborers at the time of his death. Three of the slave boys—Dick, Abram, and Jacob—were probably born in Virginia. Violet and her son, George, were from Barbados. The fate of Dick, Abram, and George is unknown. Violet and Jacob became a part of Galt's household.

Galt returned to Williamsburg by March 1773 when he served on a petit jury in York County. The York County grand jury presented him for not listing a slave woman—Violet—in November 1773. The silversmith's slave woman Grace was the mother of a son, John, baptized on March 2, 1783.

1783—Jacob, Violet, Violet, Grace, and Sally over sixteen
Patrick, Dublin, Primus, and John under sixteen

1784—Jacob, Violet, Violet, and Sally over sixteen
Primus, Patrick, Dublin, and Suckey under sixteen

1786—Jacob, Violet, Sally, and Suckey over sixteen
Patrick, Dublin, and Primus under sixteen

Blovet Pasteur

Blovet Pasteur, the son of John and Mary Pasteur, learned the skills of a silversmith and a jeweler from Alexander Craig. Pasteur boarded at Craig's between 1752 and 1760. He paid £14 per year for himself and £13 for his slave.²⁶⁷ It is possible that the slave was a mulatto fellow named Joe who was owned by John Pasteur at the time of his death in 1741.

Pasteur carried on his business in a shop "next door below the Raleigh Tavern."²⁶⁸ This silversmith had one slave—a woman named Sally—in 1783.

William Rowsay

William Rowsay opened a jewelry store with his partner, John Rowsay, in April 1774. Rowsay married Fanny Tabb of Yorktown on November 14, 1779. This jeweler owned slaves in 1783 and 1784:

1783—Will, Caesar, and Sarah over sixteen
Charlotte, Phil, Lucy, and Dick under sixteen

1784—Betty, Hannah, and Caesar over sixteen
Charlotte, Betty, and Dick under sixteen

There is no information about the work that these slaves performed in the Rowsay household. Rowsay also had "four or five valuable Negroes used to plantation business" on 200 acres of land in York County.²⁶⁹ The jeweler mortgaged four of his slaves—Caesar, Annie, Crager, and Bob—to Joseph Prentis in April 1786. He died between April 2, 1786 and February 5, 1787.

Anthony Singleton

On July 4, 1771, Anthony Singleton, a jeweler and goldsmith, announced that he had just opened a shop across the street from the Raleigh Tavern. John Morris, a tithe in his household in November 1773, might have been an apprentice. Singleton appeared on the 1783 and 1784 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax Lists as the owner of the following slaves:

1783—Roger, Judith, Kate, and Hannah over sixteen
Nanny, Lewis, Lucinda, Polly, and Hercules under sixteen

1784—Roger, Kate, and Hannah over sixteen

²⁶⁷ Alexander Craig Account Book.

²⁶⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., October 8, 1767.

²⁶⁹ *Virginia Gazette or American Advertiser*, December 17, 1785.

Nancy, Lucinda, Lewis, and Polly under sixteen

Singleton also had two white tithes—William Whitaker and John Martin—in his household in 1784.

The Tan Yard

The Tan Yard operated by William Pearson (1760 to late 1776 or early 1777) and by William Plume (1777 to 1783) was a craft enterprise where skilled slaves and white artisans worked together. Pearson's operation depended on the labor of enslaved tanners, curriers, and shoemakers.

Alexander Craig established a tannery on Capitol Landing Road between 1752 and 1758 with his partners, Christopher Ford (a carpenter) and Nicholas Sim (a tanner). Craig became the sole owner of the tannery in 1758. It is possible that he hired a tanner named William Pearson to operate the business after Sim moved to Petersburg.²⁷⁰ Pearson purchased Lots 2 and 3 in the Waller Subdivision from Craig on November 17, 1760. Pearson gained possession of the land on which the tannery was located. Craig retained possession of the tan vats, bark houses, a mill house, a flocking house and other buildings used in the tanning business.²⁷¹

In May 1767 Pearson announced that he would pay “great wages” to a currier, an indication that he had complete control of the tannery. It is possible that Pearson's six tithes in 1768 included himself, a white currier, and several slaves.²⁷² Among the tanner's workers was an enslaved man, Lewis. At an oyer and terminer trial on February 12, 1768 Lewis, and another slave, Philip who belonged to the estate of John Coke, pled not guilty to the charge of breaking into the dwelling house of Coke's widow, Sarah, and stealing ten gallons of liquor, ten pounds of soap, and one pot of sweet meats. The justices found Philip not guilty and Lewis guilty of the felony and innocent of the burglary. The magistrates decided that “the said Offence being with

²⁷⁰ Harold B. Gill, “Leather Workers in Colonial Virginia,” (Colonial Williamsburg Research Report, 1966), pp. 65-66.

²⁷¹ York County Deeds (6) 294-298, dated and recorded November 17, 1760. Pearson also bought Lots 1, 4, 5, and 6.

²⁷² Gill, “Leather Workers in Colonial Virginia,” p. 75; *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., May 7, 1767. Pearson also advertised for a currier in 1775. On September 29, 1775 Pearson announced that he “WANTED IMMEDIATELY, a CURRIER, who is a good workman. Such a one will have good encouragement, by the month, six months, or a whole year.” See *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., September 29, 1775, page 3.

the benefit of the Act of Assembly relating to Felonies It is Considered that he be burnt and the left hand which was immediately done but it appearing to the Court that the said Lewis is a Great offender It is Ordered that the Sherif give him fifteen Lashes at the Public Whipping Post on his bare back well laid on.”²⁷³

Pearson died between March 30, 1776 and January 17, 1777. The tanner died without a will, and his widow, Mary Magdalen Pearson, became the administrator of his estate. The inventory of his personal property included twelve slaves:

Sam £ 150 Will £ 150 Jimmy £ 100 Ben £ 100
 Len £ 90 Molly £ 40 Old Sarah 5/ Sarah £ 80
 Betty £ 80 Kate £ 80 Milly £ 30 Harry £ 25

The appraisers valued Pearson’s enslaved laborers at £925..5. They determined that his entire estate was worth £2115..16..9.²⁷⁴ It is likely that Sam, Will, Jimmy, Ben, and Len were skilled workers (either tanners or shoemakers) because of their high value in Pearson’s inventory.

On March 7, 1777 the widow Pearson announced the terms under which someone could rent the tan yard:

TO be LET for a Term of six years, on the 24th Instant, the TAN WORKS in this City, late the Property of Mr. William Pearson, deceased, with the Dwelling-house, and all convenient Outhouses both for a Family and the Business, and several Acres of ground under a good Enclosure; also four Negro Men TANNERS and CURRIERS, two SHOEMAKERS, a CARPENTER, and two negro Women, one a good COOK, the other a SPINNER. Any One whom it will suit to rent may enter on the Tanyard immediately. As there is a small number of Hides that I will dispose of, and as Possession cannot be given of the Negroes until the Business now in Hand is finished, they will be able, under a proper Manager, to be assisting in their Work, on paying a proportionate Part of the Expencc. It is earnestly requested of those indebted to the Estate to make immediate Payment, and those to whom any Thing is due will please to bring in their Accounts, properly proved, and they shall be paid.²⁷⁵

Matthew Plume and Company occupied the tanyard by May 9, 1777 when Plume informed readers of the *Virginia Gazette* that he and his company operated the business. Plume was a tanner and a carrier who had worked for James Parker, one of the partners in the Norfolk tannery.²⁷⁶ It is possible that Plume owned at least one bond laborer. In February 1780 he noted

²⁷³ York County Order Book (1765-1768) 433-434, February 12, 1768.

²⁷⁴ York County Wills and Inventories (22) 387-388, dated March 13, 1777 and recorded June 15, 1778 [Note: The value of Pearson’s slaves is in inflated war-time paper currency].

²⁷⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., March 7, 1777.

²⁷⁶ Gill, “Leather Workers in Colonial Virginia,” p. 75.

that he “would exchange a negro man, who is a good house servant and cook, and by profession a biscuit maker, for a house wench or likely boy.”²⁷⁷ Plume returned to Norfolk after his lease expired in 1783.

Mary Magdalen Pearson received her dower in her deceased husband’s estate on August 21, 1780. The widow became the owner of Ben, Molly, Sarah, Kate, and the houses and lots where she lived on Francis Street.²⁷⁸ In 1782 her household included six whites and six enslaved individuals. The 1783, 1784, and 1786 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax Lists provide details about the enslaved laborers whom Pearson and her son, Matthew, owned:

1783: Ariana, daughter of Betty; baptized May 1783 (Matthew Pearson)
 Betty, mother of Ariana; over sixteen years old (Matthew Pearson)
 Harry under sixteen years old
 Kate over sixteen years old
 Milly under sixteen years old
 Nanny/Nancy under sixteen years old
 Sarah over sixteen years old
 Will over sixteen years old

1784: Ariana, daughter of Betty (Matthew Pearson)
 Betty, mother of Ariana; over sixteen years old (Matthew Pearson)
 Isham over sixteen years old
 Milly under sixteen years old
 Nanny/Nancy under sixteen years old
 Sarah over sixteen years old

1786: Ariana, daughter of Betty (Matthew Pearson)
 Betty, mother of Ariana; over sixteen years old (Matthew Pearson)
 Nanny/Nancy under sixteen years old
 Sarah over sixteen years old

It is possible that the widow Pearson hired out her enslaved man Ben and her woman, Kate.

On March 1, 1783, Matthew Pearson announced that he wanted to sell “THE TAN-YARD near this City. On the lots, exclusive of the necessary houses for carrying on the business, there is an exceeding good dwelling-house, and convenient out-houses, in good order. There will also be sold, two or three NEGROES, that have been used to attend the yard. A speedy application is required, for unless sold in a month or two, the above will not be for sale after that period.”²⁷⁹ Pearson took out another advertisement on April 26, 1783. He planned to

²⁷⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon, ed., February 12, 1780.

²⁷⁸ York County Wills and Inventories (22) 498, dated and recorded August 21, 1780.

²⁷⁹ *Virginia Gazette or the American Advertiser*, March 1, 1783.

sell “THREE NEGRO MEN, one is an exceeding good currier, having served under several good hands at that business; the other two have been used to attend in a tanyard, and work in a shoemaker’s shop.”²⁸⁰ Four years later Pearson still owned his father’s tanyard. In September 1787, he advertised for “a person that has been regularly bred a TANNER, such a one coming well recommended for his honesty, industry, and knowledge in his business, will meet with immediate employment and generous wages. If acquainted with the currying business also, it will be the more agreeable.”²⁸¹ Ten years later, the guardian of Matthew Pearson’s orphans announced that the tanyard could be leased for the term of ten years.²⁸²

Wetherburn’s Tavern

Henry Wetherburn had twelve enslaved men, women, and children at his Williamsburg tavern at the time of his death in late 1760. He also owned seventeen slaves who lived and worked at his James City County plantation. Ann Wetherburn gained possession of ten slaves and Wetherburn’s nephew, Edward Nicholson, became the owner of nineteen enslaved laborers. Benjamin Weldon, the executor of Edward Nicholson’s estate, hired out a number of Nicholson’s slaves as a way to raise money for the support of Nicholson’s son, Henry Wetherburn Nicholson.

Henry Wetherburn died between November 13, and December 15, 1760.²⁸³ The tavern keeper bequeathed a slave girl named Clarissa to his wife Ann and a slave boy to Henry Armistead “who now lives with me.” In addition, the widow Wetherburn also received one half of her husband’s personal estate. Since the Wetherburns did not have any children, the tavern keeper’s nephew, Edward Nicholson, a James City County planter, gained possession of the remainder of Wetherburn’s real and personal estate.²⁸⁴

The December 19, 1760 inventory of Wetherburn’s estate in Williamsburg included twelve slaves who were valued at £ 410. He had seventeen enslaved men, women, and children

²⁸⁰ *Virginia Gazette or the American Advertiser*, April 26, 1783.

²⁸¹ *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, September 27, 1787.

²⁸² *Virginia Gazette, and General Advertiser*, October 18, 1797.

²⁸³ Several of Wetherburn’s slaves had been owned by other Williamsburg tavern keepers. Wetherburn’s first wife, Mary, was the widow of tavern keeper Henry Bowcock Senior. Wetherburn gained possession of Bowcock’s five slaves (Caesar, Cheshire, Lincoln, Nan, and Will) when he married the widow Bowcock by June 1731. Ann Wetherburn was the daughter of John Marot, a tavern keeper. Marot owned ten slaves (Betty, Jenny, Mary, Nan, Sue and her four children, and Tony) at the time of his death in November 1717. Marot’s widow and their three daughters were to share the tavern keeper’s personal estate. Ann Marot’s second husband, James Shields Junior, operated a tavern in the same building that Marot did. Shields had at least thirteen slaves in Williamsburg and twenty-five enslaved laborers on his James City County plantation when he died in 1750. However, the widow Shields gave up her life right to the Shields slaves when she married Wetherburn.

²⁸⁴ York County Wills and Inventories (21) 23-25, dated November 13, 17[60] and recorded December 15, 1760.

appraised at £ 540 on his plantation called “Wallhills” in James City County. Wetherburn’s James City County inventory also included livestock (sheep, cattle), produce, and fodder. The tavern keeper probably relied on his rural slaves to raise produce, fodder, and livestock to be used at his Williamsburg tavern. It is likely that the Wetherburn’s James City County slaves harvested enough corn to feed the enslaved men, women, and children at Wallhills.²⁸⁵

George Wythe, Robert Carter Nicholas, William Hunter, and Thomas Everard assigned Ann Wetherburn her dower on January 25, 1761. She received “the Dwelling House Outhouses and 2 Lotts of Land No. 21 & 22 [*sic*] in the City of Williamsburgh excepting the Tenement in Possession of James Martin Barber Also 9 Slaves named Caesar, Sarah and her child Tom, Jack, Sarah and her Child Rachel Sylvia Phillis and Judy as and for her one third part of the Land & Slaves of her sd. late Husband.”²⁸⁶ The fact that the widow Wetherburn gained possession of eight urban slaves as part of her dower indicates that Wythe, Nicholas, Hunter, and Everard assigned her the slaves she needed to continue to operate a tavern. Perhaps Jack, the one James City County slave, given to Ann Wetherburn, ran errands between “Wallhills” and Wetherburn’s Tavern. It is known that the widow Wetherburn lived on Lots 20 and 21 until August 1769 and possibly later. Perhaps Nicholson’s estate gained possession of the widow Wetherburn’s slaves after her death.

Edward Nicholson became the owner of three Williamsburg slaves—Belinda, Billy, and Gabriel—and sixteen enslaved men, women, and children at “Wallhills.” Wetherburn’s rural laborers included Caesar, Peter, Venus, Nanny, Jemmy, Bess and her child Peter, Hannah and her c[orn], Lucy and her children (Ben and Robin), Durham, Stepney, Moll, and Beck. Nicholson was dead by September 1762. Benjamin Weldon of James City County served as the executor of Nicholson’s estate and guardian of his son, Henry Wetherburn Nicholson, who was born in 1762.

Benjamin Weldon kept records of the slaves whom he hired out for the benefit of Henry Wetherburn Nicholson.²⁸⁷ Residents of Williamsburg and York and James City counties hired slaves from Weldon between 1770 and 1781.

1. A tavern keeper named Gabriel Maupin paid Weldon £10 on December 25, 1770 for the hire of a slave named Caesar. Maupin took over the tavern kept by his mother-in-law, Mary Page, after her death in 1767. He operated a tavern in Williamsburg until 1777. It

²⁸⁵ York County Wills and Inventories (21) 36-43, dated December 19, 1760 and recorded March 16, 1761; *ibid.*, pp. 43-45, dated December 13, 1760 and recorded March 16, 1761.

²⁸⁶ York County Judgments and Orders (3) 216-217, March 16, 1761.

²⁸⁷ Sarah S. Hughes provides details about the practice of hiring slaves: “In the eighteenth century the customs controlling the practices were already well established. The usual period of hire was fifty weeks, beginning in early January and ending shortly before Christmas. At the outset of each new year owners who had a surplus of slave labor met prospective hirers at the courthouses to negotiate privately or to participate in public auctions. The hirer paid a cash rent and assumed the costs of feeding, clothing, and housing the slaves, as well as medical expenses and slave taxes. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the courts had defined the responsibilities of lessor and lessee in instances of death, injury, or escape of a hired slave.” See Sarah S. Hughes, “Slaves for Hire: The Allocation of Black Labor in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782-1810,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., XXXV (1978): 260-86.

is possible that Caesar waited on Maupin's customers and/or cared for their horses. Maupin owned women named Nanny and Rachel who probably helped his wife, Easter, with the cooking and the cleaning at the tavern.

2. Joseph Scrivener paid the sum of £8 for the hire of Sary on December 25, 1770.
3. Robert Gilbert spent £5 to hire Sylvia on December 25, 1771 and the same amount in December 1779. Gilbert kept a lodging house on the Back Street near the Capitol in 1777 in addition to making boots and shoes. It is possible that Gilbert took in lodgers for a longer period of time or that he hired Sylvia to cook and clean for him.
4. In January 1771 Robert Hyland gave Weldon £4.10 for the hire of a slave woman. He also paid £4 to Nicholson's guardian on December 24, 1774 for the hire of a slave.
5. Cuthbert Hubbard operated a tavern near the College of William and Mary from 1771 to 1777. There is no evidence that Hubbard owned any slaves. He hired one of Nicholson's slaves from Weldon for £7 in 1771, 1772, and 1773.
6. A Williamsburg shoemaker named James Taylor paid for the hire of a slave from Weldon on two occasions: December 25, 1772 and December 25, 1773.
7. In 1773 Weldon hired Fiddler Billy who belonged to the estate of Edward Nicholson to William Fearson, dancing master in Williamsburg. In September 1769 Fearson placed the following advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette*: "WANTED, to buy or to hire, AN orderly Negro or Mulatto man, who can play well on the violin. Whoever has such a one may have good wages, or a good price, ready money, if to be sold. Enquire of the Printer, or apply to WILLIAM FEARSON."²⁸⁸
8. John Dewberry, a resident of James City County, hired a slave for short periods of time in 1773. He paid six shillings and three pence for five days of a slave's work on April 24, 1773. Four days later he gave Weldon one shilling and three pence for another day of a slave's labor. One of Nicholson's slaves worked for Dewberry on the seventh and eighth of August of the same year for two shillings and six pence.
9. Robert Anderson rented Wetherburn's Tavern from 1771 to 1779. He also gave Weldon a bond of £10 for the hire of one of Nicholson's slaves on August 31, 1774.
10. A Williamsburg resident named Mr. Bickerton paid £5 for the hire of a slave on January 25, 1776.
11. The printer Alexander Purdie gave Weldon the sum of £5 for the hire of a woman named Beck on January 1, 1776.

²⁸⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, Rind, ed., September 14, 1769.

12. The slave Gaby worked for several men who lived in and near Williamsburg between 1776 and 1781:

- a. A carpenter named John Driver paid Weldon for a month of Gaby's labor in July 1776; from June 26 to August 1, 1777; January 2 to May 21, 1778; July 23 to November 16, 1778; November 23 to December 5, 1778; and December 7, 1778 to March 23, 1779. Gaby also carted shingles for Driver for seven days in October of 1779.
- b. John Mead of York County hired Gaby from May 18 to June 18, 1779.
- c. Philip Bullifant of Bruton Parish hired Gaby from August 9 to September 22, 1779. Gaby also worked for Bullifant for half of October 1779.
- d. Charles Graves, a resident of Bruton Parish, paid Weldon for Gaby's labor from April 24 to July 26, 1780.
- e. James Shields of James City County hired Gaby between July 26 and September 30, 1780.
- f. William Pitt hired Gaby for four days in 1780.

13. Colonel John Dixon paid Nicholson for the hire of a slave for £25 in 1779, £90 in 1780, and £5 specie in 1781.²⁸⁹ Dixon also hired Durham for £5 for the year 1781. It is possible that he rented Durham from 1778 to 1780.

14. Matthew Pate hired one of Nicholson's slaves from Weldon for the sum of £41 in 1780.

15. James Cocke paid Weldon £10 for the hire of a slave in 1781.

16. John Crump, a cabinetmaker, paid £11..10..0 for the hire of one of Nicholson's slaves in January 1781. He also rented Peter and Nanny for 1781 for the sum of £16.

Weldon hired out at least fourteen of Nicholson's slaves for the year 1781:

Pompey	B. Weldon	£ 7..4
Betty	Col. James Wilson	8
Robbin	Wm. Cole	11
Peter & Nanny	Jno. Crump	16
Judy	Wm. Eggleston	5..3
Caesar	Jno. Fenton	10
Silvia	Wm. Pitt	6
Rachel	Fitzgerarld (hatter)	5
Beck	Harris (taylor)	4

²⁸⁹The high price for slaves hired in 1780 was due to the inflation that Virginia experienced during the Revolution.

Sary (cook)	Carter	5
Durham	Col. John Dixon	5
Betty	Arch Didup [crossed out] to Caesar	6 [crossed out] 5 bar Corn
Sary	Franc. Daven(portwashing)	

Henry Wetherburn Nicholson gained possession of his slaves when he celebrated his twenty-first birthday in 1783.

The extensive list of slaves hired out to residents of Williamsburg and the surrounding rural area implies that Benjamin Weldon did not continue the farming operation at Wallhills that Wetherburn began. Inhabitants of Williamsburg hired Wetherburn's urban slaves because of their domestic and musical skills. Planters in York and James City counties rented the enslaved laborers who had tended fields and raised livestock at Wallhills. It is likely Gabriel Maupin and other residents of Williamsburg hired rural slaves because they had skills (caring for horses, carting produce and meat) that could be used in the town as well as in the countryside.

The Wheelwright

By the 1770s, some rural slaves worked as wheelwrights. These artisans made agricultural carts and wagons. However, there is not much evidence for enslaved wheelwrights in towns at the same time. The majority of the men who worked as wheelwrights and chairmakers in Williamsburg relied on the labor of white apprentices and journeymen in their businesses. John Brown had a mulatto apprentice in 1745 and Campbell Thompson, a coach and herald painter, noted that he would take a slave boy as an apprentice in 1774. It is possible that Charles Taliaferro had several of his enslaved men make wheelbarrows, riding chairs, carriages, and carts.

Both Robey Coke and William Cosby were slaveowners, but there is no evidence that their enslaved laborers assisted them in their businesses. Elkanah Deane's operation included an indentured servant named John Hunter; Obadiah Puryear, a journeyman; and John Howard, a coach painter. Edward Roberts worked in Deane's shop as a saddler and a cap and harness maker. John Sheppard had two servants—John Staunton, a wheelwright, and a blacksmith named Andrew McGill—who worked for him in 1776. Deane and Sheppard advertised for journeymen chairmakers and apprentices in the *Virginia Gazette*. Jones Allen Deane, William Holiday, and John Lindsay did not own slaves.

John Brown

In 1745 John Brown, a wheelwright who lived near the Capitol had a mulatto apprentice named Thomas Gilbert. Brown's apprentice ran away twice in that year. The March 21, 1744/5 issue of the *Virginia Gazette* contained an advertisement for a runaway apprentice. Brown announced that

Ran away on Sunday the 9th Inst. from his Master, living near Williamsburg, an Apprentice Lad, nam'd Thomas Gilbert, aged about 17 years: He has a broad Face, and full set of Teeth, is of a low Stature, pretty well-set, of a dark Complexion, being a Mustee, and has a thick bushy Head of Hair. Had on a Virginia Cloth Jacket, Kersey-wove, and the Sleeves plain, an old Pair of Duroy Breeches, an old Pair of Stockings, a new Pair of Shoes, an Oznabrigs Shirt, almost new, and an Old Felt Hat. Whoever takes him up, and conveys him to me, a Wheelwright, near the Capitol in Williamsburg, shall have a Pistole Reward, besides what the Law allows.²⁹⁰

The wheelwright regained possession of Gilbert who decided to run away a second time in October of the same year. Brown placed the following announcement in the *Virginia Gazette* on October 10, 1745:

Ran away, last Night, from the Subscriber, living near the Capitol, an Apprentice Lad, named Thomas Gilbird; he is a well-set Mustee Lad, with very short curl'd Hair, a full Face, and a good Set of Teeth; has a Scar on one Arm, occasion'd (as he says) by his being shot: Had on when he went away, an old Felt Hat, an old Kersey-wove Waistcoat, with plain wove Sleeves, an Oznabrig Shirt and Trowsers, very much worn, and a Pair of old Shoes. The last Time he ran away he was taken up on board a Vessel, and it is suppos'd he will endeavour the same Way to make his Escape. Whoever will take up the said Runaway, and convey him to me, shall have a Pistole Reward, besides what the Law allows.²⁹¹

There is no evidence that Brown's apprentice returned to Williamsburg.

Robey Coke

Robey Coke was the son of John Coke, a goldsmith and a tavern keeper. The elder Coke operated his tavern until the time his death in 1767 and his widow, Sarah, continued the business. Robey Coke received all the houses and the five lots in Williamsburg where his father lived in addition to Philip, a slave man, and woman called Sylvia. The younger Coke was a wheelwright and a house joiner. Philip and Sylvia might have assisted Sarah Coke in her tavern since she paid taxes on them in 1783 and 1784.

There is no evidence that Coke's slave named John assisted him in his work as a wheelwright or a house joiner. John ran away in 1777 and it is possible that Coke did not regain possession of him. In 1783 Robey Coke owned slaves named Sylvia and Will who were under sixteen years old.

²⁹⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, March 21, 1744/5.

²⁹¹ *Virginia Gazette*, October 10, 1745.

William Cosby

William Cosby was a wheelwright who also made riding chairs with Filmer Moore in 1766. Cosby sold an enslaved woman named Pat to James Anderson in November of 1766. There is no evidence that he owned or hired another slave. Cosby had at least one apprentice—Daniel McCarty—who ran away in late 1771.

Charles Taliaferro

Charles Taliaferro was a chairmaker who lived on the James City County side of Williamsburg. In 1768 he had six tithes and the following year the number increased to seven. It is possible that Taliaferro's tithes included both white apprentices and enslaved laborers in 1768 and 1769. Taliaferro paid taxes on the following adult male slaves in 1783, 1784, and 1786:

Caesar over sixteen in 1783
 Gaby over sixteen in 1783
 George over sixteen in 1783, 1784, and 1786
 Godfrey over sixteen in 1783, 1784, and 1786
 Heckbeck/Hekabeck over sixteen in 1784 and 1786
 Jack over sixteen in 1783
 Jim over sixteen in 1783
 King over sixteen in 1783, 1784, and 1786
 Natt over sixteen in 1783, 1784, and 1786
 Sam over sixteen in 1783

Most Williamsburg residents had more enslaved women than enslaved men in their households in the early 1780s: six out of every ten adult slaves in the town were females.²⁹² It is possible that Taliaferro relied on his enslaved men to make carts, wheelbarrows, and riding vehicles.

Campbell Thomson

Campbell Thomson placed the following advertisement in the April 14, 1774 issue of Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*:

CAMPBELL THOMSON, HERALD AND COACH PAINTER, TAKES this Method to inform the Ladies and Gentlemen that he has opened Shop opposite the New Hospital, in Williamsburg, where he carries on the painting business; he likewise paints all Kinds of Landscapes with Accuracy, and repairs all kinds of painting and gilding in the most

²⁹² Michael L. Nicholls, "Aspects of the African American Experience in Williamsburg and Norfolk," (unpublished report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990), pp. 3-5, 12-13.

elegant Manner. Those who please to employ him may depend on a full Exertion of his Abilities to given general Satisfaction.

N. B. He will take a Negro Boy as an Apprentice.²⁹³

There is no information about the apprentice that worked with Thomson.

The Wigmaker

There is evidence that four of the barbers/wigmakers in Williamsburg in 1775—Edward Charlton, George Lafong, Walter Lenox, and James Nichols—had slaves in their households; Alexander Wiley did not own or hire an enslaved laborer. Charlton, Lafong, and Nichols owned at least one enslaved person and Lenox hired two slaves. In addition, Charlton’s brother, Richard, a tavern keeper who worked as a barber and wigmaker in 1776, owned enslaved men, women, and children.

Edward Charlton and Richard Charlton

Edward Charlton had a greater number of slaves than did the other Williamsburg barbers and wigmakers, an indication of his abilities and the success of his business. In July 1763, Annar, the son of his slave Rachel, was baptized. Charlton’s slave Betty (also known as Elizabeth) had two sons who received their baptism—Joseph on September 1, 1765 and Francis on January 10, 1768. Edward Charlton might have been the Mr. Charlton who sent two slaves—Nancy and Davy—to the Bray School in 1765.

Charlton’s brother, Richard, was a Williamsburg tavern keeper between 1767 and 1777. Richard Charlton also worked as a barber and a wigmaker in 1776. In November of that year James Nichols dissolved his partnership with Richard Charlton because he had “not been concerned in the shop carried on by the subscriber in this city” since April 1776.²⁹⁴ Richard Charlton’s estate included a mulatto fellow (valued at £ 1000) who was acquainted with shaving and hair dressing. A man named Mr. Bretman purchased Yellow Jack for £ 2100 at the sale of Richard Charlton’s estate in December 1779.

Edward Charlton had two slaves in his Williamsburg household in 1783 and 1784—Ben and Jenny who were both over the age of sixteen. In 1786 Rosemary was the only tithable slave in Charlton’s possession. Charlton died between late 1790 and early 1791. There is no evidence that any of Edward Charlton’s slaves worked as a barber or a wigmaker.

²⁹³ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., April 14, 1774.

²⁹⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 22 November 1776.

George Lafong

In 1766 the York County grand jury presented George Lafong because he did not list his black tithe. Lafong placed advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette* for a hair dresser (November 1771), a journeyman barber (December 1772), a hair dresser and a wigmaker (March 1774), and a journeyman hair dresser (February 1777). This barber entered into a partnership with Alexander Wiley in December 1775.²⁹⁵ Lafong paid taxes on two enslaved women—Bett and Lucy—in 1786. It appears that he and Wiley relied on white journeymen to assist them in their business.

Walter Lenox

It is likely that Sally, a slave woman who belonged to the estate of Carter Burwell, was one of Walter Lenox's three tithes in September 1762. Sally was a part of the Lenox household on May 17, 1763 when Cuffy, a slave belonging to the Reverend John Fox of Gloucester, and Isaac, a free person of color, poisoned the family. John Norton noted that Cuffy and Isaac tried to murder Lenox, a barber, and "his family Elizabeth Lenox John Lenox James Long William Awbrey Judith Dunford William White John Jones Adam White & the sd negro woman Sally" in the 28 May 1763 proceedings of the trial.²⁹⁶ The justices found Cuffy guilty of the felony and decided that he should be hanged by his neck. Isaac was committed to jail and freed in July 1763. Adam White was one of Lenox's apprentices and it is possible that William White and James Long were also bound to this barber to learn his trade. In October 1768 Lenox announced that he wanted to find a journeyman peruke maker to work in his shop. He advertised for this position again in March 1771 and August 1773. There is no evidence that Lenox ever owned a slave. In addition to Sally, this barber hired an unnamed woman, the wife of Gaby, from James Burwell in 1771. It is possible that the slave women helped Elizabeth Lenox run her household and to provide meals for her husband's apprentices.

James Nichols

James Nichols owned an enslaved woman by December 1779 when he announced that he had a valuable cook wench for sale. He also noted that the houses where he lived were well-suited to the tavern business. There is no evidence that Nichols had a slave or a free black who helped him in his barbering and wigmaking business.

* * * *

William Marshman's accounts of the daily expenses at the Palace during Lord Botetourt's administration indicate that he hired a barber to dress the hair of servants—white and

²⁹⁵ There is no evidence that Wiley owned or hired a slave during the time he lived in Williamsburg.

²⁹⁶ York County Judgments and Orders (3), 504-505, 28 May 1763.

black—who served as waiting men and sentinels during balls. Marshman made the following payments to a barber:

May 25, 1769	dressing the hair of ten servants on May 19, 1769
November 1, 1769	dressing the hair of ten servants on October 25, 1769
January 10, 1770	dressing the hair of seven servants on December 26, 1769
May 24, 1770	dressing the hair of five servants on May 21, 1770
May 24, 1770	dressing the hair of six servants on November 8, 1769

Unfortunately, Marshman did not identify the barber or barbers whom he hired.

* * * *

Yorktown was the home to an enslaved barber, John Hope, also known as Barber Caesar—see the Biography section of this resource book for information on John Hope.

The Wythe House

This examination of George Wythe and the slaves who lived and worked in his household in Williamsburg focuses on the enslaved men, women, and children on the Wythe property in 1774-1776; the work that his bond laborers performed in town; the slaves Wythe had on his plantation, Chesterville, in Elizabeth City County; the relationship among Wythe's Williamsburg slaves, his Elizabeth City County slaves, and the Taliaferro slaves at Powhatan in James City County; Wythe's manumissions; and possible influences on his thoughts about slavery.

George Wythe's Williamsburg Slaves

George Wythe married Elizabeth Taliaferro, daughter of Richard Taliaferro of Powhatan in James City County, sometime between 1755 and 1760. Elizabeth Wythe's dowry included slaves, but the number of bond laborers is unknown. It is likely that her father gave her the enslaved woman who was her personal servant and several slaves who were accustomed to laboring in tobacco fields. Wythe probably had a man servant who waited on him at the time of his marriage.

Entries in the *Virginia Gazette Day Book, 1764-1766* provide the first information about the names of the Wythe slaves who lived and worked in Williamsburg. Harry purchased one ounce of pounce for his master on January 9, 1764 and Jacob bought six packs of the best Harry cards on March 30, 1764. Ben purchased a dozen packs of the best Harry cards for Wythe on January 9, 1765 at the printing office. It is likely that Harry, Jacob, and Ben ran additional errands for their master.

It is interesting to note that the name or names of Wythe slaves do not appear on the three extant lists (1762, 1765, and 1769) of students at the Bray School. Perhaps the lawyer sent a slave child or children to receive instruction from Ann Wager at other times during her tenure at

the school. Maybe he decided to educate one or more of his bond laborers at home. It is known that Wythe taught an enslaved boy named Jimmy to write in 1791.²⁹⁷ Lydia Broadnax wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson a year after Wythe's death in which she asked for financial assistance.

Wythe probably hired several of his slaves to Lord Botetourt soon after the governor arrived in the colony. On January 21, 1769 William Marshman, the governor's butler, noted that he paid £ 2 to Mr. Wythe's servants. One of Wythe's slaves received one shilling and three pence—the payment for a day of work—on March 30, 1769. Marshman gave £ 3 as a “Christmas box” to Wythe's slaves on January 13, 1770. Perhaps they expected this gift from Marshman because they worked for him at the Palace the previous year.²⁹⁸

Wythe's slaves also carried food to the Governor's Palace on several occasions. A bond laborer delivered angelica to Marshman on August 18, 1770 and received a tip of one shilling and three pence. William Sparrow tipped one of Wythe's slaves two shillings and six pence for beef on November 16, 1769. Rosanna Wilson paid two shillings and six pence to a Wythe slave for mutton on March 12, 1770 and April 14, 1770. Mrs. Wilson gave out the same consideration for fruit on July 24, 1770. The tip from Mrs. Wilson for musk melon on August 23, 1770 and peaches on September 4, 1770 was one shilling and three pence. The tips that Wythe's slaves received meant that these individuals had money that they could use to purchase goods.²⁹⁹

Thomas Jefferson gave tips to several of his teacher's slaves for work between 1769 and 1779. Jefferson paid Ben one shilling and three pence for coach hire on December 13, 1769. A

²⁹⁷ William Munford to John Coalter, July 22, 1791, John Thompson Brown Papers, Special Collections, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

²⁹⁸In the eighteenth century, a “Christmas Box” was a gift of money, a tip, given during the forty-day Christmas season. Traditionally, a master gave a “Christmas Box” to an inferior—a servant, a slave, an apprentice, or a tradesman. See David DeSimone, “The Christmas Box Tradition,” *The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, Winter 1997, pp. 1-4; *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish, (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated, 1943), pp. 40, 54.

²⁹⁹John Cook, William Sparrow, and Rosanna Wilson paid for the various foods that they purchased for use in Botetourt's household. Ann Smart Martin notes that

The town's most important political leaders, such as the Speaker of the House or the President of the Council curried favor by sending special foods, usually carried by their slaves. These slaves were tipped well for their services. The generosity of the Governor meant that the value of the tips in some cases equaled the value of the foods themselves. This regular movement of cash into the slave economy ensured that the power of the governor to command attention rested at the top and bottom of the Williamsburg hierarchy. The provisioning of the colony's most important political leader took on special significance. One group gained or buttressed political patronage, the other added to pocket change.

See Ann Smart Martin, “Consumption Patterns in Individual Households,” in “Provisioning Early American Towns. The Chesapeake: A Multidisciplinary Case Study,” (Final Performance Report, National Endowment for the Humanities Grant RO-22643-93, 1997), pp. 145-146.

similar payment to Ben in June of the following year might also have been for coach hire. Ben's tip of four shillings and three pence on November 6, 1771 suggests that he drove a coach for Jefferson on several occasions or ran several errands. The fourteen shillings that Jefferson gave to Wythe's slaves on December 7, 1776 may have been for work that they performed between October 6, 1776 and December 5, 1776 when Jefferson and his wife lived in Wythe's house. Perhaps the six shillings that Jefferson gave Ben on December 28, 1777 was a holiday gift instead of a tip for work. He also paid Hannah five shillings for a canister two days later. Abram received twelve shillings on January 11, 1778 and six shillings thirteen days later, the same day that Jefferson gave Ben twelve shillings. Abram gained twelve shillings on June 10, 1778. The final record of a payment from Jefferson to a slave owned by Wythe was on February 27, 1779 when he gave eighteen shillings to Abram and thirty shillings to Hannah.³⁰⁰ It is possible that the first mention of Lydia Broadnax is in Martha Jefferson's account book. On January 24, 1778 Martha Jefferson noted that she "Gave Mrs. Wythe's cook" eighteen shillings.

The references to Ben in Jefferson's Memorandum Books indicate that he was in Williamsburg between 1774 and 1776. During this period Fanny and Rose were among Wythe's slaves. They were daughters of an enslaved woman (or women) whom Richard Taliaferro gave to Wythe at the time of his marriage to his daughter Elizabeth. Fanny bore at least five children and she probably had one or two sons to raise (Daniel and Paris) while she did her work at the Wythe house between 1774 and 1776. It is likely that Abram, Charles, Hannah, and Lydia Broadnax also lived and worked in Wythe's household during this time.³⁰¹

The account books kept by Joseph Royle, Thomas Jefferson, and Martha Jefferson provide some details about the work performed by Wythe's slaves. The lawyer sent enslaved males on errands to the printing office. Ben drove his master's coach and a cook, probably Lydia Broadnax, prepared meals for members of the household. Wythe took one or more slaves with him when he and his wife traveled to Philadelphia in the fall of 1775. The Williamsburg lawyer made the trip because he was one of Virginia's delegates to the Continental Congress. The Wythes decided that they and their slaves would get vaccinated against the smallpox. Purdie's October 6, 1775 issue of the *Virginia Gazette* noted that "By a letter from another gentleman in Philadelphia, dated Sept. 25th, we have the agreeable intelligence that mrs. NELSON, mr. WYTHE and his lady, mr. FRANCIS L. LEE and his lady, with their several servants, are safely through the smallpox."³⁰² Perhaps Ben drove the coach that carried the Wythes to Philadelphia and served as his waiting man. It is likely that a female slave attended

³⁰⁰ James A. Bear, Jr., and Lucia C. Stanton, eds., *Jefferson's Memorandum Books. Accounts, with Legal Records and Miscellany, 1767-1826*, 2 vols., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), I:153, 206, 263, 426, 428, 429, 455, 456, 457, 466, 476.

³⁰¹ Wythe, like most Williamsburg residents, had more female slaves than males slaves in his household. See Michael L. Nicholls, "Aspects of the African American Experience in Williamsburg and Norfolk," (unpublished report, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990), pp. 3-5, 12-13.

³⁰² *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., October 6, 1775, supplement.

Elizabeth Wythe during the time that they were in Philadelphia. The trip to Philadelphia, the largest city in British North America, enabled Wythe's slaves to meet enslaved persons who lived and worked in each of the thirteen colonies. It is also possible that the lawyer's slaves encountered members of this city's free black population.³⁰³

Like Peyton and Betty Randolph, George and Elizabeth Wythe had several nieces spend time with them in their Williamsburg house. Elizabeth Taliaferro stayed with her aunt and uncle in the early 1780s and Ann/Nancy Taliaferro was part of the Wythe household in 1783. Perhaps each woman brought a slave from their father's plantation, Powhatan, with them when they stayed in Williamsburg. Mary Taliaferro Nelson and her husband William Nelson lived with the Wythes in 1783 and 1784. Nelson's slave woman Succordia and his slave boy named Paul appeared on the Williamsburg Personal Property Tax Lists as part of Wythe's household in 1783 and 1784. The Nelsons were in their own house in Williamsburg by the time of the 1786 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax List.

The 1783, 1784, and 1786 Williamsburg Personal Property Tax Lists provide information about the enslaved men, women, and children who lived in the Wythe household in these years. In 1783 Wythe paid taxes on two adult men—Ben and Charles—and women named Betty, Fanny, Hannah, Lydia Broadnax, and Succordia (a Nelson slave). The children under sixteen were Daniel, Isaac, Jimmy, Paris, Paul (a Nelson slave), Little Betty, and Jenny. The following year two females over the age of sixteen—Dinah and Rose—and a girl by the name of Polly joined the enslaved individuals who had been in the Wythe household the previous year. Two years later, in 1786, there were seven adult slaves who worked in the Wythe house: Ben, Charles, Betty, Dinah, Fanny, Lydia Broadnax, and Rose. Edward, Rose's infant son, and Joe, the young son born to Fanny, joined Daniel, Isaac, Jimmy, Paris, and Polly. Fanny's daughter, Jenny, and Little Betty died between 1784 and 1786.

The death of Elizabeth Wythe on August 18, 1787 had a tremendous impact on the slaves in the household. Two days after her death Wythe conveyed descendants of his wife's dower slaves to members of the Taliaferro family. He

delivered unto Richard Taliaferro, of the County of James City, my negro woman slave Cate, with her children and grandchildren, Rachel, Lydia, Lucy, Bob and Jamey, and also my negro woman slave Fanny, with her children Paris and Isaac, to have and possess the said slaves to the use of his the said Richard Taliaferro's children Anne, Rebeca, Sarah, Lucy, Benjamin and Robert to be divided among them, so that Anne and Rebecca may each have such of the said slaves as are equal in value to Rose and Edward, her child this

³⁰³ For information about slaves and free blacks in Philadelphia see Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988) and Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, comp., *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

day given by me to their sister Elizabeth Call; and that the slaves of the other four children of the said Richard Taliaferro may be equal the one to the other.³⁰⁴

Wythe's deed of gift to Richard Taliaferro and his conveyance to Elizabeth Taliaferro Call indicate that he kept slave families together—Kate and her daughters Rachel and Lydia; Rachel and her children Lucy, Bob, and Jamey; Fanny and her children Paris and Isaac; and Rose and her son, Edward.³⁰⁵ The Williamsburg Personal Property Tax Lists and the Elizabeth City County Personal Property Tax Lists indicate that Wythe had his wife's dower slaves in town and at Chesterville, his plantation in Elizabeth City County. The family ties that joined these slaves together also connected them to the Taliaferro slaves who lived and worked at Powhatan in James City County.

Deeds of emancipation from Wythe to three of his urban slaves survive. On September 15, 1787 he freed Lydia Broadnax and acknowledged "the negro woman Lydia freed from slavery by me to have been at the Time of her manumission more than forty five Years old."³⁰⁶ In February of the following year Wythe emancipated his slave girl named Polly "when she shall attain the age of eighteen years." He noted that she was four years of age on September 13, 1787.³⁰⁷ Wythe freed a man named Charles who was over the age of eighteen and under the age of forty-five on August 13, 1788. The lawyer also freed Ben, but his deed of emancipation is not extant.

Wythe paid the assessment on two blacks over the age of sixteen between 1789 and 1791. It is likely that Ben and Lydia Broadnax continued to live in their former master's Williamsburg house after he emancipated them. Wythe paid for the medical treatment that Lydia Broadnax received in 1788. In addition, Jimmy, the son of Rachel and grandson of Kate, was part of the Wythe household between 1787 (when Wythe conveyed him to Richard Taliaferro) and 1791. Doctors Galt and Barraud treated Jimmy in 1789. Two years later, on July 22, 1791, William Munford informed his friend John Coalter "Would you believe it that he [Wythe] has begun to teach Jamey, his servant, to write?"³⁰⁸ It is possible that Jimmy moved to the Taliaferro plantation at Powhatan when Wythe relocated to Richmond in 1791.

³⁰⁴ George Wythe to Richard Taliaferro, dated August 20, 1787 and recorded October 8, 1787 in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., XII (1903-1904): 125-126.

³⁰⁵ Six years later, on September 14, 1793, Wythe entered into a second deed of gift with Elizabeth Call in which he transferred Rose and her three children—Edward, Betty, and a child at her breast. It is possible that Rose, Edward, Betty, and the unnamed child were in the possession of Elizabeth Call and that this second deed of gift made the 1787 transfer legal. Richmond Hustings Court Deed Book II, f. 116, September 14, 1793.

³⁰⁶ York County Deed Book 6 (1777-1791) 351, dated September 15, 1787 and recorded September 17, 1787.

³⁰⁷ York County Deed Book 6 (1777-1791) 371, dated February 20, 1788 and recorded June 16, 1788.

³⁰⁸ Munford to Coalter, July 22, 1791, John Thompson Brown Papers.

Wythe's Slaves in Elizabeth City County

When Thomas Wythe Senior, an Elizabeth City County planter, died in 1729 he bequeathed his wife half of Chesterville, his plantation on the Back River, and seven slaves—Tom, Mercury, Peter, Sampson, Phillis, Tony, and Jack—during her lifetime. The elder Wythe left Chesterville to his son and namesake. After the death of Margaret Wythe the seven slaves and their increase were to be equally divided among Wythe's surviving children. This planter wanted the remaining enslaved laborers (except those hired to Robert Ballard of Yorktown) to be equally divided among his children when one of his children married or reached the age of eighteen. Wythe noted that he had hired an unspecified number of slaves to Robert Ballard of Yorktown for nine years. After the expiration of lease, these slaves were to become the property of his nephew, Matthew Ballard, if a debt due to Colonel Digges and a debt due to Major Lightfoot were satisfied. If the debts were not paid or Ballard died without heirs, then Wythe's children were to gain possession of these enslaved individuals.³⁰⁹ Wythe's grandmother, Ann Keith Walker Wallace, bequeathed him an enslaved girl named Bildad in her will dated March 14, 1739.³¹⁰ Margaret Wythe probably died in the latter part of the decade of the 1740s and her children—Thomas, George, and Ann—gained possession of the slaves she had for her lifetime.

George Wythe was a slave owner when he moved to Spotsylvania County to begin his career as a lawyer. If Wythe had a male slave who served as his waiting man he would have taken this individual with him. It is likely that he left his slaves who tended crops behind in Elizabeth City County. The young lawyer might have gained possession of one or more slaves when he married Ann Lewis, daughter of Zachary Lewis, a lawyer who lived in Spotsylvania County, in December of 1747. However, there is no evidence that Wythe brought a Lewis slave with him when he arrived in Williamsburg a short time after the death of his wife on August 8, 1748. Ann Pattison charged Wythe seven and a half pence for “ye Man Supper” and one shilling and three pence for feeding his horse on January 9, 1749.³¹¹ The entry is puzzling: why did Wythe pay to have his man eat at Pattison's tavern when he himself lived in Williamsburg?

Thomas Wythe Junior followed in his father's footsteps and was a planter. He did not have any heirs when he died between May 2, 1754 and January 7, 1755. According to the terms of their father's will, his younger brother George gained possession of Chesterville. The second Thomas Wythe left his slaves to his wife and to his sister, Ann Wythe Sweeney.³¹² The bond

³⁰⁹ Elizabeth City County Deeds and Wills 1704-1730, dated November 3, 172[8?] and recorded October 15, 1729, pp. 188-189.

³¹⁰ Elizabeth City County Wills, Etc., 1701-1904, dated March 14, 1739.

³¹¹ Ann Pattison Account Book, January 9, 1749, Virginia Historical Society.

³¹² Will of Thomas Wythe in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, Wills, 1733-1799, p. 25; see also Alonzo Thomas Dill, *George Wythe, Teacher of Liberty*, (Williamsburg, Virginia: Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1979), p. 14.

laborers whom George Wythe received as the dower of his second wife, Elizabeth Taliaferro, joined his enslaved men, women, and children at Chesterville when they married between 1755 and 1760.

It is possible that Wythe managed Chesterville from Williamsburg for a number of years. However, by 1773 Wythe decided to hire an overseer named Hamilton Usher St. George who was reputed to be the best farmer in the area.³¹³ St. George was a native of Ireland who arrived in Virginia in 1766. This decision caused Wythe problems because St. George was a Loyalist.

After the Revolution St. George recalled that Wythe owned 1,050 acres of land on the Back River in Elizabeth City County. He managed the lawyer's slaves (a total of thirty-two in 1781) in addition to his own (a minimum of fourteen at the beginning of the Revolution). St. George noted that Wythe

granted Claimant a Lease for his Life the agreement was late in the Spring 1775. the Lease was not granted till the Summer. The Terms of the Lease were his paying a half of the net profits after deducting all expences & in consideration thereof Wythe was to Educate Claimants Son – Occupied this from 1773 - till 1781. thinks they shared £ 300 a year Sterling each after the end of 2 or 3 years –

Thinks there were about 250 Acres of Wood Land and all the rest cleared – Corrects himself and says afterwards it was early in the Spring in 1775 when the agreement was made –

Is positive the Memorandum was signed before the Battle of Lexington – the Lease not till afterwards – Says Mr. Wythe was very desirous of the Agreement and thought the advantage lay on his side – he sought it for a long time before – Lord Dunmore offered his Estate on the same terms – Claimant was reckoned the best Farmer in the Country –

Claimant was to have Liberty to surrender the Lease at any time – Claimant wished to have a clause inserted for that purpose – There was no power on the part of the Lessee to determine the Lease –

Claimant was bound to cultivate the Land so long as he held it and it was liable he supposes to be determined if he failed in the Conditions of Cultivating and managing the Farm – He was not at Liberty to assign – Estimates the profits of this at £ 300 pr. Annum. if he could have lived upon it and at 7 years purchase for his Life – Says in his Claim before the Treasury he put no value on this article but was advised By the Committee of Loyalists to extend a value on it If he had transacted the management of the Farm adjoining with Mr. Wythes he could not have done it for £ 300 pr. Annum –

³¹³ Information about Hamilton Usher St. George is from the “Loyalist Claim of Hamilton Usher St. George,” P.R.O. /A.O. 12/54, pp. 195-213.

Thinks a good Manager might have been got for £ 100 pr. Annum and his provisions – Claimant for the most part resided there.

St. George “made a Tender of his service to Lord Dunmore before he left the Palace who advised him to remain at Home and procure Intelligence and provisions.” The overseer’s neighbors resented his actions and burned “his House with all therein contained” and “ordered your Memorialist with his Overseer to prison with his Negroes. . . . That your Memorialist Negroes took the goal Fever by which 14 of them died.” St. George did not note if any of his slaves survived “goal Fever.” It appears that the residents of Elizabeth City County knew which slaves at Chesterville belonged to St. George and which were the property of Wythe.³¹⁴

Perhaps both St. George’s activities on behalf of the British and the rhetoric of freedom influenced four of Wythe’s slaves to leave Chesterville. Surviving documents indicate that two men ran away soon after Dunmore’s Proclamation, but chose not to join the Ethiopian Regiment. On January 17, 1776 the proceedings of the Fourth Virginia Convention noted “that *Neptune*, belonging to *George Wythe, esq;* was taken up as a runaway.” Neptune and other runaways who did not serve in Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment were to

be delivered to their respective owners, on their paying the expenses which have accrued, or shall accrue, from the time of their being taken, till the time of their delivery; and that a list of the said negroes, with the names of their several owners, be inserted in the *Virginia Gazette*. And if the owners do not apply within two months from the date of the said advertisement, that such thereof as may then remain be sold at publick auction, and the balance, after deducting the expenses aforesaid, be lodged in the hands of the treasurer of this colony, to be paid to the owners, when demanded.

Wythe probably sold Neptune soon after the Fourth Virginia Convention’s decision on January 17th because Neptune was not one of the nine slaves whom Peter Pelham listed as being in the Public Goal on January 19, 1776 and there is no additional evidence that Wythe owned a man named Neptune.³¹⁵

Charles ran from Wythe’s Elizabeth City County plantation in the spring of 1776. Charles was one of nineteen enslaved men held in the Public Goal in Williamsburg in July 1776. The Council of the State of Virginia ordered John Minson Galt, Robert Nicolson, and James Southall to examine the slaves. They estimated the yearly hire of Charles at £8. Peter Pelham, the keeper of the Public Goal was ordered to

³¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 202-204, 201, 195-196.

³¹⁵ Robert L. Scribner et al., eds., *Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence*, 7 vols., (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1973-1983), 5:423-424, 432.

deliver the Negroes in his custody to Mr Peter Terrel, to be by him carried to the Lead Mines, and there delivered to Mr James Calloway; and that Mr Terrel give his Receipt to the Jailor for the same

Ordered, that the General be requested to order a Waggon to assist in removing the Slaves up to the Lead Mines, and that he be informed it is expected, Mr Calloway will have a Load of Lead ready to send down by the return of the Waggon

Ordered that Mr Terrel be empowered to hire a Guard of four Men, to assist in removing the above slaves; and in case he shall not be able to procure the same—that he then apply to the Lieutenants of the several Counties, through which, he is to pass, who are requested to order a proper Guard to attend him to the next County.

There is no additional information about Charles.³¹⁶

Two men who lived and worked at Chesterville ran to the enemy four years after Dunmore issued his Proclamation. In 1783 a twenty-five year old man named George Weeks reported that he was formerly a slave to George Wythe in Elizabeth City County and that he departed in 1779. Perhaps he ran with another slave who left Chesterville. James Wythe, twenty-four years old in 1783, also joined the enemy in 1779. Both George Weeks and James Wythe were among the slaves who were evacuated with the British when they left New York in 1783. The fact that these two men had surnames suggests that each of their fathers was a free man and that Wythe allowed their mothers to choose the name of their son.³¹⁷

The Wythe slaves who remained in Elizabeth City County continued to work in the fields. The Allies impressed provisions grown at Chesterville for the use of the army in late 1780 and 1781³¹⁸:

Nov'r ____ To 30 bush. Irish Potatoes del'd the Comm'rs
@ 4/ 6...--

³¹⁶ H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Journals of the Council of the State of Virginia*, 4 vols., (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1931), 1:70-71. The legislators sent Wythe's Charles and other slaves to the lead mines in Montgomery County in the southwestern part of the state. The mining of lead began in 1759 by a company organized by John Robinson, Francis Fauquier, William Byrd III, and John Chiswell. The state operated the mines during the Revolution. In *Notes on the State of Virginia* Jefferson noted that the lead mines could employ thirty men per year and they could produce up to sixty tons of lead per year. The mines became important when the fighting shifted to the South since the Montgomery County mines were the only major source of lead in the region. See James A. Mulholland, *A History of Metals in Colonial America*, pp. 137-139.

³¹⁷ Graham Russell Hodges, ed., *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile After the American Revolution*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., in association with the New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1996), pp. 50, 178.

³¹⁸ John L. Patterson, "Revolutionary War Public Claim Records For Elizabeth City County, Virginia," (Hampton, Virginia: LRC Historical and Archeological Society, 1976), p. 15.

1781			
Jan'yry	1	To 22 bush. Do. Do.	4..8..-
		To 5 bush. Pease Do. 3/	..15..-
	6	To a Cart and 6 Oxen and two Men Carting Fodder per Order Commissioners	..12..-
Feb'yry	8	To 5 beaves estimated to Weigh 1200 lbs. del'd to Comm'rs @ 3d	15..-.-
March		To 1 hhd. Cyder 100 Gallons	3..2..6
		To 20 bush. Irish Potatoes @ 4/	4...-.-
Oct'r	1st	To 1 ½ bush. Corn for Maj'r Nelson's Troop of horse @ 2/6	..3..9
	4	To 15 bush. Do. furnished Gen'l Stevens Brigade per per Rec't 2/6	3..7..6
	7	To 52 bushels Oats furnished Do. Do. @ 1/6	<u>3..18..-</u>
			£ 31..6..9

St. George stayed in Elizabeth City County until the Siege of Yorktown when he joined Cornwallis. His claim included his losses for 1781:

Decr. 20	Every thing I possessed in Elizabeth City County was taken this day which is as follows and in which George Wythe was to share one Moiety of the stock and Crop		
	To 50 Load of Oats @ £ 2..10	£ 125	62..10
	To 250000 Corn hills which would yield 750 Barrels of Indian Corn @ 10/		187..10
	To 104 full grown Cattle @ £ 5		260..00
	To 150 sheep @ £ 1	£ 150	75..
	To 130 Hogs @ £ 1		65
	To 10 Acres of Land in potatoes @ £ 30 pr Acre		150
	To [100 Busl. of Wheat @ £ 5		100

In addition, he claimed £ 2100 for “a Lease for my Life on 1050 Acres of Land upon Back River & 32 Negroes worth to me pr. Year £ 300 at 7 years purchase.”³¹⁹ On December 20, 1781 St. George noted that his wife informed him “that George Wythe who was a Member of Congress and concerned with him in the Farm, turned her out of possession of the Farm and took possession of everything upon it except the little Household Furniture she had got together.”³²⁰

On December 31, 1781 Wythe wrote to Jefferson in order to decline an invitation to spend time at Monticello. He noted that “the manager who hath lately eloped” left Chesterville in a state of confusion.³²¹ The Elizabeth City County Personal Property Tax Lists provide

³¹⁹ “Loyalist Claim of Hamilton Ushur St. George,” pp. 199-200.

³²⁰ Ibid., p. 208. See also p. 213.

information about the number, age, and gender of the slaves who remained at Chesterville between 1782 and 1792:

1782	11 slaves over sixteen and 16 slaves under sixteen
1783	13 slaves over sixteen and 15 slaves under sixteen
1784	11 slaves over sixteen and 15 slaves under sixteen
1785	15 slaves over sixteen and 13 slaves under sixteen
1786	11 slaves over sixteen and 17 slaves under sixteen
1787	14 slaves over sixteen and 14 slaves under sixteen
1788	11 slaves over sixteen and 1 slave between twelve and sixteen
1789	10 slaves over sixteen and 2 slaves between twelve and sixteen
1790	9 slaves over sixteen and 2 slaves between twelve and sixteen
1791	9 slaves over sixteen and 2 slaves between twelve and sixteen
1792	9 slaves over sixteen

The tax lists also indicate that Wythe had two overseers in the 1780s. First, a man named John Wills worked at Chesterville in 1784 and 1785. Next, the lawyer's nephew, George Wythe Sweeney managed the plantation between 1786 and 1792. In October of that year Wythe and George Wythe Sweeney and his wife Jane sold Chesterville to Daniel L. Hylton. It is possible that Hylton also purchased the enslaved men, women, and children who lived on the property because neither Wythe nor Sweeney appeared on subsequent tax lists as the owners of slaves. Hylton defaulted on his payment for the plantation. He placed an announcement of the sale of Chesterville in the July 8, 1795 issue of the *Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser*:

FOR SALE,

Or to be Exchanged for Property in New-York, New-Jersey, or Philadelphia,
A VALUABLE PLANTATION CALLED CHESTERVILLE,

ON Back-River, in Elizabeth City County; containing by a late survey 920 acres of LAND, of which 477 are cleared, divided and ditched round in 50 acre [l]ots, 233 in wood, and 210 in fine grazing marsh, capable of producing the best salt hay, and supporting from 200 to 300 head of cattle through the winter. The upland is of extraordinary quality, fitted either for corn, wheat, barley or hay—and the natural grass is well calculated to make the latter. There is on it an orchard of about 6 acres of Hughes Crab, and other bearing apple trees; with 500 more choice apple trees ready to set out, near to the dwellings—They consist of a large new convenient brick house, neatly finished, with four large rooms in it, and offices below; a large negro quarter, a kitchen, stable, and storehouse in good repair, and a granary 60 by 22 feet, lately completed; and at which vessels of 60 tons may load.

Besides the above, there are about 400 acres of Dry and Marsh LAND, belonging to the Free School, adjoining and rented to Chesterville, at 15 l. a year, upon a life lease, and may be taken or not with the place. Also about 80 head of CATTLE and HORSES, 150 SHEEP and HOGS, and some NEGROES.

³²¹ Julian P. Boyd, ed., et al., eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 2:144-145.

The advantages of this Plantion for game and fish of every kind, and its adjacence to Norfolk market by water, are recommendations which render it desirable and profitable. For further particulars apply to Doctor FOUSHEE, DANIEL L. HYLTON, and WM. DABNEY, Esqrs. Richmond.³²²

Hylton did not find a purchaser for this property and Wythe regained possession of Chesterville in 1800. The lawyer sold the land to Holdner Hutchings of Mathews County in December 1802.³²³

Family Background and Possible Influences on Wythe's Thoughts About Slavery

It is difficult to discuss Wythe's thoughts about slavery because his private papers do not survive. However, Wythe's family background, his friendship with Governor Francis Fauquier, two letters written by Thomas Jefferson in the 1780s, his emancipations of his slaves, two deeds of gift, and a court decision made by Wythe in 1806 provide some clues.

George Wythe was born in late 1726 or early 1727 at Chesterville, his family's plantation in Elizabeth City County. His parents were Thomas and Margaret (nee Walker, daughter of George and Ann Keith Walker). Chesterville was located on a neck of the Back River, about seven miles northwest of Hampton. Wythe's great-grandfather, George Keith, was a prominent Quaker who traveled from England to Pennsylvania to preach. He and his followers (who were known as "Keithians") published *An Exhortation & Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes* in 1693. The "Keithians" encouraged slave owners to manumit those bond laborers who had served a "reasonable" amount of time.³²⁴

When George Keith's daughter, Ann, married George Walker of Elizabeth City County she and her husband were both Quakers. Ann Walker turned to the established church after her father became an Anglican minister and a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. However, George Walker remained a Quaker. Ann Walker petitioned the Council for the right to control the religious education of their children in 1708. On April 25th of that year the Governor and members of the Council informed Ann Walker that her husband

Desiers to have that athorety over his Childr. that properly Belongs to Every Christian man: that is to Bring up his Childr. in whatever Christian Religion he may Be of that is priveliged By our Christian Laws . . . y'r husband Seems to Be very Willing to Give yo all manner of Liberty to Injoy y'r Religion provided yo Leave the Instruction of all his

³²² *Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser*, July 8, 1795.

³²³ Elizabeth City County Land and Personal Property Tax Lists 1782 to 1804; Elizabeth City County Deeds and Wills No.12 (1796-1806), pp. 87-88; dated June 15, 1801 and recorded July 23, 1801; *ibid.*, pp. 232-234, dated December 6, 1802 and recorded April 28, 1803.

³²⁴ Dill, *George Wythe*, pp. 3, 5. See also Robert B. Kirtland, *George Wythe: Lawyer, Revolutionary, Judge*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), pp. 20-40.

Children to him and that yo will Not Cause them to Read any Books Except the Scripture but Such as he allows of and that yo forbare to Incense and persuad any of his Children against his Religion as Long as he professes to Be a Christian . . . if y'r husband will Give yo Liberty to Injoy y'r Religion without Interruption: he ought to have all the Liberty above Desiered: But if yo Can prove that he is Not a Christian and So Consequently Not within the virge of our Christian Laws then we are willing to heare yo on Wensday Morning Next but wee Shuld be Glad yo Could Be Reconcilled without Such proceedings.³²⁵

Evidence suggests that Ann Walker returned to the Quaker faith after her father's death in 1716. She and her husband hosted meetings of Quakers in their home. It is likely that George Wythe's mother, Margaret, was raised as a Quaker.³²⁶ Margaret Walker married Thomas Wythe and they had three children: Thomas, George, and Ann. Wythe's father died in 1729 and it is possible that his mother played an important role in his education. Perhaps Margaret Wythe's background influenced her decision to exchange sixteen acres of land along the Back River for a similar size tract of land with a free black woman named Hannah Francis in March 1740.³²⁷

Wythe and Francis Fauquier became close friends during the time that Fauquier was governor of Virginia. It is likely that Wythe, Fauquier, Thomas Jefferson, and William Small discussed and debated the institution of slavery when they dined together at the Palace. Fauquier noted his dislike of slavery in his will. In March 1767 the governor wrote

It is now expedient that I should dispose of my Slaves, a part of my Estate in its nature disagreeable to me, but which my situation made necessary for me; the disposal of which has constantly given me uneasiness whenever the thought has occurred to me. I hope I shall be found to have been a Merciful Master to them and that no one of them will rise up in Judgment against me in that great day when all my actions will be exposed to Public view. For with what face can I expect Mercy from an offended God, if I have not myself shewn Mercy to those dependent on me. But It is not sufficient that I have been this Master in my life, I must provide for them at my death by using my utmost Endeavours that they experience as little Misery during their lives as their very unhappy and pitiable condition will allow. Therefore I will that they shall have liberty to choose their own Masters and that the Women and their Children shall not be parted; that they shall have six Months allowed them to make such Choice, during which Time they shall be maintained out of my Estate; That my Executor shall take for them of such Masters as they shall choose twenty five per Cent under the then Market price.

³²⁵ "Answer by Gov'r & Council to Mrs. Walker's Petition," in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 16 (1908): 80-81.

³²⁶ Dill, *George Wythe*, p. 6.

³²⁷ Elizabeth City County Deeds and Wills (34) 118, April 25, 1793.

Fauquier selected Wythe, William Nelson, Robert Carter, and Peyton Randolph as the executors of his estate.³²⁸ It took Wythe, Nelson, Carter, and Randolph four years to settle the estate of the deceased governor. Perhaps the time that Wythe spent handling Fauquier's property led him to reflect on his friend's thoughts about the institution of slavery.

In late 1769 or early 1770 Wythe agreed to represent Wade Netherland in the suit brought against him by Samuel Howell.³²⁹ Netherland believed that Howell, a mulatto man, was his indentured servant until the age of thirty-one, not to the age of twenty-one as Howell claimed. Howell secured Thomas Jefferson as his lawyer. In April 1770 Jefferson presented his opening argument before the members of the General Court. As Wythe prepared to answer Jefferson's statement, the General Court's justices interrupted him and ruled in favor of his client. Unfortunately, Wythe did not have an opportunity to present his case before the court.

Two letters written by Thomas Jefferson, one in 1785 and one in 1786, indicate that Wythe and his student discussed slavery and how Virginians could abolish the institution. First, in a letter to Richard Price, a noted British abolitionist, dated August 7, 1785, Jefferson commented on the influence that Price's pamphlet would have on the new nation as a whole and on Virginia in particular. In this discussion he noted that he believed that Wythe would play an important part in educating Virginia's future leaders about the need to end slavery in their state:

Southward of the Chesapeak it will find but few readers concurring with it in sentiment on the subject of slavery. From the mouth to the head of the Chesapeak, the bulk of the people will approve it in theory, and it will find a respectable minority ready to adopt it in practice, a minority which for weight and worth of character preponderates against the greater number, who have not the courage to divest their families of a property which however keeps their consciences inquiet. Northward of the Chesapeak you may find here and there an opponent to your doctrine as you may find here and there a robber and a murderer, but in no greater number. In that part of America, there being but few slaves, they can easily disencumber themselves of them, and emancipation is put into such a train that in a few years there will be no slaves Northward of Maryland. In Maryland I do not find such a disposition to begin the redress of this enormity as in Virginia. This is the next state to which we may turn our eyes for the interesting spectacle of justice in conflict with avarice and oppression: a conflict wherein the sacred side is gaining daily recruits from the influx into office of young men grown and growing up. These have suckled in the principles of liberty as it were with their mother's milk, and it is to them I look with anxiety to turn the fate of this question. Be not therefore discouraged. What you have written will do a great deal of good: and could you still trouble yourself with our welfare, no man is more able to give aid to the labouring side. The college of William and Mary in Williamsburg, since the remodelling of it's plan, is the place where are collected

³²⁸ York County Wills and Inventories (21) 396-404, dated March 26, 1767 and recorded March 21, 1768.

³²⁹ See the section on the Capitol in this resource book for the details of the Howell v. Netherland case.

together all the young men of Virginia under preparation for public life. They are there under the direction (most of them) of a Mr. Wythe one of the most virtuous characters, and whose sentiments on the subject of slavery are unequivocal. I am satisfied if you could resolve to address an exhortation to those young men, with all that eloquence of which you are master, that it's influence on the future decision of this important question would be great, perhaps decisive.³³⁰

In June of the following year Jefferson addressed some of the criticism that he and Wythe received for not abolishing slavery when they revised Virginia's laws between 1777 and 1779, when he wrote Jean Nicolas Demeunier:

M. de Meusnier, where he mentions that the slave-law has been passed in Virginia, without the clause of emancipation, is pleased to mention that neither Mr. Wythe nor Mr. Jefferson were present to make the proposition they had meditated; from which people, who do not give themselves the trouble to reflect or enquire, might conclude hastily that their absence was the cause why the proposition was not made; and of course that there were not in the assembly persons of virtue and firmness enough to propose the clause for emancipation. This supposition would not be true. There were persons there who wanted neither the virtue to propose, nor talents to enforce the proposition had they seen that the disposition of the legislature was ripe for it. These worthy characters would feel themselves wounded, degraded, and discouraged by this idea. Mr. Jefferson would therefore be obliged to M. de Meusnier to mention it in some such manner as this. 'Of the two commissioners who had concerted the amendatory clause for the gradual emancipation of slaves Mr. Wythe could not be present as being a member of the judiciary department, and Mr. Jefferson was absent on the legation to France. But there wanted not in that assembly men of virtue enough to propose, and talents to vindicate this clause. But they say that the moment of doing it with success was not yet arrived, and that an unsuccessful effort, as too often happens, would only rivet still closer the chains of bondage, and retard the moment of delivery to this oppressed description of men. What a stupendous, what an incomprehensible machine is man! Who can endure toil, famine, stripes, imprisonment or death itself in vindication of his own liberty, and the next moment be deaf to all those motives whose power supported him thro' his trial, and inflict on his fellow men a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose. But we must await with patience the workings of an overruling providence, and hope that that is preparing the deliverance of these our suffering brethern. When the measure of their tears shall be full, when their groans shall have involved heaven itself in darkness, doubtless a god of justice will awaken to their distress, and by diffusing light and liberality among their oppressors, or at length by his exterminating thunder, manifest his attention to the things of this world, and that they are not left to the guidance of a blind fatality.'³³¹

³³⁰ Boyd, et al., eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 8:356-357.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 10:62-63.

Two deeds of gift from Wythe to members of the Taliaferro family indicate his concern to keep slave families together. The lawyer transferred Kate, her daughters Rachel and Lydia, and Rachel's children Lucy, Bob, and Jimmy; and Fanny and her sons Paris and Isaac to the minor children of his brother-in-law, Richard Taliaferro. Rose and her son Edward became the property of another Taliaferro daughter, Elizabeth Call. Extant documents indicate that Wythe emancipated at least four of his Williamsburg slaves: Lydia Broadnax on September 15, 1787; Polly on February 20, 1788; Charles on August 13, 1788; and Ben sometime before April 20, 1803.

Wythe's decision in *Hudgins v. Wrights* in 1806 indicates his belief that all persons, regardless of race, deserved to be free. The following selection is a summary of the *Hudgins v. Wrights* case:

Hudgins, being about to send the appellees out of the state, "a writ of *ne exeat*³³² was obtained from the Chancellor, on the ground that they were entitled to freedom . . . The time of the birth of the youngest was established by the testimony; and the characteristic features, the complexion, the hair and eyes were proven to have been the same with those of whites. Their genealogy was traced back by the evidence taken in the cause . . . through female ancestors, to an old Indian called Butterwood Nan [who was 60 years, or upwards, in 1755] . . . her daughter Hannah had long black hair, was of the right Indian copper colour, and was generally called an Indian by her neighbours, who said she might recover her freedom; if she would sue for it; . . . John, (a brother of Hannah,) brought a suit to recover his freedom; and that Hannah herself made an almost continual claim as to her right of freedom, insomuch that she was threatened to be whipped by her master for mention the subject." On the hearing, "the late Chancellor perceiving from his own view, that the youngest of the appellees was perfectly white, and that there were gradual shades of difference in colour between the grand-mother, mother, and grand-daughter, (all of whom were before the Court,) and considering the evidence in the cause, determined that the appellees were entitled to their freedom; and, moreover, on the ground that freedom is the birth-right of every human being, which sentiment is strongly inculcated by the first article of our 'political catechism,' the bill of rights—he laid it down as a general position, that whenever one person claims to hold another in slavery, the *onus probandi*³³³ lies on the claimant.

St. George Tucker upheld Wythe's decree that the Wrights were entitled to their freedom. However, Tucker noted

I do not concur with the chancellor in his reasoning or in the operation of the first clause of the Bill of Rights, which was notoriously framed with a cautious eye to this subject, and was meant to embrace the case of free citizens, or aliens only; and not by a side wind

³³² A writ of *ne exeat* is a writ that forbids the person to whom it is addressed from leaving the jurisdiction of the court or removing any property from the jurisdiction of the court.

³³³The term *onus probandi* means the burden of proof.

to overturn the rights of property, and give freedom to those very people whom we have been compelled from imperious circumstances to retain, generally, in the same state of bondage that they were in at the revolution, in which they had no concern, agency or interest I heartily concur with him in pronouncing the appellees absolutely free.”

In Tucker’s opinion, the basis of the Wrights’ freedom could be found in the fact that the freedom of Native Americans had been guaranteed since April 1691 when the General Assembly passed an act entitled “An Act for a free trade with Indians.”³³⁴

AMERICAN PARADOX: FREEDOM AND SLAVERY

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³³⁴ Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, ed., *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, 5 vols., (Washington, [D.C.]: Carnegie Institution of Washington Publication No. 374, 1926-1937; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), I:112-113.

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AMERICAN PARADOX: FREEDOM AND SLAVERY

Part I—Introduction

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

At the moment the North American colonies declared their independence from British rule, one out of every five Americans was enslaved and the institution itself was legal in each of the newly established United States. The incongruity of maintaining slavery in a society founded upon freedom and liberty was quickly recognized, harshly criticized, and ultimately justified by the founders of this new nation.

When Thomas Jefferson penned the above words in the Declaration of Independence, he was fully aware of the paradox created by a slaveholding society demanding its freedom. As early as 1764 James Otis noted in *The Rights of the British Colonies* that “the Colonists are by law of nature free born, as indeed all men are, white or black.” In May 1774, several enslaved men from Boston brought a petition to Governor Gage and the General Court that stated “your petitioners apprehend we have in common with all other men a natural right to our freedoms without being deprived of them by our fellow men.... We therefore beg your Excellency and Honors will.... cause an act of the legislation to be passed that we may obtain our natural right, our freedoms, and our children to be set at liberty.”³³⁵

Justifying the American paradox was a difficult, but not impossible, task. Revolutionary leaders used the ubiquity of enslavement in America to bolster their demands for independence. “The crisis is arrived,” wrote George Washington in August, 1774, “when we must assert our rights or submit to every imposition that can be heaped upon us till custom and use make us tame and abject slaves, as the blacks we rule over with such arbitrary sway.”³³⁶ Some quickly recognized the slippery slope of this argument. In 1775, Thomas Paine asked how Americans can “complain so loudly of attempts to enslave them while they hold so many hundreds of thousands in slavery.”³³⁷ Most, however, realized that to define freedom (and gain grassroots support for independence) one needed to have a readily available and universally understood concept of un-freedom. The moral and ideological conundrum of maintaining a system of oppression in a free country was less important than the motivational factor that symbolized enslavement as the end result of continued British rule.

³³⁵ Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 292; Kaplan and Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution*, pp. 13-15.

³³⁶ Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 292.

³³⁷ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 220.

The years immediately following American independence showed a marked increase in manumissions. The formation of an independent Republic caused some to reexamine slavery's position in the new nation. Gradual emancipation took root in northern states where enslaved populations were relatively small. Southern states simply relaxed restrictions on individual manumissions, allowing slaveholders to decide the fate—freedom or enslavement—of their human property. According to the 1790 census, Virginia's free black population grew six fold in 8 years with nearly 13,000 free persons of color residing in the Old Dominion. Nevertheless, ten thousand or so manumissions in eight years could not keep pace with the fifty thousand new slaves either born or brought to Virginia during the same time.³³⁸

Almost as soon as the number of manumissions began to rise in Virginia, several local, national and international factors converged to reassert the perceived necessity of enslavement. Fueled by the people's revolution in France and the publication of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the enslaved population of Saint Domingue (later Haiti) also demanded liberty, equality, and fraternity. Since there were some similarities with the American Revolution, the United States could have supported the revolution in Saint Domingue. It didn't. The turmoil in Saint Domingue was seen as insurrectionary and the United States did what it could to keep word of a slave rebellion in Saint Domingue from the African American population on the mainland. News did spread, however, in port towns like Baltimore, and cities like Richmond where Gabriel Prosser and perhaps as many as one thousand other enslaved Americans plotted their own revolution.

By the turn of the century, the development of the cotton gin and further westward expansion had once again placed slave labor at a premium. Virginia had a surplus of enslaved Americans and exporting slaves to Kentucky, Tennessee and points south was more profitable and efficient for owners than manumission or African colonization. Justification for enslavement also shifted. With national independence obtained, enslavement as a synecdoche for remaining under British rule was unnecessary. As the demand for enslaved labor increased with the large-scale production of cotton, scientific and philanthropic justifications for maintaining the institution also increased.

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson concluded that the inferiority of African descended peoples was due to physical rather than environmental factors. When confronted with the mathematical and scientific mind of free black Benjamin Banneker, Jefferson eventually concluded that, based on "a long letter from Banneker, [it] shows him to have a mind of very common stature indeed." Dr. Samuel Cartwright, a professor at the University of Louisiana, noted that slaves suffer from many natural diseases "peculiar to Africans," such as "Draptomania, or the Disease of Causing Negroes to Run Away," and "Dysthesia Aethiopica," which seems to cause both laziness and rebelliousness.³³⁹

The perceived natural inferiority of African peoples also led some to believe that American enslavement was a "positive good" for the enslaved. It was considered far better to be a slave exposed to the civilizing influences of Western thought and Christianity than remain primitive and unenlightened (but free) in Africa. This theory was not new or unique to the

³³⁸ Ibid., pp. 370-373.

³³⁹ Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 454; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, pp. 308, 650; Katz, *Breaking the Chains*, p. x.

nineteenth century; it simply became more popular as earlier justifications faded. As early as 1773, Dr. Theodore Parsons noted “It is evident beyond all controversy, that the removal of the Africans from the state of brutality, wretchedness, and misery in which they are at home so deeply involved, to this land of light, humanity, and christian knowledge, is to them so great a blessing.”³⁴⁰

The union of democracy and tyranny continued in the United States for more than “four score and seven years.” It took years of bloodshed, the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, and the passage of the Reconstruction Amendments before four million African Americans obtained American citizenship. Although the paradox of slavery in a land founded on freedom and liberty was finally resolved, the legacy of enslavement—racism and mistrust—continued in the form of Jim Crow segregation, brutal violence, disfranchisement, and second-class citizenship. Poet Langston Hughes recognized the paradox and the legacy when he wrote:

*I am the American heartbreak—
Rock on which Freedom
Stumps its toe—
The great mistake
That Jamestown
Made long ago.*³⁴¹

Ira Berlin provides an overview of the growth of freedom and slavery in the Upper South in the years after the American Revolution in his book, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (1998).

The revolutionary crisis transformed African-American life in the Chesapeake, or, as it was called when Marylanders, North Carolinians, and Virginians moved west into Kentucky and Tennessee, the Upper South. As in the northern colonies, the struggle for political independence—both the war itself and the changes that accompanied the establishment of an independent republic—challenged slavery, as slaves and their allies hammered at chattel bondage with the mallets of revolutionary republicanism and evangelical egalitarianism. But unlike in the North, slavery in the Upper South did not crack. The slave society that had emerged in the wake of the plantation revolution of the late seventeenth century hardly faltered, even as the region’s periphery—mostly prominently the area surrounding Baltimore—developed into a society with slaves. Thousands of slaves gained their freedom in the Upper South, and the greatly enlarged free black population began to reconstruct black life in freedom. But the expansion of slavery and with it a host of new forms of racial dependencies more than counterbalanced the growth of freedom.

The simultaneous expansion of freedom and of slavery defined black life in the Upper South and united free and slave as in no other region of the United States. The nascent class

³⁴⁰ Tise, *Proslavery*, p. 101.

³⁴¹ Hughes, *Selected Poems*, p. 9.

lines—informed more by notions of propriety and respectability than by material standing—that divided black people in the free states did not materialize in the Upper South; freedom and slavery evolved in a parallel course that entwined free and slave blacks in the same families, workplaces, churches, and communities. A two-caste system with rigid divisions between black and white came to exemplify the Upper South following the Age of Revolution.

...

But the continued existence of slavery muted the differences within black society. Many free people of color—men and women—married slaves and live, worked, and prayed together. Independent African churches were usually joint ventures of free and slave. If the ability of free people to hold property propelled them into positions of leadership in these organizations, slaves participated fully and often took leadership roles as deacons and ministers. Everyday experience reinforced the ties between free and slave peoples. Measured by church membership, family formation, wealth distribution, and aspirations and ideas, black society was much more of one piece in the Upper South—despite the formal divisions of freed and slave—than in the North. The shadow of slavery assured continued African-American unity. As perhaps nowhere else in mainland North America, the fate of free and slave blacks was entwined. Slavery defined freedom, and freedom defined slavery, in the Upper South during the Age of Revolution.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 256, 288-289.

Edmund Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (1975) remains one of the most influential treatments of the simultaneous development of an economy based on slave labor and a political system based on the ideal of liberty. In the following excerpts, Morgan hypothesizes that the existence of slavery created a healthy respect for freedom among Virginia's founding fathers.

The men who built the great houses [in the second quarter of the eighteenth century] and lived in them still thought of themselves as Englishmen and aped the style of the English country gentleman. They read English newspapers and imported the latest English fashions; but with a few exceptions like [William] Byrd they were content to be Englishmen in Virginia, without continually sighing for the security of the mother country. The commitment to Virginia that they expressed in bricks and mortar grew with the change in labor that made Virginia forever unlike England. The safe investment that a William Fitzhugh hoped for in an English estate would have come from the rents that other Englishmen would pay for land. Virginia's great planters too could count on getting some rent from their immense quantities of land, but their fortunes rested less on extracting rents from tenants or taxes from freemen than on the labor they extracted from African men and women permanently enslaved to them. They no longer needed to exploit other Englishmen in the ways their fathers had.

Thus by the second quarter of the eighteenth century Virginians had established the conditions for the mixture of slavery and freedom that was to prevail for at least another century: a slave labor force isolated from the rest of society by race and racism; a body of large planters, firmly committed to the country, who had become practiced in politics and political maneuvering; and a larger body of small planters who had been persuaded that their interests

were well served by the leadership of their big neighbors. The way was now prepared for the final ingredient that locked these elements together in a vital combination that enabled Virginians large and small to join with other Americans in devotion to freedom and equality, in abhorrence of slavery--and in the preservation of slaveholding.

That ingredient was a conglomeration of republican ideas that had gained popularity in England at the time of the Commonwealth. In England the ideas had not in the end prevailed, but they continued to be studied and refined and proclaimed by men who have come to be known as the eighteenth-century commonwealthmen. The commonwealthmen were not conspirators, hoping to overthrow the monarch and restore the republic of the 1650s. But they were admirers of the Roman republic if not the English one, and caustic critics of the English monarchy. Along with other Englishmen they paid tribute to John Locke and the Revolution of 1688; but their favorite political philosophers were James Harrington and Algernon Sydney, who had championed the cause of republican government and suffered (the one imprisoned, the other executed) at the hands of Charles II.

The commonwealthmen believed that a monarch, if not curbed, would inevitably turn tyrant and reduce his subjects to slavery. In eighteenth-century England they saw in every exercise of executive power the signs of a drift toward tyranny and slavery, which they called on their countrymen to arrest. They suspected the army. They despised the churchmen who unflinchingly supported every infringement of liberty. They wanted to extend the suffrage and make representatives more responsive to the people. Above all, they wanted a wide distribution of property to create an enlarged enfranchised yeomanry who would see to it that government stuck to its proper business of protecting liberty and property. Their countrymen paid them little heed, and their names have not survived in fame: John Trenchard, Thomas Gordon, Robert Molesworth, Francis Hutcheson, James Burgh--these are scarcely household names today. But in the American colonies they were known and admired. In Virginia their ideas gradually gathered strength in a movement whose beginnings are difficult to discern but which became more and more palpable as the century advanced, until Virginians spoke in a language that would have astonished and disgusted William Berkeley.

...

It may be coincidence that so many Virginians who grew up after the advent of slavery turned out to be ardent republicans. And it may be coincidence that among their predecessors who lived before slavery became prevalent, so many were unrepublican, unattractive, and unscrupulous, not to say depraved. On the other hand, there may have been more than coincidence involved. Although it seems unlikely that slavery had any tendency to improve the character of masters, it may have had affinities with republicanism that escaped Jefferson's analysis. The presence of men and women who were, in law at least, almost totally subject to the will of other men gave to those in control of them an immediate experience of what it could mean to be at the mercy of a tyrant. Virginians may have had a special appreciation of the freedom dear to republicans, because they saw every day what life without it could be like.

...

Virginia's republicans had the decency to be disturbed by the apparent inconsistency of what they were doing. But they were far more disturbed by the prospect of turning 200,000

slaves loose to find a place in their free society. "If you free the slaves," wrote Landon Carter, two days after the Declaration of Independence, "you must send them out of the country or they must steal for their support." They would be, after all, what they were, poor, and they would exhibit the congenital laziness and immorality of the poor. Jefferson himself thought that slaves could not safely be freed unless they were exiled. And the only serious plan for their emancipation, proposed by St. George Tucker in 1796, would have transformed their slavery into a kind of serfdom, under which they would still be compelled to labor, lest they become "idle, dissipated, and finally a numerous banditti." But even Tucker's plan seemed too dangerous to receive serious consideration.

One wonders if it might not have been taken more seriously if Virginia's slaves had belonged to the same race as their masters. The fact that they did not made it easier for Virginians to use slavery as a flying buttress to freedom. The English had come to view their poor almost as an alien race, with inbred traits of character that justified plans for their enslavement or incarceration in workhouses. Almost, but not quite. It required continual denunciations from a battery of philosophers and reformers; it even required special badges, to proclaim the differentness of the poor to the undiscerning, who might otherwise mistake them for ordinary men.

In Virginia neither badges nor philosophers were needed. It was not necessary to pretend or to prove that the enslaved were a different race, because they were. Anyone could tell black from white, even if black was actually brown or red. And as the number of poor white Virginians diminished, the vicious traits of character attributed by Englishmen to their poor could in Virginia increasingly appear to be the exclusive character of blacks. They were ungrateful, irresponsible, lazy, and dishonest. "A Negroe can't be honest," said Landon Carter and filled his diary with complaints of the congenital laziness and ingratitude of black men.

Racism thus absorbed in Virginia the fear and contempt that men in England, whether Whig or Tory, monarchist or republican, felt for the inarticulate lower classes. Racism made it possible for white Virginians to develop a devotion to the equality that English republicans had declared to be the soul of liberty. There were too few free poor on hand to matter. And by lumping Indians, mulattoes, and Negroes in a single pariah class, Virginians had paved the way for a similar lumping of small and large planters in a single master class.

Virginians knew that the members of this class were not in fact equal, either in property or in virtue, just as they knew that Negroes, mulattoes, and Indians were not one and the same. But the forces which dictated that Virginians see Negroes, mulattoes, and Indians as one also dictated that they see large and small planters as one. Racism became an essential, if unacknowledged, ingredient of the republican ideology that enabled Virginians to lead the nation.

How Virginian, then, was America? How heavily did American economic opportunity and political freedom rest on Virginia's slaves? If Virginia had continued to rely on the importation of white servants, would they have headed north when they turned free and brought insoluble problems of poverty with them? Would they have threatened the peace and prosperity of Philadelphia and New York and Boston, where the poor were steadily growing in numbers anyhow? Would Northerners have embraced republican ideas of equality so readily if they had been surrounded by men in "a certain degree of misery?" And could the new United States have made a go of it in the world of nations without Virginia and without the products of slave labor? Northern republicans apparently thought not. Some could not condone slavery and talked of breaking loose from the South in their own independent confederation. But the fact is that they

did not. They allowed Virginians to compose the documents that founded their republic, and they chose Virginians to chart its course for a generation.

Eventually, to be sure, the course the Virginians charted for the United States proved the undoing of slavery. And a Virginia general gave up at Appomattox the attempt to support freedom with slavery. But were the two more closely linked than his conquerors could admit? Was the vision of a nation of equals flawed at the source by contempt for both the poor and the black? Is America still colonial Virginia writ large? More than a century after Appomattox the questions linger.

Source: Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, pp. 368-370, 376, 385-387.

Part II—Virginia Slavery During The Revolution

1776 to 1781—The Experiences of Black Women During the Revolutionary War

In many ways, slave and free black women experienced the war differently than their male counterparts. Most significantly, women were much less likely to play a role in the war's military campaigns. The war profoundly affected women's lives, however, especially in their capacities as laborers on the home front and as members of families broken up by the war. And, although slave women were not as likely as men to find new opportunities for escape during the war, many did take advantage of wartime dislocation and increasing antislavery sentiment among whites to gain their freedom.

In the following selections from her essay "Race, Sex, and Self-Evident Truths: The Status of Slave Women during the Era of the American Revolution," Jacqueline Jones traces some of the trials and possibilities encountered by black women during the war. While many women suffered as a result of physical deprivation, new work demands, and separation from family and kin, others were able to translate the high demand for manual labor and the general upheaval of war into greater autonomy for themselves.

The political unrest and wartime devastation that marked the Revolutionary era brought into focus all the contradictions implicit in the emerging democratic republic of slaveholders and their allies. Masters found themselves confronted by their own demands for liberty and reacted accordingly, either by manumitting their slaves or by fighting ever more tenaciously to enforce black subordination. These conflicting impulses among the white elite helped to shape the experiences of black women during this period of upheaval, but so too did the economic transformations wrought by armed conflict and incipient nation-building. For their part, slaves seized the initiative whenever an opportune moment presented itself and fought their own battles for self-determination as field hands, refugees, and liberators of their own kin. Finally, black women's family responsibilities as wives and mothers remained constant even as the Revolution gave their productive abilities a new political significance.

Fears of organized slave revolts dogged the colonists throughout their War for Independence; at one time or another most whites regardless of class status must have agreed with Abigail Adams when she said she regretted that there existed "a slave in the province."

Resistance to bondage during the war assumed a number of highly publicized forms—from the South Carolina maroon uprisings in the late 1760s to the general “restiveness” of Boston blacks in the mid-1770s, massive defections of slaves to the British, and petitions for freedom submitted to new state legislatures in the 1780s. Try as they would to maintain a semblance of routine within their households, slaveholders could hardly ignore the enemies that waited on and surrounded them each day.

For the bulk of slave women located on southern plantations, the war entailed both physical suffering and greater latitude for personal action. Forced to make do with less in the way of food, clothing, and other basic supplies, white southerners considered the daily needs of their slaves to be a low priority (especially after 1778, when fighting engulfed the region). At least some whites fulfilled the prediction of the patriot who railed against runaway slave men seeking protection from the British: “The aged, the infirm, the women and children, are still to remain the property of their masters, masters who will be provoked to severity, should part of their slaves desert them.” Untold numbers of slave women felt the wrath of “an enraged and injured people” desperate to keep the upper hand at home as well as on the battlefield.

The women who remained with their masters gave whites cause enough for alarm. Thomas Pinckney’s depleted South Carolina plantation consisted primarily of mothers and children in 1779, but they proved no more tractable than the male slaves who had already deserted; according to the white man, the slave women “pay no attention” to the overseer. Residing on another estate, Pinckney’s mother commiserated with him, noting that she had lost control over her servants, “for they all do now as they please everywhere.” As the war raged near her North Carolina estate in 1781, another mistress complained bitterly about the insolent Sarah: “She never came near me till after repeated messages yesterday to come and Iron a few clothes. . . . She made shift to creep here and then was very impudent.” Such recalcitrance could provoke some whites to violence, others to reluctant indulgence. A Baltimore slaveholder urged his overseer not to upset the slave Ruth, or “she will run off, for she is an arch bitch.”

Slaveholders might try to brutalize, cajole, or bribe black women into submission, but they could not escape the fact that they needed every available worker. The estimated 55,000 slaves who absconded, and many others pressed into service by the colonists and British alike, left some areas of the South bereft of field hands and thus devastated by food shortages. Planters who sought to institute a system of household cloth production reserved the positions of spinners and weavers for black women and girls, a sexual division of labor shaped in part by the now critical lack of male laborers. The rebels were not about to let gender considerations interfere with their exploitation of black labor in this time of crisis, and southern states often sought to buy, hire, or impress slaves of both sexes for use on public works projects. For example, in 1780 the Board of Trade of Virginia purchased twenty-six blacks (among them three women) to work in its tanneries, ironworks, boatyards, and army hospitals. The intense demand for unskilled labor during the war, exacerbated by a temporary halt in the foreign slave trade, endangered the well-being of free blacks, as well as slave women. In 1778 Ann Driggus of North Carolina suffered a beating at the hands of two men who then kidnapped four of her children in order to sell them.

Increased demands on their productive energies, combined with the confusion produced by wartime, prompted slave women to seek safety with the enemies of their master, whether rebel or loyalist. According to Gerald W. Mullin and other historians, family ties assumed even greater significance as a source of motivation among runaways, compared to the colonial period, perhaps reflecting more favorable conditions for flight and for beginning a new life elsewhere

with kinfolk. Mary Beth Norton has suggested that “although a majority of runaways were male, women apparently sought freedom in greater numbers [that is, proportion] during the war than in peacetime.” Evidence from scattered sources reveals that up to a third of all wartime refugees were female, compared to the 10 percent or so of runaways listed in colonial newspapers who were female. Panic-stricken, patriot law-enforcement officials condemned to hard labor, executed, or sold to the West Indies those women and men who failed in their bid for freedom.

...

Thus the black fight for independence proceeded apace, whenever formerly compliant slave women suddenly turned “sassy” and defiant or abandoned their master’s household, either to cast their lot with the British or slip as self-freed persons into the anonymity of urban life. A more formal (though no less difficult) route to freedom lay through the state courts and legislatures and through the efforts of free blacks to buy and then emancipate their own kin. For example, among the many individual petitions submitted to legislative and judicial bodies was that of the Connecticut slave Belinda, who argued that her four decades of toil for a white man had availed her nothing: “My labors have not procured me any comfort,” she wrote. “I have not yet enjoyed the benefits of creation. With my poor daughter, I fear I shall pass the remainder of my days in slavery and misery. For her and myself, I beg freedom.” Soon after the Revolution, a Petersburg, Virginia, black woman named Lucy Arbuckle paid the owner of her slave daughter over £30, and once she had secured the girl’s release, freed her (although the mother had to make an additional final payment three weeks later). Some women managed to buy their own freedom, while others relied on relatives (frequently artisan husbands) to escape slavery through legal means. As Ira Berlin notes, these instances of legal support transcended differences in the legal status of individuals and testified to the “solidarity and common purpose” that informed Afro-American life during the Revolutionary era.

The war unleashed unprecedented antislavery sentiment among whites, but that sentiment manifested itself in uneven ways. In the mid-1700s all but a few thousand black women and men in the colonies were slaves; by the first decade of the next century the free black population had swelled to nearly a quarter million. . . . Two points are relevant to [the issue of manumission]: first, the most far-reaching antislavery legislation was enacted by northerners, who had the least to lose financially from their altruism; and second, the burden of transition from a slave to free black population fell most heavily on mothers, whose offspring perpetuated the system of bondage.

The upper South reached a middle ground between the changes overtaking its economy and the Revolutionary principles espoused so fervently by its planter elite. As Virginia turned from tobacco to a more diversified agricultural base, it facilitated the process of individual manumission and at the same time strengthened existing slave-code legislation. In contrast, the lower South, poised on the verge of a new era of cotton production and eager to revitalize its rice economy, eschewed all emancipation efforts. South Carolina reopened its slave trade with Africa in 1803 and expanded its market for Chesapeake slaves.

Regardless of how they obtained their freedom, black women shared common goals: to consolidate family members, keep their households intact, and provide for the material welfare of dependents.

Source: Jones, “Race, Sex, and Self-Evident Truths,” pp. 324-327, 329-331, 337.

1776 to 1782—Slave Laborers Work for Virginia During the Revolutionary War

During the Revolution, Virginia authorities sought to employ slaves as military laborers in the campaign against the British. The officials faced several obstacles, including the escape of able-bodied male slaves to Lord Dunmore and the unwillingness of slaveowners to sell or hire out their slaves to assist in the war effort. (State and Confederate authorities would face similar difficulties almost a century later.) Virginia slaves who did contribute to the patriot cause as military laborers found themselves performing dangerous and dirty work, from toiling in lead mines to erecting fortifications. After the war, few were set free in return for their service. Below, Benjamin Quarles reviews Virginia's use of slave laborers during the war.

Another labor procurement device was state purchase of slaves, a practice most common in Virginia. Most masters were reluctant to sell their slaves for the depreciated currency offered by the state; hence many of the purchased slaves were runaways who had been recaptured from the British or caught trying to reach them. By purchasing such a slave the state did three things at once: it punished the runaway, recognized the property stake of a loyal master, and gained a badly needed military laborer.

Late in August 1777 the state employed Duncan Rose to buy slaves to work the lead mines at Chiswells, agreeing to pay him a commission of 5 per cent. Six weeks later Rose had rounded up five slaves. Later that year the state purchased five additional slaves, two of whom had been taken from the British and ordered sold by a decree of the Admiralty Court. These, too, were sent to the lead mines.

On April 5, 1780, the Board of Trade purchased twenty-six Negroes, including three women and a boy. Six state-owned Negroes were employed at the Warwick tannery in October 1781; they ranged in age from twenty to thirty-five, and varied in color from 'yellow and slim' Charles to 'black and well made' Ambrose. Fifteen other Negro men belonging to the public tannery had been taken by the British or had gone over to them. At the state-owned Westham iron works 'Negroes were depended upon' in molding and casting cannon. In December 1779, when the commissioners of the Virginia navy asked the Board of War for twelve carpenters and axemen, twelve laborers, ten sawyers, and five blacksmiths, the Board recommended to the governor that slaves be purchased for these jobs. In the spring of 1780 six purchased Negroes were working as armorers under the supervision of the Board of Trade, and in the summer of 1782, ten state-owned slaves were working as wagoners in the quartermaster's department.

The Virginia Board of Trade preferred to buy slaves outright whenever possible, rather than hire them, because it was ultimately less expensive; however, the more common practice was to hire slaves for war service. It required less money at the outset, and permitted a much greater degree of flexibility in dovetailing supply with demand. As early as January 1778, Washington had broached the idea that free Negroes from Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas be employed as wagoners.

...

In Virginia slaves were hired during the first year of the war, for service with military units such as the Lancaster District Minute Men and the Second Regiment. Late in 1777, upon

the request of the quartermaster of the York garrison, the state council authorized an agent to obtain eight slaves for work at the garrison and its hospital. He was instructed to contract for them by the year “upon the best terms he can.” Hired slaves were employed in 1781 at the Fredericksburg gun factory, and in 1782 as wagoners in the quartermaster’s department. The Hospital Department signed on a Negro woman in July 1780 but six months after the hiring her master had received not a shilling. In Virginia’s domain west of the Alleghanies, the estate of James Robinson received payment for 945 days of skilled labor performed by Caesar, perhaps a record in long-term hired service.

When Lafayette was dealing with Cornwallis in Virginia during the summer of 1781, he sent an urgent letter to Governor Jefferson asking for 250 Negro laborers to march with the army, plus a corps of 150 Negro wagoners. Lafayette’s request was beyond the Governor’s reach. Jefferson had just had a sobering experience in trying to procure Negroes for a fortification requested by Steuben. On February 11, 1781, the Prussian-born General had told Jefferson of the importance of erecting a small work at Hood’s, in Prince George County. Anxious to cooperate with a hard working professional soldier of Steuben’s rank and reputation, Jefferson immediately directed the state quartermaster, Granville Smith, to “go out yourself” and hire forty slaves. Smith was advised to apply first to those masters who lived in the vicinity of Hood’s, inasmuch as they would be more “immediately” interested in its defense. Five days later thirteen Negroes, one of them a bricklayer, had been hired.

The number never went much higher. On March 12 Captain John Allen reported that a total of nineteen Negroes, procured from nine different masters, were working at the garrison; but it was too small a group to do the job. Not a single Negro had been gotten from Dinwiddie or Prince George counties. Ten days later another disappointed agent reported that in Charles City County he had been able to raise only five Negroes, and that he despaired of raising a single additional one, even at a high rate of pay. Early in April, as if to compound the woes of the military officers in charge, the Negroes at Hood’s went home “to hold their Holydays.” Not enough soldiers were present to prevent this walkout, but by April 19 all but four of the workers had returned.

It was hard to hire able-bodied slaves because so many had joined the British that masters did not care to part with those who remained. This reluctance of the master was an insurmountable barrier to Jefferson, for, as he informed General Steuben, Virginia officials had no power to call a slave to labor without first obtaining the master’s consent.

Finally, with the British in Chesapeake waters, Jefferson made one last desperate appeal. In a message to the legislature on May 10, 1781, he asked whether slaves might not be taken into the army solely for labor service. Such non-arms-bearing slave soldiers would permit Virginia to throw up batteries on every river and thus protect her commerce and property. Nothing came of Jefferson’s proposal, and the state authorities, civilian and military, resumed the dreary task of trying to cajole masters to lease out their black retainers.

Source: Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, pp. 98-102.

<p>October 1776—ACT XXVI. <i>An act declaring tenants of lands or slaves in taille to hold the same in fee simple</i></p>

This statute ended the practice of entail by which planters had passed their property—land and slaves—onto a specified heir, often the eldest son who in turn had to pass the property to his eldest son.

I. WHEREAS the perpetuation of property in certain families, by means of gifts made to them in fee taille, is contrary to good policy, tends to deceive fair traders, who give a credit on the visible possession of such estates, discourages the holder thereof from taking care and improving the same, and sometimes does injury to the morals of youth, by rendering them independent of and disobedient to their parents; and whereas the former method of docking such estates taille by special act of assembly, formed for every particular case, employed very much of the time of the legislature, and the same, as well as the method of defeating such estates, when of small value, was burthensome to the publick, and also to individuals:

II. *Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly of the commonwealth of Virginia, and it is hereby enacted by authority of the same,* That any person who now hath, or hereafter may have, any estate in fee taille, general or special, in any lands or slaves in possession, or in the use or trust of any lands or slaves in possession, or who now is or hereafter may be entitled to any such estate taille in reversion or remainder, after the determination of any estate for life or lives, or of any lesser estate, whether such estate taille hath been or shall be created by deed, will, act of assembly, or by any other ways or means, shall from henceforth, or from the commencement of such estate taille, stand *ipso facto* seized, possessed, or entitled of, in, or to such lands or slaves, or use in lands or slaves, so held or to be held as aforesaid, in possession, reversion, or remainder, in full and absolute fee simple, in like manner as if such deed, will, act or assembly, or other instrument, had conveyed the same to him in fee simple; any words, limitation, or conditions, in the said deed, will act of assembly, or other instrument, to the contrary notwithstanding.

III. Saving to all and every person and persons, bodies politick and corporate, other than the issue in taille, and those in reversion and remainder, all such right, title, interest, and estate, claim, and demand, as they, every, or any of them, could or might claim if this act had never been made; and saving also to such issue in taille, and to those in reversion and remainder, any right or title which they may have acquired by their own contract for good and valuable consideration actually and bona fide paid or performed.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 9:226-227.

May 1777—ACT I. *An act for regulating and disciplining the Militia*

This statute continued to restrict free black men from carrying and using guns in the militia.

The free mulattoes in the said companies or battalions shall be employed as drummers, fifers, or pioneers.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 9:267-268.

May 1777—ACT II. *An act for the more speedily completeing the Quota of Troops to be raised in this commonwealth for the continental army, and for other purposes*

Legislators decided to require recruiting officers to enlist only blacks or mulattoes who could prove their freedom in order to quell a rumor that slaves could win their freedom by fighting in the war. This law also indicates that free men of color were being accepted for full military service by this date.

And whereas several negro slaves have deserted from their masters, and under pretence of being free men have enlisted as soldiers: For prevention whereof, *Be it enacted*, that it shall not be lawful for any recruiting officer within this commonwealth to enlist any negro or mulatto into the service of this or either of the United States, until such negro or mulatto shall produce a certificate from some justice of the peace for the county wherein he resides that he is a free man.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 9:275, 280; see also May 1779—ACT VI. *An act concerning officers, soldiers, sailors, and marines*, *ibid.*, 10:23-27; and October 1780—ACT III. *An act for recruiting this state's quota of troops to serve in the continental army*, *ibid.*, 10:326-337.

May 1777—ACT XXII. *An act for confirming a codicil annexed to the last will and testament of John Barr, deceased, respecting certain slaves*

The legislators passed this act to recognize the freedom that John Barr tried to secure for an enslaved woman and her child during his lifetime.

WHEREAS a certain John Barr, late of Northumberland county, being possessed of a negro woman named Rachel and her child also named Rachel, in his own right, was desirous to manumit them, but the consent of the governour and council could not be procured, as required by the laws then and still in force, occasioned by lord Dunmore (the then governour) withdrawing from his government; and the said Barr, to carry his intention into execution, as far as was then in his power, made his last will and testament in writing, duly published, and in a codicil annexed to, and part of that will, ordered and devised as followeth: "I claim no right, title, or interest, of, in, or to my negro woman Rachel and her child Rachel, and hereby order that the same shall in no wise for ever hereafter be considered as part of my estate; and I do hereby give and bequeath unto my brother Zachariah twenty five acres of my land joining Jameson's, Palmer's, and Hurst's lands, with as much of my estate as will build a house thereon, in trust, to and for the benefit, sole use, and profit, of the said negro woman Rachel and her child Rachael, and their heirs and assigns for ever." And the said John Barr, soon afterwards departed this life, and his will, with the codicil aforesaid, was duly proved at Northumberland county court, and disputes have arisen touching the validity of the said will:

For remedy herein, and for securing to the said negro woman and her child their freedom, and the benefit of the said devise, *Be it enacted by the General Assembly*, That the said negro woman Rachel, and her child named Rachel, shall, and are hereby declared to be free, and may enjoy all such rights, privileges, and immunities, as free negroes or mulattoes by the laws of this

country do enjoy; and, moreover, shall, and are hereby declared to be capable of taking, holding, and disposing of all such estate as the said John Barr, by the will and codicil aforesaid, hath devised or bequeathed to them, of for their use.

Saving to all and every other person, his or their heirs, executors, and administrators (except the vestrymen or churchwardens of the parish of Wicomico, in the county of Northumberland, and those claiming under the said John Barr) any right, title, or claim, they may have to the said negroes, as if this act had never been made. And it is declared, that this act shall not be drawn into precedent, except in cases where the circumstances may be precisely similar to those of the present case.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 9:320-321; see also *ibid.*, 12:611-616.

January 29, 1778—General Washington Suggests the Use of Free Blacks as Wagoners

On January 29, 1778, from his headquarters at Valley Forge, Washington suggested to the committee of conference that free blacks from Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina be hired as wagoners for the army. Wagoners were in short supply, and those available commanded large wages. Washington did not want to use slaves because he feared they would escape to the British.

The difficulty of getting waggoners and the enormous wages given them, would tempt one to try any expedient to answer the end on easier and cheaper terms. Among others, it has occurred to me, whether it would not be eligible to hire Negroes in Carolina, Virginia and Maryland for the purpose. They ought however to be freemen, for slaves could not be sufficiently depended on. It is to be apprehended they would too frequently desert to the enemy to obtain their liberty; and for the profit of it, or to conciliate a more favorable reception, would carry off their waggon-horses with them.

Source: *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 10:401.

October 1778—ACT I. *An act for preventing the farther importation of Slaves*

Virginians ceased to import slaves in 1774, and this statute gave the ban a legal basis. The statute banned the importation of slaves whether they arrived by ship or by land. However, a master who moved to Virginia from one of the other states and who registered slaves within ten days of arrival was not in violation of this law. Travelers were also allowed to bring enslaved persons with them. If a master violated the provisions of this statute, his or her slaves were entitled to their freedom. In 1795 the legislators simplified the procedures by which a slave could bring a suit for freedom.

I. FOR preventing the farther importation of slaves into this commonwealth, *Be it enacted by the General Assembly*, That from and after the passing of this act no slave or slaves shall hereafter be imported into this commonwealth by sea or land, nor shall any slaves so imported be sold or bought by any person whatsoever.

II. Every person hereafter importing slaves into this commonwealth contrary to this act shall forfeit and pay the sum of one thousand pounds for every slave so imported, and every person selling or buying any such slaves shall in like manner forfeit and pay the sum of five hundred pounds for every slave sold or bought, one moiety of which forfeitures shall be to the use of the commonwealth, and the other moiety to him or them that will sue for the same, to be recovered by action of debt or information in any court of record.

III. *And be it farther enacted*, That every slave imported into this commonwealth, contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, shall, upon such importation become free.

IV. *Provided always*, That this act shall not be construed to extend to those who may incline to remove from any of the United States, and become citizens of this, provided, that within ten days after their removal into the same they take the following oath before some magistrate of this commonwealth: “I, A.B. do swear, that my removal to the state of Virginia was with no intention to evade the act for preventing the farther importation of slaves within this commonwealth, nor have I brought with me, or will cause to be brought, any slaves, with an intent of selling them, nor have any of the slaves now in my possession been imported from Africa, or any of the West India islands, since the first day of November, 1778. So help me God.” Or to travellers and others, making a transient stay in this commonwealth, bringing slaves with them for necessary attendance, and carrying them out again.

V. *Provided also, and be it farther enacted*, That this act shall not be construed to extend to persons claiming slaves by descent, devise, or marriage, or to any citizens of this commonwealth being now the actual owners and proprietors of slaves residing or being in any of the United States and removing such slaves into this commonwealth.

VI. *And it is farther enacted*, That so much of an act of assembly made in the year 1753, intituled “An act for the better government of servants and slaves,” as comes within the purview of this act, shall be, and the same if hereby repealed.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 9:471-472.

May 1779—ACT XLIV. *An act for the manumission of a certain Slave*

Late in 1778, a slave named Kitt fingered a counterfeiting ring in Brunswick County, leading to the arrest of two men and the recovery of a significant amount of fake continental money. The Virginia General Assembly rewarded Kitt for his loyalty, first by providing him with protection and then by manumitting him. George Mason apparently penned both the resolutions that led to Kitt's emancipation and the final act passed by the General Assembly.

WHEREAS a negro man slave named Kitt, the property of a certain Hinchia Mabry of the county of Brunswick, hath lately rendered meritorious service to this commonwealth, in making the first information and discovery against several persons concerned in counterfeiting money, whereby so dangerous a confederacy has been in some measure broke, and some of the offenders have been discovered and brought to trial; and it is judged expedient to manumit him for such service; *Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly*, That the said Kitt be, and he is hereby declared to be emancipated and set free; any law or usage to the contrary notwithstanding. *And it is farther enacted*, That the treasurer of this commonwealth may, and he is hereby required to pay to the said Hinchia Mabry, on producing the auditors warrant, which

they are hereby directed to grant, the sum of one thousand pounds out of the publick treasury, as a full compensation for the said slave.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 10:115; *The Papers of George Mason*, ed. Rutland, 2:521-522.

October 1779—ACT XLVII. *An act for the manumission of certain Slaves*

This statute enabled Susannah Riddell, Thomas Walker the younger, and Lewis Dunn to emancipate a slave.

WHEREAS application hath been made to this present general assembly, that John Hope, otherwise called Barber Caesar, a negro man slave the property of Susanna Riddle of York town; that William Beck, a mulatto slave the property of Thomas Walker, the younger, of the county of Albemarle, and that a mulatto girl named Pegg, the property of Lewis Dunn, of the county of Sussex, may be severally emancipated; *Be it therefore enacted*, That the said negroes, John Hope otherwise called Barber Caesar, William Beck, and Pegg, shall, and they are hereby respectively declared to be free, and may enjoy all such rights, privileges, and immunities, as free negroes or mulattoes by the laws of this country do enjoy; saving to all and every other person, his or their heirs, executors, and administrators, (except the said Susanna Riddle, Thomas Walker, the younger, and Lewis Dunn, and those claiming under them) any right, title, or claim they may have to the said negroes, as if this act had never been made.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 10:211; see also *ibid.*, 10:372.

May 1780—ACT XXXIII. *An act to authorize the citizens of South Carolina and Georgia to remove their slaves into this state*

This law made it clear that residents of South Carolina and Georgia who were forced to flee their homes during the Revolution could legally move their slaves to Virginia.

WHEREAS many of the good and faithful citizens of Georgia and South Carolina, have been, and may be compelled by the common enemy to fly their country, and seek shelter and protection in this commonwealth, but are prevented bringing their slaves hither by an act of the assembly entitled “An act for preventing the farther importation of slaves,” and it is incumbent upon the good people of Virginia to afford all possible relief to such our brethren in their present distressed situation; *Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly*, That it shall and may be lawful (the said recited act notwithstanding) for any citizen of either of the said states, who hath been or shall be expelled therefrom by the enemy, to remove, or cause to be removed, his or her slaves into this commonwealth, until one year next after the expulsion of the enemy from, or the restoration of civil government in the state from which such slaves were respectively removed, and no longer. And all and every such slave or slaves, or any of their increase, which shall be suffered to remain here after the expiration of the said term of one year, to be computed as aforesaid, shall become free; except only such of the said slaves as may be sold by the owner for

his or her necessary support and maintenance, in manner hereafter directed: *Provided always*, That every person removing any slave or slaves from either of the said states, and desiring to take the benefit of this act, shall deliver to the clerk of the first county within this commonwealth into which any such slave or slaves shall be brought, within one month after their arrival therein, an exact list or schedule of each and every slave so removed, distinguishing the name, sex, and as near as may be the age of such slaves respectively, and the state from whence they were removed; and such persons as have already removed any such slave or slaves into this commonwealth since the twentieth day of May last, shall within one month after the passing of this act, deliver to the clerk of the county into which such slave or slaves were first brought, a list or schedule as aforesaid; which in either case, such clerk is hereby required to enter of record, giving to the person a certificate thereof, upon his or her paying down the fee of one dollar for each slave, and also to transmit to the clerk of the council within one month thereafter, an attested copy of such list or schedule. And to give farther relief to the suffering citizens of the said states; *Be it enacted*, That all and every slave or slaves removed into this state under the regulations of this act, shall be exempted from any assessment or tax, for the space of one year from the date of their having been registered in the clerk's office as aforesaid: *And be it farther enacted*, That the governour with the advice of the council, may from time to time, grant to any citizen of either of the said states, a permit in writing, to dispose of or sell, any or so many of such slaves as shall appear necessary for the comfortable support and maintenance of such citizen, and his or her family; causing all such permits to be entered by the clerk of the council, in a book to be kept for that purpose.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 10:307-308.

July 11, 1781—St. George Tucker to Fanny Tucker

In this letter Tucker describes the impact that the British army had on the city of Williamsburg. Tucker also tells his wife that a number of Williamsburg slaves decided to join Cornwallis in the summer of 1781.

Williamsburg July 11th 1781

My ever dear Fanny: Could I have entertained a doubt of the propriety of my conduct in endeavouring to remove you beyond the reach of the British army, the sight of this unhappy spot must immediately have removed it. The traces of British cruelty were faint as they marched through the country. Here they remained for some days, and with them pestilence and famine took root, and poverty brought up the rear. Instead of attempting a florid description of the horrors of this place, I will endeavour to give you an account of the situations of a few individuals with whom you are acquainted. Our friend Madison and his lady (they have lost their son) were turned out of their house to make room for Lord Cornwallis. Happily the College afforded them an asylum. They were refused the small privilege of drawing water from their own well. A contemptuous treatment, with the danger of starving were the only evils which he recounted, as none of his servants left him. The case was otherwise with Mr. McClurg. He has one small servant left, and but two girls. He feeds and saddles his own horse and is philosopher enough to enjoy the good that springs from the absence of the British without repining at what he

lost by them. Poor Mr. Cocke was deserted by his favorite man Clem: and Mrs. Cocke by the loss of her cook was obliged to have recourse to her neighbours to dress her dinner for her. They have but one little boy—who is smaller than Tom—left to wait on them within doors. I believe they are as badly off without. The old gentleman talks of going to Cumberland, as he says he is entirely ruined. But this is not all. The small-pox, which the hellish polling of these infamous wretches has spread in every place through which they have passed has now obtained a crisis throughout the place so that there is scarcely a person to be found to nurse those who are most afflicted by it. Your old friend Aunt Betty is in that situation. A child of Sir Peyton Skipwith's who is with her, was deserted by its nurse, and the good lady was left without a human being to assist her in any respect for some days. As the British plundered all that they could, you will conceive how great an appearance of wretchedness this place must exhibit. To add to the catalogue of mortifications, they constrained all the inhabitants of the town to take paroles. After tyrannizing ten days here, they went to James Town where they were attacked by our advanced parties....The British have since crossed at Cobham, and their ships have gone down the river. Our army is in motion. I am told we cross at Hoods....Among the plagues the British left in Williamsburg, that of flies is inconceivable. It is impossible to eat, drink, sleep, write, sit still or even walk about in peace on account of their confounded stings. Their numbers exceed description, unless you look into the eighth chapter of Exodus for it.

Source: Coleman, *St. George Tucker: Citizen of No Mean City*, pp. 66-67.

1781—Slaves Attempt to Gain Their Freedom After the Battle of Yorktown

Slaves took part in the Battle of Yorktown as soldiers, laborers, and servants. After the American victory, some hoped to use the confusion of the scene to their own advantage by passing themselves off as free. On October 25, 1781, General George Washington issued orders to try to prevent that from happening by setting up checkpoints to sort out the slaves from the free blacks.

It having been represented that many Negroes and Mulattoes the property of Citizens of these States have concealed themselves on board the Ships in the harbor; that some still continue to attach themselves to British Officers and that others have attempted to impose themselves upon the officers of the French and American Armies as Freemen and to make their escapes in that manner, In order to prevent their succeeding in such practices All Officers of the Allied Army and other persons of every denomination concerned are directed not to suffer any such negroes or mulattoes to be retained in their Service but on the contrary to cause them to be delivered to the Guards which will be establish'd for their reception at one of the Redoubts in York and another in Gloucester. Mr. David Ross will have the superintendency and will give passes to enable them to return to their Masters or where that is not practicable will have directions to make other provision for them. Any Negroes or mulattoes who are free upon proving the same will be left to their own disposal.

The Gentlemen of the American Army who have made return to the Orderly Office of negroes in their possession agreeably to the Order of the 9th. instant are desired to deliver them to the above mentioned Mr. David Ross this day or tomorrow.

The General Officer of the day is requested to establish a Guard in York and the Commandant of Gloucester another at that post for the reception of negroes agreeably to the above order.

Source: *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 23:264-265.

1781 to 1782—Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Jefferson wrote *Notes on the State of Virginia* not for publication but in response to a set of queries about the new republic posed by a French nobleman, the Marquis de Barbe-Marbois. In *Notes* Jefferson expresses both antislavery and antiblack sentiments. He makes clear his belief that race resulted in significant behavioral differences among black and white Virginians. He uses his ideal of the gentry class to assess the lives of slaves.

In Query XIV—Laws, Jefferson refers to a three-man committee appointed by the General Assembly to revise the legal code. The committee, consisting of Jefferson, Edmund Pendleton, and George Wythe, submitted their report to the legislature on June 18, 1779. By 1786, fifty of the 126 bills had become law. The provision recommending emancipation, obviously, was not one of them.

The following excerpts are from the edition published by London bookseller John Stockdale in 1787.

Query VIII—Population

Under the mild treatment our slaves experience, and their wholesome, though coarse, food, this blot in our country increases as fast, or faster, than the whites. During the regal government, we had at one time obtained a law, which imposed such a duty on the importation of slaves, as amounted nearly to a prohibition, when one inconsiderate assembly, placed under a peculiarity of circumstance, repealed the law. This repeal met a joyful sanction from the then sovereign, and no devices, no expedients, which could ever after be attempted by subsequent assemblies, and they seldom met without attempting them, could succeed in getting the royal assent to a renewal of the duty. In the very first session held under the republican government, the assembly passed a law for the perpetual prohibition of the importation of slaves. This will in some measure stop the increase of this great political and moral evil, while the minds of our citizens may be ripening for a complete emancipation of human nature.

Query XIV—Laws

Many of the laws which were in force during the monarchy being relative merely to that form of government, or inculcating principles inconsistent with republicanism, the first assembly which met after the establishment of the commonwealth appointed a committee to revise the whole code, to reduce it into proper form and volume, and report it to the assembly. This work

has been executed by three gentlemen, and reported; but probably will not be taken up till a restoration of peace shall leave to the legislature leisure to go through such a work.

The plan of the revision was this. The common law of England, by which is meant, that part of the English law which was anterior to the date of the oldest statutes extant, is made the basis of the work. It was thought dangerous to attempt to reduce it to a text: it was therefore left to be collected from the usual monuments of it. Necessary alterations in that, and so much of the whole body of the British statutes, and of acts of assembly, as were thought proper to be retained, were digested into 126 new acts, in which simplicity of stile was aimed at, as far as was safe. The following are the most remarkable alterations proposed:

...

To emancipate all slaves born after passing the act. The bill reported by the revisors does not itself contain this proposition; but an amendment containing it was prepared, to be offered to the legislature whenever the bill should be taken up, and further directing, that they should continue with their parents to a certain age, then be brought up, at the public expence, to tillage, arts or sciences, according to their geniusses, till the females should be eighteen, and the males twenty-one years of age, when they should be colonized to such place as the circumstances of the time should render most proper, sending them with arms, implements of household and of the handicraft arts, seeds, pairs of the useful domestic animals, &c. to declare them a free and independent people, and extend to them our alliance and protection, till they shall have acquired strength; and to send vessels at the same time to other parts of the world for an equal number of white inhabitants; to induce whom to migrate hither, proper encouragements were to be proposed. It will probably be asked, Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the state, and thus save the expence of supplying, by importation of white settlers, the vacancies they will leave? Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.—To these objections, which are political, may be added others, which are physical and moral.

The first difference which strikes us is that of colour. Whether the black of the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature, and is as real as if its seat and cause were better known to us. And is this difference of no importance? Is it not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races? Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immovable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race? Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favour of the white, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oran-ootan for the black women over those of his own species. The circumstance of superior beauty, is thought worthy of attention in the propagation of our horses, dogs, and other domestic animals; why not in that of man? Besides those of colour, figure, and hair, there are other physical distinctions proving a difference of race. They have less hair on the face and body. They secrete less by the kidnies, and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a strong and disagreeable odor. This greater degree of transpiration renders them more tolerant of heat,

and less so of cold, than the whites. Perhaps too a difference of structure in the pulmonary apparatus, which a late ingenious experimentalist has discovered to be the principal regulator of animal heat, may have disabled them from extricating, in the act of inspiration, so much of that fluid from the outer air, or obliged them in expiration, to part with more of it. They seem to require less sleep. A black, after hard labour through the day, will be induced by the slightest amusements to sit up till midnight, or later, though knowing he must be out with the first dawn of the morning. They are at least as brave, and more adventuresome. But this may perhaps proceed from a want of forethought, which prevents their seeing a danger till it be present. When present, they do not go through it with more coolness or steadiness than the whites. They are more ardent after their female: but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. Their griefs are transient. Those numberless afflictions, which render it doubtful whether heaven has given life to us in mercy or in wrath, are less felt, and sooner forgotten with them. In general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than reflection. To this must be ascribed their disposition to sleep when abstracted from diversions, and unemployed in labour. An animal whose body is at rest, and who does not reflect, must be disposed to sleep of course. Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.

It would be unfair to follow them to Africa for this investigation. We will consider them here, on the same stage with the whites, and where the facts are not apocryphal on which a judgment is to be found. It will be right to make great allowances for the difference of condition, of education, of conversation, of the sphere in which they move. Many millions of them have been brought to, and born in America. Most of them indeed have been confined to tillage, to their own homes, and their own society; yet many have been so situated, that they might have availed themselves of the conversation of their masters; many have been brought up in the handicraft arts, and from that circumstance have always been associated with the whites. Some have been liberally educated, and all have lived in countries where the arts and sciences are cultivated to a considerable degree, and have had before their eyes samples of the best works from abroad. The Indians, with no advantages of this kind, will often carve figures on their pipes not destitute of design and merit. They will crayon out an animal, a plant, or a country, so as to prove the existence of a germ in their minds which only wants cultivation. They astonish you with strokes of the most sublime oratory; such as prove their reason and sentiment strong, their imagination glowing and elevated. But never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never seen even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture. In music they are more generally gifted than the whites with accurate ears for tune and time, and they have been found capable of imagining a small catch. Whether they will be equal to the composition of a more extensive run of melody, or of complicated harmony, is yet to be proved. Misery is often the parent of the most affecting touches in poetry.—Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry. . . . The improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by every one, and proves their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition in life.

We know that among the Romans, about the Augustan age especially, the condition of their slaves was much more deplorable than that of the blacks on the continent of America. . . . With the Romans, the regular method of taking the evidence of their slaves was under torture. Here it has been thought better never to resort to their evidence. When a master was murdered,

all his slaves, in the same house, or within hearing, were condemned to death. Here punishment falls on the guilty only, and as precise proof is required against him as against a freeman. Yet notwithstanding these and other discouraging circumstances among the Romans, their slaves were often their rarest artists. They excelled too in science, insomuch as to be employed as tutors to their master's children. Epictetus, (Diogenes, Phaedon), Terence, and Phaedrus were slaves. But they were of the race of whites. It is not their condition, then, but nature, which has produced the distinction.—Whether further observation will or will not verify the conjecture, that nature has been less bountiful to them in the endowments of the head, I believe that in those of the heart she will be found to have done them justice. That disposition to theft with which they have been branded, must be ascribed to their situation, and not to any depravity of the moral sense. The man, in whose favour no laws of property exist, probably feels himself less bound to respect those made in favour of others. While arguing for ourselves, we lay it down as a fundamental, that laws, to be just, must give a reciprocation of right: that, without this, they are mere arbitrary rules of conduct, founded in force, and not in conscience: and it is a problem which I give to the master to solve, whether the religious precepts against the violation of property were not framed for him as well as his slave? And whether the slave may not as justifiably take a little from one, who has taken all from him, as he may slay one who would slay him? That a change in the relations in which a man is placed should change his ideas of moral right and wrong, is neither new, nor peculiar to the color of the blacks. Homer tells us it was so 2600 years ago.

Jove fix'd it certain, that whatever day
Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away.

But the slaves of which Homer speaks were whites. Notwithstanding these considerations which must weaken their respect for the laws of property, we find among them numerous instances of the most rigid integrity, and as many as among their better instructed masters, of benevolence, gratitude, and unshaken fidelity.—The opinion, that they are inferior in the faculties of reason and imagination, must be hazarded with great diffidence. . . . To our reproach it must be said, that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, were made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications. Will not a lover of natural history then, one who views the gradations in all the races of animals with the eye of philosophy, excuse an effort to keep those in the department of man as distinct as nature has formed them? This unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people. Many of their advocates, while they wish to vindicate the liberty of human nature, are anxious also to preserve its dignity and beauty. Some of these, embarrassed by the question "What further is to be done with them?" join themselves in opposition with those who are actuated by sordid avarice only. Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.

The particular customs and manners that may happen to be received in that state?

It is difficult to determine on the standard by which the manners of a nation may be tried, whether *catholic*, or *particular*. It is more difficult for a native to bring to that standard the manners of his own nation, familiarized to him by habit. There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self love, for restraining the intemperance of passion towards his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should the statesman be loaded, who permitting one half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the *amor patriae* of the other. For if a slave can have a country in this world, it must be any other in preference to that in which he is born to live and labour for another: in which he must lock up the faculties of his nature, contribute as far as depends on his individual endeavours to the evanishment of the human race, or entail his own miserable condition on the endless generations proceeding from him. With the morals of the people, their industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labour. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest.—But it is impossible to be temperate and to pursue this subject through the various considerations of policy, of morals, of history natural and civil. We must be contented to hope they will force their way into every one's mind. I think a change already perceptible, since the origin of the present revolution. The spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust, his condition mollifying, the way I hope preparing, under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this is disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.

Source: Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. Peden, pp. 87, 136-143, 162-163.

May 1782—ACT VIII. *An act for the recovery of slaves, horses, and other property, lost during the war*

This statute made it easier for masters to regain possession of enslaved persons who ran away or were captured by the British during the Revolution.

I. WHEREAS great numbers of slaves, horses, and other property belonging to the citizens of this commonwealth and of the neighbouring states, have, during the war, been carried off, or have gone from their owners and been concealed by wicked and evil disposed persons; and it is reasonable that the owners should be enabled to recover their property in an easy and expeditious manner: *Be it therefore enacted*, That any person or persons who have any such slave or slaves, horses or other property in his or her possession, and who shall not before the first day of October next deliver such slave or slaves, horses or other property in his or her possession, and who shall not before the first day of October next deliver such slave or slaves, horses or other property to the owner or owners thereof, if known, and if not known, publish a particular description of such slave or slaves, horses or other property three times in the Virginia gazette, shall forfeit and pay the sum of fifty pounds. And if any person or persons possessed of such slave or slaves, horses or other property as aforesaid, shall delay to deliver or publish the same as above directed, within the time hereby limited, he or she shall forfeit and pay the sum of five pounds, for every month he or she shall so delay after the said first day of October next, and shall moreover be liable to the action of the party grieved at the common law, in which the plaintiff shall recover double damages. And if the defendant in any such action shall not immediately pay and satisfy the damages, he or she shall be imprisoned six months, without bail or mainprize, unless the damages are sooner discharged; the act of insolvency, or any other law to the contrary notwithstanding; and the act of limitation shall be no bar to such action.

II. *And be it further enacted*, That all and every person and persons from whom any such slave or slaves, horses or other property have gone or been taken as aforesaid, on application to any two justices of the peace for the county where such slave or slaves, horses or other property may be, and making proof, to the satisfaction of such justices, of his or her right to such slaves, horses, or other property, and that the same were taken or went off from him or her in consequence of the invasion of this or any of the neighbouring states, shall be entitled to a warrant from such justices, under their hands and seals, directed to the sheriff or any constable of the said county, commanding them and each and every of them, to take such slave or slaves, horse or horses, or other property, and deliver the same to the owners thereof. *Provided*, That before granting such warrant, the person or persons demanding the same shall give bond, with sufficient security, in such sum as the justices shall direct, payable to the person or persons in whose possession the slave or slaves, horse or horses, or other property claimed as aforesaid may be, to return the same to the possessors in case he or she so claiming shall fail to prove his or her right to such slaves, horses or other property, at the trial of any suit to be brought for the same.

III. *And be if further enacted*, That where any person or persons shall be possessed of any slaves, horses or other property suspected to have gone or to have been taken from their owners, in consequence of any invasion as aforesaid, it shall be lawful for any two justices of the peace for the county where such persons reside, on information to them made, to cause such person or persons to come before them, and if such suspicion shall appear to them to be well founded, after hearing the parties, to cause such person or persons to enter into a recognizance to the governor or chief magistrate of this commonwealth, in such sum as the said justices shall judge

reasonable, and with sufficient security, on condition that he or she shall not sell, dispose of or secrete any such slave or slaves, horses or other property, for such time as the said justices shall think proper, not exceeding one year. And when any slave or slaves shall be found wandering about, it shall be lawful for any justice of the peace to commit such slave or slaves to the gaol of his county, by warrant under his hand and seal, and the sheriff or gaoler is hereby required to receive such slave or slaves, and to confine him, her or them in close gaol for three months, unless the owner or owner of such slave or slaves shall sooner appear. And such sheriff or gaoler shall, within three weeks after such commitment, cause such slave or slaves to be advertised in the Virginia gazette, which advertisement shall be inserted in three successive papers, and if no owner shall appear within the time limited for the confinement of such slave or slaves, the sheriff or gaoler may hire out such slave or slaves for the payment of his prison fees and the expences of advertising. And if the owner shall apply within the time aforesaid, he shall pay the said fees and expences of advertising, and the further sum of twenty shillings for each slave so confined and advertised as aforesaid.

IV. *And it is further enacted*, That the penalties by this act imposed may be recovered in any court of record in this commonwealth, by action of debt, indictment or information, and shall be applied, the one half thereof to the use of the commonwealth, and the other half to the use of the informer. *Provided always*, That this act, so far as it respects the penalties to be incurred for not delivering to the owner, or not publishing any such slaves, horses or other property, shall not extend to bona fide purchasers of such slaves, horses or other property, or to such as may have pursued the method directed by the laws now in force for taking up of strays. *Provided also*, That this act shall not extend to slaves, horses or other property taken by the enemy and retaken in action by any soldier or citizen of this state, or any of the United States, except where the same were the capitulation or agreement to be returned to their owners.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 11:23-25.

May 1782—ACT XXI. *An act to authorize the manumission of slaves*

The General Assembly decided to allow slave owners to manumit their enslaved men, women, and children. The law required a former master to be financially responsible for a slave who was either too old or too young to support him or herself.

Ira Berlin notes that “The spectacular increase in manumission, self-purchase, freedom suits, flight, and immigration altered the size and character of the free black population in the Upper South. Maryland, which was fast being transformed from a slave society into a society with slaves, best exemplified the change. Between 1755 and 1790, the state’s free black population grew 300 percent to about 8,000, and in the following ten years it more than doubled. By 1810 nearly 34,000 black Marylanders were free, giving the state the largest free black population in the nation. The gains registered by free blacks elsewhere in the Upper South never equaled that of Maryland, but they were substantial. In 1782, the year Virginia legalized private manumission, St. George Tucker estimated the presence of about 2,000 free blacks in the state. By 1790, when the first federal census was taken, the free black population had grown to 12,000. Ten years later, it numbered 20,000, and in another ten years it stood at over 30,000. During the twenty

years between 1790 and 1810, the free black population of Virginia had more than doubled. In all, the number of free black people in the states of the Upper South grew almost 90 percent between 1790 and 1800 and another 65 percent the following decade, so that they made up more than 10 percent of the region's black population. By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, there were over 108,000 free black people in the Upper South, and better than 10 percent of the black population enjoyed freedom . . .

As in the North, freedom arrived burdened with the heavy weight of slavery's continuing presence. New forms of dependency emerged even more quickly than the old ones could be liquidated. In the countryside, many free blacks continued to reside with their former masters, suffering the oversight of an owner even after they no longer were owned. Planters appreciated the advantages of power without responsibility. They held tight to the spouses and children of former slaves, seeing them as a lever to access the labor of free blacks. Some planters sold or rented small plots of land to former slaves to secure the benefit of their labor during planting and harvest. In the cities, term slavery provided a means for owners to exact the labor of energetic young men and women and make them responsible for themselves in old age. Much like gradual emancipation and apprenticeship in the northern states, contingent manumission and term slavery delayed the arrival of freedom and strengthened the masters' hand.

But if the continued presence of slavery burdened black people, so did freedom. As slaves, black men and women were fully integrated into the economy and society of the Upper South. As free people, they faced ostracism and discrimination. To the new forms of subordination that equated free blacks with slaves, lawmakers added the new proscriptions that distinguished free blacks from white people. Free black men were barred from voting, sitting on juries, testifying in court, and attending the militia, and all free blacks, women as well as men, were barred from owning dogs and guns and trading without a permit. A pass system prevented free blacks from traveling freely and required them to register themselves annually with county authorities. Many of these restrictions had long existed, but the new legislation reinforced them, reminding all that freedom would not mean equality.”

I. WHEREAS application hath been made to this present general assembly, that those persons who are disposed to emancipate their slaves may be empowered so to do, and the same hath been judged expedient under certain restrictions: *Be it therefore enacted*, That it shall hereafter be lawful for any person, by his or her last will and testament, or by any other instrument in writing, under his or her hand and seal, attested and proved in the county court by two witnesses, or acknowledged by the party in the court of the county where he or she resides, to emancipate and set free, his or her slaves, or any of them, who shall thereupon be entirely and fully discharged from the performance of any contract entered into during servitude, and enjoy as full freedom as if they had been particularly named and freed by this act.

II. *Provided always, and be it further enacted*, That all slaves so set free, not being in the judgment of the court, of sound mind and body, or being above the age of forty-five years, or being males under the age of twenty-one, or females under the age of eighteen years, shall respectively be supported and maintained by the person so liberating them, or by his or her estate; and upon neglect or refusal so to do, the court of the county where such neglect or refusal may be, is hereby empowered and required, upon application to them made, to order the sheriff

to distrain and sell so much of the person's estate as shall be sufficient for that purpose. *Provided also*, That every person by written instrument in his life time, or if by last will and testament, the executors of every person freeing any slave, shall cause to be delivered to him or her, a copy of the instrument of emancipation, attested by the clerk of the court of the county, who shall be paid therefor, by the person emancipating, five shillings, to be collected in the manner of other clerk's fees. Every person neglecting or refusing to deliver to any slave by him or her set free, such copy, shall forfeit and pay ten pounds, to be recovered with costs in any court of record, one half thereof to the person suing for the same, and the other to the person to whom such copy ought to have been delivered. It shall be lawful for any justice of the peace to commit to the gaol of his county, any emancipated slave travelling out of the county of his or her residence without a copy of the instrument of his or her emancipation, there to remain till such copy is produced and the gaoler's fees paid.

III. *And be it further enacted*, That in case any slave so liberated shall neglect in any year to pay all taxes and levies imposed or to be imposed by law, the court of the county shall order the sheriff to hire out him or her for so long time as will raise the said taxes and levies. *Provided* sufficient distress cannot be made upon his or her estate. *Saving nevertheless* to all and every person and persons, bodies politic or corporate, and their heirs and successors, other than the person or persons claiming under those so emancipating their slaves, all such right and title as they or any of them could or might claim if this act had never been made.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 283-285; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 11:39-40.

May 1782—ACT XXXII. *An act concerning Slaves*

Legislators passed this law to prevent masters from allowing their slaves to hire themselves out to others in their community. This statute did not keep slaves from participating in the economy. Ira Berlin observes that "Entering the marketplace, slaves sold items of handicraft and produce from their gardens, along with their labor, and thereby accumulated property of their own. Although the economy of Chesapeake slaves rarely advanced beyond the "ground...allowed them for gardening, and privilege given them to raise dung-hill fowls," farming and handicraft provided new outlets for the slaves' entrepreneurial energies. Slaveholders raised few objections to these practices or challenged the slaves' right to market goods produced on his or her own time. In fact, petitioners from the Virginia piedmont complained that many slaveholders permitted their slaves to "own, possess and raise stock of horses and hogs" and allowed them to exercise "all the rights of ownership in such stock." Writing at the turn of the century, one observer declared that the right to produce and market such crops was "permitted (and greatly confirmed by custom)." Indeed, some slaveholders regularly purchased produce from their slaves. The reinvigoration of the slaves' economy entangled masters in endless negotiations with their slaves, who tenaciously protected what they believed was rightfully theirs."

I. WHEREAS great inconveniences hath arisen from persons permitting their slaves to go at large and hire themselves out, under a promise of paying their masters or owners a certain sum of money in lieu of their services: For remedy whereof, *Be it enacted*, That if any person shall, after the tenth day of August next, permit or suffer his or her slave to go at large and hire him or

herself out, it shall be lawful for any person to apprehend and carry every such slave before a justice of the peace in the county where apprehended, and if it shall appear to the justice that such slave comes within the purview of this act, he shall order him or her to the gaol of the county, there to be safely kept until the next court, when, if it shall be made appear to the court that the slave so ordered to gaol hath been permitted or suffered to hire him or herself out, contrary to the meaning of this act, it shall be lawful for the court, and they are hereby required to order the sheriff of the county to sell and dispose of every such slave for ready money, at the next court held for the said county, notice being given by the sheriff at the court-house door at least twenty days before the said sale.

II. *And be if further enacted*, That twenty five per centum upon the amount of the sale of every slave made under this act, shall be applied by the court ordering such sale, towards lessening the county levy, and the residue shall be paid by the sheriff, after deducting five per centum for his trouble and the gaoler's fees, to the owner of such slave.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 270; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 11:59.

1782—The French Army Conceals Slaves in Yorktown and Williamsburg

On June 26, 1782, Governor Benjamin Harrison wrote to Count Rochambeau to request his assistance in returning slaves to their owners.

Complaints are made every day to me of Negroes being concealed in York and Williamsburg amongst the Troops. I am certain it must be without your knowledge and am therefore unhappy to be again obliged to trouble you on that subject, but as their [there] is no other way by which the unhappy sufferers in this and the Neighbouring States can recover their property by thro your Justice your goodness will excuse the application the pretence that some make of their being free and of their being the property of the British is without foundation and is inculcated into them to serve the purposes of detention. However convenient their services may be yet that rule of right that we ought to observe to each other will not suffer us to avail ourselves unnecessary to You who have at all Times manifested the most generous and upright principle, but they may not be amiss to those concern'd in the detention of the Negroes.

I have to request ye favour of your Excellency to give immediate orders for the securing all the Negroes without distinction that are amongst your Troops and for their being deliver'd to officers that will be appointed to receive them. Those belonging to this State will soon be reclaim'd and those from North and South Carolina I will make it my Business to have them sent back; this piece of Justice will do Honor to the French Troops and will silence every clamour that has been rais'd on this disagreeable subject. The legion has also some Negroes with it that were deliver'd once to me but being press'd and wearied out by frequent applications I order'd them to be return'd there are five of them all of which belonged to South Carolina but three of them say they are free.

The letter that Harrison penned to General Washington on July 11, 1782 indicates that he did not receive a favorable response from Rochambeau.

Many of the Negroes belonging to this State and the two Carolinas are carried off by the French. I have written on the subject till I am wearied out without being able to procure them. Some indeed have been sent me and it appears to me that most of the Officers of distinction wish that all that do not really belong to the Army shou'd be returned however by one Means or other they are detain'd either for want of the owners having proof at hand or the negroes declaring themselves free &c. Our People are much disturbed at this conduct and it will have a bad effect[.] And what makes the matters worse is that the French will loose their services if ever they get so near the Enemy as to desert to them. You saw the French Army when it came here when You see it again You will be able to determine whether the Charge is just or not.

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia*, 3:257-258, 266.

August 15, 1782—John Blair to his sister, Mary Blair Burwell

Blair tells his sister about the losses he experienced at the hands of the British during the last months of the Revolution. He also notes that he regained possession of some slaves who ran to the British and that he lost others to disease.

The British too had before plundered my stocks of all sorts in a great degree; I recovered back all the negroes I had lost except two who died with the enemy & 3 more who have I believe got off, but many of those I recovered on the surrender of York; are since dead, of diseases they brot. home with them, & wch. they fatally communicated to several others—My loss upon the whole has been very great—I hope however we shall not want the necessaries of life, if we can but [scuffle?] thro this & the next year, which will pinch us much, for want of those helps the plantation used to afford.

Source: Blair, Banister, Braxton, Horner, and Whiting Papers, 1765-1890, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

1782 to 1810—Slaves For Hire in Elizabeth City County

Sarah S. Hughes analyzes the practice of slave hiring in Elizabeth City County (present day Hampton) between 1782 and 1810. She examines the reasons that owners hired enslaved laborers to others and the impact that hiring had on the relationships between masters and slaves.

Few of the county's slaves escaped being hired out. Before their childhood ended, most blacks spent at least a year working as hired servants outside their home household, and such uprootings continued periodically throughout their lives. This practice made slave labor available to nearly all of the free whites. Even tenants and owners of farms as small as 25 acres or less could employ slaves. Residents of the village of Hampton also hired domestic servants from among the women and children on the county's larger farms, while the local shipyards, artisans, and merchants rented the labor of more expensive skilled adult male slaves. Although large farms

were a principal source of such labor, nearly anyone who owned one or two slaves might occasionally hire them out.

Rather than being an incidental or peripheral aspect of the slave labor market, such arrangements were the key to the survival of slavery in the county. Hiring was a means of adjusting a labor system initiated when tobacco was the profitable staple crop to the needs of the smaller grain-livestock farms of the late eighteenth century. The hire of slaves introduced flexibility in allocating workers in a diversified rural economy with low profit margins. It also allied the large class of poor white farmers with the wealthy against the enslaved blacks, who composed the majority of the people of the county. The result was a form of slavery different from that associated with plantation agriculture. These differences were not simply economic, for their impact was felt by whites and blacks alike and affected relationships between the two groups.

Historians have long known that slaves throughout the South were often temporarily transferred from owners to other employers by hiring. In the eighteenth century the customs controlling the practices were already well established. The usual period of hire was fifty weeks, beginning in early January and ending shortly before Christmas. At the outset of each new year owners who had a surplus of slave labor met prospective hirers at the courthouses to negotiate privately or to participate in public auctions. The hirer paid a cash rent and assumed the costs of feeding, clothing, and housing the slaves, as well as medical expenses and slave taxes. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the courts had defined the responsibilities of lessor and lessee in instances of death, injury, or escape of a hired slave

During the period under consideration Elizabeth City County, now incorporated as the city of Hampton, was a small rural district on the western shore of Chesapeake Bay. At the end of the Revolution it had 2,450 inhabitants, of whom 1,298 were slaves; in 1810, of the county's 3,600 people, 1,734 were slaves. The number of free blacks was very small: eighteen in 1790 and eighty-five in 1810. Three-fourths of the population lived on farms, the remainder in the village of Hampton. The county's location at the tip of a peninsula, jutting into Chesapeake Bay and bounded on the south by the James River, gave its farmers access to the West Indies trade, to ships provisioning for voyages, and to the markets of the growing city of Norfolk across the roadstead. This advantageous position seems to have been the principal factor in the commercial success of farms of remarkably small size. Sixty-two percent of the farms of Elizabeth City County were under 100 acres, 33 percent were 101-500 acres, and only 6 percent contained more than 500 acres. It is especially striking that 21 percent were smaller than 26 acres and 42 percent were under 51. Despite the distribution of land into small parcels, the county was no model of a Jeffersonian society of independent yeomen. Tenancy was widespread; by 1810 about one-third of the land was held by absentee owners and one-half was farmed by tenants. The presence of adult sons and daughters in farm households indicates a surplus of farm labor—yet one-half of the population was held in slavery.

All farms of one hundred or more acres were worked by slaves. Ninety-two percent of the farmers owning from 51 to 100 acres used slave labor, as did 76 percent of those owning 50 acres or less. Over one-half (54 percent) of the farms using no slaves were 25 acres or less. By the time of the Revolution tobacco was no longer a crop of commercial importance in Elizabeth City County. Cattle and corn had become the principal products on farms of all sizes. The county had nearly four times as many cattle per hundred persons (including slaves) as did ten counties of southeastern Pennsylvania where livestock was fattened for the Philadelphia market. Cattle were more numerous than swine on most farms. Barreled beef and pork, along with corn,

were sold to the ship provisions of Hampton Roads or exported to the West Indies. Secondary products such as lamb, butter, poultry, cider, oats, wheat and tobacco were marketed in Norfolk.

The hiring of slaves had become well-established in the county before the Revolution. By the 1780s it was pervasive, and its continuance to 1810 is indicated by several sorts of records. Although no contracts specifying terms of hire have been found, the common practice of renting slaves is well documented in personal property tax lists, probate records, and papers relating to the sale or mortgage of personal property or the manumission of slaves.

...

Flexibility was the key to the viability of slavery in Elizabeth City County, and the hire of slaves was essential to that flexibility. The pervasive and complex system of hiring offset the inherent rigidity of slavery in several ways. For the owner of slaves, hiring permitted a more efficient allocation of workers of various ages, sexes, and skills. Mature male workers could be shifted from job to job in response to market conditions, skilled men brought premium earnings to their owners as shipyard workers and seamen. In addition, hiring helped cut the costs of maintaining slaves, even if only room, board, and clothing could be obtained for the services of a pregnant woman, or a nominal fee for a child's work. By these means the underemployment of slaves was minimized, and profits even from the labor of children were maximized. Hiring also provided the slaveowner with a form of insurance to protect widows or orphans. And it was in itself very profitable.

Hiring so broadened access to slave labor that it was used even by a large part of the propertyless tenant class. Those who hired slaves benefited in several ways. Labor was obtained at minimal expense - without the capital investment or risk of loss from death or injury that owning a slave incurred, and at substantially less cost than the wages of a free worker. Counterbalancing this enormous advantage was always the possibility of being outbid or unable to hire slaves when crop prices were highest and peak production was needed. Though in an abstract sense the job opportunities and access to land of young white people, tenants, and small farmers might have been greater had there been no slaves in Virginia, this was not the practical context in which slavery was viewed. Slaves were seen as potential employees, rather than as potential competitors. They were prevented by their legal status from competing for the small number of places in the county as owners of farm land, as tenants, or as farm managers. Only male slaves who were skilled workers in the maritime trades attained even limited privileges in this system.

It must be assumed that slavery in Elizabeth City County was profitable to the whites who, whether rich or poor, deliberately spent income to hire slaves or retained ownership in order to hire them out. In 1810 the percentages of county households that used slave labor were 82.5 among farm owners, 65 among farm tenants, and 81 in the village of Hampton. Although many blacks born in the county were forced to follow their owner's migration or live outside the area, the institution of slavery remained secure until the Civil War. Slaves were never less than 41 percent of the total population before 1860.

How did hiring affect relationships between masters and slaves? One may reasonably speculate that the practice minimized patriarchal control over the lives of black people and encouraged them to take responsibility for their own welfare. Yet greater autonomy had social

costs for black people: Harsh exploitation of adults and children, separations from family and friends, low standards of living, and infrequent manumissions.

Hiring was foremost among the factors that weakened ties between slaves and masters. The discontinuity of work experience was extreme among slaves of taxpayers surveyed between 1784 and 1786, for only 39 percent of those slaves lived and worked in the same household for three successive years. By 1810 the practice of hiring out children separately from their families had become so widespread that about one of eight slave children that year began early in their working lives to adapt to different masters without the buffer of their parents. Two-thirds of the slaves lived in groups of eight to fifty on farms of over 100 acres, and in any year less than 10 percent of all slaves were living alone or with only one other slave in a free household, but because hiring was so common, the life experience of many slaves must have encompassed both situations. Blacks thus knew the cultural and personal autonomy of group life and also had the familiarity with the dominant culture and class that came from the close associations of individual service.

With a substantial number of slaves moving about among the farms, the shipyards, and the homes of Hampton each year, there were ample opportunities for slaves to learn that working conditions varied, that free people were paid wages for the same work, that there were many other slaves in the county. News of the successful revolution in Haiti in 1793 spread quickly among the slaves, and the fear of county leaders that their slaves were conspiring with counterparts in Norfolk and on the Eastern Shore implies much about their freedom of movement. The problem of controlling and disciplining slaves who must have gained a sense of independence under such conditions was intensified by the fact that during most of these years slaves composed more than one-half of the county's population. Most threatening were the few slaves left behind to hire out their own time by owners who migrated from the county. Grand jury charges against absentee owners for letting their slaves "go at large" were an ineffectual means of control. Evidently more effective were the increased slave patrols, which by the end of the period constituted a major expense of local government. Undoubtedly the economic dependence of both landowning and tenant farmers on slave labor was crucial to maintaining the dominance of the white minority, for the situation left little possibility for an alliance of the poor free people and slaves that would have been requisite to a successful revolt. But fear of slave rebellion was constant, and the slave patrol a consequential duty and expense.

The system had other disadvantages for the slaves. As the patriarchal authority of a master was diminished when slaves were hired out, so also was the sense of responsibility that may have accompanied it. If hiring made slavery a more profitable institution for owners, it did so by making blacks work harder. It also seems likely that the low profit margins of the major county crops and the widespread distribution of slaves among owners of varying degrees of wealth led to more systematic and earlier exploitation of children, both those hired out and those retained on their home farms. The owner who calculated which men, women, and children were more profitably hired out was more capitalist than patriarch.

Few material goods were furnished to slaves in return for their labor. There is no evidence of separate slave quarters in either Hampton or the countryside. Black families with a kitchen, a storehouse, or a shed in which to live were fortunate; the only furnishing they could expect to receive were a mattress covering and a blanket. Scant clothing was provided. For instance, shoes were never bought for any slave of the Mallory estate, and blankets were issued only at four-year intervals. In this wealthy house the average cash expenditure for clothing, pallets, and blankets per slave each year was well under one pound. No record exists of a hired

slave being provided with a full set of clothes in any year by owner or hirer. More usual are such ledger entries as “to one shirt and stockings for negro I hired, six shillings, 9 ½ pence.” When the richest farmers and merchants spent so little on their slaves it is unlikely that poorer people provided more. Sixty percent of the free farm families lived in poverty in crowded quarters that seldom had more furnishings than the houses of their early seventeenth-century predecessors. Periodic removal from farms of wealthy people to those of poorer families, whose standard of living was harsh in itself and who had less to cast off or share with people even more oppressed, must have been a hardship for some slaves. Such conditions must have been especially hard for children already lonely and vulnerable because of their separation from family and friends.

County slaves may, by their own efforts, have made shoes, woven material for clothing, and supplemented their diet from gardens, fishing, and hunting small game. They had little control over gaining freedom. Manumission was rare: only thirty-four slaves were freed between 1782 and 1810. Despite the opportunities for slaves to work closely with free families and to know them well under the intimate conditions that prevailed in the smaller households, emancipation seldom resulted. Nor did hiring provide the means for more than a handful of county slaves to acquire freedom by self purchase.

That hiring seldom eventuated in manumission points to differences between the rural hire of slaves in Elizabeth City County and the better-known urban hire of southern cities. Most of the hired slaves in the county were farm laborers. Few had the opportunities of artisans to purchase their freedom. There was no flow of new slaves into the area that might have benefited native acculturated blacks. The closing of the external slave trade cut off the supply of Africans in the late eighteenth century, and the relatively stagnant agricultural economy of the county did not pull slaves into its orbit as did growing cities or new cotton plantations. The county’s small number of free blacks provided no base for formation of black-controlled institutions such as the churches of Williamsburg, Norfolk, or Charles City County.

Source: Hughes, “Slaves for Hire,” pp. 260-263, 282-286.

1783—Slaves Who Served as Substitutes Gain Their Freedom

Throughout the former colonies, slaves who served as substitutes in the Continental Army gained their freedom at the end of the war. Some owners in Virginia who had sent their slaves to the front as substitutes sought to prevent such emancipations, but the governor and legislature rebuffed their attempts, as Benjamin Quarles recounts below.

One indubitable fact was that many slaves became free men from taking part in the struggle for independence. Those who joined the army upon the promise of freedom usually obtained it.

The one notable attempt to repudiate this pledge and return Negro soldiers to slavery occurred in Virginia. Since only free men could enlist in the state forces, some masters had entered slaves as their substitutes, passing them off to the authorities as free men and privately promising them their freedom, but when the term of enlistment expired, they tried to repossess their former chattels. One such incident came to public attention in the last days of the war. In November 1782 the Virginia Council ordered five counties to furnish 3,500 men to level the works at Yorktown. Anyone summoned to duty was permitted to “send an able bodied [free] Negro Man in his stead.” Consequently, the force contained a goodly number of Negroes.

When the time came for the black substitutes to be discharged, their former masters in numerous instances tried to re-enslave them.

Governor Harrison, like many other Virginians, was indignant at this violation of the “common principles of justice and humanity,” and was determined to “Lay the matter before the Assembly, not doubting but they will pass an act giving to those unhappy creatures that liberty which they have been in some measure instrumental in securing to us.” Harrison quickly got what he wanted. Declaring that the slaves who enlisted had contributed to American liberty and independence, and that their former masters were acting “contrary to the principles of justice, and to their own solemn promise,” the legislature decreed that each slave who had served as a substitute was henceforth fully and completely emancipated. The attorney general was charged with acting on behalf of any former slave who was being detained in servitude.

Source: Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, p. 183.

October 1783—ACT III. *An act directing the emancipation of certain slaves who have served as soldiers in this state, and for the emancipation of the slave Aberdeen*

Governor Benjamin Harrison secured the following legislation that guaranteed the freedom of slaves who served as substitutes for free persons during the Revolution.

I. WHEREAS it hath been represented to the present general assembly, that during the course of the war, many persons in this state had caused their slaves to enlist in certain regiments or corps raised within the same, having tendered such slaves to the officers appointed to recruit forces within the state, as substitutes for free persons, whose lot or duty it was to serve in such regiments or corps, at the same time representing to such recruiting officers that the slaves so enlisted by their direction and concurrence were freeman; and it appearing further to this assembly, that on the expiration of the term of enlistment of such slaves that the former owners have attempted again to force them to return to a state of servitude, contrary to the principles of justice, and to their own solemn promise.

II. And whereas it appears just and reasonable that all persons enlisted as aforesaid, who have faithfully served agreeable to the terms of their enlistment, and have thereby of course contributed towards the establishment of American liberty and independence, should enjoy the blessings of freedom as a reward for their toils and labours; *Be it therefore enacted*, That each and every slave, who by the appointment and direction of his owner, hath enlisted in any regiment or corps raised within this state, either on continental or state establishment, and hath been received as a substitute for any free person whose duty or lot it was to serve in such regiment or corps, and hath served faithfully during the term of such enlistment, or hath been discharged from such service by some officer duly authorized to grant such discharge, shall from after the passing of this act, be fully and COMPLETELY emancipated, and shall be held and deemed free in as full and ample a manner as if each and every of them were specially named in this act; and the attorney-general for the commonwealth, is hereby required to commence an action, *in forma pauperis*, in behalf of any of the persons above described who shall after the passing of this act be detained in servitude by any person whatsoever; and if upon such

prosecution it shall appear that the pauper is entitled to his freedom in consequence of this act, a jury shall be empannelled to assess the damages for his detention.

III. And whereas it has been represented to this general assembly, that Aberdeen, a negro man slave, hath laboured a number of years in the public service at the lead mines, and for his meritorious services is entitled to freedom; *Be it therefore enacted*, That the said slave Aberdeen shall be, and he is hereby emancipated and declared free in as full and ample a manner as if he had been born free.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 11:308-309.

1783—Virginia Slaves and Free Blacks Leave New York With the British

It is often forgotten that Lord Dunmore fulfilled his promise of freedom to slaves who joined the British during the Revolution. In the fall of 1783, approximately 3,000 African Americans from Virginia were among the men, women, and children evacuated from New York with the British. The following list includes persons who lived in Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Jamestown before the Revolution. Two of George Wythe's slaves who ran from his plantation in Elizabeth City County are also on the list.

NAME	AGE	RESIDENCE	OWNER	WHEN RAN	SHIP
Daniel Barber	70	Yorktown	James Moore	Freed by A. Moore 20 years ago	<i>Aurora</i>
Isaac	21	Williamsburg	John Henderson	Brought off by parents 5 yrs ago by Proclamation	<i>London</i>
Peter Prentis	32	Williamsburg	John Southern	3 years ago	<i>Esther</i>
John Gray	28	Williamsburg	Howard Harrand	Put in army by master – deserted	<i>Blacket</i>
John Jones	40	Williamsburg	Richard Jones	Left with Dunmore in 1776	<i>Elizabeth</i>
Thomas Plumb	42	Yorktown		Born Free	<i>Mary</i>
Charlotte Plumb	13	Yorktown		Daughter and Property of Thomas Plumb	<i>Mary</i>
Jupiter King	24	Williamsburg	Colonel King	3 years ago	<i>Delight</i>
George Weeks	25	Elizabeth City	George Wythe	4 years ago	<i>Greg</i>
Jack	15	King's Creek	Captain Pearson	Brought away 2 years ago by Capt. Kid, N.Y.	<i>Little Dale</i>
Sally Dennis	20	Williamsburg	Lewis Burwell	2 years ago	<i>L'Abondance</i>
John	19mon			Sally's son – Born within British lines	<i>L'Abondance</i>
Dick Richard	30	Yorktown	Peter Willis	5 years ago	<i>Clinton</i>
John Gustus	19	Williamsburg	John Tazewell	4 years ago	<i>Clinton</i>
Samuel Tompkin	23	Yorktown	Richard Tompkin	7 years ago	<i>Clinton</i>
Lewis Kirby	29	Yorktown	John Kirby	3 years ago	<i>Clinton</i>
Jacob Adams	26	Yorktown		Born Free – Left 6 years ago	<i>Clinton</i>
Mary Tompkins	23	Yorktown	Captain Tompkins	7 years ago	<i>Clinton</i>
Hannah Jackson	12	Williamsburg	William Holt	4 years ago	<i>L'Abondance</i>
Hannah Jackson	33	Williamsburg	William Holt	4 years ago	<i>L'Abondance</i>
Nancy Moody	14	Williamsburg	Henry Moody	5 years ago	<i>L'Abondance</i>
Daniel Archer	32	Yorktown	Thomas Archer	4 years ago	<i>L'Abondance</i>
Nancy Dixon &	30	Williamsburg	John Dixon	3 years ago	<i>Nautilus</i>

Daughter	6	Williamsburg	John Dixon	3 years ago	<i>Nautilus</i>
Simon Johnson	16	Williamsburg	John Cooper	Joined the army in 1781	<i>Elizabeth</i>
Joe Freeman	35	Yorktown	Joseph Freeman	4 years ago	<i>Cato</i>
Sarah	42	Williamsburg	Lord Dunmore	Left him in 1776	<i>Lehigh</i>
Roger Scott	57	Williamsburg	Lord Dunmore	Claimed freed by Dunmore	<i>Elijah</i>
James Rea	24	Williamsburg	George Wilk	1779	<i>Elijah</i>
Robert Holt	24	Williamsburg	William Holt	1779	<i>Elijah</i>
Peggy Minton	42	Williamsburg	William Black	1779	<i>Elijah</i>
Catherine Scott	40	Williamsburg	Lord Dunmore	?	<i>Elijah</i>
James Wythe	24	Hampton	George Wythe	1779	<i>Joseph</i>
Sally Stewart	26	Williamsburg	John Tazewell	7 ½ years ago	<i>Danger</i>
Robert Bowland	35	Jamestown	Edward C. Travis	About 3 ½ years ago	<i>L'Abondance</i>

Source: Hodges, ed., *The Black Loyalist Directory*, pp. 5, 18, 28, 32, 41, 43, 45, 50, 59, 86, 89, 92, 93, 96, 97, 99, 109, 111, 117, 125, 134, 162, 167, 170, 171, 173, 178, 201, 208.

Part III—Virginia Questions Slavery in the Years After the Revolution

In the following selections from his book *Many Thousands Gone* Ira Berlin examines the changes that took in Virginia during the Revolution. Virginia's slave population increased between 1776 and 1781 as did the number of people who owned enslaved laborers. The growth in the slave population made it possible for some Virginians to oppose the slave trade since they did not need to add to their labor force. Several planters profited from the sale of enslaved men, women, and children to residents of the Lower South. Other slaveholders—including members of the Burwell family—moved their laborers to plantations in the Shenandoah Valley, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Mississippi Valley.

In addition, there were economic changes in Virginia after the end of the war. Mixed farming—grains, vegetables, and other produce—replaced the focus on tobacco cultivation. Slaves performed a variety of new tasks to produce a greater number of crops. Planters (and their overseers) introduced new management techniques to increase the production and profit of their plantations. From the perspective of the slaves, these techniques required them to work longer and harder. As a result, enslaved laborers created new forms of resistance to the demands placed upon them.

More significantly, over the course of the war the number of slaves in the Upper South increased by natural means. In Maryland the slave population inched up from 80,000 at the beginning of the war to 83,000 in 1783, as did Virginia's—from about 210,000 at the commencement of the war to 236,000 at its end. Despite all of the wartime turbulence that increased mortality and allowed some slaves to escape, the Chesapeake's slave population continued to increase at an annual rate of about 2 percent. In the last quarter of the century, the slave population of the Chesapeake had nearly doubled. As more children were born to slaves on plantations and as some states, following the North, banned importation, the Chesapeake became a net exporter of slaves.

The steady expansion of the slave population in the Upper South during the wartime years allowed many nonslaveholders to enter the slaveholders' ranks. Between 1782 and 1790 the proportion of property-holders owning slaves increased from 47 to 60 percent in Charles County, Maryland, and it followed a similar path in other rural jurisdictions, so that two-thirds of white householders held slaves. But the greatest growth in slaveholding came not among new entries to the owning class but among the grandees, whose expanding holdings swelled the population of the great plantation towns. On many estates, the number of slaves soon exceeded the number of workers needed. George Washington spoke for his class when he observed that it was "demonstratively clear that...I have more working Negroes by a full moiety, than can be employed to any advantage in the farming system.

Enjoying a surfeit of bound labor, Chesapeake planters became the great opponents of the African trade, smugly condemning both Lower South planters who were eager to repopulate their plantations after the disruptions of the war and

the northern merchants who were equally eager to supply them. In condemning the international slave trade while embracing the interstate trade, Upper South planters could lament slavery as an evil that had been foisted upon them by their former British overlords while reaffirming their commitment to chattel bondage.

Indeed, the internal slave trade proved to be a source of enormous profit, what one Maryland newspaper called “an almost universal resource to raise money.” Planters not only collected quick cash from the sale of “excess” slaves, much of which was promptly invested in the region’s expanding industrial economy, but it also provided them an opportunity to reconfigure their labor force in ways that improved productivity. Edward Lloyd, the largest slaveowner on Maryland’s eastern shore, regularly sold a portion of his holdings—generally teenaged children—to keep his plantation workforce at what he believed to be the appropriate level. The practice was adopted by many others, as even the most conscientious masters found it necessary to reduce the size of their holdings periodically. Smaller planters followed suit, although some of them migrated with their slaves to seek new opportunities in the West. Yet others migrated cityward.

The migration to the Virginia piedmont, begun before the war, continued in its aftermath, But the Blue Ridge could not contain the ambitions of Chesapeake planters and farmers, who spilled into the Great Valley of the Shenandoah and up to the edge of the Alleghenies. Before long they had vaulted into Kentucky and Tennessee, and some were headed down the Mississippi with slaves in tow. By century’s end, slaves whose ancestors had worked the tobacco fields of the Chesapeake for a hundred years or more were growing hemp in Kentucky and Tennessee, cotton in the Lower South, and sugar in the lower Mississippi Valley. In 1790 Kentucky counted 13,000 slaves, almost all of them from the Chesapeake region. Ten years later the total was nearly 40,000. Other slaves could be found in Tennessee, Missouri, and Louisiana. The exodus accelerated in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In all, an estimated 115,000 slaves left the tidewater region between 1780 and 1810. The long-distance migrations from the tidewater to the piedmont and from the seaboard states to Kentucky and Tennessee created havoc as thousands of slave families were dismembered and communities set adrift.

...

Yet wartime changes continued to resonate on the region’s plantations and farms. The Upper South’s economy never returned to the pre-revolutionary preoccupation with tobacco production; and with the advent of European war in the 1790s and the subsequent collapse of tobacco prices due to the loss of the French market, mixed farming—corn, wheat, dairying, and in some cases vegetables and other produce—permanently unseated tobacco monoculture. During the final decade of the eighteenth century, tobacco—for the first time—made up less than half of Maryland’s exports. A similar pattern could be found in nearby portions of Virginia. Even in the region’s richest tobacco areas, farmers raised corn, small grains, livestock, and vegetables. In some parts of the Upper

South, little tobacco was grown. Although the transition was nowhere easy, agricultural changes a half century in the making relentlessly transformed the nature of the slaves' work, life, and life chances in the Upper South.

...

Slaves moved with relative ease from single-minded cultivation of tobacco to the complex multifaceted division of labor of the new mixed economy. On the plantations and farms, they sowed, mowed, plowed, broke flax, pressed cider, sheared sheep, and did dozens of other chores. Off the estates, they drove wagons, sailed boats, serviced inns and taverns, and labored in a variety of nonagricultural enterprises, increasing the proportion of slaves employed in manufacturing. Planters established flour mills and invested profits derived from cereal cultivation into ironworks and other enterprises. As millers, blacksmith, machinists, and coopers, some slaves became highly skilled craftsmen. Yet, if there were many specialties in the new economy, there were few specialists among the slaves. Most slaves moved from job to job over the course of the year to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse and complex economy.

...

As they adjusted their labor force, slaveholders also tried to reclaim prerogatives that had been lost during the tumult of war. Styling themselves "improving farmers," planters introduced new managerial techniques to rationalize production and increase the profitability of their estates—all in the name of the genius of the new enlightened age. From the slaves' perspective, such enlightened agriculture doubtless looked like much of the same, and "improvement" was the master's euphemism for their slaves' working harder and longer. According to a historian of the Chesapeake's agriculture, planters "scaled up to the old prewar standard." At Mount Vernon, Washington set a pace that left slaves little time but to work, ordering his overseers to have his slaves "at their work as soon as it is light – work 'till it is dark – and be diligent while they are at it... The presumption," he emphasized, "being, that, every Labourer (male or female) does as much in the 24 hours as their strength, without endangering their health, or constitution, will allow of." While Washington disdained the lash and offered a variety of incentives to encourage his slaves to meet his imposing standard of industry, he also implemented a system of close supervision. "If the Negroes will not do their duty by fair means, they must be compelled to do it," declared the leader of the new republic.

Slaves resisted this intensification of labor under the new order as they had resisted it under the old, frustrating and infuriating those who had been charged with implementing the new regimen. If masters like Washington contrived to speed the pace of work, slaves conspired to maintain what they had come to understand as the traditional stint. More than one overseer felt like James Eagle, who supervised slaves on a Maryland plantation, when he complained that the slaves under his direction "Get much more Dissatisfied Every year & troublesome for they say that they ought all to be at there

liberty & they think that I am the Cause that they are not.” Eventually, Eagle quit, muttering about being unable to “Conduct my business as I ought to do.”

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 264-269.

1784 and 1785—Proslavery Petitions

In 1784 and 1785, eight Virginia counties (Amelia, Brunswick, Halifax, Hanover, Henrico, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, and Pittsylvania) submitted proslavery petitions to the General Assembly in response to the 1782 private manumission act and increasing agitation by the state's Methodists in favor of general emancipation. Although manumission remained infrequent, the number of free blacks in Virginia had doubled between 1782 and 1784. And, in the summer and fall of 1785, Virginia Methodists circulated petitions in support of emancipation, which they then submitted to the legislature.

The proslavery petitions, which are housed in the Library of Virginia, consist of five separate texts, two of which were presented by more than one county. The similarities between them suggest that the counties collaborated or at least shared information with each other. The petitioners made use of Revolutionary rhetoric to stress the inviolability of property rights. They also invoked scripture in defense of slavery and presented free blacks as a dangerous element in society. The petition submitted by Amelia, Mecklenburg, and Pittsylvania Counties is given here.

To the honourable the General Assembly of Virginia, the Remonstrance and Petition of the Inhabitants of Amelia County.

Gentlemen,

When the British Parliament usurped a Right to dispose of our Property without our Consent, we dissolved the Union with our Parent Country, and established a Constitution and Form of Government of our own, that our Property might be secure, in Future. In Order to effect this we risked our Lives and Fortunes, and waded through Seas of Blood. By the favourable Interposition of Providence our Attempt was crowned with Success. We were put in Possession of our Rights of Liberty and Property: And these Rights as well secured, as they can be by an human Constitution or Form of Government. But notwithstanding this, we understand a very subtle and daring Attempt is made to dispossess us of a very important Part of our Property. An Attempt set on Foot, we are informed, by the Enemies of our Country, Tools of the British Administration, and supported by certain Men among us of considerable Weight, to WREST FROM US OUR SLAVES, by an Act of the Legislature for a general Emancipation of them. An Attempt unsupported by Scripture or sound Policy.

It is unsupported by Scripture. For we find that under the Old Testament Dispensation, Slavery was permitted by the Deity himself. Thus, Leviticus Ch. 25, Ver. 44, 45, 46. "Both thy Bond Men and Bond Maids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the Heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy Bond Men and Bond Maids.

Moreover, of the Children of the Strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their Families that are with you, which they begat in your Inheritance, for your Children after you, to inherit them for a Possession; they shall be your Bond-men forever." This Permission to buy and inherit Bond-men and Bond-maids, we have Reason to conclude, continued through all the Revolutions of the Jewish Government, down to the Advent of our Lord. And we do not find, that either he or his Apostles abridged it. The Freedom promised to his Followers, is a Freedom from the Bondage of Sin and Satan, and from the Dominion of Mens Lusts and Passions; but as to their Outward Condition, whatever that was before they embraced the Religion of Jesus, whether Bond or Free, it remained the same afterwards. This St. Paul expressly asserts I Cor. Chap. 7. Ver. 20. where he is speaking directly to this very Point, "Let every Man abide in the same Calling, wherein he is called"; and Ver. 24. "Let every Man wherein he is called, therein abide with God." Thus it is evident the said Attempt is unsupported by Scripture.

It is also exceedingly *impolitic*. For it involves in it, and is productive of Want, Poverty, Distress, and Ruin to the Free Citizen; Neglect, Famine and Death to the black Infant and superannuated Parent; The Horrors of all the Rapes, Murders, and Outrages, which a vast Multitude of unprincipled, unpropertied, revengeful, and remorseless Banditti are capable of perpetrating; inevitable Bankruptcy to the Revenue, and consequently Breach of public Faith, and Loss of Credit with foreign Nations; and, lastly, sure and final Ruin to this now flourishing free and happy Country.

We therefore, your Petitioners and Remonstrants, do solemnly adjure and humbly pray you that you will discountenance and utterly reject every Motion and Proposal for emancipating our Slaves; that as the Act lately made, empowering the Owners of Slaves to liberate them, hath produced, and is still productive of, very bad Effects, you will immediately and totally repeal it; and that as many of the Slaves, liberated by this Act, have been guilty of Thefts and Outrages, Insolences and Violences, destructive to the Peace, Safety, and Happiness of Society, you will make effectual Provision for the due Government of them.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, etc., etc.

[Amelia County, November 10, 1785, with 22 signatures. Also submitted by Mecklenburg County, November 8, 1785, with 223 signatures, and by Pittsylvania County, November 10, 1785, with 54 signatures.]

Source: Schmidt and Wilhelm, eds., "Early Proslavery Petitions in Virginia," pp. 133-146.

November 21, 1784—Lafayette Asks that the Slave James be Rewarded for his Service as a Spy

During the Revolutionary War, a slave named James distinguished himself as a spy for Marie Joseph, Marquis de Lafayette, who served the American cause as a major-general. Because of his daring forays into British camps, James became known as James Lafayette after the war. He successfully petitioned the legislature for his freedom on November 30,

1786. In 1819, he applied for a pension from the state of Virginia, which granted him a one-time payment of sixty dollars for relief and an annual pension of forty dollars. Five years later, James met with Lafayette during the latter's famous tour of the United States. At that time James owned forty acres of land in New Kent County.

Lafayette had become strongly antislavery after the Revolutionary War. In 1783, he unsuccessfully sought to enlist George Washington in a plan to settle former slaves on an estate as free laborers. He freed his own slaves and bought them a plantation in the French colony of Cayenne. He joined the Society for the Friends of the Blacks in 1788.

Lafayette wrote the letter below while in Richmond in 1784, no doubt to assist James in his quest to be emancipated in return for his service in the war.

This is to Certify that the Bearer By the Name of James Has done Essential Services to me While I Had the Honour to Command in this State His Intelligence from the Enemy's Camps Were Industriously Collected and Most faithfully delivered He perfectly Acquitted Himself With Some Important Commissions I gave Him and Appears to Me Entitled to Every Reward his Situation Can Admit of. done Under My Hand, Richmond November 21st 1784

Lafayette

Source: Lafayette, *Letter*, in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 39 (April 1931): between pp. 106-107.

1785—Observations on Slavery Addressed to the Citizens of Virginia

In his address, Juvenis (the pseudonym of an unidentified author) sought to demonstrate that the principles which underlay the American republic were incompatible with chattel slavery. He urged Americans to follow the laws of nature, which gave all men the right to liberty, rather than the laws of civil society, which dictated that some men could be enslaved. By comparing the situation of slaves in relation to free men to that of the colonists in relation to Great Britain before the Revolution, he pointed out that the oppression experienced by slaves was much worse than anything the colonists had ever suffered. He chastised legislators in particular for violating the precept that liberty was an inherent right. Finally, he called for the abolition of slavery, so that liberty would reign in the United States and that those who had died in the Revolution would not have died in vain. There is no information about where Juvenis delivered his address; his text was published in New York City.

THE Slavery of the unfortunate Africans ... is a practice of the most shameful and inhuman nature, and demands the attention of every citizen who would wish to be esteemed either virtuous or honest; for honesty does not always consist in a strict adherence to the laws, which are frequently defective in their nature, and in many instances give sanction to the most fraudulent dealings. In order to avoid error, and the commission of injustice, we need only to consult our own bosoms; where the virtuous

and honest man will meet with an approbation of his conduct; and the vicious and dishonest man, although patronized and protected by the laws, will meet with reprehension, for his dishonesty and baseness. It is to this tribunal, and not to that of the laws, that I wish to submit the propriety of the practice at present in debate. For although by the laws of our country we may be licensed in the enslaving of the Negroes, and in treating them in what manner we please, nevertheless, as those laws are of our own creation, and may consequently be replete with error and injustice, it becomes those who are the authors thereof, to inspect into the nature of them, and to abrogate whatever part of them may be improper, or inconsistent with those superior laws of nature; on which all laws, if either rightful or just, must indubitably be founded.

THAT all men have naturally a right to Liberty, and that to deprive them of it, is the most arbitrary and unauthorized extension of power (even if there were no other laws in existence which respected it, and if our own reason did not very evidently point it out to us) must most manifestly appear from the repeated declarations of our Congress, and the Constitutions of the different States; all of which, in the most positive manner assert, that all men are possessed of certain natural, inherent rights, of which they cannot be divested, but by the most arbitrary and unjustifiable measures.

IT is an invariable and an undoubted maxim, that wherever there is a right existing on the one part, there must necessarily be an obligation on the other; that is, if the Negroes are rightfully entitled to their liberty, there is a consequent obligation on us, not to injure or molest them in the peaceable enjoyment of it, since it would be the height of absurdity to suppose that they could possess a just and unalienable title to their freedom, and that we could at the same time be possessed of an equal right of depriving them of it.

THE only question therefore which can arise on a mature consideration of the subject, is in my opinion this, Are the Negroes men? For if they be men, and if all men have a right to liberty, as is universally acknowledged, and as you also most particularly assert, they must indubitably, as men, be entitled to a participation of that right; and you, consequently, nor no other nation in the world, can rightfully deprive them of it.

UNDER what pretext then do we retain them; or rather, with what justice did we at first reduce them from a state of liberty, to that of the most abject servitude? For since we cannot possibly discover in the laws of nature, which are the basis of all rightful laws, any rightful power which we can have, to exercise the smallest degree of authority over the Africans, more than over any other nation in the world, those persons who can persuade themselves that the enslaving them is not one of the most unwarrantable and inhuman practices that ever characterized the people of any country, or time, must either be entirely divested of every sentiment of humanity,—or must be so extremely ignorant as to suppose that the Creator of the universe made a discrimination between the White People and the Negroes, with respect to their privileges, and that he gave the preeminence to the White People; to whom it became the Negroes, either on account of their unbecoming colour, or as M. Montescue very ironically observes, of their short and curly hair, to be obedient and submissive;—a supposition which however ridiculous it may be, is nevertheless not more so than many others which are used by the proprietors of Negroes, in vindication of their conduct.

...

IF we would but consider for a moment, the origin of the contest between Great-Britain and ourselves, and would but condescend to compare their situation with respect to us, to our then situation with respect to what was at that time called the Mother Country, we shall be able to discover the injustice of our conduct towards the Africans, in a plainer and more conspicuous light. What, in the first place, was the cause which induced us into that war?—a war, which although justifiable, was as cruel and unnatural as that between a parent and a child. Was it not the apprehension which we entertained, of a disposition in the Mother Country to incroach upon our natural Liberties, and to divest us of those privileges to which all mankind are entitled, and which we considered our birth-right? We were not in a situation similar to that of the Negroes, nor could we apprehend that the British crown ever had it in contemplation to reduce us to such an one; yet notwithstanding, possess of a just and lively sense of our rights, we contemned the idea of being subject to the insolence and caprice of a Parliament; and were led on to break every tie of relationship, of friendship and affection, rather than to suffer tamely, what we considered as an unwarrantable exercise of power. But how much more deplorable than ours could have been, must be the situation of the Negroes in our country. They do not enjoy any of those privileges which we esteemed so essential to our existence, as to hazard our lives in order to obtain them. In point of liberty, they are by no means to be considered as superior to the Brutes in our fields, and are inferior to those who range the forests, and partake of nature's gifts. The world has at all times afforded us examples of licentiousness and vice; but if we can reflect on all these circumstances which respect our fellow creatures, without commiserating their fate, or making a single effort, in order to relieve them of it, we may assure ourselves that the history of our time will equal that of our most barbarous predecessors, in the number of examples which it will furnish both of licentiousness and depravity.

THE United States of America, have, by one of the most vigorous exertions that ever adorned the page of ancient or of modern history, established to themselves that Liberty and Independence which they so ardently desired; and to which, as men, they conceived they had a claim.—Their Legislators are the guardians of that Liberty; but how inconsistently with the sacred nature of their trust, and the dignity of their station, do they conduct themselves! Whilst with one hand they are vigorously supporting the standard of Liberty, they are exercising with the other, the rod of Slavery and Despotism;—whilst engaged in preserving their constitutions from violation or infraction, they violate one of its most essential articles, and subvert the very basis on which it is constructed. By their constitutions it is declared, that Liberty is inherently the property of all; and nevertheless, in open violation of that principle, (to which one would suppose they are not only bound by every tie of justice, but also of honor, to comply) they deprive more than two-thirds of their inhabitants of their freedom, without being able to assign a single reason for which they do it, or offering a single argument in vindication of the measure.

...

CONSIDERING every circumstance therefore which relates both to policy and right, we are bound by the duty which we owe to humanity and ourselves, to adopt the most immediate and effectual mode of abolishing a practice, in its nature so tyrannical,

and so unworthy of mankind.—Let Liberty, of whom we have so rapturously spoken, and in whose cause we have so obstinately fought, preside universally over our country, and be the directress of our steps.—Let that patriotic spirit, of which we so greatly boast, display itself in our conduct in the present instance; and then, and not till then, shall we be a virtuous and an honest people.—Let our conduct be always uniformly just as well towards our *own* citizens, as towards those of other nations.—Let this rising country be forever an example of virtuous patriotism and unblemished faith.—Expel from its shores the advocates of despotism and cruelty; and as we have obtained our Liberty, *so* let us watch over and protect it.

WHEN nations or individuals, act inconsistently with those principles by which they have professed themselves to be led and actuated, they render themselves contemptible in the eyes of all who are spectators of their conduct; and destroy all the confidence and faith which might have been previously reposed in them.

AFTER the effusion of so much blood in the defence of our rights (which we did not consider as peculiarly belonging to ourselves, but as the unalienable property of all mankind) let us evince to the world that our sentiments are equally noble with our declarations; that we are in reality guided by that love of Liberty which induced us into the field of battle, and that hatred of usurpation with which our minds have apparently been fraught.

THE memory of those who have fallen in our cause, who have bled in the support of our honor and our rights, requires that we should be vigilant of what we have obtained, so that they may not have bled for us in vain; that a remembrance of the ransom which they have given for our Liberty, may not be effaced from our minds; but that its benefits may be equally imparted to all our countrymen, and impartially diffused throughout all the States.

THE subject is plain, and I should conceive that it would be to doubt both your understanding and humanity, to expatiate longer on it, or to offer more arguments, in order to prove what in its nature is self-evident and simple. What I have laid down for your perusal, has been dictated by the highest zeal for your prosperity and welfare.—It has been dictated by those principles of humanity which I shall always esteem it as the greatest Happiness to possess; and although it should be of no effect, and should pass away entirely disregarded, I shall console myself with this agreeable reflection.—“That my motives were commendable and good.” On the contrary, should it contribute in the least to call up your consideration on the subject, which is all I conceive to be necessary to the acquiring so desirable an end, I shall deem myself inimitably happy and sufficiently rewarded, in the abolition of a practice which involves consequences of so important a nature to the inhabitants of this Continent.

JUVENIS.

Source: Juvenis, *Observations on the Slavery of the Negroes*, pp. 6-9, 14-17, 20-23.

<p>October 1785—ACT LXI. <i>An act concerning wills; the distribution of intestates estates; and the duty of executors and administrators</i></p>

This statute prohibited a widow who held a dower right to slaves from her husband's estate from moving the enslaved persons out of Virginia. In addition, a legatee could not gain possession of a slave who worked in the fields between March 1st and December 31st so that the decedent's slave could tend and harvest the crops.

XXII. And that if any widow possessed of a slave or slaves as of the dower of her husband, shall remove, or voluntarily permit to be removed out of this commonwealth, such slave or slaves, or any of their increase, without the consent of him or her in reversion, such widow shall forfeit all and every such slave or slaves, and all other the dower which she holds of the endowment of her husband's estate, unto the person or persons that shall have the reversion thereof; any law, custom, or usage to the contrary, notwithstanding.

XXIII. And if any widow possessed as aforesaid, shall be married to a husband who shall remove, or voluntarily permit to be removed of this commonwealth, any such slave or slaves, or any of their increase, without the consent of him or her in reversion; in such case it shall be lawful for him or her in reversion to enter into, possess, and enjoy all the estate which such husband holdeth in right of his wife's dower for and during the life of the said husband.

XXXIX. If such perishing goods be not sufficient for paying the debts and expences, the executor or administrator shall proceed in the next place to sell the other personal estate, disposing of the slaves last, until the debts and expences be all paid, having regard to the privilege of specific legacies.

XLIII. If any person shall die after the first day of March, the servants and slaves of which he was possessed, whether held for life or for other interest, and which were employed in making a crop, shall be continued on the plantations in the occupation of the decedent, until the last day of December following, and then delivered to those who shall have a right to demand the same, and their crops shall be assets in the hands of the executors and administrators, subject to debts, legacies, and distribution; the levies and taxes, their tools, the expence of feeding them and their families to that time, and delivering them well clothed, being first deducted. And if such servants or slaves be held by the testator or intestate for his life only, in that case the executor or administrator shall be obliged to deliver to those who are entitled in remainder or reversion, three barrels of Indian corn for every such servant or slave, old and young, to be allowed in their accounts of administration.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 12:145, 150-151.

October 1785—ACT LXXVII. *An act concerning slaves*

The members of the General Assembly continued the practice of the colonial legislators when they passed a statute that contained legal restrictions on slaves.

I. *BE it enacted by the General Assembly*, That no person shall henceforth be slaves within this commonwealth, except such as were so on the first day of this present session of assembly, and the descendants of the females of them. Slaves which shall hereafter be brought into this commonwealth, and kept therein one whole year together, or so long at different times as shall amount to one year, shall be free.

II. No negro or mulatto shall be a witness, except in pleas of the commonwealth against negroes or mulattoes, or in civil pleas wherein negroes or mulattoes alone shall be parties.

III. No slave shall go from the tenements of his master or other person with whom he lives, without a pass, or some letter or token whereby it may appear that he is proceeding by authority from his master, employer, or overseer: If he does, it shall be lawful for any person to apprehend and carry him before a justice of the peace, to be by his order punished with stripes or not, in his discretion.

IV. No slave shall keep any arms whatever, nor pass unless with written orders from his master or employer, or in his company with arms, from one place to another. Arms in possession of a slave contrary to this prohibition, shall be forfeited to him who will seize them. Riots, routs, unlawful assemblies, trespasses, and seditious speeches, by a slave or slaves, shall be punished with stripes, at the discretion of a justice of the peace, and he who will may apprehend and carry him, her, or them, before such justice.

V. *Provided*, That nothing in this act contained, shall be construed to extend to those who may incline to remove from any of the United States and become citizens of this; if within ten days after such removal he or she shall take the following oath before some justice of the peace of this commonwealth: “I A. B. do swear that my removal into the state of Virginia, was with no intent of evading the laws for preventing the further importation of slaves, nor have I brought with me any slaves with an intention of selling them, nor have any of the slaves which I have brought with me been imported from Africa, or any of the West India islands, since the first day of November, 1778. So help me God.” Nor to any persons claiming slaves by descent, marriage, or devise; or to any citizens of this commonwealth, being now the actual owners of slaves within any of the United States and removing such hither; nor to travellers and others making a transient stay, and bringing slaves for necessary attendance, and carrying them out again.

VI. *And be it further enacted*, That no person whatsoever shall buy, sell, or receive of, to or from a slave, any commodity whatsoever without the leave or consent of the master, owner, or overseer of such slave. And if any person shall presume to deal with any slave without such leave or consent, he or she so offending, shall forfeit and pay to the master or owner of such slave four times the value of the thing so bought, sold, or received, to be recovered with costs, by action upon the case, in any court of record within this commonwealth; and shall also forfeit and pay the further sum of five pounds, to any person who will sue for the same, to be recovered with costs, by summons and petition, in the same manner as other debts not exceeding five pounds, nor under twenty-five shillings are, or receive on his or her bare back thirty-nine lashes well laid on at the public whipping-post, but shall nevertheless be liable to pay the costs of such summons and petition.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 12:182-183; see also CHAP. 11—An ACT further to amend the act, entitled, “An act to reduce into one the several acts concerning

slaves, free negroes and mulattoes,” in Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:123-124 and CHAP. 3—An ACT to amend the several laws concerning slavery, in *ibid.*, 3:251-253.

October 1785—ACT LXXVIII. *An act declaring what persons shall be deemed mulattoes*

This definition of who was a mulatto differed from that included in the October 1705 statute entitled *An act declaring who shall not bear office in this country*. The 1705 law defined a mulatto as someone who was a child, a grandchild, or a great-grandchild of a negro or as the child of an Indian.

I. *BE it enacted by the General Assembly*, That every person of whose grandfathers or grandmothers any one is, or shall have been a negro, although all his other progenitors, except that descending from the negro, shall have been white persons, shall be deemed a mulatto; and so every person who shall have one-fourth part or more of negro blood, shall, in like manner, be deemed a mulatto.

II. This act shall commence and be in force from and after the first day of January, one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 12:184.

1785—Virginia Abolitionist Leader Robert Pleasants Urges George Washington to Free His Slaves

Robert Pleasants (1722-1801), a Quaker who lived in Henrico County, emancipated his eighty slaves under Virginia’s 1782 manumission law. During the Revolution, he had begun establishing some of them on land of their own. A leader of the abolition movement in Virginia, he believed that both slaves and freedmen should be educated. In the following letter, he urges George Washington to apply the principle of liberty he had fought for on the battlefield to his private life by freeing his slaves. He hopes to convince Washington to translate his great military and political success into moral influence on the issue of slavery. Pleasants also sent Washington John Dickinson’s “Sentiments on What Is Freedom, and What Is Slavery, by a Farmer,” which appeared in *Illuminations for Legislators, and for Sentimentalists* (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1784).

Honour’d General. Curles 12th mo. 11th 1785

Seeing the Lord has done great things for thee, not only in “covering thy head in the day of Battle,” but making thee instrumental in brining about an extraordinary Revolution (a revolution which has given thee great reputation among men, and Calls for reverent thankfulness to him, who “Rules in the Kingdoms of men,” and declared by his Prophet that, “he will not give his Glory to another, or his praise to graven Images,”) a strong desire attends my mind, that thou may not in any respect Sully in thy private

retirement, the honours thou hast acquired in the Field. Remember the cause for which thou wert call'd to the Command of the American Army, was the cause of Liberty and the Rights of Mankind: How strange then must it appear to impartial thinking men, to be informed, that many who were warm advocates for that noble cause during the War, are now sitting down in a state of ease, dissipation and extravagance on the labour of Slaves? And more especially that thou, who could forego all the Sweets of domestic felicity for a number of years, & expose thy person to the greatest fatigue & dangers in that cause, should now withhold that enestimable blessing from any who are absolutely in thy power, & after the Right of freedom, is acknowledg'd to be the natural & unalienable Right of all mankind.

I cannot suppose from the uncommon generosity of thy conduct in other respects, that this can proceed altogether from interested motives; but rather, that it is the effect of long custom, the prejudices of education towards a black skin, or that some other important concerns may have hitherto diverted thy attention from a Subject so Noble and interesting, as well to thy own Peace & reputation, as the general good of that People, and the community at large. But whatever may have been the Cause, I sincerely wish thou may not longer delay a matter of such importance. It is a Sacrifice which I fully believe the Lord is requiring of this Generation; and should we not submit to it, Is there not reason to fear, he will deal with us as he did with Pharaoh on a similar occasion? For as he is declared to be, "no respecter of persons," how can we expect to do such Violence to human Nature in this enlighten'd age with impunity? We Read, "where much is given, the more will be requird[""] and as thou hast acquired much fame, in being the Successful Champion of American Liberty; It seems highly probably to me, that thy example & influence at this time, towards a general emancipation, would be as productive of real happiness to mankind, as thy Sword may have been: I can but wish therefore, that thou may not loose the oportunity of Crowning the great Actions of thy Life, with the satisfaction of "doing to Others as thou would (in the like Situation) be done by," and finally transmit to the ages a Character, equally famous for thy Christian Virtues, as thy worldly achievements: For notwithstanding thou art now receiving the tribute of praise from a grateful people, the time is coming when all actions will be weighed in an equal ballance, and undergo an impartial examination; how inconsistant then will it appear to posterity, should it be recorded, that the Great General Washington, without fee or reward, had commanded the united forces of America, and at the expence of much Blood & treasure been instrumental in relieving those States from Tyranny & oppression: Yet after all had so far countinanced those Evils, as to keep a number of People in absolute Slavery, who were by nature equally entitled to freedom as himself. O Remember I beseech thee that "God will not be mocked," and is still requiring from each of us, to, "do justly, love mercy and walk humbly before him."

Perhaps General Washington may think it presumptuous in me, who cannot boast a perticular acquaintance, to address him in this manner, but I hope when he considers the Nature of the Subject, and that I can have no selfish views in offering these hints to his serious consideration, than what may arise from the pleasure of hearing he had done those things—which belong to his present, & future happiness, and the good of those over whom Providence hath placed him, he will at least excuse the freedom; & believe that I am with great sincerity & Respect, his Real Friend,

Robert Pleasants

P.S. I herewith send thee a small Pamphlet on the subject of Slavery, said to be wrote by John Dickinson, which if thou hast not before seen, I doubt not will afford pleasure in the perusal and am as above &c. R.P.

Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. Abbot and Twohig, Confederation Series, 3:449-451.

1786—George Washington Expresses Qualified Support for Abolition

In a 1778 letter to his cousin Lund Washington, who managed Mount Vernon, Washington had written that he every day longed “more and more to get clear of” his slaves. By 1779, he had concluded that plantation agriculture was a poor investment of capital, and considered selling the Mount Vernon slaves. Washington was concerned, however, about the possible harm to his public reputation that might result from his selling his ‘people’ on the open market, and firmly refused to consider breaking up slave families. After the end of the war, his rejection of slavery progressed further, and he moved on to support gradual abolition. In a April 12, 1786 letter to Robert Morris excerpted below, Washington declared that he favored abolition if effected by the legislature. Yet his constant belief in the sanctity of property rights, as well as a deep concern with the necessity of maintaining civic order, led Washington earnestly to oppose outside interference with slavery. Later in 1786, Washington stated that he hoped never to purchase another slave. By the early 1790s, he was privately working out the means by which he might be able to free his slaves. Washington eventually manumitted his slaves through his will, penned in July 1799.

I hope it will not be conceived from these observations, that it is my wish to hold the unhappy people, who are the subject of this letter, in slavery. I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it; but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, and that is by Legislative authority; and this, as far as my suffrage will go, shall never be wanting. But when slaves who are happy and contented with their present masters, are tampered with and seduced to leave them; when masters are taken unawares by these practices; when a conduct of this sort begets discontent on one side and resentment on the other, and when it happens to fall on a man, whose purse will not measure with that of the Society, and he looses his property for want of means to defend it; it is oppression in the latter case, and not humanity in any; because it introduces more evils than it can cure.

Source: *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 28:408.

1786—George Washington Shares his Views on Abolition with the Marquis de Lafayette

In a May 10, 1786 letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, Washington declared his approval of Lafayette’s plan to emancipate his slaves on an estate in the colony of Cayenne.

Washington also expressed his view that the Virginia legislature should adopt a plan for gradual emancipation, and he worried that few shared his opinion. In the previous legislative session, efforts on behalf of a general emancipation had failed in the House of Delegates, as had attempts to put a stop to individual manumissions altogether.

The benevolence of your heart my Dr. Marqs. is so conspicuous upon all occasions, that I never wonder at any fresh proofs of it; but your late purchase of an estate in the colony of Cayenne, with a view of emancipating the slaves on it, is a generous and noble proof of your humanity. Would to God a like spirit would diffuse itself generally into the minds of the people of this country; but I despair of seeing it. Some petitions were presented to the Assembly, at its last Session, for the abolition of slavery, but they could scarcely obtain a reading. To set them afloat at once would, I really believe, be productive of much inconvenience and mischief; but by degrees it certainly might, and assuredly ought to be effected; and that too by Legislative authority.

Source: *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 28:424.

1786—Fugitive Slave Advertisement Posted by George Mason and his Son

Mason and his son took out the following advertisement in the *Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser* on September 30, 1786.

TEN POUNDS REWARD

Ran away a few days ago from the Subscribers living in Fairfax County, Virginia, viz. DICK a very lusty well made Mulatto fellow, about 25 years of age, has bushy hair or wool, which he generally combs back, large teeth and eyes, a grum down look when spoken to, is a subtle artful fellow, well acquainted both with Virginia and Maryland, beats a drum pretty well, and formerly a waiting-man: He took with him a light lead coloured country cloth coat, with white metal buttons, a short green ditto, a white cloth waistcoat, a red ditto faced with black velvet, a round hat half worn, and common shoes and stockings. He ran away some time ago, when he worked on board a bay craft by the name of Thomas Webster.—WATT, a stout Negro fellow, remarkably black, about 35 years of age, has lost some of his foreteeth, which in some measure affects his voice, has had cross paths lately shaved on his head, to conceal which he will probably shave or cut close the rest of his hair. He is an artful fellow, has a down look, and seems confused when examined: He took with him a brown cloth coat, a pair of black breeches, and a variety of clothes not known. They will perhaps change their names and pass for freemen: and it is probable they may have a forged pass.—They will probably make for the Eastern-Shore, or for the State of Delaware or Pennsylvania. The above reward, or five pounds, for either of them will be paid for delivering them to the subscribers, or for securing them in any gaol and giving us notice, so that we get them again, and if brought home all reasonable charges paid.

GEORGE MASON,
GEORGE MASON, junr.

N.B. All Captains or Skippers of vessels and others are hereby forewarned, at their peril, from taking them on board, or employing them.

Source: *The Papers of George Mason*, ed. Rutland, 2:855-856.

October 1786—ACT LVIII. *An act directing the method of trying Slaves charged with treason or felony*

The legislators decided to continue the practice of holding an oyer and terminer trial to try a slave charged with treason or felony.

I. *BE it enacted by the General Assembly*, That the justices of every county shall be justices of oyer and terminer for trying slaves charged with treason or felony: Which trials shall be by five at the least without juries upon legal evidence at such times as the sheriffs shall appoint, not being less than five nor more than ten days after the offenders shall have been committed to jail. No slave shall be condemned in any such case unless all of the justices sitting upon his or her trial shall agree in opinion that the prisoner is guilty. *Provided always*, That when judgment of death shall be passed upon any such offender there shall be thirty days at least between the time of passing judgment and the day of execution, except in cases of conspiracy, insurrection, or rebellion. The value of a slave condemned to die, who shall suffer accordingly, or before execution of the sentence perish, to be estimated by the justices triers, shall be paid by the public to the owner. One being detained in slavery, and having commenced an action to assert his freedom, shall be prosecuted and tried for any such crime in the same manner as a free man ought to be prosecuted and tried. No person having interest in a slave shall sit upon the trial of such slave.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 12:345.

1787—The Northwest Ordinance

Congress drafted the Northwest Ordinance to have a new and more specific frame of territorial government to replace Jefferson's ordinance of 1784. The Northwest Ordinance excluded slavery permanently from the Northwest—a provision that Jefferson did not get accepted in his ordinance. This was an important decision. As northern states gradually guaranteed freedom to all blacks who lived north of the Mason-Dixon line, the Ohio River boundary of the Old Northwest territory extended the line between freedom and slavery west to the Mississippi River.

ARTICLE 6. There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted: *Provided, always*, that any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any one of the original states, such fugitive may be

lawfully reclaimed, and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or services as aforesaid.

Source: Morris, ed., *Basic Documents in American History*, p. 49.

1787—George Mason Urges the National Government to Eliminate the Slave Trade

As a member of the Virginia delegation at the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention of 1787, Mason argued that the national government should be given the power to regulate the slave trade. Like other slaveholders concerned about the spread of slavery, Mason focused on the detrimental consequences of slavery for the country as a whole and its white inhabitants rather than the effect of the institution on slaves themselves. He blamed the British for establishing the slave trade to the colonies, expressed concern over the possibility of insurrection, criticized slavery for limiting arts and manufactures and discouraging white immigration, and worried about divine retribution. The following excerpt from his participation in the debate over the importation of slaves comes from James Madison's notes on the Convention proceedings.

22 August 1787

Col. Mason. This infernal traffic originated in the avarice of British Merchants. The British Govt. constantly checked the attempts of Virginia to put a stop to it. The present question concerns not the importing States alone but the whole Union. The evil of having slaves was experienced in the late war. Had slaves been treated as they might have been by the Enemy, they would have proved dangerous instruments in their hands. But their folly dealt by the slaves, as it did by the Tories. He mentioned the dangerous insurrections of the slaves in Greece and Sicily; and the instructions given by Cromwell to the Commissioners sent to Virginia, to arm the servants & slaves, in case other means of obtaining its submission should fail. Maryland & Virginia he said had already prohibited the importation of slaves expressly. N. Carolina had done the same in substance. All this would be in vain if S. Carolina & Georgia be at liberty to import. The Western people are already calling out for slaves for their new lands, and will fill that Country with slaves if they can be got thro' S. Carolina & Georgia. Slavery discourages arts & manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They prevent the immigration of Whites, who really enrich & strengthen a Country. They produce the most pernicious effect on manners. Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of heaven on a Country. As nations can not be rewarded or punished in the next world they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes & effects providence punishes national sins, by national calamities. He lamented that some of our Eastern brethren had from a lust of gain embarked in this nefarious traffic. As to the States being in possession of the Right to import, this was the case with many other rights, now to be properly given up. He held it essential in every point of view that the Genl. Govt. should have power to prevent the increase in slavery.

Source: *The Papers of George Mason*, ed. Rutland, 3:965-966.

1787—The United States Constitution

The northern and southern delegates to the Constitutional Convention debated slavery and the regulation of trade—a sign of sectional controversies to come. Slavery was a question to be settled, not a moral dilemma, in the minds of most delegates. Few delegates considered abolition and they avoided the inclusion of the term “slavery” in the final draft of the Constitution.

Southern delegates wanted slaves to be included in a state’s population so that the region would have a greater number of representatives in Congress. Northerners wanted slaves counted in the population for the purpose of determining each state’s share of the tax burden, but not for the purpose of allotting a state’s representatives in Congress. The delegates turned an amendment proposed by members of the Confederation Congress who decided to count a slave as three-fifths of a person to determine both representation and direct taxes.

A more sensitive issue was the effort to prevent the new federal government from ending the foreign slave trade. The southern delegates accepted a twenty-year time limit on the overseas slave trade in exchange for the guarantee that Congress would not levy export taxes.

Article 1. Section 2.

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.

Article 1. Section 9.

The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.

Source: United States Constitution.

1788—George Mason Opposes the Constitution's Provisions Regarding the Slave Trade

At Virginia's ratification convention in June 1788, Mason voiced his opposition to Section 9 of Article I of the Constitution, which prevented Congress from prohibiting the importation of slaves until 1808. Mason believed that the national government should

ban further slave imports immediately. He also expressed concern that the Constitution did not contain a provision for the protection of slave property. A father of nine, he had written his will shortly after being widowed in 1773 and had made bequests of slave property a valuable element of his legacy to his children, particularly his daughters. At his death in 1792 he owned more than 110 slaves. The quotation at the end of the excerpt is from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*.

17 June 1788

Mr. GEORGE MASON. Mr. Chairman—This is a fatal section, which has created more dangers than any other. The first clause, allows the importation of slaves for twenty years. Under the royal government, the evil was looked upon as a great oppression, and many attempts were made to prevent it; but the interest of the African merchants prevented its prohibition. No sooner did the revolution take place, than it was thought of. It was one of the great causes of our separation from Great-Britain. Its exclusion has been a principal object of this state, and most of the states in the union. The augmentation of slaves weakens the states; and such a trade is diabolical in itself, and disgraceful to mankind. Yet by this constitution it is continued for twenty years. As much as I value an union of all the states, I would not admit the southern states into the union, unless they agreed to the discontinuance of this disgraceful trade, because it would bring weakness and not strength to the union. And though this infamous traffic be continued, we have no security for the property of that kind which we have already. There is no clause in this constitution to secure it; for they may lay such a tax as will amount to manumission. And should the government be amended, still this detestable commerce cannot be discontinued till after the expiration of twenty years. For the fifth article, which provides for amendments, expressly excepts this clause. I have ever looked upon this as a most disgraceful thing to America. I cannot express my detestation of it. Yet they have not secured us the property of the slaves we have already. So that “they have done what they ought not to have done, and have left undone what they ought to have done.”

Source: *The Papers of George Mason*, ed. Rutland, 3:1086.

October 1788—ACT XXIII. *An act to repeal part of an act, directing the trial of slaves committing capital crimes, and for the more effectual punishing conspiracies and insurrections of them, and for the better government of negroes, mulattoes, or indians, bond or free* [Passed the 21st of November, 1788.]

This statute made it possible to prosecute a white person for the murder of a slave under certain conditions.

BE it enacted, That so much of an act, intituled “An act directing the trial of slaves committing capital crimes, and for the more effectual punishing conspiracies and insurrections of them, and for the better government of negroes, mulattoes, and Indians, bond or free,” as declares, that “Where any slave shall happen to die by reason of any stroke or blow during his or her correction, by his

or her owner, or by reason of any accidental blow whatsoever given by such owner, no person concerned in such correction or accidental homicide, shall be liable to any prosecution, or punishment for the same, unless upon examination before the county court, it shall be proved by the oath at least of one lawful and credible witness, that such slave was killed wilfully, maliciously, or designedly; and no person indicted for the murder of a slave, and upon trial found guilty of man-slaughter only, shall incur any forfeiture or punishment for such offence or misfortune;" shall be, and the same is hereby repealed.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 12:681.

October 1788—ACT LIV. *An act concerning the importation of slaves, into the district of Kentucky* [Passed the 26th of December 1788.]

This statute made it easier for residents of the United States to move their slaves to the district of Kentucky.

I. WHEREAS many persons who have removed from some other parts of the United States, into the district of Kentucky, and have become citizens of this commonwealth, have failed within ten days after their removal into the same, to take the oath, or oaths, prescribed by two acts of assembly, the one, intituled, "An act for preventing the further importation of slaves," the other, intituled, "An act concerning slaves," to be taken on the importation of the same, although they might with great truth have taken such oaths: *And whereas* such failure hath been chiefly, if not altogether, owing to the impracticability of complying with the said acts: *Be it enacted by the General Assembly*, that such persons as have already removed, or shall remove before the passing of this act, from any part of the United States, into the district of Kentucky, may take the oaths aforesaid, on or before the first day of May, in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine, and the taking thereof shall be as effectual to award the pecuniary penalties of the said acts, as if it had been within ten days after the removal of such person.

II. All persons who shall remove to the said district, from any part of the United States, after the passing of this act, may take the oath aforesaid within sixty days after such removal; any law to the contrary notwithstanding. *Provided nevertheless*, that this act shall not be construed to affect the right of any slave or slaves, or of any person or persons, entitled to freedom: But as to all persons who may take the said oaths, on or before the said first day of May, the operation of the said acts, as far as they relate to the freedom of any slave removed, or which before the passage of this act may be removed into the district of Kentucky, shall be, and is hereby, suspended for three years; and no suit, or suits, shall be instituted or proceeded on in any court of this commonwealth for the recovery of the freedom of any such slave, before the expiration of the said term of three years. *Provided however*, that the suspension aforesaid, shall not be construed to extend to, or affect, the case of any slave or slaves, or of any person or persons,

entitled to freedom, who have before the passing of this act instituted a suit or suits for the same, in any court of this commonwealth, nor to any such case in which an adjudication, or adjudications, shall have been had thereupon.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 12:713-714.

October 1789—ACT XXII. *An act concerning the Benefit of Clergy* [Passed the 27th of November, 1789.]

The legislators continued to guarantee the right of benefit of clergy to slaves in this act.

SECT. 8 A slave shall in all cases receive the same judgment and stand in the same condition with respect to the benefit of clergy, as a free negro or mulatto.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 13:30, 32.

October 1789—ACT XLV. *An act to amend the act for preventing the farther importation of slaves* [Passed the 17th of December, 1789.]

The legislators extended the time allowed to new residents of Virginia to take the oath prescribed in the act entitled “An act for preventing the farther importation of slaves.”

SECT. 1. WHEREAS it hath been represented to the present General Assembly, that many persons who have migrated into this state, and have become citizens of this Commonwealth, have failed to take the oath within the time prescribed by the act, intituled “An act for preventing the farther importation of slaves,” and that such failure proceeded from their being strangers to the laws of this state, at the time of such removal, and it is reasonable, that they should be exonerated from the pecuniary penalties, to which they are liable in consequence of such failure: *Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly*, that all persons who have so removed into this state may take the oath aforesaid, on or before the first day of June, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety, and the taking thereof shall be as effectual to exonerate them from the pecuniary penalties of the said recited act, as if it had been taken within ten days after the removal of every such person as aforesaid into this state, and that the time in future be extended to sixty days:

SECT. 2. And for perpetuating the certificates of such oath, *Be it further enacted*, That where any person hath taken or shall hereafter take the oath prescribed by the said recited act, that the certificate thereof may be lodged with the clerk of the court of the county where such person resides, who shall enter the same of record, and if required, grant a copy thereof, which shall be as valid and

effectual as the original thereof; any law to the contrary notwithstanding.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 13:62.

October 1790—ACT LXIV. *An act to grant certain privileges to the cities of Richmond and Williamsburg, and to the borough of Norfolk* [Passed the 20th of December, 1790.]

Richmond, Williamsburg, and Norfolk gained the authority to try slaves for offenses committed within the jurisdiction of the Hustings Court for each urban area. The decision to grant this privilege to city and borough governments was connected to the increased number of slaves in cities and towns in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Ira Berlin points out that “Urban slavery expanded with the new towns, as slaves—particularly the slave hirelings—offered ambitious businessmen a quick entry into the rapidly expanding economy. On the eve of the Revolution, Norfolk residents employed about 750 slaves; by century’s end that number had at least doubled. In Richmond, the black population grew apace the white. During the 1780s, slaves composed almost half of the population in the new towns, and by the 1790s they outnumbered whites in places like Petersburg. Similar patterns of growth could be found in all the towns of the Upper South, especially the newly incorporated cities. The slave population of Baltimore exploded upward, quadrupling between 1790 and 1810 to stand at nearly 4,000.”

SECT. 1. *BE it enacted by the General Assembly*, That the mayor, recorder and aldermen of the city of Richmond, or any five of them, the mayor, recorder or eldest alderman being one, may hold a court for the trial of slaves in like manner and subject to the same laws, rules and regulations as the justices of the county courts may now do: *Provided* That their jurisdiction be limited to offences committed within the jurisdiction of the court of Hustings for the said city.

SECT. 5. *And be it further enacted*, That the courts of hustings of the city of Williamsburg and borough of Norfolk, at their respective quarterly sessions, shall have the same power and authority to impanel grand juries as is by this act given to the court of hustings of the city of Richmond.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 274; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 13:200-201.

1791—President George Washington Offers United States Assistance to Put Down the Slave Revolt in Saint Domingue

In September 1791, Jean Baptiste Ternant, the French minister to the United States, informed U.S. officials of the slave rebellion in Saint Domingue and asked for assistance

in the form of funds and material. Washington wrote to Ternant expressing his regret over France's troubles and offering the support requested.

Mount Vernon, September 24, 1791

Sir: I have not delayed a momt. since the receipt of your communications of the 22d. instant, in dispatching orders to the Secretary of the Treasury to furnish the money, and to the Secretary of War to deliver the Arms and Ammunition, which you have applied to me for.

Sincerely regretting, as I do, the cause which has given rise to this application; I am happy in the opportunity of testifying how well disposed the United States are to render every aid in their power to our good friends and Allies the French to quell "the alarming insurrection of the Negros in Hispaniola" and of the ready disposition to effect it, of the Executive authority thereof.

Two months later, Washington received an update about the situation in Saint Domingue and expressed his distress over the rebelliousness of the slaves there.

December 27, 1791

Dear Sir: I thank you for having given me the perusal of the letter herewith returned. Lamentable! to see such a spirit of revolt among the Blacks. Where it will stop, is difficult to say.

Source: *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 31:375-376, 453.

1792—Reverend David Rice's *Slavery Inconsistent With Justice and Good Policy*

Rice (1733-1816), a Presbyterian minister, was a native Virginian who served as a pastor in Bedford County for fourteen years and joined the county's committee of public safety during the Revolution. In 1783, he became the first Presbyterian minister to settle in the territory of Kentucky, where he sought land for his growing family. He organized three congregations in Kentucky and, at his house in Danville, founded a school that later became Transylvania University.

In 1792, Rice delivered the following speech at the state constitutional convention in Danville, Kentucky, and made his address available in pamphlet form. He urged the delegates to adopt a plan of gradual emancipation so as to divest the new state of the sin of slaveholding, which he described as the "national vice of Virginia." While Rice lambasted slavery for its destruction of slave families and refuted the prevalent scriptural defenses of the institution, he also appealed directly to the statesmanship of his listeners by arguing that slavery undermined republican government and civic virtue. In the following selections, Rice enumerates the many threats that slavery poses to stable government and resolutely challenges the legal definition of slaves as property. He reminds the delegates that divine law should always be the ultimate authority. His speech had little influence on the delegates but remains one of the most pointed early attacks on the institution of slavery.

Mr. Chairman,

I rise, Sir, in support of the motion now before you. But my reverence for this body, the novelty of my present situation, the great importance and difficulty of the subject, and the thought of being opposed by gentlemen of the greatest abilities, has too sensible an impression on my mind. But, Sir, I know so much of my natural timidity, which increases with my years, that I foresaw this would be the case: I therefore prepared a speech for the occasion.

Sir, I have lived free, and in many respects happy for near sixty years; but my happiness has been greatly diminished, for much of the time, by hearing of a great part of the human species groaning under the yoke of bondage. In this time, I lost a venerable father, a tender mother, two affectionate sisters, and a beloved first born son; but all these together have not cost me half the anxiety as has been occasioned by this wretched situation of my fellow-men, whom without a blush I call my brethren. When I consider their deplorable state, and who are the cause of their misery, the load of misery that lies on them; and the load of guilt on us for imposing it on them; it fills my soul with anguish. I view their distresses, I read the anger of Heaven, I believe that if I should not exert myself, when, and as far, as in my power, in order to relieve them, I should be partaker of the guilt.

Sir, the question is, Whether slavery is consistent with justice and good policy?

...

If slavery is not consistent with justice, it must be inconsistent with good policy. For who would venture to assert, that it would be good policy for us to erect a public monument of our injustice, and that injustice is necessary for our prosperity, and happiness? That old proverb, that honesty is the best policy, ought not be despised for its age.

But the inconsistency of slavery with good policy will fully appear, if we consider another consequence of our definition [of a slave], viz.

A slave is a member of civil society bound to obey the law of the land; to which laws he never consented; which partially and feebly protect his person; which allow him no property; from which he can receive no advantage; and which chiefly, as they relate to him, were made to punish him. He is therefore bound to submit to a government, to which he owes no allegiance; from which he receives great injury; and to which he is under no obligations; and to perform services to a society, to which he owes nothing and in whose prosperity he had no interest. That he is under this government, and forced to submit to it, appears from his suffering the penalties of its laws. That he receives no benefit by the laws and the government he is under, is evident, from their depriving him of his liberty, and the means of happiness. Though they protect his life and his limbs, they confine him in misery, they will not suffer him to fly from it; the greatest favours they afford him chiefly serve to perpetuate his wretchedness.

He is then a member of society, who is, properly speaking, in a state of war with his master, his civil rulers, and every member of that society. They are all his declared enemies, having, in him, made war upon almost every thing dear to a human creature. It is a perpetual war, with an avowed purpose of never making peace. This war, as it is

unprovoked, is, on the part of the slave, properly defensive. The injury done him is much greater than what is generally esteemed a just ground of war between differing nations; it is much greater than was the cause of war between us and Britain.

It cannot be consistent with the principles of good policy to keep a numerous, a growing body of people among us, who add no strength to us in time of war; who are under the strongest temptations to join an enemy, as it is scarce possible they can lose, and may be great gainers, by the event; who will count so many against us in an hour of danger and distress. A people whose interest it will be whenever in their power, to subvert the government, and throw all into confusion. Can it be safe? Can it be good policy? Can it be our interest or the interest of posterity, to nourish within our own bowels such an injured, inveterate foe, a foe, with whom we must be in a state of eternal war? What havock would a handful of savages, in conjunction with this domestic enemy, make in our country! Especially at a period when the main body of the inhabitants were softened by luxury and ease, and quite unfitted for the hardships and dangers of war. Let us turn our eyes to the West-Indies; and there learn the melancholy effects of this wretched policy. We may there read them written with the blood of thousands. There you may see the sable, let me say, the brave sons of Africa engaged in a noble conflict with their inveterate foes. There you may see thousands fired with a generous resentment of the greatest injuries, and bravely sacrificing their lives on the altar of liberty.

In America, a slave is a standing monument of the tyranny and inconsistency of human governments.

He is declared by the united voice of America, to be by nature free, and entitled to the privilege of acquiring and enjoying property; and yet by laws past and enforced in these states, retained in slavery, and dispossessed of all property and capacity of acquiring any. They have furnished a striking instance of a people carrying on a war in defence of principles, which they are actually and avowedly destroying by legal force; using one measure for themselves and another for their neighbours.

Every state, in order to gain credit abroad, and confidence at home, and to give proper energy to government, should study to be consistent; their conduct should not disagree with their avowed principles, nor be inconsistent in its several parts. Consistent justice is the solid basis on which the fabric of government will rest securely; take this away, and the building totters, and is liable to fall before every blast. It is, I presume, the avowed principles of each of us, that all men are by nature free, and are still entitled to freedom, unless they have forfeited it. Now, after this is seen and acknowledged, to enact that men should be slaves, against whom we have no evidence that they have forfeited their right; what would it be but evidently to fly in our own face; to contradict ourselves; to proclaim before the world our own inconsistency; and warn all men to repose no confidence in us? After this, what credit can we ever expect? What confidence can we repose in each other? If we generally concur in this nefarious deed, we destroy mutual confidence, and break every link of the chain that should bind us together.

Are we rulers? How can the people confide in us, after we have thus openly declared that we are void of truth and sincerity; and that we are capable of enslaving mankind in direct contradiction to our own principles? What confidence in legislators, who are capable of declaring their constituents all free men in one breath; and, in the next, enacting them all slaves? In one breath, declaring that they have a right to acquire and possess property; and, in the next, that they shall neither acquire nor possess it during

their existence here? Can I trust my life, my liberty, my property in such hands as these? Will the colour of my skin prove a sufficient defence against their injustice and cruelty? Will the particular circumstance of my ancestors being born in Europe, and not in Africa, defend me? Will straight hair defend me from the blow that fall so heavy on the wooly head?

If I am a dishonest man, if gain is my God, and this may be acquired by such an unrighteous law, I may rejoice to find it enacted: but I never can believe that the legislature were honest men; or repose the least confidence in them, when their own interest would lead them to betray it. I never can trust the integrity of the judge who can sit upon the seat of justice, and pass an unrighteous judgment, because it is agreeable to law; when that law itself is contrary to the light and law of nature.

Where no confidence can be put in men of public trust, the exercise of government must be very uneasy, and the condition of the people extremely wretched. We may conclude, with the utmost certainty, that it would be bad policy to reduce matters to this unhappy situation.

Slavery naturally tends to sap the foundations of moral, and consequently of political virtue; and virtue is absolutely necessary for the happiness and prosperity of a free people. Slavery produces idleness; and idleness is the nurse of vice. A vicious commonwealth is a building erected on quicksand, the inhabitants of which can never abide in safety.

...

It will be said, Negroes were made slaves by law, they were converted into property by an act of the legislature; and under the sanction of that law I purchased them; they therefore became my property, I have a legal claim to them. To repeal this law, to annihilate slavery, would be violently to destroy what I legally purchased with my money, or inherit from my father. It would be equally unjust with dispossessing me of my horses, cattle, or any other species of property. To dispossess me of their offspring would be injustice equal to dispossessing me of the annual profits of my estate. This is an important objection, and it calls for a serious answer.

The matter seems to stand thus: many years ago, men, being deprived of their natural right to freedom, and made slaves, were by law converted into property. This law, it is true, was wrong, it established iniquity; it was against the law of humanity, common sense, reason, and conscience. It was, however, a law; and under the sanction of it, a number of men, regardless of its iniquity, purchased these slaves, and made their fellow men their property.

The question is concerning the liberty of a man. The man himself claims it as his own property. He pleads, that it was originally his own; that he has never forfeited, nor alienated it; and therefore, by the common laws of justice and humanity, it is still his own. The purchaser of the slave claims the same property. He pleads that he purchased it under the sanction of a law, enacted by the legislature; and therefore it became his. Now, the question is, who has the best claim? Did the property in question belong to the legislature? Was it vested in them? If legislatures are possessed of such property as this, may another never exist! No individual of their constituents could claim it as his own inherent right; it was not in them collectively; and therefore they could not convey it to

their representatives. Was it ever known, that a people chose representatives to create and transfer this kind of property? The legislature were not, they could not be possessed of it; and therefore could not transfer it to another; they could not give what they themselves had not. Now does the property belong to him, who received it from a legislature that had it not to give, and by a law they had no right to enact; or to the original owner, who has never forfeited, nor alienated his right? If a law should pass for selling an innocent man's head, and I should purchase it; have I in consequence of this law and this purchase, a better claim to this man's head than he had himself?

To call our fellow-men, who have not forfeited, nor voluntarily resigned their liberty, our property, is a gross absurdity, a contradiction to common sense, and an indignity to human nature. The owners of such slaves then are the licenced robbers, and not the just proprietors, of what they claim: freeing them is not depriving them of property, but restoring it to the right owner; it is suffering the unlawful captive to escape. It is not wronging the master, but doing justice to the slave, restoring him to himself. The master, it is true, is wronged, he may suffer and that greatly: but this is his own fault, and the fault of the enslaving law; and not of the law that does justice to the oppressed.

You say, a law of emancipation would be unjust, because it would deprive men of their property; but is there no injustice on the other side? Is nobody intitled to justice, but slave-holders? Let us consider the injustice on both sides: and weigh them in an even balance. On the one hand, we see a man deprived of all property, of all capacity to possess property, of his own free agency, of the means of instruction, of his wife, of his children, of almost every thing dear to him: on the other, a man deprived of eighty or an hundred pounds. Shall we hesitate a moment to determine, who is the greatest sufferer, and who is treated with the greatest injustice? The matter appears quite glaring, when we consider, that neither this man, nor his parents had sinned, that he was born to these sufferings; but the other suffers altogether for his own sin, and that of his predecessors.—Such a law would only take away property, that is its own property, and not ours: property that has the same right to possess us, as its property, as we have to possess it: property that has the same right to convert our children into dogs, and calves, and colts, as we have to convert theirs into these beasts: property that may transfer our children to strangers, by the same right that we transfer theirs.

Human legislatures should remember, that the[y] act in subordination to the great Ruler of the universe, have no right to take the government out of his hand nor to enact laws contrary to his; that if they should presume to attempt it, they cannot make that right, which he has made wrong; they cannot dissolve the allegiance of his subjects, and transfer it to themselves, and thereby free the people from their obligations to obey the laws of nature. The people should know, that legislatures have not this power; and that a thousand laws can never make that innocent, which the divine law has made criminal; or give them a right to that, which the divine law forbids them to claim.

...

The slavery of the negroes began in iniquity; a curse has attended it, and a curse will follow it. National vices will be punished with national calamities. Let us avoid these vices, that we may avoid the punishment which they deserve; and endeavour so to act, as to secure the approbation and smiles of Heaven.

Holding men in slavery is the national vice of Virginia; and while a part of that state, we were partakers of the guilt. As a separate state, we are just now come to the birth; and it depends upon our free choice whether we shall be born in this sin, or innocent of it. We now have it in our power to adopt it as our national crime; or to bear a national testimony against it. I hope the latter will be our choice; that we shall wash our hands of this guilt; and not leave it in the power of a future legislature, ever more to stain our reputation or our conscience with it.

Source: Rice, *Slavery Inconsistent With Justice and Good Policy*, pp. [1], 8-10, 12-14, 23.

February 12, 1793—The First Fugitive Slave Act

In 1787, the framers of the U.S. Constitution included a fugitive slave clause in Article IV, Section 2. It read: "No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due." Six years later, perhaps in response to the increasing number of runaways who successfully eluded their owners, Congress passed a fugitive slave law to enforce the constitutional provision. The law enabled an owner or his agent to seize or arrest any of his slaves who had absconded to another state or territory and, after proving ownership before a federal judge or local magistrate, take the runaway back to the place from which he or she had fled. It also imposed a \$500 penalty on individuals who harbored fugitive slaves or hindered their capture. The law, which is reprinted in its entirety below, reached President George Washington's desk on February 9, 1793, and he signed it three days later.

As part of the Compromise of 1850, Congress amended the 1793 law to make it stricter (federal commissioners were given broad authority to pursue fugitive slaves; citizens were commanded to assist searches; those who aided or concealed fugitives were liable to increased fines or imprisonment; alleged runaways were prohibited from having a jury trial or testifying for themselves). The 1850 law galvanized Northern abolitionists and brought them new support from formerly apathetic citizens in the region.

An Act respecting fugitives from justice and persons escaping from the service of their masters.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That whenever the executive authority of any state in the Union, or of either of the territories northwest or south of the river Ohio, shall demand any person as a fugitive from justice, of the executive authority of any such state or territory to which such person shall have fled, and shall moreover produce the copy of an indictment found, or an affidavit made before a magistrate of any state or territory aforesaid, charging the person so demanded, with having committed treason, felony or other crime, certified as authentic by the governor or chief magistrate of the state or territory from whence the person so charged fled, it shall be the duty of the

executive authority of the state or territory to which such person shall have fled, to cause him or her to be arrested and secured, and notice of the arrest to be given to the executive authority making such demand, or to the agent of such authority appointed to receive the fugitive, and to cause the fugitive to be delivered to such agent when he shall appear: But if no such agent shall appear within six months from the time of the arrest, the prisoner may be discharged. And all costs or expenses incurred in the apprehending, securing, and transmitting such fugitive to the state or territory making such demand, shall be paid by such state or authority.

SECTION. 2. *And be it further enacted*, That any agent, appointed as aforesaid, who shall receive the fugitive into his custody, shall be empowered to transport him or her to the state or territory from which he or she shall have fled. And if any person or persons shall by force set at liberty, or rescue the fugitive from such agent while transporting, as aforesaid, the person or persons so offending shall, on conviction, be fined not exceeding five hundred dollars, and be imprisoned not exceeding one year.

SECTION. 3. *And be it also enacted*, That when a person held to labour in any of the United States, or in either of the territories on the northwest or south of the river Ohio, under the laws thereof, shall escape into any other of the said states or territory, the person to whom such labour or service may be due, his agent or attorney, is hereby empowered to seize or arrest such fugitive from labour, and to take him or her before any judge of the circuit or district courts of the United States, residing or being within the state, or before any magistrate of a county, city or town corporate, wherein such seizure or arrest shall be made, and upon proof to the satisfaction of such judge or magistrate, either by oral testimony or affidavit taken before and certified by a magistrate of any such state or territory, that the person so seized or arrested, doth, under the laws of the state or territory from which he or she fled, owe service or labour to the person claiming him or her, it shall be the duty of such judge or magistrate to give a certificate thereof to such claimant, his agent or attorney, which shall be sufficient warrant for removing the said fugitive from labour, to the state or territory from which he or she fled.

SECTION. 4 *And be it further enacted*, That any person who shall knowingly and willingly obstruct or hinder such claimant, his agent or attorney, in so seizing or arresting such fugitive from labour, or shall rescue such fugitive from such claimant, his agent or attorney when so arrested pursuant to the authority herein given or declared; or shall harbor or conceal such person after notice that he or she was a fugitive from labour, as aforesaid, shall, for either of the said offences, forfeit and pay the sum of five hundred dollars. Which penalty may be recovered by and for the benefit of such claimant, by action of debt, in any court proper to try the same; saving moreover to the person claiming such labour or service, his right of action for or on account of the said injuries or either of them.

Source: *Statutes at Large*, 1:302-305, reprinted in McDougall, ed, *Fugitive Slaves*, pp. 105-106; see the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act is in *Statutes at Large*, 9:462-465, reprinted in McDougall, ed., *Fugitive Slaves*, pp. 112-115.

December 1793—ACT XXIII. An ACT to prevent the migration of free negroes and mulattoes into this commonwealth

The legislators decided to make it illegal for free persons of color to migrate to Virginia even though it was legal for slave owners in the state to emancipate their enslaved men, women, and children.

1. *Be it enacted*, That it shall not be lawful for any free negro or mulatto to migrate into this commonwealth, and every free negro or mulatto who shall come into this commonwealth, contrary to this act, shall and may be apprehended and carried by any citizen before some justice of the peace of the county where he shall be taken; which justice is hereby authorized to examine, send and remove every such free negro or mulatto out of this commonwealth, into that state or island from whence it shall appear he or she last came; and for this purpose, the sheriff or other officer, and other persons, may by such justice be employed within the commonwealth, upon the same terms as are by law directed in the removal of criminals from one country to another. And every free negro or mulatto who shall come or be brought into this commonwealth by water from any country, state or island, may and shall be exported to the place from whence he or she came, or was brought, and the charges attending the same shall be paid by the importer; to be recovered by motion in the name of the commonwealth, upon ten days previous notice thereof in any court of record.

2. Every master of a vessel, or other person who shall bring into this commonwealth by water or by land, in any vessel, boat, land carriage or otherwise, any free negro or mulatto, shall forfeit and pay for every such person so brought, the penalty of one hundred pounds lawful money; one half to the commonwealth, and the other half to the person who shall inform thereof; to be recovered by action of debt or information in any court of record, and the defendant in every such case shall be ruled to give special bail.

3. This act shall not extend to masters of vessels bringing into this state any free negro or mulatto employed on board and belonging to such vessel, and who shall therewith depart, nor to any person travelling into this state, having any free negro or mulatto as a servant.

4. *And be it further enacted*, That in case any slave shall be brought or come into this state from Africa or the West India islands, directly or indirectly, upon information thereof given to any justice of the peace, it shall be his duty to cause such slave to be apprehended immediately and transported out of this commonwealth, and the expense attending such transportation, shall be paid by the person importing such slave, recoverable in the name of the justice directing such slave to be transported, by warrant before a single magistrate.

Source: Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 1: 239.

1795—The Constitution of the Virginia Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery

Although there were individual Virginians throughout the eighteenth century who spoke out against slavery, not until 1790 did a group of individuals in Richmond, led by Quaker Robert Pleasants, organize the “Virginia Society For Promoting The Abolition of

Slavery....” The Society, whose membership numbered almost 150 by 1796, included Methodists as well as Quakers, and concentrated on letter-writing, petitioning, and assisting slaves in freedom and kidnapping suits; but they had insufficient funding to bring major freedom suits. Their activities, along with the activities of a similar society in Alexandria organized in 1795, were largely ended when the Virginia General Assembly passed a law in 1795 that prevented abolitionist assistance in freedom suits and another law in 1798 forbidding members of abolitionist societies from sitting on juries in freedom suits. Both societies were further weakened by the backlash against Gabriel’s Rebellion of 1800.

Below are excerpts from the constitution, including the preamble and articles forbidding members from owning slaves and describing how members should investigate cases of free blacks being held in bondage.

**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE VIRGINIA SOCIETY,
For promoting the ABOLITION of SLAVERY, and the Relief of free Negroes,
or others, unlawfully held in Bondage, and other humane Purposes**

From a full belief that “the Lord’s mercy is over all his works, that he created mankind of every nation, language, and colour, equally free, and that slavery in all its forms, in all its degrees,” is an outrageous violation, and an odious degradation of human nature: That it is inconsistent with the precepts of the Gospel, of “doing to others, as we would they should do unto us;” and that it is not only a moral, but a political evil, which tends wherever it prevails, to deprave the morals of the people, weaken the bonds of Society, discourage trades and manufactures, and rather promotes arbitrary power, than secures the just rights and liberties of mankind;—Believing also, that the Societies already established in other parts of the world, for promoting the abolition of slavery, and the slave trade, have been of real advantage in manifesting the unrighteous policy of the one, and the iniquity of the other,—WE THE SUBSCRIBERS, in humble hope of contributing our mite to the cause of humanity, and the promotion of righteousness in the earth, have associated ourselves, under the title of, “THE VIRGINIA SOCIETY, FOR PROMOTING THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, AND THE RELIEF OF FREE NEGROES OR OTHERS UNLAWFULLY HELD IN BONDAGE, AND OTHER HUMANE PURPOSES.”

...

VII. In all cases where persons legally entitled to freedom shall be held in bondage, it shall be the business of the Corresponding members, appointed in the different districts, more particularly to enquire into, and give notice to the Acting Committee of all such cases, and to procure authenticated copies from records, or such other writings or testimonies as they may think necessary, or proper, for investigation of the right, and relief of the sufferers.

...

IX. Two thirds of the members present at a half yearly meeting shall have power to expel any person whom they may deem unworthy of remaining a member,—and no person shall be a member, who holds a slave, or is concerned in the unrighteous traffic of buying or selling that unhappy race of human beings.

Source: *The Constitution of the Virginia Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery*; Philip J. Schwarz on the Virginia Society for the Abolition of Slavery in Paul Finkelman and Joseph C. Miller, eds., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, forthcoming.

1796—St. George Tucker's *A Dissertation on Slavery: With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of Virginia*

Born and raised in Bermuda, St. George Tucker came to Virginia in 1771 to study at the College of William and Mary and later read law under George Wythe. A jurist and legal scholar, he received an appointment as a professor of law at the College of William and Mary in 1790. When he died in 1827, he was sitting on the bench of the United States District Court.

Tucker had several domestic slaves at his residence on Market Square. After spending more than two years working on a feasible plan for abolition, he published *A Dissertation on Slavery* in 1796. In it, he addressed directly the paradox of freedom and slavery that had bothered him since his participation in the Revolution a generation earlier. Although he sent two copies of his proposal to the General Assembly, Tucker was soon disappointed to discover that legislators did not give it serious consideration.

The following extracts include the title page and prefatory material.

A Dissertation on Slavery: With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of Virginia, by St. George Tucker, Professor of Law in the University of William and Mary, and one of the Judges of the General Court, in Virginia.

Slavery not only violates the Laws of Nature, and of civil Society, it also wounds the best Forms of Government: in a Democracy, where all Men are equal, Slavery is contrary to the Spirit of the Constitution. MONTESQUIEU

Philadelphia: Printed for Mathew Carey, No. 118, Market-Street, 1796.

To the General Assembly of Virginia

To whom it belongs to decide upon the expediency and practicability of a plan for the *gradual abolition of Slavery* in this commonwealth,

The following pages are most respectfully submitted and inscribed,

BY THE AUTHOR.

Williamsburg, in

Virginia, May 20, 1796.

To the Reader

The following pages form a part of a course of Lectures on Law and Police, delivered in the University of William and Mary, in this commonwealth. The Author considering the Abolition of Slavery in this State, as an object of the first importance, not only to our moral character and domestic peace, but even to our political salvation; and being persuaded that the accomplishment of so momentous and desirable an undertaking will in great measure depend upon the **early** adoption of some plan for that purpose, with diffidence submits to the consideration of his countrymen his ideas on a subject of such consequence. He flatters himself that the plan he ventures to suggest, is liable to fewer objections than most others that have been submitted to the consideration of the public, as it will be attended with a gradual change of condition in the blacks, and cannot possibly affect the interest either of **creditors** or any other description of persons of the **present generation**: and posterity he makes no doubt will feel themselves relieved from a perilous and grievous burden by the timely adoption of a plan, whose operation may be felt by them, before they are borne down by a weight which threatens destruction to our happiness both public and private.

On the State of Slavery in Virginia

In the preceding Enquiry into the absolute rights of the citizens of united America, we must not be understood as if those rights were equally and universally the privilege of all the inhabitants of the United States, or even of all those, who may challenge this land of freedom as their native country. Among the blessings which the Almighty hath showered down on these states, there is a large portion of the bitterest draught that ever flowed from the cup of affliction. Whilst America hath been the land of promise to Europeans, and their descendants, it hath been the vale of death to millions of the wretched sons of Africa. The genial light of liberty, which hath here shone with unrivalled lustre on the former, hath yielded no comfort to the latter, but to them hath proved a pillar of darkness, whilst it hath conducted the former to the most enviable state of human existence. Whilst we were offering up vows at the shrine of Liberty, and sacrificing hecatombs upon her altars; whilst we swore irreconcilable hostility to her enemies, and hurled defiance in their faces; whilst we adjured the God of Hosts to witness our resolution to live free, or die, and imprecated curses on their heads who refused to unite with us in establishing the empire of freedom; we were imposing upon our fellow men, who differ in complexion from us, a *slavery*, then thousand times more cruel than the utmost extremity of those grievances and oppressions, of which we complained. Such are the inconsistencies of human nature; such the blindness of those who pluck not the beam out of their own eyes, whilst they can espy a mote, in the eyes of their brother; such that partial system of morality which confines rights and injuries, to particular complexions; such the effect of that selflove which justifies, or condemns, not according to principle, but to the agent. Had we turned our eyes inwardly when we supplicated the Father of Mercies to aid the injured and oppressed when we invoked the Author of Righteousness to attest the purity of our motives, and the justice of our cause; and implored the God of Battles to aid our exertions in its defence, should we not have stood more self convicted than the contrite publican! Should we not have left our gift upon the altar, that we might be first reconciled to our brethern whom we held in bondage? Should we not have loosed their

chains, and broken their fetters? Or if the difficulties and dangers of such an experiment prohibited the attempt during the convulsions of a revolution, is it not our duty to embrace the first moment of constitutional health and vigour, to effectuate so desirable an object, and to remove from us a stigma, with which our enemies will never fail to upbraid us, nor our consciences to reproach us? To form a just estimate of this obligation, to demonstrate the incompatibility of a state of slavery with the principles of our government, and of that revolution upon which it is founded, and to elucidate the practicability of its total, though gradual, abolition, it will be proper to consider the nature of slavery, its properties, attendants, and consequences in general; its rise, progress, and present state not only in this commonwealth, but in such of our sister states as have either perfected, or commenced the great work of its extirpation; with the means they have adopted to effect it, and those which the circumstances and situation of our country may render it most expedient for us to pursue, for the attainment of the same noble and important end.

...

The present number of slaves in Virginia, is immense, as appears by the census taken in 1791, amounting to no less than 292,427 souls: nearly two-fifths of the whole population of the commonwealth. We may console ourselves with the hope that this proportion will not increase, the further importation of slaves being prohibited, whilst the free migrations of white people hither is encouraged. But this hope affords no other relief from the evil of slavery, than a diminution of those apprehensions which are naturally excited by the detention of so large a number of oppressed individuals among us, and the possibility that they may one day be roused to an attempt to shake off their chains.

...

In the course of this enquiry it is easy to trace the desire of the legislature to put a stop to the further importation of slaves, and had not this desire been uniformly opposed on the part of the crown, it is highly probable that event would have taken effect at a much earlier period than it did. A duty of five per cent, to be paid by the buyers, at first, with difficulty obtained the royal assent. Requisitions from the crown for aids, on particular occasions, afforded a pretext from time to time for increasing the duty from five, to ten, and finally to twenty per cent with which the *buyer* was uniformly made chargeable. The wishes of the people of the colony, were not sufficient to counterbalance the interest of the English merchants, trading to Africa, and it is probable, that however disposed to put a stop to so infamous a traffic by law, we should never have been able to effect it, so long as we might have continued dependent on the British government: an object sufficient of itself to justify a revolution. That the legislature of Virginia were *sincerely* disposed to put a stop to it, cannot be doubted; for even during the tumult and confusion of the revolution, we have seen that they availed themselves of the earliest opportunity, to crush for ever so pernicious and infamous a commerce, by an act passed in October 1778, the penalties of which, though apparently lessened by the act of 1792, are still equal to the value of the slave; being two hundred dollars upon the importer, and one hundred dollars upon every person buying or selling an imported slave.

A system uniformly persisted in for nearly a whole century, and finally carried into effect, so soon as the legislature was unrestrained by 'the inhuman exercise of the royal negative,' evinces the sincerity of that disposition which the legislature had shewn during so long a period, to put a check to the growing evil. From the time that the duty was raised above five per cent it is probable that the importation of slaves into this colony decreased. The demand for them in the more southern colonies probably contributed also to lessen the numbers imported into this: for some years immediately preceding the revolution, the importation of slaves into Virginia might almost be considered as at an end; and probably would have been entirely so, if the ingenuity of the merchant had not found out the means of evading the heavy duty, by pretended sales, at which the slaves were brought in by some friend, at a quarter of their real value.

Tedious and unentertaining as this detail may appear to all others, a citizen of Virginia will feel some satisfaction at reading so clear a vindication of his country, from the opprobrium, but too lavishly bestowed upon her of fostering slavery in her bosom, whilst she boasts a sacred regard to the liberty of her citizens, and of mankind in general. The acrimony of such censures must abate, at least in the breasts of the candid, upon an impartial review of the subject here brought before them; and if in addition to what we have already advanced, they consider the difficulties attendant on any plan for the abolition of slavery, in a country where so large a proportion of the inhabitants are slaves; and where a still larger proportion of the cultivators of the earth are of that description of men, they will probably feel emotions of sympathy and compassion, both for the slave and for his master, succeed to those hasty prejudices, which even the best dispositions are not exempt from contracting, upon subjects where there is a deficiency of information.

...

The extirpation of slavery from the United States, is a task equally arduous and momentous. To restore the blessings of liberty to near a million of oppressed individuals, who have groaned under the yoke of bondage, and to their descendants, is an object, which those who trust in Providence will be convinced would not be unaided by the divine Author of our being, should we invoke his blessing upon our endeavours. Yet human prudence forbids that we should precipitately engage in a work of such hazard as a general and simultaneous emancipation. The mind of man must in some measure be formed for his future condition. The early impressions of obedience and submission, which slaves have received among us, and the no less habitual arrogance and assumption of superiority, among the whites, contribute, equally, to unfit the former for *freedom*, and the later for *equality*. To expel them all at once, from the United States, would in fact be to devote them only to a lingering death by famine, by disease, and other accumulated miseries: 'We have in history but one picture of a similar enterprize, and there we see it was necessary not only to open the sea by a miracle, for them to pass, but more necessary to close it again to prevent their return.' To retain them among us, would be nothing more than to throw so many of the human race upon the earth without the means of subsistence: they would soon become idle, profligate, and miserable. Unfit for their new condition, and unwilling to return to their former laborious course, they would become the caterpillars of the earth, and the tigers of the human race. The recent history of the French West Indies exhibits a melancholy picture of the probable consequences of a

general, and momentary emancipation in any of the states, where slavery has made considerable progress. In Massachusetts the abolition of it was effected by a single stroke; a clause in their constitution: but the whites at that time, were as sixty-five to one, in proportion to the blacks. The whole number of free persons in the United States, south of Delaware state, are 1,233,829, and there are 648,439 slaves; this proportion being less than two to one. Of the cultivators of the earth in the same district, it is probable that there are four slaves for one free white man.—To discharge the former from their present condition, would be attended with an immediate general famine, in those parts of the United States, from which not all the productions of the other states, could deliver them; similar evils might reasonably be apprehended from the adoption of the measure by any one of the southern states; for in all of them the proportion of slaves is too great, not to be attended with calamitous effects, if they were immediately set free. These are serious, I had almost said unsurmountable obstacles, to a general, simultaneous emancipation.—There are other considerations not to be disregarded. A great part of the *property* of individuals consists in *slaves*. The laws have sanctioned this species of property. Can the laws take away the property of an individual without his own consent, or without a *just compensation*? Will those who do not hold slaves agree to be taxed to make this compensation? Creditors also, who have trusted their debtors upon the faith of this visible property will be defrauded. If justice demands the emancipation of the slaves, she also, *under these circumstances*, seems to plead for the owner, and for his creditor. The claims of nature, it will be said are stronger than those which arise from social institutions, only. I admit it, but nature also dictates to us to provide for our own safety, and authorizes all *necessary* measures for that purpose. And we have shewn that our own security, nay, our very existence, might be endangered by the hasty adoption of any measure for the *immediate* relief of the *whole* of this unhappy race. Must we then quit the subject, in despair of the success of any project for the amendment of their, as well as our own, condition? I think not.—Strenuously as I feel my mind opposed to a simultaneous emancipation, for the reasons already mentioned, the abolition of slavery in the United States, and especially in that state to which I am attached by every tie that nature and society form, is *now* my *first*, and will probably be my last expiring wish.

...

We must therefore endeavour to find some middle course, between the tyrannical and iniquitous policy which holds so many human creatures in a state of grievous bondage, and that which would turn loose a numerous, starving, and enraged banditti upon the innocent descendants of their former oppressors. *Nature, time, and sound policy* must cooperate with each other to produce such a change: if either be neglected, the work will be incomplete, dangerous, and not improbably destructive.

The plan therefore which I would presume to propose for the consideration of my countrymen is such, as the number of slaves, the difference of their nature, and habits, and the state of agriculture, among us, might render it *expedient*, rather than *desirable* to adopt: and would partake partly of that proposed by Mr. Jefferson, and adopted in other states; and partly of such cautionary restrictions, as a due regard to situation and circumstance, and even to *general* prejudices, might recommend to those, who engage in so arduous, and perhaps unprecedented an undertaking.

1. Let every female born after the adoption of the plan be free, and transmit freedom to all her descendants, both male and female.
 2. As a compensation to those persons, in whose families such females, or their descendants may be born, for the expence and trouble of their maintenance during infancy, let them serve such persons until the age of twenty-eight years: let them then receive twenty dollars in money, two suits of clothes, suited to the season, a hat, a pair of shoes, and two blankets. If these things be not voluntarily done, let the county courts enforce the performance, upon complaint.
 3. Let all Negroe children be registered with the clerk of the county or corporation court, where born, within one month after their birth: let the person in whose family they are born take a copy of the register, and deliver it to the mother, or if she die to the child, before it is of the age of twenty-one years. Let any Negroe claiming to be free, and above the age of puberty, be considered as of the age of twenty-eight years, if he or she be not registered, as required.
 4. Let all such Negroe servants be put on the same footing as white servants and apprentices now are, in respect to food, raiment, correction, and the assignment of their service from one to another.
 5. Let the children of Negroes and mulattoes, born in the families of their parents, be bound to service by the overseers of the poor, until they shall attain the age of twenty-one years.—Let all above that age, who are not housekeepers, nor have voluntarily bound themselves to service for a year before the first day of February annually, be then bound for the remainder of the year by the overseers of the poor. To stimulate the overseers of the poor to perform their duty, let them receive fifteen per cent. of their wages, from the person hiring them, as a compensation for their trouble, and ten per cent. per annum out of the wages of such as they may bind apprentices.
 6. If at the age of twenty-seven years, the master of a Negroe or mulattoe servant be unwilling to pay his freedom dues, above mentioned, at the expiration of the succeeding year, let him bring him into the county court, clad and furnished with necessaries as before directed, and pay into court five dollars, for the use of the servant, and thereupon let the court direct him to be hired by the overseers of the poor for the succeeding year, in the manner before directed.
 7. Let no Negroe or mulattoe be capable of taking, holding, or exercising, any public office, freehold, franchise or privilege, or any estate in lands or tenements, other than a lease not exceeding twenty-one years.—Nor of keeping, or bearing arms, unless authorised so to do by some act of the general assembly, whose duration shall be limited to three years. Nor of contracting matrimony with any other than a Negroe or mulattoe; nor be an attorney; nor be a juror; nor a witness in any court of judicature, except against, or between Negroes and mulattoes. Nor be an executor or administrator; nor capable of making any will or testament; nor maintain any real action; nor be a trustee of lands or tenements himself, nor any other person to be a trustee to him or to his use.
 8. Let all persons born after the passing of the act, be considered as entitled to the same mode of trial in criminal cases, as free Negroes and mulattoes are now entitled to.
- The restrictions in this plan may appear to savour strongly of prejudice: whoever proposes any plan for the abolition of slavery, must either encounter, or accommodate himself to prejudice.—I have preferred the latter; not that I pretend to be wholly exempt from it, but that I might avoid as many obstacles as possible to the completion of so

desirable a work, as the abolition of slavery. Though I am opposed to the banishment of the Negroes, I wish not to encourage their future residence among us. By denying them the most valuable privileges which civil government affords, I wish to render it their inclination and their interest to seek those privileges in some other climate. There is an immense unsettled territory on this continent more congenial to their natural constitution than ours, where they may perhaps be received upon more favourable terms than we can permit them to remain with us. Emigrating in small numbers they will be able to effect settlements more easily than in large numbers; and without the expence or danger of numerous colonies. By releasing them from the yoke of bondage, and enabling them to seek happiness wherever they can hope to find it, we surely confer a benefit, which no one can sufficiently appreciate, who has not tasted of the bitter curse of compulsory servitude. By excluding them from offices, we may hope that the seeds of ambition would be buried too deep, ever to germinate: by disarming them, we may calm our apprehensions of their resentments arising from past sufferings; by incapacitating them from holding lands, we should add one inducement more to emigration, and effectually remove the foundation of ambition, *and* party-struggles. Their personal rights, and their property, though limited, would, whilst they remain among us, be under the protection of the law; and their condition not at all inferior to that of the *labouring* poor in most other countries. Under such an arrangement we might reasonably hope, that time would either remove from us a race of men, whom we wish not to incorporate with us, or obliterate those prejudices, which not form an obstacle to such incorporation.

But it is not from the want of liberality to the emancipated race of blacks that I apprehend the most serious objections to the plan I have ventured to suggest.—Those slave holders (whose number I trust are few) who have been in the habit of considering their fellow creatures as no more than cattle, and the rest of the brute creation, will exclaim that they are to be deprived of their *property* without compensation. Men who will shut their ears against this moral truth, that all men are by nature *free*, and *equal*, will not even be convinced that they do not possess a *property* in an *unborn* child: they will not distinguish between allowing to *unborn* generations the absolute and unalienable rights of human nature, and taking away that which they *now possess*; they will shut their ears against truth, should you tell them, the loss of the mother's labour for nine months, and the maintenance of a child for a dozen or fourteen years, is amply compensated by the services of that child for as many years more, as he has been an expence to them. But if the voice of reason, justice and humanity be not stifled by sordid avarice or unfeeling tyranny, it would be easy to convince even those who have entertained such erroneous notions, that the right of one man over another is neither founded in nature, nor in sound policy. That it cannot extend to those *not in being*; that no man can in reality be *deprived* of what he doth not possess: that fourteen years labour by a young person in the prime of life, is an ample compensation for a few months of labour lost by the mother, and for the maintenance of a child, in that coarse homely manner that Negroes are brought up: And lastly, that a state of slavery is not only perfectly incompatible with the principles of government, but with the safety and security of their masters. History evinces this. At this moment we have the most awful demonstrations of it. Shall we then neglect a duty, which every consideration, moral, religious, political, or *selfish*, recommends. Those who wish to postpone the measure, do not reflect that every day renders the task more arduous to be performed. We have now 300,000 slaves among us. Thirty years hence we

shall have double the number. In sixty years we shall have 1,200,000. And in less than another century from this day, even that enormous number will be doubled. Milo acquired strength enough to carry an ox, by beginning with the ox while he was yet a calf. If we complain that the calf is too heavy for our shoulders, what will not the ox be?

To such as apprehend danger to our agricultural interest, and the depriving the families of those whose principal reliance is upon their slaves, of support, it will be proper to submit a view of the gradual operation, and effects of this plan. They will no doubt be surprized to hear, that whenever it is adopted, the number of slaves will not be diminished for forty years after it takes place; that it will even encrease for thirty years; that at the distance of sixty years, there will be one-third of the number at its first commencement: that it will require *above a century* to complete it; and that the number of blacks *under twenty-eight*, and consequently bound to service, in the families they are born in, will always be at least as great, as the present number of slaves. These circumstances I trust will remove any objections, and that they are truly stated will appear upon enquiry. It will further appear, that females only will arrive at the age of emancipation within the first forty-five years; all the males during that period, continuing either in slavery, or bound to service till the age of twenty-eight years. The earth cannot want cultivators, whilst our population increases as at present, and three-fourths of those employed therein are held to service, and the remainder compellable to labour. For we must not lose sight of this important consideration, that these people must be *bound* to labour, if they do not *voluntarily* engage therein. Their faculties are at present only calculated for that object; if they be not employed therein they will become drones of the worst description. In absolving them from the yoke of slavery, we must not forget the interests of society. Those interests require the exertions of every individual in some mode or other; and those who have not wherewith to support themselves honestly without corporal labour, whatever be their complexion, ought to be compelled to labour. This is the case in England, where domestic slavery has long been unknown. It must also be the case in every well ordered society; and where the numbers of persons without property increase, there the coercion of the laws becomes more immediately requisite. The proposed plan would necessarily have this effect, and therefore ought to be accompanied with such a regulation. Though the rigours of our police in respect to this unhappy race ought to be softened, yet, its regularity, and punctual administration should be increased, rather than relaxed. If we doubt the propriety of such measures, what must we think of the situation in our country, when instead of 300,000, we shall have more than *two millions of SLAVES* among us? This *must happen within a CENTURY*, if we do not set about the abolition of slavery. Will not our posterity curse the days of their nativity with all the anguish of Job? Will they not execrate the memory of those ancestors, who, having it in their power to avert evil, have, like their first parents, entailed a curse upon all future generations? We know that the rigour of the laws respecting slaves unavoidably must increase with their numbers: What a blood-stained code must that be which is calculated for the restraint of *millions* held in bondage! Such must our unhappy country exhibit within a century, unless we are both wise and just enough to avert from posterity the calamity and reproach, which are otherwise unavoidable.

I am not vain enough to presume the plan I have suggested entirely free from object; nor that in offering my own ideas to others I have been more fortunate than others: but from the communication of sentiment between those who lament the evil, it is

possible that and effectual remedy may at length be discovered. Whenever that happens the golden age of our country will begin. Till then,

--Non hospes ab hospite tutus,

Non Herus a Famulis fratrum quoque gratia rara.

THE END

Source: Coleman, ed., *Virginia Silhouettes*, pp. 1-3, 21, 25-27, 45-48, 54-64 [Note: The *Dissertation* is numbered separately from the rest of the volume].

January 1796—H[enry?] Lee to St. George Tucker

Just five months before he published his *Dissertation on Slavery*, St. George Tucker was requested by a friend, H[enry?] Lee, to purchase slaves in Williamsburg on his behalf.

Richmond

Jany. 18th 1796

dear Tucker,

On the 25th instant. before the Raleigh tavern in your city, some negroes will be sold by Mr. Pierce as administrator.

I want three or four men or lads. Do me the favor to purchase them for me. I consider

85 £ a reasonable price for a likely sound man not exceeding thirty. This letter shall be your authority for the purchase and I will send you a bill for the money you may engage at the day it shall be due, or will sign the necessary bonds.

Inform me by letr. sent to Richmond of your agency, and accept my best wishes

H. Lee

Source: Coleman, ed., *Virginia Silhouettes*, p. 5.

1796—A Young Runaway Slave Woman Bedevils George Washington

From Philadelphia on November 28, 1796, Washington wrote the following letter to Joseph Whipple, the U.S. Collector of Customs in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. A young slave woman named Oney Judge, who worked for Martha Washington, had run away to Portsmouth with a Frenchman. Skilled as a seamstress and possibly pregnant, Judge apparently attempted to negotiate with the Washingtons through Whipple; she seems to have offered to come back to the Washingtons in return for a promise of future freedom. Despite his support for gradual abolition, George Washington refused to countenance Judge's request as he did not want to reward disobedience. Instead, he suggested that she would be welcomed back to her former position if she returned

voluntarily. If she would not, he asked Whipple to try to retrieve her as unobtrusively as possible, but to give up altogether if he could not get her without causing a scene.

I regret that the attempt you made to restore the Girl (Oney Judge as she called herself while with us, and who, without the least provocation absconded from her Mistress) should have been attended with so little Success. To enter into such a compromise with *her*, as she suggested to *you*, is totally inadmissable, for reasons that must strike at first view: for however well disposed I might be to a gradual abolition, or even to an entire emancipation of that description of People (if the latter was in itself practicable at this moment) it would neither be politic or just to reward *unfaithfulness* with a premature preference; and thereby discontent before hand the minds of all her fellow-servants who by their steady attachments are far more deserving than herself of favor.

I was apprehensive (and so informed Mr. Wolcott) that if she had any previous notice more than could be avoided of an attempt to send her back, that she would contrive to elude it; for whatever she may have asserted to the contrary, there is no doubt in this family of her having been seduced, and enticed off by a Frenchman, who was either really, or pretendedly, deranged, and under that guise, used to frequent the family; and has never been seen here since [the] girl decamped. We have indeed, lately been informed thro' other channels that she went to Portsmouth with a Frenchman, who getting tired of her, as is presumed, left her; and that she had betaken herself to the needle, the use of which she well understood, for a livelihood.

About the epoch I have mentioned she herself was very desirous of returning to Virginia; for when Captn. Prescott was on the point of sailing from Portsmouth for the Federal City with his family, she offered herself to his lady as a waiter, told her she had lived with Mrs. Washington (without entering into particulars), and that she was desirous of getting back to her native place and friends. Mrs. Prescott either from not wanting a Maid Servant, or presuming she might have been discarded for improper conduct, declined (unlucky for Mrs. Washington) taking her.

If she will return to her former service without obliging me to use compulsory means to effect it her late conduct will be forgiven by her Mistress, and she will meet with the same treatment from me that all the rest of her family (which is a very numerous one) shall receive. If she will not you would oblige me, by resorting to such measures as are proper to put her on board a Vessel bound either to Alexandria or the Federal City. Directed in either case, to my Manager at Mount Vernon; by the door of which the Vessel must pass, or to the care of Mr. Lear at the last mentioned place, if the Vessel should not stop before it arrives in that Port.

I do not mean however, by this request, that such violent measures should be used as would excite a mob or riot, which might be the case if she has adherents, or even uneasy Sensations in the Minds of well disposed Citizens; rather than either of these should happen I would forego her Services altogether, and the example also which is of infinite more importance. The less is said beforehand, and the more celerity is used in the act of shipping her when an opportunity presents, the better chance Mrs. Washington (who is desirous of receiving her again) will have to be gratified.

We had vastly rather she should be sent to Virginia than brought to this place, as our stay here will be but short; and as it is not unlikely that she may, from the

circumstance I have mentioned, be in a state of pregnancy. I should be glad to hear from you on this subject and am Sir etc.

Source: *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 35:297-298.

December 1796—ACT XI. An ACT to amend the act, intituled, “An act to amend and reduce into one, the several acts concerning slaves, free negroes, and mulattoes”

The members of the General Assembly decided that a slave whose master took him or her to a state where slavery was illegal would remain a slave if he or she was taken back to Virginia.

1. *Be it enacted*, That it shall and may be lawful for any citizen of these United States, residing in or owning lands within this state, who has carried or may carry any slave or slaves born within this state, into any other state, and who has not sold or hired or shall not hereafter sell or hire out such slaves, to bring him, her or them back again into Virginia, without incurring any penalty therefor, nor shall such slave or slaves be entitled to freedom on that account.

Provided always, That if any such slave or slaves be entitled to freedom under the laws of that state, to which he, she or they may have been or shall hereafter be removed, such right shall remain; any thing in this act notwithstanding.

Source: Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:19-20.

1797—George Washington Predicts Further Escapes by Slaves

In the following excerpt from a letter to his nephew, Lawrence Lewis, Washington repeats his support for gradual abolition and reiterates his theory of the importance of selling captured runaways so that their rebelliousness will not spread to other slaves.

Mount Vernon, August 4, 1797

Dear Sir: Your letter of the 24th ulto has been received, and I am sorry to hear of the loss of your servant; but it is my opinion these elopements will be MUCH MORE, before they are LESS frequent: and that the persons making them should never be retained, if they are recovered, as they are sure to contaminate and discontent others. I wish from my soul that the Legislature of this State could see the policy of a gradual Abolition of Slavery; It would prevt. much future mischief.

Source: *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, 36:2.

December 1797—ACT IV. An ACT to amend the act, intituled, “An act to amend the act, intituled, ‘An act to reduce into one, the several acts concerning slaves, free negroes and mulattoes’” [Passed January 25, 1798.]

Section 5 of this statute indicates that free black men, women, and children were required to register their status as free persons of color in the county in which they lived.

5. And whereas divers free negroes and mulattoes who have been registered and numbered agreeably to the act of assembly in that case made and provided, and who have obtained copies of the said registers as by the said act is required, have granted their said copies to runaway slaves, who by virtue thereof have passed for free men, and have under sanction thereof prevailed on masters of vessels to transport them out of this commonwealth: For remedy whereof, *Be it enacted*, That any free negro or mulatto who shall deliver to any slave the copy of the register of his or her freedom, signed by the clerk of the court with whom the said register was made, on any pretext whatsoever, shall on conviction thereof, be adjudged a felon, and suffer accordingly.

Source: Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:78.

1798 to 1831—Excerpts from the York County Free Black Register

The law required free persons of color in Virginia to register their physical description and information about the way in which they gained their freedom. This requirement was a clear sign that free black men, women, and children did not have the same degree of freedom that white residents of Virginia enjoyed.

Elizabeth Armfield 5 feet 6 Inches high aged 66 years a bright Mulatto long grey hair born of free parents in the Parish of Bruton & County of York registered the 25th Sep 1800.

Sarah Berry, a dark mulatto Girl aged about 16 or 17 years, 5 feet 4 3/4 Inches a little pitted with the small pox has straight black hair resembling that of an Indian, black eyes and features rather small was born free in the parish of York Hampton & County of York registered 11th Feb 1803.

Jane Gillet a bright mulatto abt 22 or 23 years of age 5 feet 1 1/2 Inches high has a scar on her left arm black Eyes Ear perforated for Earrings small regular features & good countenance Emancipated by deed from Mary Stith recorded in York Ct registered 19 August 1811.

Patty alias Martha Gillett is a short black woman about 21 years of age 5 feet 1 1/4 Inches high long hair, which she usually wears platted before—flat nose, on the left side of wch is a scar—& one on left side of her chin: Daughter of Sarah Gillet who was set free by deed from Mary Stith dated 2 Octr 1793—since which period the sd Martha was born—Registered in York Ct 20 febr 1815.

Peter alias Peter Gillett is a Mulatto of bright complexion about 22 years of age, 5 feet 6 1/2 Inches high—has long bushy hair, a scar on the back of his right wrist & one on the inside of same wrist. Emancipated by deed from Mary Stith dated the 2nd of Octo: 1793 & recorded in York Court—Registered 15th February 1813 before the Court of York County.

Israel Kemp is a tall black fellow abt (blank) years of age (blank) feet Inches high—is well known as a Baptist Preacher—set free by deed from the Revd Jno Bracken recorded in Hustings ct of Wmburg—Registered in presence of York Ct the 20th August 1810 & certd to be truly registered
marginal notes: renewed 18th April 1820.

Benjamin White emancipated by deed from his Father Benja White recorded in York County Court 16 June 1794 about 21 years of age 5 feet 8 Inches high—has a scar on his left Leg & two on his right arm—dark mulatto & has long bushy hair Registered in York Ct 18 August 1812.

Source: York County Free Black Register, 1798-1831.

1799—Death of George Washington

President George Washington died on the night of December 14, 1799, almost three years after leaving office. His will, probated in Fairfax County Court in Alexandria on January 10, 1800 decreed that his slaves should be freed upon the death of Martha Washington. (A compendium of Washington's slaves from circa June 1799 listed 164 slaves outright and 153 dower slaves.) In his funeral procession at Mount Vernon on December 18, 1799, two slaves led his horse behind the bier.

William Lee, the only slave Washington mentioned by name in his will and the only one to whom he offered immediate freedom, had been Washington's body servant since 1768. He attended Washington throughout the Revolutionary War. By 1788, he had broken both knees and was disabled for the rest of his life.

In the name of God amen

I George Washington of Mount Vernon—a citizen of the United States,—and lately President of the same, do make, ordain and declare this Instrument; which is written with my own hand and every page thereof subscribed with my name, to be my last Will & Testament, revoking all others.

Imprimus. All my debts, of which there are but few, and none of magnitude, are to be punctually and speedily paid—and the Legacies hereinafter bequeathed, are to be discharged as soon as circumstances will permit, and in the manner directed—

Item. To my dearly beloved wife Martha Washington I give and bequeath the use, profit and benefit of my whole Estate, real and personal, for the term of her natural life—except such parts thereof as are specifically disposed of hereafter.—My improved lot in the Town of Alexandria, situated on Pitt & Cameron Streets, I give to her and her heirs forever, as I also do my household & Kitchen furniture of every sort & kind, with the liquors and groceries which may be on hand at the time of my decease; to be used & disposed of as she may think proper.

Item Upon the decease of my wife, it is my Will & desire that all the Slaves which I hold in *my own right*, shall receive their freedom.—To emancipate them during her life, would, tho' earnestly wished by me, be attended with such insuperable difficulties on account of their intermixture by Marriages with the Dower Negroes, as to excite the most painful sensations, if not disagreeable consequences from the latter, while both descriptions are in the occupancy of the same Proprietor; it not being in my power, under the tenure by which the Dower Negroes are held, to manumit them.—And whereas among those who will receive freedom according to this devise, there may be some, who from old age or bodily infirmities, and others who on account of their infancy, that will be unable to support themselves, it is my Will and desire that all who come under the first & second description shall be comfortably cloathed & fed by my heirs while they live;—and that such of the latter description as have no parents living, or if living are unable, or unwilling to provide for them, shall be bound by the Court until they shall arrive at the age of twenty five years;—and in cases where no record can be produced, whereby their ages can be ascertained, the judgment of the Court upon its own view of the subject, shall be adequate and final.—The Negroes thus bound, are (by their Masters or Mistresses) to be taught to read & write; and to be brought up to some useful occupation, agreeably to the Laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing for the support of Orphan and other poor Children.—And I do hereby expressly forbid the Sale, or transportation out of the said Commonwealth, of any Slave I may die possessed of, under any pretence whatsoever.—And I do moreover most pointedly, and most solemnly enjoin it upon my Executors hereafter named, or the Survivors of them, to see that *this* clause respecting Slaves, and every part thereof be religiously fulfilled at the Epoch at which it is directed to take place; without evasion, neglect or delay, after the Crops which may then be on the ground are harvested, particularly as it respects the aged and infirm;—Seeing that a regular and permanent fund be established for their Support so long as there are subjects requiring it; not trusting to the uncertain provision to be made by individuals.—And to my Mulatto man William (calling himself William Lee) I give immediate freedom; or if he should prefer it (on account of the accidents which have befallen him, and which have rendered him incapable of walking or of any active employment) to remain in the situation he now is, it shall be optional to him to do so: In either case however, I allow him an annuity of thirty dollars during his natural life, which shall be independent of the victuals and cloaths he has been accustomed to receive, if he chuses the last alternative; but in full, with his freedom, if he prefers the first;—& this I give him as a testimony of

my sense of his attachment to me, and for his faithful services during the Revolutionary War.—

...

Item The balance due to me from the Estate of Bartholomew Dandridge deceased (my wife's brother) and which amounted on the first day of October 1795 to four hundred and twenty five pounds (as will appear by an account rendered by his deceased son John Dandridge, who was the acting Exr. of his fathers Will) I release & acquit from the payment thereof.—And the Negroes, then thirty three in number) [*sic*] formerly belonging to the said estate, who were taken in execution—sold—and purchased in on my account in the year [blank] and ever since have remained in the possession, and to the use of Mary, Widow of the said Bartholomew Dandridge, with their increase, it is my Will & desire shall continue, & be in her possession, without paying hire, or making compensation for the same for the time past or to come, during her natural life; at the expiration of which, I direct that all of them who are forty years old & upwards, shall receive their freedom; all under that age and above sixteen, shall serve seven years and no longer; and all under sixteen years, shall serve until they are twenty five years of age, and then be free.—And to avoid disputes respecting the ages of any of these Negroes, they are to be taken to the Court of the County in which they reside, and the judgment thereof, in this relation shall be final; and a record thereof made; which may be adduced as evidence at any time thereafter, if disputes should arise concerning the same.—And I further direct, that the heirs of the said Bartholomew Dandridge shall, equally, share the benefits arising from the Services of the said negroes according to the tenor of this devise, upon the decease of their Mother.

Source: *The Last Will and Testament of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, pp. 1-4, 12-13.

1800—The Slave Gabriel Plans a Rebellion

In 1776, the slave Gabriel was born at “Brookfield,” the tobacco plantation of Thomas Prosser in Henrico County. He learned to read and write as a child. He and his brother Solomon were trained as blacksmiths, which was probably the occupation of their father as well. By adulthood, Gabriel had reached more than six feet in height and had gained considerable bulk from his work at the forge. He was known in the community as being distinctive for his physical size, as well as for his courage and intellect. In addition to working at the plantation, Gabriel did smithing work around Richmond several days each month.

Early in the spring of 1800, Gabriel began to outline an insurrection that aimed to achieve liberty and economic rights for slaves and working-class whites. The highly political, interracial conspiracy that Gabriel coordinated over the next several months was to result in a violent assault against slaveowners and merchants on August 30th, but the plot was revealed that night by one of the conspirators, perhaps scared by an incredibly violent

thunderstorm that had broken out. Captured in Norfolk on September 23, 1800, Gabriel was hanged October 10th. Twenty-seven slaves died altogether.

In the following passages, Douglas Edgerton discusses Gabriel's motivations and outlines his insurrection plan.

The spring of 1800 found Richmond, Virginia, a feverish tribute to partisan politics; the April elections for the General Assembly were crucial for both Federalists and Republicans in the upcoming presidential contest. The accompanying unrest, discord, and rumors of impending disunion inspired a young slave named Gabriel to conceive of what was perhaps the most extensive slave conspiracy in southern history. Most of his contemporaries, white as well as black, believed that his plan stood a good chance of succeeding. Had it done so, it might have changed not only the course of American race relations but also the course of American political history.

...

The historical Gabriel who emerges from the voluminous trial records was . . . no rustic farmhand but a highly skilled blacksmith who hired out his time around the Richmond area. Far from being meek or timid, this born rebel had so little prejudice against violence that he once bit off the left ear of a white neighbor during an angry dispute over a stolen hog. Most of all, the Gabriel who engineered a complex conspiracy with branches in at least three Virginia cities was no apolitical servant but a literate artisan whose breadth of vision was truly international. Far from praying for the religious day of jubilee, the black Jacobin labored to gather together "the most redoubtable democrats in the state" to destroy the economic hegemony of the "merchants," the only whites he ever identified as his enemies.

...

The pervasive language of liberty and equality, which reached its rhetorical peak during the overheated partisan warfare of the late 1790s, could not help but politicize black Virginians. This was particularly true of urban slaves and freemen who labored alongside stalwart white artisans, many of whom were members of the Democratic-Republican societies of Richmond and Norfolk. Most urban bondmen lacked a sophisticated understanding of the political issues they overheard, but that is hardly the point; popular revolutions often arise from conjunctions between the aspirations of the disenfranchised majority and the demands of the politically conscious minority. Only when Gabriel's plan is placed against the turbulent political background of 1800 does the logic of his conspiracy emerge. By taking advantage of what he believed to be an impending civil war between Republicans and Federalists, Gabriel hoped his urban followers could force the Federalist "merchants" to yield to his simple demands for justice. It was not merely that the conspiracy developed during a time of division among whites; it was that artisan Gabriel, sharing the same small-producer ideology of many urban Republicans, hoped to join in and exploit that division. His faith was that white

mechanics would see in his own struggle for liberty and economic rights grounds for accepting his support—and that of his soldiers.

...

Sometime during the first days of spring in the election year of 1800, Gabriel began to formulate a more precise plan for his freedom. He did not rebel because he was a slave; he had always been a slave, but only in recent months had he achieved a level of psychological autonomy that empowered him to break free from what he had borne for so long. His incarceration in the Henrico brig was the first step. His jailing and the public humiliation of his branding [for maiming] reminded him that whatever his status in the Brookfield quarters, neighboring whites and the machinery of the state were determined to hold him down. The violent political rhetoric of 1800 played an equally important role in Gabriel's personal development. As the public debate grew more clamorous, those on the bottom of society were drawn into the discourse, and they were drawn to the side of the stouthearted mechanics and unskilled whites beside whom they labored and supped. The challenging words of [the abolitionist Frenchman Charles] Quersey inspired Gabriel and helped him to choose sides in the coming conflict. Finally, Saint Domingue served as an inspiration to Gabriel and completed his development. Like Quersey, the distant figure of Toussaint, still publicly loyal to France, seemed to clarify the domestic situation and told him that if he dared, success might be within his reach.

Richmond was the key. As well as being the political heart of the state, it was also a predominantly black city and the home to countless bondmen who might be willing to join Gabriel's crusade. In northern cities, a discernible gap separated the politically conscious artisans and the unskilled laborers, who commonly expressed their grievances through sporadic crowd activity. But Gabriel stood at the top of a distinctly compressed southern urban class structure. White artisans were few in number, and skilled slaves were politicized by the election debates and radicalized by the news from Saint Domingue. As his vague plan began to emerge, Gabriel hoped to rely on a form of popular protest to achieve essentially political ends. His following would assume the form of an urban mob; they would rise up not merely in protest over a single practice but because they expected to achieve something lasting by it. They expected to attain their freedom and a place in the political order.

The violence anticipated during the fall election would provide the right timing, for it might gain allies for him. When the slaves rose in demand of their rights, Gabriel told Ben, another of Prosser's slaves, "he expected the poor white people" and "most redoubtable democrats" in the city to rise with them. Their revolt need not be the prelude to a race war; the black and white insurgents he expected to recruit would spark a class struggle that had a recognized purpose and might force specific concessions from the state authorities. "Quakers, the Methodists, and [all] Frenchmen . . . were to be spared," Gabriel insisted, on account of "their being friendly to liberty." The blacksmith "intended also to spare the poor white women who had no slaves."

There can be little doubt of the role that partisan politics played in Gabriel's thinking. In mid-April, just one day before notifying Jefferson of the Republican victories in the preliminary spring elections, James Monroe informed the vice president

of odd rumors that had surfaced “of a negro insurrection.” But whatever news had leaked to authorities quickly died down, and the governor thought no more about it.

...

As Gabriel’s army neared [Richmond], it would split into three groups. “The centre [column], well provided with cutlasses, knives, pikes, and muskets,” would move on Capitol Square and seize the guns stored in the building. James Monroe, sleeping in the adjacent Governor’s Mansion, would be taken hostage but left unharmed; it was expected that, as an advocate of French liberty, he might be brought, by persuasion or force, to consider the slaves’ demands. The other two groups would set fire to the warehouse district as a diversion and then hold Mayo’s Bridge and fortify the city. While they awaited “reinforcements” from the other Virginia towns, the rebels would “take the treasury, and divide the money amongst the soldiers.” Enough townspeople would die, or be taken hostage to force the town leaders to grant concessions. “[I]f the white people agreed to their freedom they would then hoist a white flag, and [Gabriel] would dine and drink with the merchants of the city on the day when it should be agreed to.”

What would happen next, Gabriel declined to say. Surely he believed that his revolt would bring about more than just the freedom of his soldiers; the young husband did not intend to risk his life so that his wife and family could remain in bondage. The seizure of the capital city must mean the end of slavery in Virginia, and perhaps beyond. But his desire to humble those on top and then live among them, was clear enough. Gabriel understood that simple liberation was not sufficient. He wanted the fully acknowledged position of equality with the master class—political, social, and economic—that was the antithesis of human bondage.

... As he marched into the city he planned to carry a flag inscribed with the words “death or Liberty.” Gabriel’s banner was designed to appeal to his broad coalition. West African armies marched under unit flags that presumably made them invincible in battle. The banner would remind older bondmen of Dunmore’s regiment, and by turning Patrick Henry’s famous phrase on its head, it would also remind whites that they too professed to believe in freedom.

Source: Edgerton, *Gabriel’s Rebellion*, pp. ix-xi, 48-51.

<p>December 1800—ACT 70. An ACT to amend the act, intituled, “An act to reduce into one the several acts concerning slaves, free negroes and mulattoes” [Passed January 21, 1801.]</p>
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<p>This act reveals the fact that counties and corporations did not want to support a free person of color who could not find employment.</p>

6. If any free negro or mulatto so registered, shall remove into another county, it shall and may be lawful for any magistrate of the county or corporation in which he or she may intrude, to issue a warrant to apprehend said free negro or mulatto; and if

upon examination it be found that he or she has no honest employment by which to maintain him or herself, such free negro or mulatto shall be deemed and treated as a vagrant.

Source: Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:301.

December 1802—ACT 21. An ACT more effectually to restrain the practice of negroes going at large [Passed January 25, 1803.]

The passage of this law indicates that several counties did not require free black men, women, and children to register. The members of the General Assembly hoped that the registration requirement would restrict the movement of free people of color.

1. *Be it enacted by the general assembly*, That from and after the commencement of this act, every free negro or mulatto, who resides in any county in this commonwealth, shall be registered and numbered in a book to be kept for that purpose by the clerk of the court of the said county, which register shall specify the age, name, and colour and stature of such free negro or mulatto, together with any apparent mark or scar, on his or her face, head or hands, and in what court he or she was emancipated; or that such negro or mulatto was born free. A copy of the said register, signed by the clerk and attested by one justice of the peace of the said negro or mulatto, on application, for which copy the clerk may demand and receive twenty-five cents, to be paid by the person receiving the same.

2. *Provided always*, That the clerk shall in no case grant a copy of such register, until the court of the county in which such free negro or mulatto resides, shall have certified that such register has been truly made.

Source: Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 2:417-418.

December 1804—ACT XII. An ACT to amend and explain an act further declaring what shall be deemed unlawful meetings of slaves [Passed January 4, 1805.]

Ira Berlin notes that “The evangelical awakenings that had begun prior to the Revolution reignited in the 1780s. Beginning with a series of revivals along the James River in 1785, the movement spread quickly, stoked by the growth of the Baptist Church in Virginia and the Methodist Church in Maryland and Delaware. Even more than in the prerevolutionary period, the movement’s rough egalitarianism became harnessed to a growing antislavery sentiment and a willingness to allow slave and free black members to participate in some aspects of church governance and discipline. Indeed, within the white populace, evangelical preachers were the most determined opponents to slavery. But

whether it was the hope of eternal grace or temporal equality that drew slaves, black men and especially black women came to Christianity in unprecedented numbers.”

The legislators penned the following law in reaction to slaves who attended worship services that were led by black ministers. Gowan Pamphlet led the First Baptist Church in Williamsburg when the General Assembly passed this statute.

1. Whereas doubts have arisen in the minds of many of the good citizens of this commonwealth relative to the construction which may be given to the act, entitled, “*An act further declaring what shall be deemed unlawful meetings of slaves,*” whereby they apprehend that their religious rights may be infringed: For the removal whereof, *Be it enacted by the general assembly,* That nothing in the said act contained shall be so construed as to prevent the masters or owners of slaves from carrying, or permitting his, her or their slave or slaves to go with him, her or them, or with any part of his, her or their white family, to any places whatever for the purpose of religious worship: *Provided,* That such worship be conducted by a regularly ordained, or licensed, white minister.

2. *And be it further enacted,* That nothing in the said recited act contained shall be considered as in any manner affecting white persons who may happen to be present at any meeting or assemblage, for the purpose of religious worship, so conducted by a white minister as aforesaid, at which there shall be such a number of slaves as would, as the law has heretofore been construed, constitute an unlawful assembly of slaves.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 272; Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:124.

December 1805—ACT LXIII. An ACT to amend the several laws concerning slaves [Passed January 25, 1806.]

Many Virginians disliked the increase in the number of free blacks in the state after 1782 when it became legal for masters to manumit their slaves. The legislators responded to this concern and decided that a slave emancipated after May 1, 1806 had to leave the state within one year of receiving his or her freedom.

10. *And be it further enacted,* That if any slave hereafter emancipated shall remain within this commonwealth more than twelve months after his or her right to freedom shall have accrued, he or she shall forfeit all such right, and may be apprehended and sold by the overseers of the poor of any county or corporation in which he or she shall be found, for the benefit of the poor of such county or corporation.

Source: Shepherd, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 3:251-253.

Part IV—The Defense of Slavery and The Growth of the Antislavery Movement

1820—The Missouri Compromise

The United States had an equal number of free and slave states—eleven—in 1819. Slavery either had been prohibited or was soon to be prohibited in the states located north and east of Pennsylvania and the Ohio River. However, no move had been made to extend the dividing line between free and slave states across the Louisiana Purchase territory where slavery had existed since the time when France and Spain had colonized the area. In 1819, the Missouri Territory included all of the Louisiana Purchase except the state of Louisiana and the Arkansas Territory. The request of residents of the Missouri Territory to draft a state constitution and to start the process of gaining admission to the Union forced Congress to confront the issue of the spread of slavery. The members of Congress reached a compromise that allowed Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state and Maine to enter the Union as a free state.

The Missouri Compromise remained in effect until 1854 when it was replaced with the concept of “popular sovereignty”—“all questions pertaining to slavery in the Territories, and in the new states to be formed therefrom are to be left to the people residing therein, through their appropriate representatives.”

A. The Tallmadge Amendment, February 13, 1819—

And provided, That the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude be prohibited, except for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been [duly] convicted; and that all children born within the said State, after the admission thereof into the Union, shall be free at the age of twenty-five years.

B. The Taylor Amendment, January 26, 1820—

The reading of the bill proceeded as far as the fourth section; when Mr. Taylor, of New York, proposed to amend the bill by incorporating in that section the following provision:

Section 4, line 25, insert the following after the word “States”: “And shall ordain and establish, that there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said State, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, Provided, always, That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any other State, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed, and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid: And provided, also, That the said provision shall not be construed to alter the condition or civil rights of any person now held to service or labor in the said Territory.

C. The Thomas Amendment (Final Form), February 17, 1820—

And be it further enacted, That, in all that territory ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana, which lies north of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude, excepting only such part thereof as is included within the limits of the State contemplated by this act, slavery and involuntary servitude, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall be and is hereby forever prohibited: Proved always, That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any State or Territory of the United States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed, and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service, as aforesaid.

D. Missouri Enabling Act, March 6, 1820—

Be it enacted... That the inhabitants of that portion of the Missouri territory included within the boundaries hereinafter designated, be, and they are hereby, authorized to form for themselves a constitution and State government, and to assume such name as they shall deem proper; and the said State, when formed, shall be admitted into the Union, upon an equal footing with the original states, in all respects whatsoever....

Sec. 8. And be it further enacted, That in all that territory ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana, which lies north of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude, not included within the limits of the State contemplated by this act, slavery and involuntary servitude, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes, whereof the parties shall have been duly convicted, shall be, and is hereby, forever prohibited: *Provided always,* That any person escaping into the same from whom labour or service is lawfully claimed, in any State or territory of the United States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labour or service as aforesaid.

Source: Morris, ed., *Basic Documents in American History*, pp. 93-95.

1820 to 1850—The Era of Reform, the Antislavery Movement, and the Defense of Slavery

In the early nineteenth century, reformers of all kinds sought to find or impose harmony on a society in which economic change and discord had reached a crescendo. Prompted by the evangelical ardor of the Second Great Awakening and convinced of the perfectibility of the human race, they crusaded for individual improvement. Some withdrew from the everyday competitive world to seek perfection in utopian communities. Others sought to improve themselves by renouncing alcohol. Inevitably the personal impulse to reform oneself led to the creation and reshaping of institutions. Schools, penitentiaries, and other institutions all underwent scrutiny and reform. Women were prominent in the reform movement, and the role of women in public life became an issue itself.

Eventually one concern overrode all others: antislavery. No single issue evoked the depth of passion that slavery did. On a personal level it pitted neighbor against neighbor, settler against settler, section against section. Territorial expansion in the 1840s and 1850s would make it politically explosive as well.

The Beginnings of Abolitionism. A reform movement with a liberating ideology and perfectionist goals could hardly have ignored the continued existence of human slavery in the Southern states. The evils of slavery had been acknowledged by many leaders of the Revolutionary generation, and organized antislavery activity, especially among the Quakers, dated back to the late eighteenth century. Pressure from antislavery groups had already achieved the abolition of slavery in the Northern states, and in the 1820s a small manumission movement in the Upper South, supported mostly by Quakers, had called for gradual, compensated emancipation with colonization of the free blacks in Africa.

In the early stages of the movement, because of the prevailing prejudice against blacks, both Northern and Southern emancipationists believed that a program of colonization would remove one of the chief obstacles to slavery's demise. In 1817 they helped to organize the American Colonization Society, and in 1822 the first permanent settlement of free blacks from the United States was planted in a territory named Liberia on the coast of West Africa. The American Colonization Society had only limited success in persuading free blacks to migrate, but the colonization movement introduced many future abolitionists to the antislavery cause. Eventually most abolitionists denounced colonization both as a proslavery attempt to strengthen slavery by eliminating a potential danger and as an injustice to the blacks themselves. Nevertheless, the colonization idea persisted among more moderate critics of slavery (including Abraham Lincoln) to the time of the Civil War.

During the 1820s Benjamin Lundy, a New Jersey Quaker, was the most important American emancipationist. Advocating a program of gradual emancipation, compensation to slaveholders, and colonization of the liberated slaves, Lundy helped organize local manumission societies in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia and at the same time edited an antislavery newspaper, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, in Baltimore. In 1830 young William Lloyd Garrison, a reformer from Boston, got his start as an antislavery crusader writing for Lundy's paper. But Garrison was a man of different temperament and brought a new passion and militancy to the attack. One of his strident editorials led to his arrest and brief imprisonment, after which he left Baltimore and returned to Boston. There, on January 1, 1831, he began the publication of *The Liberator*, a weekly newspaper dedicated to the immediate abolition of Southern slavery without compensation to the masters or colonization of the emancipated blacks. Garrison set the tone of his crusade in the prospectus printed in the first issue:

I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation. . . . I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD.

In 1832 Garrison organized the New England Anti-Slavery Society and a year later helped to establish a national organization, the American Anti-Slavery Society.

During the next few years abolitionist agents were busy establishing local societies, until by 1840 a network of some 2,000 of them with nearly 200,000 members stretched across the North. To many, Garrison was the embodiment of abolitionism, and the angry response of the South to his harsh words kept him in the public eye. But he was more an editor and publicist than an effective leader and tactician, and the movement soon grew too large for him to control. Other abolitionists also played significant roles: Wendell Phillips in New England, Gerrit Smith and Arthur and Lewis Tappan in New York, and Theodore Dwight Weld in the West.

...

Except for communitarianism and perhaps feminism, abolition was the most radical cause of the reformers, for it attacked not only the basic structure of Southern society but an institution whose filaments ran through the whole national economy. To justify their crusade against it, abolitionists described slavery as the greatest social evil in the way of the nation's moral regeneration. To prove its wickedness they dwelt on its corrupting impact on slaveholders and the cruelties inflicted on the slaves, for they were always less interested in presenting a balanced picture than in winning converts. Slavery provided abolitionists with plenty of illustrations of cruelty. In 1839 Weld published a powerful antislavery tract, *Slavery As It Is*, which was simply a documented compilation of atrocities culled from Southern newspapers and court records. The Southern states made themselves especially vulnerable to criticism by refusing to eliminate the system's worst abuses: its physical cruelty, its failure to give legal recognition to slave marriages, the separation of children from their parents, the callous practices of interstate slave traders, and the denial to Negroes of opportunities for self-improvement.

Abolitionism also attracted Northern reformers because the Southern manumission societies had failed to accomplish their purpose; slavery, it appeared, would never be destroyed without intervention from the outside. It no longer seemed to be a weak and declining institution that could be left to die a natural death; instead it was flourishing and spreading westward into new territories and states. The reformers were shocked by the Southerners' growing tendency to defend slavery as a desirable and permanent institution and by their increasingly harsh treatment of even native Southern critics. Moreover, the reformers were acutely conscious of the hypocrisy of America's posing as a model of liberal institutions while remaining one of the last countries in the Western world to tolerate human bondage. Finally, the success of British abolitionists in securing emancipation in the British West Indies (1833) stimulated the reformers to undertake a similar crusade in America.

One small group of Americans, the free blacks, needed no prodding from white reformers to support abolitionism, and in the North they made a significant contribution to the movement. Northern free Negroes always constituted the majority of subscribers to Garrison's *Liberator*, and after the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society three Negroes always served on its executive committee. Among the most prominent black abolitionist agents and orators were Samuel Ringgold Ward, who escaped from slavery in Maryland; Lunsford Lane, who was born a slave in North Carolina and bought his own freedom; Sojourner Truth, who was born a slave in New York and was freed by the state emancipation act; Charles Lenox Remond, a well-educated Massachusetts black

who lectured in Great Britain as well as in the United States; and Frederick Douglass, who escaped from slavery in Maryland to become editor of an antislavery newspaper, one of the greatest of all antislavery orators, and the preeminent American black leader of the nineteenth century. Though most black abolitionists accepted the peaceful tactics of their white comrades, a few helped to build a tradition of militant activism. In Boston, in 1829, David Walker, a free Negro born in North Carolina, published an angry *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, justifying violence to destroy slavery and warning white masters of the coming retribution for holding blacks in bondage. In 1843, Henry H. Garnet, in an address before a Negro convention in Buffalo, urged slaves to strike for their liberties: “Let your motto be resistance! . . . No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance!” Many free Negroes guided fugitives to freedom over the so-called underground railroad. Among them was Harriet Tubman, who escaped from slavery in Maryland but returned 19 times to help several hundred slaves flee from their bondage.

Abolitionist Tactics. The tactics of the abolitionists were determined by their optimistic assumptions about human nature, by their faith in the power of truth, by their belief that slavery was essentially a moral issue, and by the restrictive political structure within which they had to operate. They were confronted with the fact that Congress, unlike the British Parliament, had no constitutional power to abolish slavery. At the same time, the pacifism of most abolitionists discouraged the use of force. Abolitionists, therefore, relied on “moral suasion.” Their first goal was to persuade slaveholders that slavery was a sin requiring repentance, as well as a denial of the “unalienable rights” with which, according to the Declaration of Independence, all men are endowed. Though abolitionists believed in immediate emancipation—slaveholding being a sin, a moral person could not advocate abandoning it gradually—they were practical enough to understand that the actual implementation of emancipation might take a little time. Hence they usually qualified their “immediatism” by defining it, in one way or another, as a program of emancipation “promptly commenced” but “gradually accomplished.” But the theoretical immediatism to which abolitionists were committed strengthened the conviction of indignant Southerners that abolitionists were reckless incendiaries seeking to bring ruin upon the South.

Whether moral suasion might be supplemented by some form of political action was a question on which abolitionists differed. Garrison’s nonresistance principles turned him against government as an instrument of force and therefore against involvement in politics. Moreover, he viewed the political parties as tools of the slaveholders, the Union as their protector, and the Constitution as a proslavery document (in his words, “a covenant with death and an agreement with hell”). Most abolitionists, however, though recognizing that Congress could not touch slavery in the states, believed that some things might be accomplished through political action—for example, the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, the outlawing of the interstate slave trade, and the exclusion of slavery from federal territories. Hence they took an active part in politics and put pressure on congressional candidates to take antislavery positions. In 1840, a group of political abolitionists organized the Liberty party and nominated James G. Birney for the Presidency, but the small vote the party attracted in this and subsequent elections indicated that most abolitionists preferred to operate through

existing parties. With the growth of political abolitionism there was a notable decline in pacifist sentiment, and the sectional conflict of the 1850s prepared many abolitionists to turn from moral suasion to force as the ultimate remedy.

...

Northern businessmen, viewing antislavery agitation as a threat to their profitable trade with the South, more than once joined or encouraged the mobs. Nationalists opposed the abolitionists, because their crusade endangered the federal Union; conservative churchmen feared that attacks on slavery might divide the churches along sectional lines. However, race prejudice, which was nearly as intense in the North as in the South, was always the fundamental cause of the hostility to abolitionism. The prevailing prejudice exposed Northern free blacks to many forms of discrimination. They were prohibited from entering most trades and professions and forced into menial occupations; they were excluded from the public schools or sent to segregated schools; they were assigned segregated seats in white churches and on public transportation; they were barred from officeholding and jury duty; they were denied the ballot except in five New England states and in New York (where they had to meet a property qualification not required of whites); and they were prohibited from settling in several Western states. .

..

A Broadening Appeal. Though abolitionists had only limited success in reducing Northern prejudice against Negroes, the growing sectional tension of the 1840s and 1850s caused Northerners to listen more sympathetically to what they had to say about the South and the evils of slavery. Eventually abolitionist agitation helped to persuade large numbers of Northerners that even black slavery was morally wrong and therefore could not be accepted as a permanent institution. This agitation also produced an image of slaveholders as unenterprising, undemocratic, arrogant, immoral, and cruel. The slaveholders and their political henchmen, said the abolitionists, formed a sinister "Slave Power" that ruled the South and conspired to rule the entire Union in order to destroy freedom and make slavery a national institution.

Meanwhile, as the abolitionists braved mobs to defend freedom of assembly and of the press, they began to win admiration as champions of civil liberties not only for blacks but for whites. They aroused sympathy when Southern mobs broke into post offices to destroy packages of antislavery pamphlets, for now the right of minority groups to disseminate their ideas through the mails seemed to be at stake. In 1836, when the abolitionists deluged Congress with petitions urging the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, Southerners forced through the House a so-called gag rule, which provided that petitions relating to slavery were to be laid on the table without being printed, referred to committee, or debated. Until the repeal of the gag rule in 1844, abolitionists stood as defenders of another sacred liberty: the right of petition.

Most Northerners also sympathized with the more or less systematic efforts of abolitionists to assist fugitive slaves to freedom along the routes of the underground railroad. Few could help feeling compassion for pathetic fugitives seeking their own liberty, and even a Negrophobe might resent the activities of the professional slave catchers who roamed the free states. In 1842 an important case (*Prigg v. Pennsylvania*)

involving the constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 came before the Supreme Court. Though the Court ruled that the act was constitutional, it conceded that a state might prohibit its own officers from helping to enforce it. Thereafter a number of states, under pressure from the abolitionists, adopted “personal-liberty laws” that withheld assistance in the capture of fugitives.

On one issue—whether slavery should be introduced into new territories and states—the abolitionists eventually gained overwhelming Northern support. Northerners continued to agree that the Constitution prevented federal interference with slavery in the Southern states, but by the 1850s they felt strongly that slavery should not be permitted to enlarge its domain. Often this sentiment sprang less from sympathy for the blacks than from a determination of free white farmers to keep slaveholders out of the territories they coveted. But the abolitionist indictment of slavery proved a handy weapon for them to use against Southern expansionists.

In one fundamental respect the abolitionist crusade was a failure. Since it did not convert the slaveholders, it never achieved its original goal: peaceful abolition through moral suasion. Abolitionists who hoped to eliminate prejudice and discrimination in the Northern states, of course, suffered a second defeat. But in another and unexpected way the crusade was a success. Though it was launched by pacifists, by 1861 abolitionism, which had itself grown increasingly militant, had helped to arm the Northern population morally for the terrible struggle that lay ahead.

THE PROSLAVERY ARGUMENT

Slavery a Positive Good. In January 1837 Senator John C. Calhoun boldly took a position toward which many Southern apologists for slavery had been drifting:

I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin, and distinguished by color and other physical differences, as well as intellectual, are brought together, the relation now existing in the slave-holding states between the two is, instead of an evil, a good—a positive good.

There would be no more apologies—no concessions that slavery was at best a necessary evil—as Southern dialecticians spun out the arguments affirming the benign qualities of their peculiar institution. Never before had the justification of human bondage been presented with so much moral fervor and in such elaborate detail as in the antebellum South. Indeed, the proslavery argument was one of the most impressive products of its intellectual life. Southern poets, theologians, moral philosophers, social theorists, jurists, and scientists combined their talents to uphold slavery and denounce heresy and radicalism.

This body of proslavery literature is significant not only because it was one of the principal contributions of Southern men of letters but because it was a rare expression in nineteenth-century America of deep pessimism about human nature, of doubt about the liberal tradition, and of skepticism about progress. Romanticism, which found expression in the North in the reform movement and in a remarkable burst of literary productivity, found expression in the South in a cult of chivalry and in an attempt to identify the planter class with traditional aristocratic values.

The Nature of the Defense. Since the average slave-holder was highly religious, a theological defense of slavery was almost invariably incorporated in the numerous treatises on the subject. Out of the mass of Scriptural arguments, three were of crucial importance. The first identified the Negroes as the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham, of whom Noah said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." The second pointed to Mosaic law, which authorized the Jews to make bondsmen "of the heathen that are round about you." The third noted that neither the prophets of the Old Testament or Christ and his apostles ever condemned slavery. Rather, they repeatedly admonished servants to obey their masters and to submit to their earthly lot. The proper role of the church, therefore, was not to attack slavery but to bring spiritual salvation to the slaves and to urge benevolence on their masters.

Turning to history, the defenders argued that slavery had always existed in some form and that it had been the foundation of all the great civilizations of antiquity. Aristotle, whose thought permeates the proslavery argument, taught that in every organized society the men of superior talents would become masters over those of inferior talents. Slavery thus enabled a class to emerge that could devote its genius to art, literature, and other intellectual pursuits.

Yet, in spite of such generalizations, few Southerners were prepared to defend their own slave system on a class basis—that is, as a desirable condition for certain classes of people of all races. Rather, their defense was essentially a defense of *black* slavery—of the subordination of the black race to the white. Since all Southern slaves had at least some African ancestors, evidence that Africans were innately inferior to whites was crucial to the Southern justification of the peculiar institution. By a curious combination of comparative anatomy and the pseudoscience of phrenology, Southern ethnologists attributed to blacks certain distinct physical and psychic traits that suggested their inferiority to the whites. These alleged racial traits established the master-slave relationship between whites and blacks as a natural condition, its abolition a profound disaster to both groups.

Belief in the inferiority of Negroes led also to the conclusion that the affirmations of the Declaration of Independence, the provisions of state bills of rights, and the benefits of citizenship did not and were not intended to apply to them. Society must have a class "to perform the drudgery of life," affirmed James H. Hammond of South Carolina, a class "requiring but low order of intellect," a class that "constitutes the very mud-sill of society." Black slavery provided this class and, by freeing the whites from menial tasks, elevated all members of the privileged caste to a condition of perfect equality.

The South had found in slavery, argued its defenders, a way to avoid the dangers to order and property posed by the laboring classes in free society. Slavery served as a conservative bulwark against all the radical "isms" that threatened the North with revolution. In the South the slaves were "orderly and efficient," and society had within it no element of disharmony. "It is the only condition of society in which labor and capital are associated on a large scale in which their interests are combined and not in conflict. Every plantation is an organized community . . . where *all work*, where *each member gets subsistence and a home*." Slavery, in short, was a practical form of socialism.

In every respect, said Southern apologists, the slaves were better off than so-called free laborers. They were happy and contented, because they were well treated,

well fed, well housed, and well clothed; they were cared for in childhood, in old age, and in times of sickness. The free-labor system, which left workers to shift for themselves, was far more cruel and heartless. Indeed, wrote a Virginian, “a merrier being does not exist on the fact of the globe, than the Negro slave of the United States.”

The defense of slavery as a positive good in the South at a time when a great reform movement was agitating the North posed a serious threat to the survival of the Union. Slavery was no longer open to discussion in the South, and slaveholders intensely resent its denunciation on moral grounds in the North. Not even the two largest Protestant churches were able to bear the strain, and the slavery issue led to sectional splits—the Methodists in 1844, the Baptists in 1845. Eventually the national political parties would also disintegrate, and thus another major institutional tie would be broken. Abolitionists and proslavery polemicists had raised a moral issue—the right and wrong of slavery—that stubbornly resisted resolution by the best efforts of a generation of able politicians and statesmen.

Source: Norton et al., *A People and a Nation*, p. 324; Blum, et al., *The National Experience*, pp. 242-249.

1821—Thomas Jefferson Predicts Freedom for Slaves

In his autobiography, written in 1821, Jefferson reviewed his work with George Wythe and Edmund Pendleton in revising the code of Virginia. He recalled that the men envisioned proposing an amendment to the section about the slaves that would provide for the gradual emancipation and deportation of Virginia’s slaves. According to Jefferson, this did not come to pass because public opinion would not accept it.

While, in the selection below, Jefferson referred to the provisions regarding slavery as “a mere digest of the existing laws,” he was not entirely accurate. As editor Julian K. Boyd points out, the revision proposed by Jefferson limited the increase of slaves in Virginia to the descendants of female slaves then in the state (this clause was accepted by the legislature) and imposed harsh penalties on free blacks who tried to immigrate to the state or who remained in the state after manumission (these provisions were rejected by the legislature). Boyd argued that through these provisions Jefferson was attempting to bring about gradual emancipation and a decrease in the number of black residents of the state.

In the excerpt below, Jefferson expresses his belief that Virginia’s slaves would one day be free and that deportation would have to accompany emancipation.

The bill on the subject of slaves was a mere digest of the existing laws respecting them, without any intimation of a plan for a future & general emancipation. It was thought better that this should be kept back, and attempted only by way of amendment whenever the bill should be brought on. The principles of the amendment however were agreed on, that is to say, the freedom of all born after a certain day, and deportation at a proper age. But it was found that the public mind would not yet bear the proposition, nor will it bear it even at this day. Yet the day is not distant when it must hear and adopt it,

or worse will follow. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free. Nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. Nature, habit, opinion has drawn indelible lines of distinction between them. It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation and deportation peaceably and in such slow degree as that the evil will wear off insensibly, and their place be *pari passu*⁴⁴¹ filled up by free white laborers. If on the contrary it is left to force itself on, human nature must shudder at the prospect held up. We should in vain look for an example in the Spanish deportation or deletion of the Moors. This precedent would fall far short of our case.

Source: *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Ford, 1:67-68.

1829—Justice Thomas Ruffin of the North Carolina Supreme Court on the Master's Absolute Dominion Over a Slave

In *The State v. John Mann*, Judge Thomas Ruffin (1787-1870) of the North Carolina Supreme Court overturned a lower court ruling that had held Thomas Mann liable for assault and battery on a slave named Lydia, whom Mann had hired from her owner, Elizabeth Jones. A jury, instructed that Mann had only a special property in the slave, had found Mann guilty of cruel and unwarrantable punishment upon Lydia, whom he had shot and wounded after she ran off while he was attempting to punish her for a minor infraction. Mann appealed the verdict, and Ruffin determined that he had the same right to control the slave's behavior as did her owner and thus could not be indicted for battery. In delivering his decision, Ruffin addressed the question of the extent of a master's power over a slave, and he concluded that it was absolute.

Ruffin, a native of King and Queen County, Virginia, and a graduate of the College of New Jersey, had risen quickly at the bar in North Carolina and had just been elected an associate justice of the supreme court in 1829. In his classic, doggedly logical argument for judicial restraint, Ruffin declared that the courts should not be in the business of determining the rights of masters over their slaves. Judges had to recognize that masters had full dominion over their slaves, he said, and that any attempt to provide slaves with recourse in the courts would undermine slavery. Because slavery was at essence maintained by physical force, Ruffin argued, masters had to be allowed absolute power over their slaves so that they could compel absolute submission. Ruffin also averred that community pressure was usually a sufficient external force to limit cruelty on the part of a master. Ruffin, who served as chief justice from 1833 to 1852, is considered by legal scholars as a pioneer in constitutional law and also a formidable jurist in both common law and equity.

⁴⁴¹With equal pace; with equal speed. *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 2nd College Edition.

The excerpt below contains the substance of Ruffin's argument about the power relations of slavery. It comes from Ruffin's third draft of his opinion, which is exactly the same as the printed opinion found in 13 North Carolina 263.

A judge cannot but lament when such cases as the present are brought into judgment. It is impossible that the reasons on which they go can be appreciated, but where institutions similar to our own exist and are thoroughly understood. The struggle, too, in the judge's own breast between the feelings of the man and the duty of the magistrate is a severe one, presenting strong temptation to put aside such questions, if it be possible. It is useless, however, to complain of things inherent in our political state. And it is criminal in a Court to avoid any responsibility which the laws impose. With whatever reluctance, therefore, it is done, the Court is compelled to express an opinion upon the extent of the dominion of the master over the slave in North Carolina.

. . . Arguments drawn from the well-established principles which confer and restrain the authority of the parent over the child, the tutor over the pupil, the master over the apprentice, have been pressed on us. The Court does not recognize their application. There is no likeness between the cases. They are in opposition to each other, and there is an impassable gulf between them. The difference is that which exists between freedom and slavery—and a greater cannot be imagined. In the one, the end in view is the happiness of the youth, born to equal rights with that governor, on whom the duty devolves of training the young to usefulness in a station which he is afterwards to assume among freemen. To such an end, and with such a subject, moral and intellectual instruction seem the natural means; and for the most part they are found to suffice. Moderate force is superadded only to make the others more effectual. If that fail it is better to leave the party to his own headstrong passions and the ultimate correction of the law than to allow it to be immoderately inflicted by a private person. With slavery it is far otherwise. The end is the profit of the master, his security and the public safety; the subject, one doomed in his own person and his posterity, to live without knowledge and without capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that another may reap the fruits. What moral considerations shall be addressed to such a being to convince him what it is impossible but that the most stupid must feel and know can never be true—that he is thus to labor upon a principle of natural duty, or for the sake of his own personal happiness, such services can only be expected from one who has no will of his own; who surrenders his will in implicit obedience to that of another. Such obedience is the consequence only of uncontrolled authority over the body. There is nothing else which can operate to produce the effect. The power of the master must be absolute to render the submission of the slave perfect. I most freely confess my sense of the harshness of this proposition; I feel it as deeply as any man can; and as a principle of moral right every person in his retirement must repudiate it. But in the actual condition of things it must be so. There is no remedy. This discipline belongs to the state of slavery. They cannot be disunited without abrogating at once the rights of the master and absolving the slave from his subjection. It constitutes the curse of slavery to both the bond and free portion of our population. But it is inherent in the relation of master and slave.

That there may be particular instances of cruelty and deliberate barbarity where, in conscience, the law might properly interfere, is most probable. The difficulty is to determine where a Court may properly begin. Merely in the abstract it may well be

asked, which power of the master accords with right? The answer will probably sweep away all of them. But we cannot look at the matter in that light. The truth is that we are forbidden to enter upon a train of general reasoning on the subject. We cannot allow the right of the master to be brought into discussion in the courts of justice. The slave, to remain a slave, must be made sensible that there is no appeal from his master; that his power is in no instance usurped; but is conferred by the laws of man at least, if not by the law of God. The danger would be great, indeed, if the tribunals of justice should be called on to graduate the punishment appropriate to every temper and every dereliction of menial duty. No man can anticipate the many and aggravated provocations of the master which the slave would be constantly stimulated by his own passions or the instigation of others to give; or the consequent wrath of the master, prompting him to bloody vengeance upon the turbulent traitor—a vengeance generally practiced with impunity by reason of its privacy. The Court, therefore, disclaims the power of changing the relation in which these parts of our people stand to each other.

We are happy to see that there is daily less and less occasion for the interposition of the Courts. The protection already afforded by several statutes, that all-powerful motive, the private interest of the owner, the benevolences towards each other, seated in the hearts of those who have been born and bred together, the frowns and deep execrations of the community upon the barbarian who is guilty of excessive and brutal cruelty to his unprotected slave, all combined, have produced a mildness of treatment and attention to the comforts of the unfortunate class of slaves, greatly mitigating the rigors of servitude and ameliorating the condition of the slaves. The same causes are operating and will continue to operate with increased action until the disparity in numbers between the whites and blacks shall have rendered the latter in no degree dangerous to the former, when the police now existing may be further relaxed. This result, greatly to be desired, may be much more rationally expected from the events above alluded to, and now in progress, than from any rash expositions of abstract truths by a judiciary tainted with a false and fanatical philanthropy, seeking to redress an acknowledged evil by means still more wicked and appalling than even that evil.

I repeat I would gladly have avoided this ungrateful question. But being brought to it the Court is compelled to declare that while slavery exists amongst us in its present state, or until it shall seem fit to the legislature to interpose express enactments to the contrary, it will be the imperative duty of the judges to recognize the full dominion of the owner over the slave, except where the exercise of it is forbidden by statute. And this we do upon the ground that this dominion is essential to the value of slaves as property, to the security of the master, and the public tranquillity, greatly dependent upon their subordination; and, in fine, as most effectually securing the general protection and comfort of the slaves themselves.

Per Curium—Let the judgment below be reversed, and judgment entered for the defendant.

Source: *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, ed. de Roulhac Hamilton, pp. 256-257.

1829—David Walker's <i>Appeal To The Coloured Citizens of the World</i>

In his *Appeal*, David Walker makes several pointed references to Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* and the Declaration of Independence. Walker's arguments against Jefferson's inconsistencies are only a part of his *Appeal*. However, for the purpose of the *Enslaving Virginia* storyline (and brevity), only references to Jefferson and the Revolution appear here.

In his introduction to the reprint of Walker's work, James Turner notes that:

“The publication of David Walker's *Appeal* was an event of major importance. It was the most seminal expression of African American political thought to come forth in the early nineteenth century. The *Appeal* is fundamentally a treatise on the necessity of and moral justification for resistance to slavery as the most despicable form of oppression.

[In 1829, when Walker's *Appeal* was first published,] abolitionist activities were in a nascent stage of development. Walker presents the first sustained critique of slavery and racism in the United States by an African [American] person. . . .The *Appeal* evidenced a level of writing craft, multidimensional analysis, and command of principles of natural and religious philosophy that dramatically belied the conventional notion, at the time, that Africans were incapable of complex reasoning, rational differentiation, and fluent conversation in the lingua franca, i.e., English.

Its impact was immediate and dramatic. Slaveholders, particularly the powerful plantation owners and their political allies, were very alarmed. They proclaimed the pamphlet subversive and an incitement to revolution. . . .A group of wealthy planters offered a ten-thousand dollar reward for [Walker]—dead or alive. The Georgia legislature, followed by Louisiana, passed laws against the circulation of the *Appeal*. Violation of those laws was punishable by imprisonment or death. The state of North Carolina made it a crime to teach a slave to read or write.

The concise clarity from which David Walker articulated the human rights of African people at home and abroad sustains the relevance of this document to contemporary readers. The text is structured from an unequivocal Black perspective. Walker argues the need for conscious awareness among the people, responsibility for self-determination, mutual cooperation, political organization, and the essentiality of unity among all Africans on an international basis.”

Our Wretchedness In Consequence Of Slavery.

My beloved brethren: The Indians of North America and of South America—the Greeks—the Irish, subjected under the king of Great Britain—the Jews, that ancient people of the Lord—the inhabitants of the islands of the sea—in fine, all the inhabitants of the earth, (except, however, the sons of Africa) are called *men*, and of course are, and ought to be free. But we, (coloured people) and our children are *brutes!!* and of course are, and *ought to be* SLAVES to the American people and their children forever!! to dig their mines and work their farms; and thus go on enriching them, from one generation to another with our *blood* and our *tears!!!!*

I promised in a preceding page to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the most incredulous, that we, (coloured people of these United States of America) are the most wretched, degraded and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began, and

that the white Americans having reduced us to the wretched state of slavery, treat us in that condition more cruel (they being an enlightened and Christian people,) than any heathen nation did any people whom it reduced to our condition.

Oh! pity us we pray thee, Lord Jesus, Master.—Has Mr. Jefferson declared to the world, that we are inferior to the whites, both in the endowments of our bodies and of minds? It is indeed surprising, that a man of such great learning, combined with such excellent natural parts, should speak so of a set of men in chains. I do not know what to compare it to, unless, like putting one wild deer in an iron cage, where it will be secured, and hold another by the side of the same, then let it go, and expect the one in the cage to run as fast as the one at liberty.

I saw a paragraph, a few years since, in a South Carolina paper, which, speaking of the barbarity of the Turks, it said: ‘The Turks are the most barbarous people in the world—they treat the Greeks more like *brutes* than human beings.’ And in the same paper was an advertisement, which said: ‘Eight well built Virginia and Maryland *Negro fellows* and four *wenches* will positively be *sold* this day, *to the highest bidder!*’ And what astonished me still more was, to see in this same humane paper!! the cuts of three men, with clubs and budgets on their backs, and an advertisement offering a considerable sum of money for their apprehension and delivery. I declare, it is really so amusing to hear the Southerners and Westerners of this country talk about *barbarity*, that is positively, enough to make a man *smile*.

I ask you, O! Americans, I ask you, in the name of the Lord, can you deny these charges? Some perhaps may deny, by saying, that they never thought or said that we were not men. But do not actions speak louder than words?—have they not made provisions for the Greeks, and Irish? Nations who have never done the least thing for them, while we, who have enriched their country with our blood and tears—have dug up gold and silver for them and their children, from generation to generation, and are in more miseries than any other people under heaven, are not seen, but by comparatively, a handful of the American people?

The world knows, that slavery as it existed among the Romans, (which was the primary cause of their destruction) was, comparatively speaking, no more than a *cypher*, when compared with ours under the Americans. Indeed I should not have noticed the Roman slaves, had not the very learned and penetrating Mr. Jefferson said, “when a master was murdered, all his slaves in the same house, or within hearing, were condemned to death.” Here let me ask Mr. Jefferson, (but he is gone to answer at the bar of God, for the deeds done in his body while living,) I therefore ask the whole American people, had I not rather die, or be put to death, than to be a slave to any tyrant, who takes not only my own, but my wife and children’s lives by inches? Yea, would I meet death with avidity far! far!! in preference to such *servile submission* to the murderous hands of tyrants. Mr. Jefferson’s very severe remarks on us have been so extensively argued upon by men whose attainments in literature, I shall never be able to reach, that I would not have meddled with it, were it not to solicit each of my brethren, who has the spirit of a man, to buy a copy of Mr. Jefferson’s *Notes on Virginia*, and put it in the hand of his son. For let no one of us suppose that the refutations which have been written by our white friends are enough—they are *whites*—we are *blacks*.

We, and the world wish to see the charges of Mr. Jefferson refuted by the blacks themselves, according to their chance; for we must remember that what the whites have

written respecting this subject, is other men's labors, and did not emanate from the blacks. I know well, that there are some talents and learning among the coloured people of this country, which we have not a chance to develop, in consequence of oppression; but our oppression ought not to hinder us from acquiring all we can. For we will have a chance to develop them by and by. God will not suffer us, always to be oppressed. Our suffering will come to an end, in spite of all the Americans this side of eternity. Then we will want all the learning and talents among ourselves.—“Every dog must have its day,” the American is coming to an end.

But let us review Mr. Jefferson's remarks respecting us some further. Comparing our miserable fathers, with the learned philosophers of Greece, he says:

Yet notwithstanding these and other discouraging circumstances among the Romans, their slaves were often their rarest artists. They excelled too, in science, insomuch as to be usually employed as tutors to their master's children; Epictetus, Terence and Phaedrus, were slaves,—but they were of the race of whites. It is not their *condition* then, but *nature*, which has produced the distinction.

See this, my brethren!! Do you believe that this assertion is swallowed by millions of the whites? Do you know that Mr. Jefferson was one of as great characters as ever lived among the whites? See his writings for the world, and public labors for the United States of America. Do you believe that the assertions of such a man, will pass away into oblivion unobserved by this people and the world? If you do you are much mistaken.

But to the slaves among the Romans. Every body who has read history, knows, that as soon as a slave among the Romans obtained his freedom, he could rise to the greatest eminence in the State, and there was no law instituted to hinder a slave from buying his freedom. Have not the Americans instituted laws to hinder us from obtaining our freedom? Do any deny this charge? Read the laws of Virginia, North Carolina, &c. Further: have not the Americans instituted laws to prohibit a man of colour from obtaining and holding an office whatever, under the government of the United States of America? Now, Mr. Jefferson tells us, that our condition is not so hard, as the slaves were under the Romans!!!!!!

The whites have always been an unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious and bloodthirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority.—We view them all over the confederacy of Greece, where they were first known to be any thing, (in consequence of education) we see them there, cutting each other's throats—trying to subject each other to wretchedness and misery—to effect which, they used all kinds of deceitful, unfair, and unmerciful means. We view them next in Rome, where the spirit of tyranny and deceit raged still higher. We view them in Gaul, Spain, and in Britain.—In fine, we view them all over Europe, together with what were scattered about in Asia and Africa, as heathens, and we see them acting more like devils than accountable men. But some may ask, did not the blacks of Africa, and the mulattoes of Asia, go on in the same way as did the whites of Europe. I answer, no—they never were half so avaricious, deceitful and unmerciful as the whites, according to their knowledge.

But we leave the whites or Europeans as heathens, and take a view of them as Christians, in which capacity we see them as cruel, if not more so than ever. In fact, take them as a body, they are ten times more cruel, avaricious and unmerciful than ever they

were; for while they were heathens, they were not quite so audacious as to go and take vessel loads of men, women and children, and in cold blood, and through devilishness, throw them into the sea, and murder them in all kind of ways. While they were heathens, they were too ignorant for such barbarity. But being Christians, enlightened and sensible, they are completely prepared for such hellish cruelties.

How can, Oh! how can those enemies but say that we and our children are not of the HUMAN FAMILY, but were made by our Creator to be an inheritance to them and theirs forever? How can the slaveholders but say that they can bribe the best coloured person in the country, to sell his brethren for a trifling sum of money, and take that atrocity to confirm them in their avaricious opinion, that we were made to be slaves to them and their children? How could Mr. Jefferson but say,

I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are *inferior* to the whites in the endowments of both body and mind?

“It,” says he, “is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications.” [Here, my brethren, listen to him.]

Will not a lover of natural history, then, one who views the gradations in all the races of *animals* with the eye of philosophy, excuse an effort to keep in the department of MAN as distinct as nature has formed them?

I hope you will try to find out the meaning of this verse—its widest sense and all its bearings: whether you do or not, remember the whites do. This very verse, brethren, having emanated from Mr. Jefferson, a much greater philosopher the world never afforded, has in truth injured us more, and has been as great a barrier to our emancipation as any thing that has ever been advanced against us. I hope you will not let it pass unnoticed.

For my own part, I am glad Mr. Jefferson has advanced his positions for your sake; for you will either have to contradict or confirm him by your own actions, and not by what our friends have said or done for us; for those things are other men’s labors, and do not satisfy the Americans, who are waiting for us to prove to them ourselves, that we are MEN, before they will be willing to admit the fact; for I pledge you my sacred word of honor, that Mr. Jefferson’s remarks have sunk deep into the hearts of millions of the whites, and never will be removed this side of eternity.

ADDITION.—I will give here a very imperfect list of the cruelties inflicted on us by the enlightened Christians of America.—First, no trifling portion of them will beat us nearly to death, if they find us on our knees praying to God,—They hinder us from going to hear the word of God—they keep us sunk in ignorance, and will not let us learn to read the word of God, nor write—If they find us with a book of any description in our hand, they will beat us nearly to death—they are so afraid we will learn to read, and enlighten our dark and benighted minds—They will not suffer us to meet together to worship the

God who made us—they brand us with hot iron—they cram bolts of fire down our throats—they cut us as they do horses, bulls, or hogs—they crop our ears and sometimes cut off bits of our tongues—they chain and handcuff us, and while in that miserable and wretched condition, beat us with cowhides and clubs—they keep us half naked and starve us sometimes nearly to death under their infernal whips or lashes (which some of them shall have enough of yet)—They put on us fifty-sixes and chains, and make us work in that cruel situation, and in sickness, under lashes to support them and their families.—They keep us three or four hundred feet under ground working in their mines, night and day to dig up gold and silver to enrich them and their children.—They keep us in the most deathlike ignorance by keeping us from all source of information, and call us, who are free men and next to the Angels of God, their property!!!!!! They make us fight and murder each other, many of us being ignorant, not knowing any better.—They take us, (being ignorant,) and put us as drivers one over the other, and make us afflict each other as bad as they themselves afflict us—and to crown the whole of this catalogue of cruelties, they tell us that we (the blacks) are an inferior race of beings! incapable of self-government!!—We would be injurious to society and ourselves, if tyrants should lose their unjust hold on us!!! That if we were free we would not work, but would live on plunder or theft!!!! that we are the meanest and laziest set of beings in the world!!!! That they are obliged to keep us in bondage to do us good!!!!!!—That we are satisfied to rest in slavery to them and their children!!!!!!—That we ought not to be set free in America, but ought to be sent away to Africa!!!!!!—That if we were set free in America, we would involve the country in a civil war, which assertion is altogether at variance with our feeling or design, for we ask them for nothing but the rights of man, viz. for them to set us free, and treat us like men, and there will be no danger, for we will love and respect them, and protect our country—but cannot conscientiously do these things until they treat us like men.

See your Declaration Americans!!! Do you understand your own language? Hear your language, proclaimed to the world, July 4th, 1776—

We hold these truths to be self evident—that ALL men are created EQUAL!! that they *are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights*; that among these are life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness!!

Compare your own language above, extracted from your Declaration of Independence, with your cruelties and murders inflicted by your cruel and unmerciful fathers and yourselves on our fathers and on us—men who have never given your fathers or you the least provocation!!!!!!

Hear your language further!

But when a long train of abuses and usurpation, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Now, Americans! I ask you candidly, were your sufferings under Great Britain, one hundredth part as cruel and tyrannical as you have rendered ours under you? Some

of you, no doubt, believe that we will never throw off your murderous government and “provide new guards for our future security.” If Satan has made you believe it, will he not deceive you? Do the whites say, I being a black man, ought to be humble, which I readily admit? I ask them, ought they not be as humble as I? or do they think that they can measure arms with Jehovah? will not the Lord yet humble them? or will not those very coloured people whom they now treat worse than brutes, yet under God, humble them down low enough? Some of the whites are ignorant enough to tell us, that we ought to be submissive to them that they may keep their feet on our throats. And if we do not submit to be beaten to death by them, we are bad creatures and of course must be damned, &c.

The Americans may be as vigilant as they please, but they cannot be vigilant enough for the Lord, neither can they hide themselves, where he will not find and bring them out.

Source: *David Walker’s Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, ed. Turner, pp. 9-18, 27, 30-37, 46-48, 84-85, 95-96.

1831—Nat Turner’s Insurrection

The most famous slave insurrection in the United States took place in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831. Before dawn on August 22, Nat Turner, a gifted slave preacher, followed his religious, mystical visions and launched a rebellion against local slaveholders. Eventually, sixty to eighty black men joined Turner, and they murdered between fifty-seven and sixty whites, many of them women and children. The rebellion was swiftly put down by the militia. About two dozen of the insurrectionists were killed in battle or hanged after trial, and more than one hundred alleged rebels died at the hands of vigilantes.

Nat Turner himself avoided capture for more than two months. Once found, he was quickly tried, found guilty, and executed. Before his trial, however, Turner was interviewed in his jail cell by Thomas R. Gray, a local lawyer and slaveholder. Gray published Turner’s account of his life and the rebellion as *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1831), which went through at least two reprintings and may have sold as many as 50,000 copies. While the *Confessions* does contain the voice of Nat Turner, Gray crafted it to prove that Turner was insane and that the seeds of the rebellion lay in the fanaticism of one man, not in the system of slavery itself. In contrast, the heroic image of Turner in the oral history passed down by slaves portrayed the rebellion as a courageous effort to liberate slaves from an oppressive system.

Turner’s revolt led to a legislative debate in Virginia about the possible gradual abolition of slavery. The state’s representatives ultimately rejected that option in favor of new restraints on slaves and free blacks. Free blacks were denied the right to trial by jury. Both free blacks and slaves were forbidden to preach or lead religious meetings.

While Turner pleaded not guilty at his trial, a witness who had seen his family members killed during the revolt testified to Turner's leadership of the uprising. The following excerpt from the trial record is from the Southampton County Minute Book, 1830-1835, housed in the Library of Virginia in Richmond.

At a Court of Oyer and Terminer summoned and held for the County of Southampton on Saturday the fifth day of November 1831 for the trial of Nat alias Nat Turner a negro man slave the property of Putnam Moore an infant charged with conspiring to rebel and making insurrection—Present—Jeremiah Cobb, Samuel B. Hines, James D. Massenburg, James W. Parker, Robert Goodwin, James Trezevant & Ores A. Browne—Gent. Carr Bowers, Thomas Preston and Richd A. Urquardt.

For reasons appearing to the Court it is ordered that the Sheriff summon a sufficient additional guard to repel any attempt that may be made to remove Nat alias Nat Turner from the custody of the Sheriff—

The prisoner Nat alias Nat Turner was set to the bar in custody of the Jailor of this County, and William C. Parker is by the Court assigned Counsel for the prisoner in his defense, and Meriwether B. Broadnax attorney for the Commonwealth filed an Information against the prisoner who upon his arraignment pleaded not guilty and Levi Waller being summoned as a Witness states that on the morning of the 22nd day of August last between 9 and 10 o'clock he heard that the negroes had risen and were murdering the whites and were coming. Witness sent his son Thos. to the school house he living about a quarter of a mile off to let it be known & for his children to come home. Mr. Crocker the School Master came with the Witnesses children Witness told him to go to the house and load the guns, but before the guns were loaded Mr. Crocker came to the still where witness was—and said they were in Sight. Witness retreated and concealed himself in the corner of the fence in the weeds behind the garden on the opposite side of the house. Several negroes pursued him but he escaped them by falling among the weeds over the fence—One negro rode up and looked over, but did not observe him—The attention of the party he thinks were called off from him by some of the party going in pursuit of another, which he thinks they took for him but turned out to be his blacksmith—Witness then retreated into the swamp which was not far off—After remaining some time witness again approached the house—before he retreated he saw several of his family murdered by the negroes—Witness crept up near the house to see what they were doing and concealed himself by getting in the plum orchard behind the garden—the negroes were drinking—Witness saw prisoner whom he knew very well, mounted (he thought on Dr. Musgrave's horse) stated that the prisoner seemed to command the party—made Peter Edwards' negro man Sam who seemed disposed to remain mount his horse and go with them—prisoner gave command to the party to "go ahead" when they left his house—Witness states that he cannot be mistaken in the identity of the prisoner—James Trezevant being sworn said that Mr. James W. Parker and himself were the Justices before whom the prisoner was examined prior to his commitment—That the prisoner at the time was in confinement but no threats or promises were held out to him to make any disclosures. That he admitted he was one of the insurgents engaged in the late insurrection, and the Chief among them—that he gave to his master and mistress Mr. Travis and his wife the first blow before they were dispatched—that he killed Miss Peggy Whitehead—that he was with the insurgents from

their first movement to their dispersion on the Tuesday morning after the insurrection took place—That he gave a long account of the motives which lead him finally to commence the bloody scenes which took place—that he pretended to have had intimations by signed omens from God that he should embark in the desperate attempt—That his comrades and even he were impressed with a belief that he could by the imposition of his hands cure disease—That he related a particular instance in which it was believed that he had in that manner effected a cure on one of his comrades, and that he went on to detail a medley of incoherent and confused opinions about his communications with God, his command over the clouds etc., etc. which he had been entertaining as far back as 1826.

The Court after hearing the testimony and from all the circumstances of the case are unanimously of opinion that the prisoner is guilty in manner and form as in the Information against him alleged, and it being demanded of him if anything for himself he had or knew to say by the Court to judgment and execution against him of and upon the premises should not precede—he said he had nothing but what he had before said. Therefore it is considered by the Court that he be taken hence to the Jail from whence he was taken therein to remain until Friday the 11th day of November instant, on which day between the hours of ten o'clock in the forenoon and four o'clock in the afternoon he is to be taken by the Sheriff to the usual place of execution and then and there be hanged by the neck until he be dead. And the Court value the said slave to the sum of three hundred and seventy five dollars.

Ordered that William C. Parker be allowed the sum of ten dollars as a fee for defending Nat alias Nat Turner, late the property of Putnam Moore, an infant.

JMH. COBB

Source: Greenberg, ed., *The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents*, pp. 101-103.

1832—Thomas R. Dew Argues Against the Abolition of Slavery

In the wake of Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion, a number of Virginia legislators, under the leadership of Thomas J. Randolph, Thomas Jefferson's grandson, proposed plans for the emancipation of the state's slaves. Backed by a coalition of moral and practical opponents of the peculiar institution, as well as large numbers of western Virginians resentful of the power of the plantation gentry in state affairs, in the early months of 1832, Randolph and the emancipationists initiated in the General Assembly an open, frank, and widely reported two-week-long debate over the future of slavery. The emancipationist legislators were able to force agreement from many of their opponents that slavery was a dangerous institution that ideally should be eliminated. Yet they shared with the defenders of slavery the conviction that Africans could not coexist with Europeans in a state of equality, without society collapsing into crime, anarchy, and race war. Overwhelmingly, therefore, Virginia's emancipationists returned to the plan of colonization, arguing that freed slaves should be returned to Africa at state expense. In response, Virginia's conservative slaveholders argued for the rights of property, and

particularly focused on the financial impossibility of the gargantuan task of general colonization. Randolph's proposals were largely shelved. In the wake of the debates, conservatives gained the upper hand, arguing that the only way to maintain peace and order in Virginia's race relations was to tighten the discipline and regulation of slavery even further. Public discussion of emancipation in Virginia withered, as conservatives argued that absolute white solidarity was needed to prevent revolution. In the decade before the Civil War, men like George Fitzhugh and Edmund Ruffin would adopt radical proslavery views more typical of the Deep South.

Thomas Roderick Dew (1802-1846), a professor of political law at the College of William and Mary and a slaveholder, published one of the best-known conservative analyses of the debate entitled "Abolition of Negro Slavery," in the September 1832 issue of the *American Quarterly Review*. His arguments gained considerable press throughout the South. Although Dew acknowledged the debaters' eloquence, he criticized the legislators for opening up the Pandora's Box of abolition. Dew stated without reservation that the elimination of slavery would be impossible to achieve in Virginia. He focused largely on property rights as a justification for slavery. The excerpts below introduce the flavor of Dew's piece, which became nationally known as the forerunner of those increasingly strident proslavery writings produced in the years leading up to the sectional crisis.

In our southern slave-holding country, the question of emancipation had never been seriously discussed in any of our legislatures, until the whole subject, under the most exciting circumstances, was, during the last winter, brought up for discussion in the Virginia legislature, and plans of partial or total abolition were earnestly pressed upon the attention of that body. It is well known, that during the last summer, in the county of Southampton in Virginia, a few slaves, led on by Nat Turner, rose in the night, and murdered in the most inhuman and shocking manner between sixty and seventy of the unsuspecting whites of that county. The news of course was rapidly diffused, and with it consternation and dismay were spread throughout the state, destroying for a time all feeling of security and confidence, and even when subsequent development had proven, that the conspiracy had originated with a fanatic negro preacher, (whose confessions prove beyond a doubt mental aberration,) and that this conspiracy embraced but few slaves, all of whom had paid the penalty of their crimes, still the excitement remained, still the repose of the commonwealth was disturbed, for the ghastly horrors of the Southampton tragedy could not immediately be banished from the mind. *Rumour*, with her thousand tongues, was busily engaged in spreading tales of disaffection, plots, insurrections, and even massacres, which frightened the timid, and harassed and mortified the whole of the slave-holding population. During this period of excitement, when reason was almost banished from the mind, and the imagination was suffered to conjure up the most appalling phantoms, and picture to itself a crisis in the vista of futurity, when the overwhelming numbers of the blacks would rise superior to all restraint, and involve the finest portion of our land in universal ruin and desolation, we are not to wonder that even in the lower part of Virginia many should have seriously inquired, if this supposed monstrous evil could not be removed from her bosom. Some looked to the removal of the free people of colour, by the efforts of the Colonization Society, as an antidote to our

ills; some were disposed to strike at the root of the evil, to call on the general government for aid, and by the labours of *Hercules* to extirpate the curse of slavery from the land; and others again, who could not bear that Virginia should stand towards the general government (whose unconstitutional action she had ever been foremost to resist) in the attitude of a suppliant, looked forward to the legislative action of the state as capable of achieving the desired result. In this degree of excitement and apprehension, the legislature met, and plans for abolition were proposed and earnestly advocated in debate.

Upon the impropriety of this debate we beg leave to make a few observations. Any scheme of abolition proposed so soon after the Southampton tragedy, would necessarily appear to be the result of that most inhuman massacre. Suppose the negroes, then, to be really anxious for their emancipation, no matter on what terms, would not the extraordinary effect produced on the legislature by the Southampton insurrection, in all probability have a tendency to excite another? And we must recollect, from the nature of things, no plan of abolition could act suddenly on the whole mass of slave population in the state.

...

We have not formed our opinion lightly upon this subject; we have given to the vital question of abolition the most mature and intense consideration which we are capable of bestowing, and we have come to the conclusion—a conclusion which seems to be sustained by facts and reasoning as irresistible as the demonstration of the mathematician—that every plan of emancipation and deportation which we can possibly conceive, is *totally* impracticable. We shall endeavour to prove, that the attempt to execute these plans can only have a tendency to increase all the evils of which we complain, as resulting from slavery. If this be true, then the great question of abolition will necessarily be reduced to the question of emancipation, with a permission to remain, which we think can easily be shown to be subversive of the interests, security, and happiness, of both the blacks and whites, and consequently hostile to every principle of expediency, morality, and religion. We have heretofore doubted the propriety even of too frequently agitating, especially in a public manner, the questions of abolition, in consequence of the injurious effects which might be produced on the slave population. But the Virginia legislature, in its zeal for discussion, boldly set aside all prudential considerations of this kind, and openly and publicly debated the subject before the whole world. The seal has now been broken, the example has been set from a high quarter; we shall, therefore, waive all considerations of a prudential character which have heretofore restrained us, and boldly grapple with the abolitionists on this great question. We fear not the result, so far as truth, justice, and expediency alone are concerned. But we must be permitted to say, that we do most deeply dread the effects of misguided philanthropy, and the intrusion, in this matter, of those who have no interest at stake, and who have not that intimate and minute knowledge of the whole subject so absolutely necessary to wise action.

...

There is \$100,000,000 of slave property in the state of Virginia, and it matters but little how you destroy it, whether by the slow process of the cautious practitioner, or with the frightful despatch of the self confident quack; when it is gone, no matter how, the deed will be done, and Virginia will be a desert.

Source: Greenberg, ed., *The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents*, pp. 115-118, 131.

1850—The Compromise of 1850

The issue of statehood for California brought up the question of the expansion of slavery again. The admission of California as a free state would end the balance between free and slave states. Henry Clay, who had played a large role in the Missouri Compromise, drew up a series of eight resolutions to address the issue. His proposals sparked a long debate that involved John Calhoun, Jefferson Davis, and Daniel Webster. A congressional committee included all of Clay's proposals into one bill that became known as the "Omnibus Bill." The passage of the bill was in question until Stephen A. Douglas decided to divide the provisions into six (later five) separate measures. Douglas realized that nearly everybody objected to one or another provision of the "Omnibus Bill." He succeeded in finding a majority for each measure when it was brought up for a vote. The name given to the various pieces of legislation—The Compromise of 1850—was misleading. The passage of the bills was a result of Douglas's legislative maneuvers, not a result of sectional compromise. The five measures did not settle the divisive issue of slavery.

Henry Clay's Resolutions, January 29, 1850

It being desirable, for the peace, concord, and harmony of the Union of these States, to settle and adjust amicably all existing questions of controversy between them arising out of the institution of slavery upon a fair, equitable and just basis: therefore,

1. *Resolved*, That California, with suitable boundaries, ought, upon her application, to be admitted as one of the States of this Union, without the imposition by Congress of any restriction in respect to the exclusion or introduction of slavery within those boundaries.

2. *Resolved*, That as slavery does not exist by law, and is not likely to be introduced into any of the territory acquired by the United States from the republic of Mexico, it is inexpedient for Congress to provide by law either for its introduction into, or exclusion from, any part of the said territory; and that appropriate territorial governments ought to be established by Congress in all of the said territory, not assigned as the boundaries of the proposed State of California, without the adoption of any restriction or condition on the subject of slavery.

5. *Resolved*, That it is inexpedient to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia whilst that institution continues to exist in the State of Maryland, without the consent of

that State, without the consent of the people of the District and without just compensation to the owners of slaves within the District.

6. But, *resolved*, That it is expedient to prohibit, within the District, the slave trade in slaves brought into it from States or places beyond the limits of the District, either to be sold therein as merchandise, or to be transported to other markets without the District of Columbia.

7. *Resolved*, That more effectual provision ought to be made by law, according to the requirement of the constitution, for the restitution and delivery of persons bound to service or labor in any State, who may escape into any other State or Territory in the Union. And,

8. *Resolved*, That Congress has no power to prohibit or obstruct the trade in slaves between the slaveholding States; but that the admission or exclusion of slaves brought from one into another of them, depends exclusively upon their own particular laws.

Source: Morris, ed., *Basic Documents in American History*, pp. 115-117.

1852—Frederick Douglass on “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro”

On July 5, 1852, Douglass spoke on “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro” in Rochester, New York. Between 500 and 600 people paid 12 ½ cents to hear Douglass criticize their country on account of slavery, challenge all citizens to improve their country by eliminating slavery, and to express hope that slavery would be abolished.

This, for the purpose of this celebration, is the Fourth of July. It is the birthday of your National Independence, and of your political freedom. This, to you, is what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God. It carries your minds back to the day, and to the act of your great deliverance; and to the signs, and to the wonders, associated with that act, and that day. This celebration also marks the beginning of another year of your national life; and reminds you that the Republic of America is now 76 years old. I am glad, fellow-citizens, that your nation is so young. Seventy-six years, though a good old age for a man, is but a mere speck in the life of a nation. Three score years and ten is the allotted time for individual men; but nations number in their years by thousands. According to this fact, you are, even now, only in the beginning of your national career, still lingering in the period of childhood. I repeat, I am glad this is so. There is hope in the thought, and hope is much needed, under the dark clouds which lower above the horizon. The eye of the reformer is met with angry flashes, portending disastrous times; but his heart may well beat lighter at the thought that America is young, and that she is still in the impressionable stage of her existence. May he not hope that high lessons of wisdom, of justice and of truth, will yet give direction to her destiny? Were the nation older, the patriot’s heart might be sadder, and the reformer’s brow heavier. Its future might be shrouded in gloom, and the hope of its prophets go out in sorrow. There is consolation in the thought that America is young.—Great streams are not easily turned from channels, worn deep in the course of ages.

...

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful.

...

But such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common.—The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth July is *yours*, not *mine*. *You* may rejoice, *I* must mourn. To drag a man into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, towering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrevocable ruin! I can to-day take up the plaintive lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people!

...

My subject, then, fellow-citizens, is American slavery. I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view. Standing there identified with the American bondsman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the pact, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the Bible which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery—the great sin and shame of America! “I will not equivocate; I will not excuse”; I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right and just.

...

What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue? On what branch of the subject do the people of this country need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. There are seventy-two crimes in the State of Virginia which, if committed by a black man (no matter how ignorant he be), subject him to the punishment of death; while only two of the same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the acknowledgment that the slave is a moral, intellectual, and responsible being? The manhood of the slave is conceded. It is admitted in the fact that Southern statute books are covered with enactments forbidding, under severe fines and penalties, the teaching of the slave to read or to write.

...

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, to-day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.

...

But a still more inhuman, disgraceful, and scandalous state of things remains to be presented. By an act of the American Congress, not yet two years old, slavery has been nationalized in its most horrible and revolting form. By that act, Mason and Dixon's line has been obliterated; New York has become as Virginia; and the power to hold, hunt, and sell men, women and children, as slaves, remains no longer a mere state institution, but is now an institution of the whole United States. The power is co-extensive with the star-spangled banner, and American Christianity. Where these go, may also go the merciless slave-hunter. Where these are, man is not sacred. He is a bird for the sportsman's gun. By that most foul and fiendish of all human decrees, the liberty and person of every man

are put in peril. Your broad republican domain is hunting ground for *men*. *Not* for thieves and robbers, enemies of society, merely, but for men guilty of no crime. Your law-makers have commanded all good citizens to engage in this hellish sport. Your President, your Secretary of State, your *lords, nobles*, and ecclesiastics enforce, as a duty you owe to your free and glorious country, and to your God, that you do this accursed thing.

...

Americans! your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love for liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties) is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen You declare before the world, and are understood by the world to declare that you "*hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; and that among these are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;* and yet, you hold securely, in a bondage, which, according to your own Thomas Jefferson, "*is worse than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose,*" a seventh part of the inhabitants of your country.

Fellow-citizens, I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretense, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing and a bye-word to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your *Union*. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement; the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet you cling to it as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh! be warned! be warned! a horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation's bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic; *for the love of God, tear away*, and fling from you the hideous monster, and *let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy it forever!*

...

Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented, of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. "The arm of the Lord is not shortened," and the doom of slavery is certain. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with hope. While drawing encouragement from "the Declaration of Independence," the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age."

Source: Douglass, "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro," in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Foner, 2:181-204.

1857—The Dred Scott Decision

Born a slave in Virginia circa 1800, Dred Scott relocated from Southampton County first to Alabama and then to Missouri, as his owner, Peter Blow, migrated west. After Blow died in 1832, Scott was purchased by Dr. John Emerson, a surgeon in the U.S. Army. For the next several years, Scott lived with Emerson on army posts in the free state of Illinois and in the Wisconsin Territory, where slavery was illegal. In 1846, while working as a hired slave in St. Louis, Scott attempted to purchase freedom for himself and his family from Emerson's widow, Eliza Irene Sanford. (Her brother, John F. A. Sanford represented her in court, but the Supreme Court reporter misspelled his name so the case is known as *Scott v. Sandford*.) She refused, and Scott filed suit for his freedom and that of his wife and daughters. The case eventually went to the Supreme Court, which declared in a 7-2 decision that Scott was still a slave but which went much further by pronouncing that a black person could never be considered a citizen of the United States and that Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories. The decision was a bombshell, as no one had predicted that Chief Justice Roger Taney would use the case to attack the Missouri Compromise and black rights. The case remains notorious today, as both conservative and liberal legal scholars agree that it was one of the worst legal decisions handed down by the Court. Virginian Peter V. Daniel, the most proslavery member of the Court, voted with the majority. Fortunately for Dred Scott and his family, soon after the decision, the sons of his first owner purchased and freed the Scott family. In the following selections, legal historian Paul Finkelman provides a succinct overview of the case and its significance.

In 1846 Dred Scott, a slave living in St. Louis, sued in a Missouri state court to prove that he, his wife, Harriet, and his two daughters, Eliza and Lizzie, were legally entitled to their freedom. Eleven years later the United States Supreme Court, by a vote of 7-2, rejected Scott's claim. Writing for the Court, Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney reached two major conclusions. First, he held that blacks, even if free, could never be considered citizens of the United States, and thus they did not have a right to sue in federal courts. Second, Taney held that Congress lacked the power to prohibit slavery in any federal territories, and so the Missouri Compromise, which banned slavery in the vast territories north and west of the state of Missouri, was unconstitutional. This decision affected Dred Scott personally, but because Chief Justice Taney addressed issues beyond the scope of Scott's immediate claim, the case had an enormous affect on the politics of the nation.

The story of Dred Scott is really three stories. First, there is the story of a slave, Dred Scott, struggling hard to gain his freedom through the courts and eventually taking his case to the United States Supreme Court. Scott lost that suit. However, in the end he gained his freedom through other means, when white friends, the sons of Peter Blow, who had owned Scott years before, purchased and freed Scott and his family.

The second story is about the Supreme Court, its role in interpreting the Constitution and federal law, and the limits of its power to resolve political problems. Chief Justice Taney tried to settle, with one sweeping decision, the volatile problem of

slavery in the territories. He also tried to relegate American blacks to a permanent state of inferiority. Taney ultimately failed in both attempts. His decision led to a temporary diminution of the power of the Supreme Court. More permanently, the case was a catalyst for a fundamental alteration of the Constitution through the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, forever changing the nature of American law and race relations. The Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery. The Fourteenth Amendment made all people born in the United States—including former slaves—citizens of the United States and guaranteed them equal rights under the law. The Fifteenth Amendment prohibited discrimination in voting on the basis of race. In the aftermath of *Dred Scott* and the Civil War, the United States witnessed what Abraham Lincoln called “a new birth of freedom” for African Americans.

The third story is about the politics of slavery and the coming of the Civil War. The Supreme Court decision sparked enormous political reaction, particularly in the North. It destroyed any chance of agreement between the North and South over slavery in the territories. It would be an exaggeration to say that the *Dred Scott* decision caused the Civil War. But it certainly pushed the nation far closer to that war. The decision played a decisive role in the emergence of Abraham Lincoln as the Republican Party’s presidential candidate in 1860 and his election later that year. That in turn set the stage for secession and war.

The case began simply enough. Dred Scott wanted to be free. Unlike most slaves, however, Scott had what he believed was a legal claim to his freedom. For many years, Scott had been the slave of Dr. John Emerson, an army surgeon who had taken him to live on military bases in the free state of Illinois and later to Fort Snelling, in what is today St. Paul, Minnesota. At that time present-day Minnesota was part of the Wisconsin Territory. In 1846 Scott filed suit in a Missouri court to gain freedom for himself, his wife, Harriet, and for their two children. Scott argued that living in those free jurisdictions had made him and his family free, and once free they remained free, even after returning to Missouri.

In 1847, when the case went to trial, Scott lost on technical grounds. In 1848 the Missouri Supreme Court granted Scott the right to a new trial, and in January 1850 Scott and his family won their freedom in a St. Louis court. A jury of twelve white men in Missouri concluded that Scott’s residence in a free state and a free territory had made him free. However, in 1852 the Missouri Supreme Court reversed this result.

In 1854 Scott turned to the federal courts and renewed his quest for freedom in the United States Circuit Court in Missouri. There Judge Robert W. Wells upheld Scott’s right to sue in a federal court but, after a trial, rejected his claim to freedom. Scott remained a slave.

Scott then appealed to the United States Supreme Court. In 1857 the Court, in a 7-2 decision, held that Scott was still a slave. In his “Opinion of the Court,” Chief Justice Taney declared (1) that no black person could ever be a citizen of the United States and thus blacks could not sue in federal courts, and (2) that Congress did not have the power to prohibit slavery in the federal territories and thus the Missouri Compromise of 1820 was unconstitutional, as were all other restrictions on slavery in the territories. These two dramatic and controversial rulings placed the decision at the center of American politics and law for the next decade and a half.

Source: Finkelman, *Dred Scott v. Sandford: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 1-4.

Part V—Emancipation and Amendments to the Constitution

January 1, 1863—The Emancipation Proclamation

In 1862 Abraham Lincoln decided that complete emancipation would be required to save the Union. He had several reasons for this belief: slave labor bolstered the rebel cause, sagging morale in the North needed the lift of a moral cause, and public opinion was shifting toward emancipation as the war continued. In addition, the possibility that England or France would support the Confederacy would vanish if the war became a war to end slavery.

Lincoln issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862 after the Union forces secured a victory over Robert E. Lee at Antietam. He announced that he would issue the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. In his annual message of December 1862 Lincoln closed with the following passage: “We, even we here, hold the power and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which if followed the world will forever applaud and God must forever bless.”

Whereas, On the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

“That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the states and parts of states, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any state, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such state shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such state, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.”

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United

States in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the states and parts of states wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana (except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Johns, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans), Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth); and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated states, and parts of states, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of
our Lord
[L.S.] one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of
the United
States of America the eighty-seventh.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By the President:

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, *Secretary of State*

Source: Morris, ed., *Basic Documents in American History*, pp. 124-127.

1865 to 1870—The Reconstruction Amendments to the Constitution

The straightforward Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. The much more ambiguous Fourteenth Amendment prohibited the states from denying citizens the “equal protection of the laws,” pressured the states to allow black men to vote or risk a reduction in representation in Congress, and forbade some former Confederates from holding state or national office. By tacitly sanctioning the denial of votes to women, the Fourteenth Amendment drew criticism from some supporters of women’s suffrage. In the mid-twentieth century, the Fourteenth Amendment would serve as the cornerstone of the legal efforts by the NAACP and other civil rights groups to dismantle segregation and ensure equal rights for black Americans. The Fifteenth Amendment declared that citizens could not be denied the vote based on race or previous condition of servitude. Again, some women’s suffrage advocates were disappointed; they had hoped the amendment would include sex along with race. Although by the early twentieth century, many former Confederate states had used violent intimidation, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses to deny black men the suffrage, former slaves voted throughout the South for decades after the end of the Civil War.

Amendment XIII [Adopted 1865]

Section 1: Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2: Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Amendment XIV [Adopted 1868]

Section 1: All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Section 2: Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of Electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the executive and judicial officers of a State, or the members of the legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such state.

Section 3: No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or Elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. Congress may, by a vote of two-thirds of each house, remove such disability.

Section 4: The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss of emancipation of any slave; but all debts, obligations, and claims shall be held illegal and void.

Section 5: The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Amendment XV [Adopted 1870]

Section 1: The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Section 2: The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Source: United States Constitution.

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1781 to 1782—Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Jefferson wrote *Notes on the State of Virginia* not for publication but in response to a set of queries about the new republic posed by a French nobleman, the Marquis de Barbe-Marbois. In *Notes* Jefferson expresses both antislavery and antiblack sentiments. He makes clear his belief that race resulted in significant behavioral differences among black and white Virginians. He uses his ideal of the gentry class to assess the lives of slaves.

In Query XIV—Laws, Jefferson refers to a three-man committee appointed by the General Assembly to revise the legal code. The committee, consisting of Jefferson, Edmund Pendleton, and George Wythe, submitted their report to the legislature on June 18, 1779. By 1786, fifty of the 126 bills had become law. The provision recommending emancipation, obviously, was not one of them.

The following excerpts are from the edition published by London bookseller John Stockdale in 1787.

Query VIII—Population

Under the mild treatment our slaves experience, and their wholesome, though coarse, food, this blot in our country increases as fast, or faster, than the whites. During the regal government, we had at one time obtained a law, which imposed such a duty on the importation of slaves, as amounted nearly to a prohibition, when one inconsiderate assembly, placed under a peculiarity of circumstance, repealed the law. This repeal met a joyful sanction from the then sovereign, and no devices, no expedients, which could ever after be attempted by subsequent assemblies, and they seldom met without attempting them, could succeed in getting the royal assent to a renewal of the duty. In the very first session held under the republican government, the assembly passed a law for the perpetual prohibition of the importation of slaves. This will in some measure stop the increase of this great political and moral evil, while the minds of our citizens may be ripening for a complete emancipation of human nature.

Query XIV—Laws

Many of the laws which were in force during the monarchy being relative merely to that form of government, or inculcating principles inconsistent with republicanism, the first assembly which met after the establishment of the commonwealth appointed a committee to revise the whole code, to reduce it into proper form and volume, and report it to the assembly. This work has been executed by three gentlemen, and reported; but

probably will not be taken up till a restoration of peace shall leave to the legislature leisure to go through such a work.

The plan of the revival was this. The common law of England, by which is meant, that part of the English law which was anterior to the date of the oldest statutes extant, is made the basis of the work. It was thought dangerous to attempt to reduce it to a text: it was therefore left to be collected from the usual monuments of it. Necessary alterations in that, and so much of the whole body of the British statutes, and of acts of assembly, as were thought proper to be retained, were digested into 126 new acts, in which simplicity of stile was aimed at, as far as was safe. The following are the most remarkable alterations proposed:

...

To emancipate all slaves born after passing the act. The bill reported by the revisors does not itself contain this proposition; but an amendment containing it was prepared, to be offered to the legislature whenever the bill should be taken up, and further directing, that they should continue with their parents to a certain age, then be brought up, at the public expence, to tillage, arts or sciences, according to their geniusses, till the females should be eighteen, and the males twenty-one years of age, when they should be colonized to such place as the circumstances of the time should render most proper, sending them with arms, implements of household and of the handicraft arts, seeds, pairs of the useful domestic animals, &c. to declare them a free and independent people, and extend to them our alliance and protection, till they shall have acquired strength; and to send vessels at the same time to other parts of the world for an equal number of white inhabitants; to induce whom to migrate hither, proper encouragements were to be proposed. It will probably be asked, Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the state, and thus save the expence of supplying, by importation of white settlers, the vacancies they will leave? Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.—To these objections, which are political, may be added others, which are physical and moral.

The first difference which strikes us is that of colour. Whether the black of the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature, and is as real as if its seat and cause were better known to us. And is this difference of no importance? Is it not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races? Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immovable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race? Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favour of the white, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oran-ootan for the black women over those of his own species. The circumstance of superior beauty, is thought worthy of attention in the propagation of our horses, dogs, and other domestic animals;

why not in that of man? Besides those of colour, figure, and hair, there are other physical distinctions proving a difference of race. They have less hair on the face and body. They secrete less by the kidneys, and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a strong and disagreeable odor. This greater degree of transpiration renders them more tolerant of heat, and less so of cold, than the whites. Perhaps too a difference of structure in the pulmonary apparatus, which a late ingenious experimentalist has discovered to be the principal regulator of animal heat, may have disabled them from extricating, in the act of inspiration, so much of that fluid from the outer air, or obliged them in expiration, to part with more of it. They seem to require less sleep. A black, after hard labour through the day, will be induced by the slightest amusements to sit up till midnight, or later, though knowing he must be out with the first dawn of the morning. They are at least as brave, and more adventuresome. But this may perhaps proceed from a want of forethought, which prevents their seeing a danger till it be present. When present, they do not go through it with more coolness or steadiness than the whites. They are more ardent after their female: but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. Their griefs are transient. Those numberless afflictions, which render it doubtful whether heaven has given life to us in mercy or in wrath, are less felt, and sooner forgotten with them. In general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than reflection. To this must be ascribed their disposition to sleep when abstracted from diversions, and unemployed in labour. An animal whose body is at rest, and who does not reflect, must be disposed to sleep of course. Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.

It would be unfair to follow them to Africa for this investigation. We will consider them here, on the same stage with the whites, and where the facts are not apocryphal on which a judgment is to be found. It will be right to make great allowances for the difference of condition, of education, of conversation, of the sphere in which they move. Many millions of them have been brought to, and born in America. Most of them indeed have been confined to tillage, to their own homes, and their own society; yet many have been so situated, that they might have availed themselves of the conversation of their masters; many have been brought up in the handicraft arts, and from that circumstance have always been associated with the whites. Some have been liberally educated, and all have lived in countries where the arts and sciences are cultivated to a considerable degree, and have had before their eyes samples of the best works from abroad. The Indians, with no advantages of this kind, will often carve figures on their pipes not destitute of design and merit. They will crayon out an animal, a plant, or a country, so as to prove the existence of a germ in their minds which only wants cultivation. They astonish you with strokes of the most sublime oratory; such as prove their reason and sentiment strong, their imagination glowing and elevated. But never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never seen even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture. In music they are more generally gifted than the whites with accurate ears for tune and time, and they have been found capable of imagining a small catch. Whether they will be equal to the composition of a more extensive run of melody, or of complicated harmony, is yet to be proved. Misery is

often the parent of the most affecting touches in poetry.—Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry. . . . The improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by every one, and proves their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition in life.

We know that among the Romans, about the Augustan age especially, the condition of their slaves was much more deplorable than that of the blacks on the continent of America. . . . With the Romans, the regular method of taking the evidence of their slaves was under torture. Here it has been thought better never to resort to their evidence. When a master was murdered, all his slaves, in the same house, or within hearing, were condemned to death. Here punishment falls on the guilty only, and as precise proof is required against him as against a freeman. Yet notwithstanding these and other discouraging circumstances among the Romans, their slaves were often their rarest artists. They excelled too in science, insomuch as to be employed as tutors to their master's children. Epictetus, (Diogenes, Phaedon), Terence, and Phaedrus were slaves. But they were of the race of whites. It is not their condition, then, but nature, which has produced the distinction.—Whether further observation will or will not verify the conjecture, that nature has been less bountiful to them in the endowments of the head, I believe that in those of the heart she will be found to have done them justice. That disposition to theft with which they have been branded, must be ascribed to their situation, and not to any depravity of the moral sense. The man, in whose favour no laws of property exist, probably feels himself less bound to respect those made in favour of others. While arguing for ourselves, we lay it down as a fundamental, that laws, to be just, must give a reciprocation of right: that, without this, they are mere arbitrary rules of conduct, founded in force, and not in conscience: and it is a problem which I give to the master to solve, whether the religious precepts against the violation of property were not framed for him as well as his slave? And whether the slave may not as justifiably take a little from one, who has taken all from him, as he may slay one who would slay him? That a change in the relations in which a man is placed should change his ideas of moral right and wrong, is neither new, nor peculiar to the color of the blacks. Homer tells us it was so 2600 years ago.

Jove fix'd it certain, that whatever day
Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away.

But the slaves of which Homer speaks were whites. Notwithstanding these considerations which must weaken their respect for the laws of property, we find among them numerous instances of the most rigid integrity, and as many as among their better instructed masters, of benevolence, gratitude, and unshaken fidelity.—The opinion, that they are inferior in the faculties of reason and imagination, must be hazarded with great diffidence. . . . To our reproach it must be said, that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, were made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications. Will not a lover of natural history then, one who views the gradations in all the races of animals with the eye of philosophy, excuse an effort to keep those in the department of man as distinct as nature has formed

them? This unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people. Many of their advocates, while they wish to vindicate the liberty of human nature, are anxious also to preserve its dignity and beauty. Some of these, embarrassed by the question "What further is to be done with them?" join themselves in opposition with those who are actuated by sordid avarice only. Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.

Query XVIII—Manners

The particular customs and manners that may happen to be received in that state?

It is difficult to determine on the standard by which the manners of a nation may be tried, whether *catholic*, or *particular*. It is more difficult for a native to bring to that standard the manners of his own nation, familiarized to him by habit. There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self love, for restraining the intemperance of passion towards his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should the statesman be loaded, who permitting one half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the *amor patriae* of the other. For if a slave can have a country in this world, it must be any other in preference to that in which he is born to live and labour for another: in which he must lock up the faculties of his nature, contribute as far as depends on his individual endeavours to the evanishment of the human race, or entail his own miserable condition on the endless generations proceeding from him. With the morals of the people, there industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labour. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune,

an exchange of situation, is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest.—But it is impossible to be temperate and to pursue this subject through the various considerations of policy, of morals, of history natural and civil. We must be contented to hope they will force their way into every one's mind. I think a change already perceptible, since the origin of the present revolution. The spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust, his condition mollifying, the way I hope preparing, under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this is disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.

Source: Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. Peden, pp. 87, 136-143, 162-163.

May 1782—ACT VIII. *An act for the recovery of slaves, horses, and other property, lost during the war*

This statute made it easier for masters to regain possession of enslaved persons who ran away or were captured by the British during the Revolution.

I. WHEREAS great numbers of slaves, horses, and other property belonging to the citizens of this commonwealth and of the neighbouring states, have, during the war, been carried off, or have gone from their owners and been concealed by wicked and evil disposed persons; and it is reasonable that the owners should be enabled to recover their property in an easy and expeditious manner: *Be it therefore enacted*, That any person or persons who have any such slave or slaves, horses or other property in his or her possession, and who shall not before the first day of October next deliver such slave or slaves, horses or other property in his or her possession, and who shall not before the first day of October next deliver such slave or slaves, horses or other property to the owner or owners thereof, if known, and if not known, publish a particular description of such slave or slaves, horses or other property three times in the Virginia gazette, shall forfeit and pay the sum of fifty pounds. And if any person or persons possessed of such slave or slaves, horses or other property as aforesaid, shall delay to deliver or publish the same as above directed, within the time hereby limited, he or she shall forfeit and pay the sum of five pounds, for every month he or she shall so delay after the said first day of October next,

and shall moreover be liable to the action of the party grieved at the common law, in which the plaintiff shall recover double damages. And if the defendant in any such action shall not immediately pay and satisfy the damages, he or she shall be imprisoned six months, without bail or mainprize, unless the damages are sooner discharged; the act of insolvency, or any other law to the contrary notwithstanding; and the act of limitation shall be no bar to such action.

II. *And be it further enacted*, That all and every person and persons from whom any such slave or slaves, horses or other property have gone or been taken as aforesaid, on application to any two justices of the peace for the county where such slave or slaves, horses or other property may be, and making proof, to the satisfaction of such justices, of his or her right to such slaves, horses, or other property, and that the same were taken or went off from him or her in consequence of the invasion of this or any of the neighbouring states, shall be entitled to a warrant from such justices, under their hands and seals, directed to the sheriff or any constable of the said county, commanding them and each and every of them, to take such slave or slaves, horse or horses, or other property, and deliver the same to the owners thereof. *Provided*, That before granting such warrant, the person or persons demanding the same shall give bond, with sufficient security, in such sum as the justices shall direct, payable to the person or persons in whose possession the slave or slaves, horse or horses, or other property claimed as aforesaid may be, to return the same to the possessors in case he or she so claiming shall fail to prove his or her right to such slaves, horses or other property, at the trial of any suit to be brought for the same.

III. *And be if further enacted*, That where any person or persons shall be possessed of any slaves, horses or other property suspected to have gone or to have been taken from their owners, in consequence of any invasion as aforesaid, it shall be lawful for any two justices of the peace for the county where such persons reside, on information to them made, to cause such person or persons to come before them, and if such suspicion shall appear to them to be well founded, after hearing the parties, to cause such person or persons to enter into a recognizance to the governor or chief magistrate of this commonwealth, in such sum as the said justices shall judge reasonable, and with sufficient security, on condition that he or she shall not sell, dispose of or secrete any such slave or slaves, horses or other property, for such time as the said justices shall think proper, not exceeding one year. And when any slave or slaves shall be found wandering about, it shall be lawful for any justice of the peace to commit such slave or slaves to the gaol of his county, by warrant under his hand and seal, and the sheriff or gaoler is hereby required to receive such slave or slaves, and to confine him, her or them in close gaol for three months, unless the owner or owner of such slave or slaves shall sooner appear. And such sheriff or gaoler shall, within three weeks after such commitment, cause such slave or slaves to be advertised in the Virginia gazette, which advertisement shall be inserted in three successive papers, and if no owner shall appear within the time limited for the confinement of such slave or slaves, the sheriff or gaoler may hire out such slave or slaves for the payment of his prison fees and the expences of advertising. And if the owner shall apply within the time aforesaid, he shall pay the said fees and expences of advertising, and the further sum of twenty shillings for each slave so confined and advertised as aforesaid.

IV. *And it is further enacted*, That the penalties by this act imposed may be recovered in any court of record in this commonwealth, by action of debt, indictment or information, and shall be applied, the one half thereof to the use of the commonwealth, and the other half to the use of the informer. *Provided always*, That this act, so far as it respects the penalties to be incurred for not delivering to the owner, or not publishing any such slaves, horses or other property, shall not extend to bona fide purchasers of such slaves, horses or other property, or to such as may have pursued the method directed by the laws now in force for taking up of strays. *Provided also*, That this act shall not extend to slaves, horses or other property taken by the enemy and retaken in action by any soldier or citizen of this state, or any of the United States, except where the same were the capitulation or agreement to be returned to their owners.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 11:23-25.

May 1782—ACT XXI. *An act to authorize the manumission of slaves*

The General Assembly decided to allow slave owners to manumit their enslaved men, women, and children. The law required a former master to be financially responsible for a slave who was either too old or too young to support him or herself.

Ira Berlin notes that “The spectacular increase in manumission, self-purchase, freedom suits, flight, and immigration altered the size and character of the free black population in the Upper South. Maryland, which was fast being transformed from a slave society into a society with slaves, best exemplified the change. Between 1755 and 1790, the state’s free black population grew 300 percent to about 8,000, and in the following ten years it more than doubled. By 1810 nearly 34,000 black Marylanders were free, giving the state the largest free black population in the nation. The gains registered by free blacks elsewhere in the Upper South never equaled that of Maryland, but they were substantial. In 1782, the year Virginia legalized private manumission, St. George Tucker estimated the presence of about 2,000 free blacks in the state. By 1790, when the first federal census was taken, the free black population had grown to 12,000. Ten years later, it numbered 20,000, and in another ten years it stood at over 30,000. During the twenty years between 1790 and 1810, the free black population of Virginia had more than doubled. In all, the number of free black people in the states of the Upper South grew almost 90 percent between 1790 and 1800 and another 65 percent the following decade, so that they made up more than 10 percent of the region’s black population. By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, there were over 108,000 free black people in the Upper South, and better than 10 percent of the black population enjoyed freedom

As in the North, freedom arrived burdened with the heavy weight of slavery’s continuing presence. New forms of dependency emerged even more quickly than the old ones could be liquidated. In the countryside, many free blacks continued to reside with their former masters, suffering the oversight of an owner even after they no longer were owned. Planters appreciated the advantages

of power without responsibility. They held tight to the spouses and children of former slaves, seeing them as a lever to access the labor of free blacks. Some planters sold or rented small plots of land to former slaves to secure the benefit of their labor during planting and harvest. In the cities, term slavery provided a means for owners to exact the labor of energetic young men and women and make them responsible for themselves in old age. Much like gradual emancipation and apprenticeship in the northern states, contingent manumission and term slavery delayed the arrival of freedom and strengthened the masters' hand.

But if the continued presence of slavery burdened black people, so did freedom. As slaves, black men and women were fully integrated into the economy and society of the Upper South. As free people, they faced ostracism and discrimination. To the new forms of subordination that equated free blacks with slaves, lawmakers added the new proscriptions that distinguished free blacks from white people. Free black men were barred from voting, sitting on juries, testifying in court, and attending the militia, and all free blacks, women as well as men, were barred from owning dogs and guns and trading without a permit. A pass system prevented free blacks from traveling freely and required them to register themselves annually with county authorities. Many of these restrictions had long existed, but the new legislation reinforced them, reminding all that freedom would not mean equality.”

I. WHEREAS application hath been made to this present general assembly, that those persons who are disposed to emancipate their slaves may be empowered so to do, and the same hath been judged expedient under certain restrictions: *Be it therefore enacted*, That it shall hereafter be lawful for any person, by his or her last will and testament, or by any other instrument in writing, under his or her hand and seal, attested and proved in the county court by two witnesses, or acknowledged by the party in the court of the county where he or she resides, to emancipate and set free, his or her slaves, or any of them, who shall thereupon be entirely and fully discharged from the performance of any contract entered into during servitude, and enjoy as full freedom as if they had been particularly named and freed by this act.

II. *Provided always, and be it further enacted*, That all slaves so set free, not being in the judgment of the court, of sound mind and body, or being above the age of forty-five years, or being males under the age of twenty-one, or females under the age of eighteen years, shall respectively be supported and maintained by the person so liberating them, or by his or her estate; and upon neglect or refusal so to do, the court of the county where such neglect or refusal may be, is hereby empowered and required, upon application to them made, to order the sheriff to distrain and sell so much of the person's estate as shall be sufficient for that purpose. *Provided also*, That every person by written instrument in his life time, or if by last will and testament, the executors of every person freeing any slave, shall cause to be delivered to him or her, a copy of the instrument of emancipation, attested by the clerk of the court of the county, who shall be paid therefor, by the person emancipating, five shillings, to be collected in the manner of other clerk's fees. Every person neglecting or refusing to deliver to any slave by him or her set free, such copy, shall forfeit and pay ten pounds, to be recovered with costs in any court of record, one half thereof to the person suing for the same, and the other to the person to

whom such copy ought to have been delivered. It shall be lawful for any justice of the peace to commit to the gaol of his county, any emancipated slave travelling out of the county of his or her residence without a copy of the instrument of his or her emancipation, there to remain till such copy is produced and the gaoler's fees paid.

III. *And be it further enacted*, That in case any slave so liberated shall neglect in any year to pay all taxes and levies imposed or to be imposed by law, the court of the county shall order the sheriff to hire out him or her for so long time as will raise the said taxes and levies. *Provided* sufficient distress cannot be made upon his or her estate. *Saving nevertheless* to all and every person and persons, bodies politic or corporate, and their heirs and successors, other than the person or persons claiming under those so emancipating their slaves, all such right and title as they or any of them could or might claim if this act had never been made.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 283-285; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 11:39-40.

May 1782—ACT XXXII. *An act concerning Slaves*

Legislators passed this law to prevent masters from allowing their slaves to hire themselves out to others in their community. This statute did not keep slaves from participating in the economy. Ira Berlin observes that “Entering the marketplace, slaves sold items of handicraft and produce from their gardens, along with their labor, and thereby accumulated property of their own. Although the economy of Chesapeake slaves rarely advanced beyond the “ground...allowed them for gardening, and privilege given them to raise dung-hill fowls,” farming and handicraft provided new outlets for the slaves’ entrepreneurial energies. Slaveholders raised few objections to these practices or challenged the slaves’ right to market goods produced on his or her own time. In fact, petitioners from the Virginia piedmont complained that many slaveholders permitted their slaves to “own, possess and raise stock of horses and hogs” and allowed them to exercise “all the rights of ownership in such stock.” Writing at the turn of the century, one observer declared that the right to produce and market such crops was “permitted (and greatly confirmed by custom).” Indeed, some slaveholders regularly purchased produce from their slaves. The reinvigoration of the slaves’ economy entangled masters in endless negotiations with their slaves, who tenaciously protected what they believed was rightfully theirs.”

I. WHEREAS great inconveniences hath arisen from persons permitting their slaves to go at large and hire themselves out, under a promise of paying their masters or owners a certain sum of money in lieu of their services: For remedy whereof, *Be it enacted*, That if any person shall, after the tenth day of August next, permit or suffer his or her slave to go at large and hire him or herself out, it shall be lawful for any person to apprehend and carry every such slave before a justice of the peace in the county where apprehended, and if it shall appear to the justice that such slave comes within the purview of this act, he shall order him or her to the gaol of the county, there to be safely kept until the next court, when, if it shall be made appear to the court that the slave so ordered to

gaol hath been permitted or suffered to hire him or herself out, contrary to the meaning of this act, it shall be lawful for the court, and they are hereby required to order the sheriff of the county to sell and dispose of every such slave for ready money, at the next court held for the said county, notice being given by the sheriff at the court-house door at least twenty days before the said sale.

II. *And be if further enacted*, That twenty five per centum upon the amount of the sale of every slave made under this act, shall be applied by the court ordering such sale, towards lessening the county levy, and the residue shall be paid by the sheriff, after deducting five per centum for his trouble and the gaoler's fees, to the owner of such slave.

Source: Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, p. 270; Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, 11:59.

1782—The French Army Conceals Slaves in Yorktown and Williamsburg

On June 26, 1782, Governor Benjamin Harrison wrote to Count Rochambeau to request his assistance in returning slaves to their owners.

Complaints are made every day to me of Negroes being concealed in York and Williamsburg amongst the Troops. I am certain it must be without your knowledge and am therefore unhappy to be again obliged to trouble you on that subject, but as their [there] is no other way by which the unhappy sufferers in this and the Neighbouring States can recover their property by thro your Justice your goodness will excuse the application the pretence that some make of their being free and of their being the property of the British is without foundation and is inculcated into them to serve the purposes of detention. However convenient their services may be yet that rule of right that we ought to observe to each other will not suffer us to avail ourselves unnecessary to You who have at all Times manifested the most generous and upright principle, but they may not be amiss to those concern'd in the detention of the Negroes.

I have to request ye favour of your Excellency to give immediate orders for the securing all the Negroes without distinction that are amongst your Troops and for their being deliver'd to officers that will be appointed to receive them. Those belonging to this State will soon be reclaim'd and those from North and South Carolina I will make it my Business to have them sent back; this piece of Justice will do Honor to the French Troops and will silence every clamour that has been rais'd on this disagreeable subject. The legion has also some Negroes with it that were deliver'd once to me but being press'd and wearied out by frequent applications I order'd them to be return'd there are five of them all of which belonged to South Carolina but three of them say they are free.

The letter that Harrison penned to General Washington on July 11, 1782 indicates that he did not receive a favorable response from Rochambeau.

Many of the Negroes belonging to this State and the two Carolinas are carried off by the French. I have written on the subject till I am wearied out without being able to procure

them. Some indeed have been sent me and it appears to me that most of the Officers of distinction wish that all that do not really belong to the Army shou'd be returned however by one Means or other they are detain'd either for want of the owners having proof at hand or the negroes declaring themselves free &c. Our People are much disturbed at this conduct and it will have a bad effect[.] And what makes the matters worse is that the French will loose their services if ever they get so near the Enemy as to desert to them. You saw the French Army when it came here when You see it again You will be able to determine whether the Charge is just or not.

Source: McIlwaine, ed., *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia*, 3:257-258, 266.

**EPILOGUE:
NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY EVOCATIONS OF SLAVERY**

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Introduction

For over two hundred years Americans have used folklore, memoirs, works of fiction, and, more recently, films to try to understand slavery and to evoke life under slavery. The first attempts to convey to a wide audience the horrors of enslavement and the quest for freedom were the nineteenth-century narratives written by former slaves and promoted by northern abolitionists. These stirring accounts, along with those given by ex-slaves interviewed during the Great Depression, remain the touchstone of historical understanding of slaves' experience of oppression.

Slave narratives are widely taught in colleges and universities, but they must compete with the images of slavery found in popular works of fiction and on film. Particularly influential bestsellers about slavery have been the sentimental novels *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Gone with the Wind*, and, more recently, the postmodern novel *Beloved*. From the film *Gone with the Wind* to the television miniseries *Roots*, celluloid images of slavery probably have had even greater staying power in people's minds than portrayals found in print.

Finally, young Americans sometimes confuse slavery with segregation; and for all Americans the issue of slavery is often tied up with contemporary concerns about race. Although the topic of segregation is beyond the scope of this resource book, a brief overview of the relationship between slavery and segregation should be helpful. In addition, Thurgood Marshall's dissent in the *Bakke* Supreme Court case provides a telling reminder of how pertinent historical understanding of slavery remains to efforts to overcome modern racial inequalities.

1823 or 1824—African Americans Use Folklore to Try to Understand Slavery and the Slave Trade

William D. Pierson examines the ways in which Africans and African Americans tried to make sense why God allowed slavery and the slave trade. He follows the explanations that Africans developed in Africa across the Atlantic to folklore in the Antebellum South.

Why were Africans rather than Europeans the ones to be taken away into bondage? Why had God given superior technology and control of the Atlantic commerce to white foreigners rather than to his own children? And why in the new lands to the west did God permit white strangers to profit from black labor? These Job-like questions demanded answers. Both in Africa and in America, blacks had to think about growing inequalities of condition between the races.

...

For their part, Africans were already developing their own explanations for the strange commerce moving inland from the sub-Saharan coast long before most had heard anything of Christianity or the peculiar white rationalizations for European power. One popular supposition, as we have seen, was that the overseas slave trade was required to supply bloodthirsty white cannibals with an endless supply of sacrificial victims. And given the death rate for new slaves in the Americas, this folk explanation was not that far from the figurative truth. Beyond this, Africans also produced a more philosophical analysis of the growing imbalance between the races and condensed this introspection into an explanatory tale tradition that might be called “God’s Gifts to the Races.” These latter tales, too, presented the slave trade and the growing imbalance of world power from a black perspective; as the tales saw it, the inequalities between the races were caused not by Europe’s strength but, instead, by Africa’s own shortsightedness and moral weakness.

William Bosman described the story as it was given to him on the African coast in 1698:

The Africans tell us that in the beginning God created black as well as white men; thereby not only hinting but endeavoring to prove that their race was as soon in the world as ours; and to bestow a yet greater horror on themselves, they tell us that God, having created these two sorts of men, offered two sorts of gifts, to wit, gold and the knowledge of arts and reading and writing, giving the blacks the first election, who chose the gold and left the knowledge of letters to the white. God granted their request, but being incensed at their avarice resolved that the whites should for ever be their masters and they be obliged to wait on them as their slaves.

...

When William Bosman first collected the tale in 1698, mercantilist theory in one form or another ruled much of the world’s economic thinking. Thus many West Africans, like the Spanish in the Americas, were being undone by the belief that the accumulation of gold and wealth was the true basis of power. But the tale of God’s gifts demonstrates a prescient understanding by others on the African coast that the new realities of the Atlantic trade were suggesting something radically different. The mercantilists were wrong. Power did not come through the dead weight of specie; instead, it was the almost magnetic pull of technology that drew resources to Western Europe and its overseas colonies.

One of the most interesting aspects of the mythic tale of God’s gifts is that it did not remain simply an African story. Like the peoples of Africa, it too crossed with the slave ships into the Americas where it found new life as an African-American folktale that offered an explanation as to why in a just world blacks ended up as laborers to white masters.

...

The tale probably crossed to North America in the eighteenth century but made its first recorded appearance in 1823 or 1824 in a Seminole creation myth. That it should

first resurface among Native Americans in Florida is not as peculiar as it might seem since the Seminoles incorporated many black runaways into their society and adopted much from African-American folklore. When Chief Neamathla offered up his version of the origin myth, which he contended came from his forefathers, he introduced it with a humorous explanation about how the various races were produced. God's first attempt, he said, was an underdone white man, the second an overcooked black. Only on the third attempt did God get it right, producing the red man:

In this way the Great Spirit made the white, the black, and the red man....Here they were - but they were very poor. They had no lodges nor horses, no tools to work with, no traps, nor anything with which to kill game. All at once, these three men, looking up, saw three large boxes coming down from the sky. They descended very slowly, but at last reached the ground....The Great Spirit spoke and said, "White man, you are pale and weak, but I made you first, and will give you the first choice; go to the boxes, open them and look in, and choose which you will take for your portion." The white man opened the boxes, looked in, and said, "I will take this." It was filled with pens, and ink, and paper, and compasses, and such things as your people now use. The Great Spirit spoke again and said, "Black man, I made you next, but I do not like you. You may stand aside. The Red man is my favorite, he shall come forward and take the next choice; Red man, choose your portion of the things of this world." The Red man stepped boldly up and chose a box filled with tomahawks, knives, war clubs, traps, and such things as are useful in war and hunting. The Great Spirit laughed when he saw how well his red son knew how to choose. Then he said to the Negro, "You may have what is left, the third box is for you." That was filled with axes and hoes, with buckets to carry water in, and long whips for driving oxen, which meant that the Negro must work for both the red and white man, and it has been so ever since.

The Seminole used the tale to explain their own position in the world as well as to explain the reason God gave whites their exceptional technological competence and blacks their position of enslavement. In the Indian version, unlike the African and African-American versions, the black man did nothing to deserve his fate.

Among North American blacks themselves, the gifts story was transformed into a new version that could be more accurately called "Why the Black Does All the Hard Work."

Source: Pierson, *Black Legacy*, pp. 12, 14-15, 17, 19-21.

1845—Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

The most famous of all antebellum slave narratives, Frederick Douglass's account chronicles his experiences as a slave and charts the development of his consciousness that he must be free. Douglass (ca. 1817-1895) was born in Talbot County on Maryland's Eastern Shore to a slave named Harriet Bailey, who died when he was about seven. His father may have been his master. Shortly after his mother died, Douglass went to live in Baltimore, where he worked for his master's daughter's brother-in-law. His

mistress taught him the alphabet until her husband forbade further instruction. Douglass used these rudiments of education to teach himself how to read and write with some assistance from children he knew. As a teenager, he was sent back to the Eastern Shore to work as a field hand, and in 1833 his insubordination led to his being hired out to a slave breaker named Covey. Douglass eventually prevailed over Covey, however, by overpowering him before an attempted whipping. After an unsuccessful escape attempt in 1835, Douglass was returned to Baltimore, where he worked as a ship's caulker. He escaped in 1838 by disguising himself as a free black seaman and taking a train from Baltimore to New York via Philadelphia.

Douglass settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, with his wife, Anna Murray, a free black woman whom he had met in Baltimore. He soon became a powerful orator on the anti-slavery lecture circuit. When questions were raised regarding the validity of his identity as a former slave, he penned his narrative to record his history and to elicit support for abolition. His *Life* became an international best-seller. After it was published, he traveled to Great Britain to elude slave catchers. Only when a British couple paid his former owner to secure his emancipation, did Douglass return to the United States to become a distinguished journalist, reformer, and statesman.

In the following selections, Douglass recounts his relationship with his mother and his views on master/slave sexual relations, his education by his former mistress, the treatment of his grandmother as a slave, his altercation with the slave breaker Covey, and his escape from slavery.

I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life, and each of those times was very short in duration, and at night. She was hired by a Mr. Stewart, who lived about twelve miles from my home. She made her journeys to see me in the night, travelling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise, unless a slave has special permission which they seldom get, and one that gives to him that gives it the proud name of being a kind master. I do not recollect of ever seeing my mother by the light of day. She was with me in the night. She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone. Very little communication ever took place between us. Death soon ended what little we could have while she lived, and with it her hardships and suffering. She died when I was about seven years old, on one of my master's farms, near Lee's Mill. I was not allowed to be present during her illness, at her death, or burial. She was gone long before I knew anything about it. Never having enjoyed, to any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender and watchful care, I received the tidings of her death with the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger.

Called thus suddenly away, she left me without the slightest intimation of who my father was. The whisper that my master was my father, may or may not be true; and, true or false, it is of but little consequence to my purpose whilst the fact remains, in all its glaring odiousness, that slaveholders have ordained, and by law established, that the children of slave women shall in all cases follow the condition of their mothers; and this is done too obviously to administer to their own lusts, and make a gratification of their wicked desires profitable as well as pleasurable; for by this cunning arrangement, the slaveholder, in cases not a few, sustains to his slaves the double relation of master and father.

I know of such cases; and it is worthy of remark that such slaves invariably suffer great hardships, and have more to contend with, than others. They are, in the first place, a constant offence to their mistress. She is ever disposed to find fault with them; they can seldom do any thing to please her; she is never better pleased than when she sees them under the lash, especially when she suspects her husband of showing to his mulatto children favors which he withholds from his black slaves. The master is frequently compelled to sell this class of his slaves, out of deference to the feelings of his white wife; and, cruel as the deed may strike anyone to be, for a man to sell his own children to human flesh-mongers, it is often the dictate of humanity for him to do so; for, unless he does this, he must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother, of but few shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the gory lash to his naked back; and if he lisp one word of disapproval, it is set down to his parental partiality, and only makes a bad matter worse, both for himself and the slave whom he would protect and defend.

Every year brings with it multitudes of this class of slaves. It was doubtless in consequence of a knowledge of this fact, that one great statesman of the south predicted the downfall of slavery by the inevitable laws of population. Whether this prophecy is ever fulfilled or not, it is nevertheless plain that a very different-looking class of people are springing up at the south, and are now held in slavery, from those originally brought to this country from Africa; and if their increase will do no other good, it will do away the force of the argument, that God cursed Ham, and therefore American slavery is right. If the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery at the south must soon become unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their own masters.

...

My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door,—a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business, she had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery. I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen. I could not approach her as I was accustomed to approach other white ladies. My early instruction was all out of place. The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. She did not deem it impudent or unmannerly for a slave to look her in the face. The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none left without feeling better for having seen her. Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music.

But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice,

made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. And Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.

...

If any one thing in my experience, more than another, served to deepen my conviction of the infernal character of slavery, and to fill me with unutterable loathing of slaveholders, it was their base ingratitude to my poor old grandmother. She had served my old master faithfully from youth to old age. She had been the source of all his wealth; she had peopled his plantation with slaves; she had become a great grandmother in his service. She had rocked him in infancy, attended him in childhood, served him through life, and at his death wiped from his icy brow the cold death-sweat, and closed his eyes forever. She was nevertheless left a slave—a slave for life—a slave in the hands of

strangers; and in their hands she saw her children, her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren, divided, like so many sheep, without being gratified with the small privilege of a single word, as to their or her own destiny. And, to cap the climax of their base ingratitude and fiendish barbarity, my grandmother, who was now very old, having outlived my old master and all his children, having seen the beginning and end of all of them, and her present owners finding she was of but little value, her frame already racked with the pains of old age, and complete helplessness fast stealing over her once active limbs, they took her to the woods, built her a little hut, put up a little mud-chimney, and then made her welcome to the privilege of supporting herself there in perfect loneliness; thus virtually turning her out to die! If my poor old grandmother now lives, she lives to suffer in utter loneliness; she lives to remember and mourn over the loss of children, the loss of grandchildren, and the loss of great-grandchildren. . . .

The hearth is desolate. The children, the unconscious children, who once sang and danced in her presence, are gone. She gropes her way, in the darkness of age, for a drink of water. Instead of the voices of her children, she hears by day the moans of the dove, and by night the screams of the hideous owl. All is gloom. The grave is at the door. And, now, when weighed down by the pains and aches of old age, when the head inclines to the feet, when the beginning and ending of human existence meet, and helpless infancy and painful old age combine together—at this time, this most needful time, the time for the exercise of that tenderness and affection which children only can exercise towards a declining parent—my poor old grandmother, the devoted mother of twelve children, is left all alone, in yonder little hut, before a few dim embers. She stands—she sits—she staggers—she falls—she groans—she dies—and there are none of her children or grandchildren present, to wipe from her wrinkled brow the cold sweat of death, or to place beneath the sod her fallen remains. Will not a righteous God visit for these things?

. . .

Long before daylight, I was called to go and rub, curry, and feed, the horses. I obeyed, and was glad to obey. But whilst thus engaged, whilst in the act of throwing down some blades from the loft, Mr. Covey entered the stable with a long rope; and just as I was half out of the loft, he caught hold of my legs, and was about tying me. As soon as I found what he was up to, I gave a sudden spring, and as I did so, he holding to my legs, I was brought sprawling to the stable floor. Mr. Covey seemed now to think he had me, and could do what he pleased; but at this moment—from whence came the spirit I don't know—I resolved to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the throat; and as I did so, I rose. He held on to me, and I to him. My resistance was so entirely unexpected, that Covey seemed taken all aback. He trembled like a leaf. This gave me assurance, and I held him uneasy, causing the blood to run where I touched him with the ends of my fingers. Mr. Covey soon called out to Hughes for help. Hughes came, and, while Covey held me, attempted to tie my right hand. While he was in the act of doing so, I watched my chance, and gave him a heavy kick close under the ribs. This kick fairly sickened Hughes, so that he left me at the hands of Mr. Covey. This kick had the effect of not only weakening Hughes, but Covey also. When he saw Hughes bending over with pain, his courage quailed. He asked me if I meant to persist in my resistance. I

told him I did, come what might; that he had used me like a brute for six months, and that I was determined to be used so no longer. With that, he strove to drag me to a stick that was lying just out of the stable door. He meant to knock me down. But just as he was leaning over to get the stick, I seized him with both hands by his collar, and brought him by a sudden snatch to the ground. By this time, Bill came. Covey called upon him for assistance. Bill wanted to know what he could do. Covey said, "Take hold of him, take hold of him!" Bill said his master hired him out to work, and not to help whip me, so he left Covey and myself to fight our own battle out. We were at it for nearly two hours. Covey at length let me go, puffing and blowing at a great rate, saying that if I had not resisted, he would not have whipped me half so much. The truth was, that he had not whipped me at all. I considered him as getting entirely the worst end of the bargain; for he had drawn no blood from me, but I had from him. The whole six months afterwards, that I spend with Mr. Covey, he never laid the weight of his finger upon me in anger. He would occasionally say, he didn't want to get hold of me again. "No," thought I, "you need not; for you will come off worse than you did before."

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free. The gratification afforded by the triumph was a full compensation for whatever else might follow, even death itself. He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced, who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery. I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.

From this time I was never again what might be called fairly whipped, though I remained a slave four years afterwards. I had several fights, but was never whipped.

...

It is impossible for me to describe my feelings as the time of my contemplated start drew near. I had a number of warm-hearted friends in Baltimore,—friends that I loved almost as I did my life,—and the thought of being separated from them forever was painful beyond expression. It is my opinion that thousands would escape from slavery, who now remain, but for the strong cords of affection that bind them to their friends. The thought of leaving my friends was decidedly the most painful thought with which I had to contend. The love of them was my tender point, and shook my decision more than all things else. Besides the pain of separation, the dread and apprehension of a failure exceeded what I had experienced at my first attempt. The appalling defeat I then sustained returned to torment me. I felt assured that, if I failed in this attempt, my case would be a hopeless one—it would seal my fate as a slave forever. I could not hope to get off with any thing less than the severest punishment, and being placed beyond the means of escape. It requires no very vivid imagination to depict the most frightful scenes through which I should have to pass, in case I failed. The wretchedness of slavery, and

the blessedness of freedom, were perpetually before me. It was life and death with me. But I remained firm, and according to my resolution, on the third day of September, 1838, I left my chains, and succeeded in reaching New York without the slightest interruption of any kind. How I did so,—what means I adopted,—what direction I travelled, and by what mode of conveyance,—I must leave unexplained, for the reasons before mentioned.

I have been frequently asked how I felt when I found myself in a free State. I have never been able to answer the question with any satisfaction to myself. It was a moment of the highest excitement I ever experienced. I suppose I felt as one may imagine the unarmed mariner to feel when he is rescued by a friendly man-of-war from the pursuit of a pirate. In writing to a dear friend, immediately after my arrival at New York, I said I felt like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions. This state of mind, however, very soon subsided; and I was again seized with a feeling of great insecurity and loneliness. I was yet liable to be taken back, and subjected to all the tortures of slavery. This in itself was enough to damp the ardor of my enthusiasm. But the loneliness overcame me. There I was in the midst of thousands, and yet a perfect stranger; without home and without friends, in the midst of thousands of my own brethren—children of a common Father, and yet I dared not to unfold to any one of them my sad condition. I was afraid to speak to any one for fear of speaking to the wrong one, and thereby falling into the hands of money-loving kidnappers, whose business it was to lie in wait for the panting fugitive, as the ferocious beasts of the forest lie in wait for their prey. The motto which I adopted when I started from slavery was this—“Trust no man!” I saw in every white man an enemy, and in almost every colored man cause for distrust. It was a most painful situation; and, to understand it, one must needs experience it, or imagine himself in similar circumstances.

Source: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Baker, pp. 48-50, 77-79, 91-93, 112-113, 142-144.

1852—Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in response to the Compromise of 1850, which included a Fugitive Slave Law that mandated that Northerners assist in the recovery of escaped slaves. Phenomenally successful in both the United States and England, Stowe’s book brought the inhumanity of slavery to the attention of hundreds of thousands of people, reigniting the slavery question that U.S. lawmakers had hoped to put to rest with the 1850 compromise. The novel was controversial in many respects, particularly because of Stowe’s gender; respectable women were not supposed to take public positions on moral and political issues. Abolitionists disagreed with Stowe’s advocacy of colonization and her apparent depiction of slaves as docile. Prominent twentieth-century black writers such as James Baldwin and Richard Wright would later also criticize the novel for its characterization of black life. The term “Uncle Tom,” in fact, evolved into a moniker suggesting black complicity with racism. Stowe, however, viewed the character of Uncle Tom as strong, not weak. For her, Tom’s evangelical Christianity made him a hero of strength and resistance to slavery.

In the following selections from Chapter IV, “An Evening in Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” Stowe introduces the characters of Uncle Tom and his wife, Aunt Chloe, house slaves who belong to the Shelby family of Kentucky. In her descriptions of Aunt Chloe and Uncle Tom, Stowe emphasizes their blackness and sentimentalizes their simplicity. With Uncle Tom, Stowe establishes the essential attributes that make his heroism in her eyes and in the eyes of her Northern, Christian middle-class audience: deep spirituality, evangelical righteousness, humble dignity, and unflinching benevolence. In addition, she lays out the domestic tranquility of Uncle Tom’s cabin, which later has its antithesis in the stark inhumanity of Simon Legree’s plantation.

The cabin of Uncle Tom was a small log building, close adjoining to “the house,” as the negro *par excellence* designates his master’s dwelling. In front it had a neat garden-patch, where, every summer, strawberries, raspberries, and a variety of fruits and vegetables, flourished under careful tending. The whole front of it was covered by a large scarlet bignonia and a native multiflora rose, which, entwining and interlacing, left scarce a vestige of the rough logs to be seen. Here, also, in summer, various brilliant annuals, such as marigolds, petunias, four-o’clocks, found an indulgent corner in which to unfold their splendors, and were the delight and pride of Aunt Chloe’s heart.

Let us enter the dwelling. The evening meal at the house is over, and Aunt Chloe, who presided over its preparation as head cook, has left to inferior officers its dishes, and come out into her own snug territories, to “get her old man’s supper”; therefore, doubt not that it is her you see by the fire, presiding with anxious interest over certain frizzling items in a stew-pan, and anon with grave consideration lifting the cover of a bake-kettle, from whence steam forth indubitable intimations of “something good.” A round, black, shining face is hers, so glossy as to suggest the idea that she might have been washed over with white of eggs, like one of her own tea rusks. Her whole plump countenance beams with satisfaction and contentment from under her well-starched checked turban, bearing on it, however, if we must confess it, a little of that tinge of self-consciousness which becomes the first cook of the neighborhood, as Aunt Chloe was universally held and acknowledged to be.

...

In one corner of [the cabin] stood a bed, covered neatly with a snowy spread; and by the side of it was a piece of carpeting, of some considerable size. On this piece of carpeting Aunt Chloe took her stand, as being decidedly in the upper walks of life, and it and the bed by which it lay, and the whole corner, in fact, were treated with distinguished consideration, and made, so far as possible, sacred from the marauding inroads and desecrations of little folks. In fact, that corner was the *drawing-room* of the establishment. In the other corner was a bed of much humbler pretensions, and evidently designed for *use*. The wall over the fireplace was adorned with some very brilliant scriptural prints, and a portrait of General Washington, drawn and colored in a manner which would certainly have astonished that hero, if ever he happened to meet with its like.

...

A table, somewhat rheumatic in its limbs, was drawn out before the fire, and covered with a cloth, displaying cups and saucers of a decidedly brilliant pattern, with other symptoms of an approaching meal. At this table was seated Uncle Tom, Mr. Shelby's best hand, who, as he is to be the hero of our story, we must daguerreotype for our readers. He was a large, broad-chested, powerfully-made man, of a full glossy black, and a face whose truly African features were characterized by an expression of grave and steady good sense, united with much kindness and benevolence. There was something about his whole air self-respecting and dignified, yet united with a confiding and humble simplicity.

...

Uncle Tom was a sort of patriarch in religious matters, in the neighborhood. Having, naturally, an organization in which the *morale* was strongly predominant, together with a greater breadth and cultivation of mind than obtained among his companions, he was looked up to with great respect, as a sort of minister among them; and the simple, hearty, sincere style of his exhortations might have edified even better educated persons. But it was in prayer that he especially excelled. Nothing could exceed the touching simplicity, the child-like earnestness, of his prayer, enriched with the language of Scripture, which seemed so entirely to have wrought itself into his being, as to have become a part of himself, and to drop from his lips unconsciously; in the language of a pious old negro, he "prayed right up." And so much did his prayer always work on the devotional feelings of his audiences, that there seemed often a danger that it would be lost altogether in the abundance of the responses which broke out everywhere around him.

One of the best-known scenes from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the flight of Eliza and her young son Harry over the Ohio River between Kentucky and Ohio. In the following selection, Eliza, who had been a house slave for the Shelbys, describes her experience to the owners of the house where she sought refuge. Her story illustrates one of Stowe's central reasons for indicting slavery: the breakup of slave families.

[Eliza] was now sitting up on the settle, by the fire. She was looking steadily into the blaze, with a calm, heart-broken expression, very different from her former agitated wildness.

"Did you want me?" said Mrs. Bird, in gentle tones. "I hope you feel better now, poor woman!"

A long-drawn, shivering sigh was the only answer; but she lifted her dark eyes, and fixed them on her with such a forlorn and imploring expression, that the tears came into the little woman's eyes.

"You needn't be afraid of anything; we are friends here, poor woman! Tell me where you came from, and what you want," said she.

"I came from Kentucky," said the woman.

"When?" said Mr. Bird, taking up the interrogatory.

“To-night.”

“How did you come?”

“I crossed on the ice.”

“Crossed on the ice!” said everyone present.

“Yes,” said the woman, slowly. “I did. God helping me, I crossed on the ice; for they were behind me—right behind—and there was no other way!”

“Law, Missis,” said Cudjoe, “the ice is all in broken-up blocks, a swinging and a tetering up and down in the water!”

“I know it was—I know it!” said she, wildly; “but I did it! I wouldn’t have thought I could,—I didn’t think I should get over, but I didn’t care! I could die, if I didn’t. The Lord helped me; nobody knows how much the Lord can help ’em till they try,” said the woman, with a flashing eye.

“Were you a slave?” said Mr. Bird.

“Yes, sir; I belonged to a man in Kentucky.”

“Was he unkind to you?”

“No, sir; he was a good master.”

“And was your mistress unkind to you?”

“No, sir—no! my mistress was always good to me.”

“What could induce you to leave a good home, then, and run away, and go through such dangers?”

The woman looked up at Mrs. Bird, with a keen, scrutinizing glance, and it did not escape her that she was dressed in deep mourning.

“Ma’am,” she said, suddenly, “have you ever lost a child?”

The question was unexpected, and it was thrust on a new wound; for it was only a month since a darling child of the family had been laid in the grave.

Mr. Bird turned around and walked to the window, and Mrs. Bird burst into tears; but, recovering her voice, she said,

“Why do you ask that? I have lost a little one.”

“Then you will feel for me. I have lost two, one after another,—left ’em buried there when I came away; and I had only this one left. I never slept a night without him; he was all I had. He was my comfort and pride, day and night; and, ma’am, they were going to take him away from me,—to *sell* him,—sell him down south, ma’am, to go all alone,—a baby that had never been away from his mother in his life! I couldn’t stand it, ma’am. I knew I never should be good for anything, if they did; and when I knew the papers were signed, and he was sold, I took him and came off in the night; and they chased me,—the man that bought him, and some of Mas’r’s folks,—and they were coming down right behind me, and I heard ’em. I jumped right on to the ice; and how I got across, I don’t know,—but first I knew, a man was helping me up the bank.”

In the following selection, Eliza’s husband, George, who has also run away from his owner, delivers a fiery speech on the degradation of slavery. George confronts Mr. Wilson, the owner of a bagging factory where George used to work, with the fact that the law allows slaveowners to separate families, ignore slave marriage ties, and take advantage of slave women. Slavery has alienated George from Kentucky and from the United States as a whole, and he seeks to make Canada his home.

“See here, now, Mr. Wilson,” said George, coming up and sitting himself determinately down in front of him; “look at me, now. Don’t I sit before you, every way, just as much a man as you are? Look at my face,—look at my hands,—look at my body,” and the young man drew himself up proudly; “why am I *not* a man, as much as anybody?” Well, Mr. Wilson, hear what I can tell you. I had a father—one of your Kentucky gentlemen—who didn’t think enough of me to keep me from being sold with his dogs and horses, to satisfy the estate, when he died. I saw my mother put up at sheriff’s sale, with her seven children. They were sold before her eyes, one by one, all to different masters; and I was the youngest. She came and kneeled down before old Mas’r, and begged him to buy her with me, that she might have at least one child with her; and he kicked her away with his heavy boot. I saw him do it; and the last that I heard was her moans and screams, when I was tied to his horse’s neck, to be carried off to his place.”

“Well, then?”

“My master traded with one of the men, and bought my oldest sister. She was a pious, good girl,—a member of the Baptist church,—and as handsome as my poor mother had been. She was well brought up, and had good manners. At first, I was glad she was bought, for I had one friend near me. I was soon sorry for it. Sir, I have stood at the door and heard her whipped, when it seemed as if every blow cut into my naked heart, and I couldn’t do anything to help her; and she was whipped, sir, for wanting to live a decent Christian life, such as your laws give no slave girl a right to live; and at last I saw her chained with a trader’s gang, to be sent to market in Orleans,—sent there for nothing else but that,—and that’s the last I know of her. Well, I grew up,—long years and years,—no father, no mother, no sister, not a living soul that cared for me more than a dog; nothing but whipping, scolding, starving. Why, sir, I’ve been so hungry that I have been glad to take the bones they threw to their dogs, and yet, when I was a little fellow, and laid awake whole nights and cried, it wasn’t the hunger, it wasn’t the whipping, I cried for. No, sir, it was for *my mother* and *my sisters*,—it was because I hadn’t a friend to love me on earth. I never knew what peace or comfort was. I never had a kind word spoken to me till I came to work in your factory. Mr. Wilson, you treated me well; you encouraged me to do well, and to learn to read and write, and to try to make something of myself; and God knows how grateful I am for it. Then, sir, I found my wife; you’ve seen her,—you know how beautiful she is. When I found she loved me, when I married her, I scarcely could believe I was alive, I was so happy; and, sir she is as good as she is beautiful. But now what? Why, now comes my master, takes me right away from my work, and my friends, and all I like, and grinds me down into the very dirt! And why? Because, he says, I forgot who I was; he says, to teach me that I am only a nigger! After all, and last of all, he comes between me and my wife, and says I shall give her up, and live with another woman. And all this your laws give him power to do, in spite of God or man. Mr. Wilson, look at it! There isn’t one of all these things, that have broken the hearts of my mother and my sister, and my wife and myself, but that your laws allow, and give every man power to do, in Kentucky, and none can say to him nay! Do you call these the laws of *my* country? Sir, I haven’t any country, anymore than I have any father. But I’m going to have one. I don’t want anything of *your* country, except to be let alone,—to go peaceably out of it; and when I get to Canada, where the laws will own me and protect me, *that* shall be my country, and its laws I will obey. But if any man tries to stop me, let

him take care, for I am desperate. I'll fight for my liberty to the last breath I breathe. You say your fathers did it; if it was right for them, it is right for me."

Tom, first sold to New Orleans by Mr. Shelby to pay off some debts, is later sold again after the death of his benevolent but irresponsible young master, Augustine St. Clare. Tom is purchased by Simon Legree, a brutal, Northern-born man who runs an isolated cotton plantation in Arkansas. In the following passages, Legree decides to try to harden Tom so that he can become a driver. But Tom refuses Legree's order that he whip a woman who has not picked enough cotton. Tom is savagely beaten, but draws on his Christian faith to continue to resist Legree's commands. Ultimately, of course, Legree beats Tom to death, but not before Tom has converted Legree's two drivers to Christianity.

It took but a short time to familiarize Tom with all that was to be hoped or feared in his new way of life. He was an expert and efficient workman in whatever he undertook; and was, both from habit and principle, prompt and faithful. Quiet and peaceable in his disposition, he hoped, by unremitting diligence, to avert from himself at least a portion of the evils of his condition. He saw enough of abuse and misery to make him sick and weary; but he determined to toil on, with religious patience, committing himself to Him that judgeth righteously, not without hope that some way of escape might yet be opened to him.

Legree took a silent note of Tom's availability. He rated him as a first-class hand; and yet he felt a secret dislike to him,—the native antipathy of bad to good. He saw, plainly, that when, as was often the case, his violence and brutality fell on the helpless, Tom took notice of it; for, so subtle is the atmosphere of opinion, that it will make itself felt, without words; and the opinion even of a slave may annoy a master. Tom in various ways manifested a tenderness of feeling, a commiseration for his fellow-sufferers, strange and new to them, which was watched with a jealous eye by Legree. He had purchased Tom with a view of eventually making him a sort of overseer, with whom he might, at times, intrust his affairs, in short absences; and, in his view, the first, second, and third requisite for that place, was *hardness*. Legree made up his mind, that, as Tom was not hard to his hand, he would harden him forthwith; and some few weeks after Tom had been on the place, he determined to commence the process.

...

"And now," said Legree, "come here, you Tom. You see I telled ye I didn't buy ye jest for the common work; I mean to promote ye, and make a driver of ye; and to-night ye may jest as well begin to get yer hand in. Now, ye jest take this yer gal and flog her; ye've seen enough on't to know how."

"I beg Mas'r's pardon," said Tom; "hopes Mas'r won't set me at that. It's what I an't used to,—never did,—and can't do, no way possible."

"Ye'll larn a pretty smart chance of things ye never did know, before I've done with ye!" said Legree, taking up a cowhide, and striking Tom a heavy blow cross the cheek, and following up the infliction by a shower of blows.

“There!” he said, as he stopped to rest; “now, will ye tell me ye can’t do it?”

“Yes, Mas’r,” said Tom, putting up his hand, to wipe the blood, that trickled down his face. “I’m willin’ to work, night and day, and work while there’s life and breath in me; but this yer thing I can’t feel it right to do;—and, Mas’r, I *never* shall do it,—*never!*”

Tom had a remarkably smooth, soft voice, and a habitually respectful manner, that had given Legree an idea that he would be cowardly, and easily subdued. When he spoke these last words, a thrill of amazement went through every one; the poor woman clasped her hands, and said, “O Lord!” and every one involuntarily looked at each other and drew in their breath, as if to prepare for the storm that was about to burst.

Legree looked stupefied and confounded; but at last burst forth,—

“What! Ye blasted black beast! Tell me ye don’t think it right to do what I tell ye! What have any of you cussed cattle to do with thinking what’s right? I’ll put a stop to it! Why, what do ye think ye are? May be ye think ye’r a gentleman master, Tom, to be a telling your master what’s right, and what ain’t! So you pretend it’s wrong to flog the gal!”

“I think so, Mas’r,” said Tom; “the poor crittur’s sick and feeble; ’t would be downright cruel, and it’s what I never will do, nor begin to. Mas’r, if you mean to kill me, kill me; but, as to my raising my hand agin any one here, I never shall,—I’ll die first!”

Tom spoke in a mild voice, but with a decision that could not be mistaken.

Legree shook with anger; his greenish eyes glared fiercely, and his very whiskers seemed to curl with passion; but, like some ferocious beast, that plays with its victim before he devours it, he kept back his strong impulse to proceed to immediate violence, and broke out into bitter raillery.

“Well, here’s a pious dog, at last, let down among us sinners!—a saint, a gentleman, and no less, to talk to us sinners about our sins! Powerful holy crittur, he must be! Here, you rascal, you make believe to be pious,—didn’t you never hear, out of yer Bible, ‘Servants, obey yer masters’? An’t I yer master? Didn’t I pay down twelve hundred dollars, cash, for all there is inside yer old cussed black shell? An’t yer mine, now, body and soul?” he said, giving Tom a violent kick with his heavy boot; “tell me!”

In the very depth of physical suffering, bowed by brutal oppression, this question shot a gleam of joy and triumph through Tom’s soul. He suddenly stretched himself up, and, looking earnestly to heaven, while the tears and blood that flowed down his face mingled, he exclaimed,

“No! no! no! my soul an’t yours, Mas’r! You haven’t bought it,—ye can’t buy it! It’s been bought and paid for, by one that is able to keep it;—no matter, no matter, you can’t harm me!”

“I can’t!” said Legree, with a sneer; “we’ll see,—we’ll see! Here, Sambo, Quimbo, give this dog such a breakin’ in as he won’t get over, this month!”

The two gigantic negroes that now laid hold of Tom, with fiendish exultation in their faces, might have formed no unapt personification of the powers of darkness. The poor woman screamed with apprehension, and all rose, as by a general impulse, while they dragged him unresisting from the place.

Source: Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, pp. 66-68, 79, 148-150, 185-187, 467-468, 500-501, 507-509.

1861—Harriet A. Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

While never as famous as Frederick Douglass's account of his life as a slave, Harriet Jacobs's memoir has gained considerable attention in the last fifteen years as one of the few slave narratives penned by a woman. Jacobs, who used the pseudonym Linda Brent in her account, was born in Edenton, North Carolina, in about 1813. Her parents died when she was young, but her grandmother, who was free, looked after Jacobs and her brother. Jacobs worked as a house servant for Dr. James Norcom (named Dr. Flint in the book) and his wife and belonged to their young daughter. When Jacobs reached age fifteen, Dr. Norcom began to subject her to intense sexual harassment, but she rebuffed his repeated attempts to make her his concubine. In part to get back at Norcom, Jacobs entered into a sexual relationship with a white lawyer, by whom she had two children. Throughout her narrative, she expresses guilt over this relationship because of her grandmother's disapproval of her actions. Meanwhile, Norcom continued to pursue Jacobs.

In 1835, Jacobs believed that running away would prompt the doctor to sell her children to their father, who had promised to free them. For seven years, Jacobs hid in a small crawlspace over her grandmother's storeroom. In 1842, she escaped to the North, where she was soon reunited with her children and where she became involved in the abolitionist movement. Jacobs worked as a nursemaid, and her employer eventually purchased and manumitted her. This was bittersweet for Jacobs, who cherished her freedom but was deeply resentful that she had achieved it by being purchased like "an article of property" from her former oppressors. With the encouragement of Quaker reformer Amy Post, Jacobs wrote her narrative, which was edited by Lydia Maria Child and published in Boston in 1861. During and after the Civil War, Jacobs worked as an agent for the Quakers, assisting freedpeople in Washington, D.C., Alexandria, and Savannah. She died in 1897.

Jacobs, who believed that "slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women," directed her book to a female audience. In the preface, she wrote "I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse." In the following selections, Jacobs describes the sexual harassment she experienced and her hiding place above her grandmother's storeroom. The final selection is an excerpt from a letter Jacobs wrote to Amy Post in 1857, regarding the manuscript and the endorsement of it that Post planned to write.

During the first years of my service in Dr. Flint's family, I was accustomed to share some indulgences with the children of my mistress. Though this seemed to me no more than right, I was grateful for it, and tried to merit the kindness by the faithful discharge of my duties. But I now entered on my fifteenth year—a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. Young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import. I tried to treat them with indifference or contempt.

The master's age, my extreme youth, and the fear that his conduct would be reported to my grandmother, made him bear this treatment for many months. He was a crafty man, and resorted to many means to accomplish his purposes. Sometimes he had stormy, terrific ways, that made his victims tremble; sometimes he assumed a gentleness that he thought must surely subdue. Of the two, I preferred his stormy moods, although they left me trembling. He tried his utmost to corrupt the pure principles my grandmother had instilled. He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. I turned from him with disgust and hatred. But he was my master. I was compelled to live under the same roof with him—where I saw a man forty years my senior daily violating the most sacred commandments of nature. He told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things. My soul revolted against the mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection? No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death; all these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men. The mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feelings towards her but those of jealousy and rage. The degradation, the wrongs, the vices, that grow out of slavery, are more than I can describe. They are greater than you would willingly believe. Surely, if you credited one half the truths that are told you concerning the helpless millions suffering in this cruel bondage, you at the north would not help to tighten the yoke. You surely would refuse to do for the master, on your own soil, the mean and cruel work which trained bloodhounds and the lowest class of whites do for him at the south.

Every where the years bring to all enough of sin and sorrow; but in slavery the very dawn of life is darkened by these shadows. Even the little child, who is accustomed to wait on her mistress and her children, will learn, before she is twelve years old, why it is that her mistress hates such and such a one among the slaves. Perhaps the child's own mother is among the hated ones. She listens to violent outbreaks of jealous passion, and cannot help understanding what is the cause. She will become prematurely knowing in evil things. Soon she will learn to tremble when she hears her master's footfall. She will be compelled to realize that she is no longer a child. If God has bestowed beauty upon her, it will prove her greatest curse. That which commands admiration in the white woman only hastens the degradation of the female slave. I know that some are too much brutalized by slavery to feel the humiliation of their position; but many slaves feel it most acutely, and shrink from the memory of it. I cannot tell how much I suffered in the presence of these wrongs, nor how I am still pained by the retrospect. My master met me at every turn, reminding me that I belonged to him, and swearing by heaven and earth that he would compel me to submit to him. If I went out for a breath of fresh air, after a day of unwearied toil, his footsteps dogged me. If I knelt by my mother's grave, his dark shadow fell on me even there. The light heart which nature had given me became heavy with sad forebodings. The other slaves in my master's house noticed the change. Ma[n]y of them pitied me; but none dared to ask the cause. They had no need to inquire. They knew too well the guilty practices under that roof; and they were aware that to speak of them was an offence that never went unpunished.

I longed for some one to confide in. I would have given the world to have laid my head on my grandmother's faithful bosom, and told her all my troubles. But Dr. Flint swore he would kill me, if I was not as silent as the grave. Then, although my

grandmother was all in all to me, I feared her as well as loved her. I had been accustomed to look up to her with a respect bordering upon awe. I was very young, and felt shamefaced about telling her such impure things, especially as I knew her to be very strict on such subjects. Moreover, she was a woman of a high spirit. She was usually very quiet in her demeanor; but if her indignation was once roused, it was not very easily quelled. I had been told that she once chased a white gentleman with a loaded pistol, because he had insulted one of her daughters. I dreaded the consequences of a violent outbreak; and both pride and fear kept me silent. But though I did not confide in my grandmother, and even evaded her vigilant watchfulness and inquiry, her presence in the neighborhood was some protection to me. Though she had been a slave, Dr. Flint was afraid of her. He dreaded her scorching rebukes. Moreover, she was known and patronized by many people; and he did not wish to have his villainy made public. It was lucky for me that I did not live on a distant plantation, but in a town not so large that the inhabitants were ignorant of each other's affairs. Bad as are the laws and customs of a slaveholding community, the doctor, as a profession man, deemed it prudent to keep up some outward show of decency.

O, what days and nights of fear and sorrow that man caused me! Reader, it is not to awaken sympathy for myself that I am telling you truthfully what I suffered in slavery. I do it to kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered.

...

A small shed had been added to my grandmother's house years ago. Some boards were laid across the joists at the top, and between these boards and the roof was a very small garret, never occupied by any thing but rats and mice. It was a pent roof, covered with nothing but shingles, according to the southern custom for such buildings. The garret was only nine feet long and seven wide. The highest part was three feet high, and sloped down abruptly to the loose board floor. There was no admission for either light or air. My uncle Phillip, who was a carpenter, had very skillfully made a concealed trap-door, which communicated with the storeroom. He had been doing this while I was waiting in the swamp. The storeroom opened upon a piazza. To this hole I was conveyed as soon as I entered the house. The air was stifling; the darkness total. A bed had been spread on the floor. I could sleep quite comfortably on one side; but the slope was so sudden that I could not turn on the other without hitting the roof. The rats and mice ran over my bed; but I was weary, and I slept such a sleep as the wretched may, when a tempest has passed over them. Morning came. I knew it only by the noises I heard; for in my small den day and night were all the same. I suffered for air even more than for light. But I was not comfortless. I heard the voices of my children. There was joy and there was sadness in the sound. It made my tears flow. How I longed to speak to them! I was eager to look on their faces; but there was no hole, no crack, through which I could peep. This continued darkness was oppressive. It seemed horrible to sit or lie in a cramped position day after day, without one gleam of light. Yet I would have chosen this, rather than my lot as a slave, though white people considered it an easy one; and it was so compared with the fate of others. I was never cruelly over-worked; I was never lacerated with the whip from head to foot; I was never so beaten and bruised that I could

not turn from one side to the other; I never had my heel-strings cut to prevent my running away; I was never chained to a log and forced to drag it about, while I toiled in the fields from morning till night; I was never branded with hot iron, or torn by bloodhounds. On the contrary, I had always been kindly treated, and tenderly cared for, until I came into the hands of Dr. Flint. I had never wished for freedom till then. But though my life in slavery was comparatively devoid of hardships, God pity the woman who is compelled to lead such a life!

My food was passed up to me through the trap-door my uncle had contrived; and my grandmother, my uncle Phillip, and aunt Nancy would seize such opportunities as they could, to mount up there and chat with me at the opening. But of course this was not safe in the daytime. It must all be done in darkness. It was impossible for me to move in an erect position, but I crawled about my den for exercise. One day I hit my head against something, and found it was a gimlet. My uncle had left it sticking there when he made the trap-door. I was as rejoiced as Robinson Crusoe could have been at finding such a treasure. It put a lucky thought into my head. I said to myself, "Now I will have some light. Now I will see my children." I did not dare to begin my work during the daytime, for fear of attracting attention. But I groped round; and having found the side next the street, where I could frequently see my children, I stuck the gimlet in and waited for evening. I bored three rows of holes, one above another; then I bored out the interstices between. I thus succeeded in making one hole about an inch long and an inch broad. I sat by it till late into the night, to enjoy the little whiff of air that floated in. In the morning I watched for my children. The first person I saw in the street was Dr. Flint. I had a shuddering, superstitious feeling that it was a bad omen. Several familiar faces passed by. At last I heard the merry laugh of children, and presently two sweet little faces were looking up at me, as though they knew I was there, and were conscious of the joy they imparted. How I longed to *tell* them I was there!

...

June 21st [1857]

My Dear Friend . . .

I have My dear friend – Striven faithfully to give a true and just account of my own life in Slavery—God knows I have tried to do it in a Christian spirit—there are somethings that I might have made plainer I know—Woman can whisper—her cruel wrongs into the ear of a very dear friend—much easier than she can record them for the world to read—I have left nothing out but what I thought—the world might believe that a Slave Woman was too willing to pour out—that she might gain their sympathies I ask nothing—I have placed myself before you to be judged as a woman whether I deserve your pity or contempt—I have another object in view—it is to come to you just as I am a poor Slave Mother—not to tell you what I have heard but what I have seen—and what I have suffered—and if there is any sympathy to give—let it be given to the thousands—of of [*sic*] Slave Mothers that are still in bondage—suffering far more than I have—let it plead for their helpless Children that they may enjoy the same liberties that my Children now enjoy—Say nothing of me that you have had from a truthful source that you think best—ask me any question you like—in regard to the father of my Children I think I have

stated all perhaps I did not tell you that he was a member of Congress at that time all of this I have written—I think it would be best for you to begin with our acquaintance and the length of time that I was in your family your advice about giving the history of my life in Slavery mention that I lived in service all the while I was striving to get the Book out but do not say with whom I lived as I would not use the Willis name neither would I like to have people think that I was living an Idle life—and had got this book out merely to make money—my kind friend I do not restrict you in anything for you know far better than I do what to say I am only too happy to think that I am going to have it from you—

...

HARRIET

Source: Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed. Child, pp. 27-29, 114-115, 242.

Early Twentieth Century—Virginia Slave Narratives

Of all the materials historians use to interpret slavery, interviews given by ex-slaves in the early twentieth century have come under the closest scrutiny as sources. While the old age of the former slaves, as well as the often marked class and race differences between them and the interviewers, certainly influenced the conversations that took place, the interviews unquestionably provide unparalleled insight into the institution of slavery from the perspective of those who lived through it. They also contain numerous perceptions about life under segregation.

Most interviews with former slaves in Virginia were conducted by interviewers for the Virginia Writers' Project, which was part of the Federal Writers' Project established by the Works Progress Administration in 1935. The Virginia program, along with those in Louisiana and Florida, was one of the few WPA offices to employ significant numbers of African-American interviewers. Of the 159 extant Virginia Writers' Project ex-slave interviews, 100 are known to have been completed by blacks and nine by whites. Most of the other fifty are thought to have been done by African Americans. Comparison of WPA interviews conducted by whites and ex-slave interviews completed by blacks for the WPA, Fisk University, and Southern University between 1929 and 1938 has demonstrated that those conducted by black interviewers contain fuller information about family life, slave resistance, cruelty by owners, and other aspects of slave life.

The following selections include memories of family life, punishment, escape, work, slave sales, the Civil War, and emancipation. The dialect used by the interviewees is unsettling to late twentieth-century readers but is an integral part of the historical record. Both Claude W. Anderson and Susie R.C. Byrd were African Americans.

Cornelia Carney (b. 1838)

Williamsburg, Va.

Interviewer: Claude W. Anderson

Date of interview: Unknown

Source: *Negro in Virginia*, MS version, draft no. 1, chap. 13, pp. 8-9.

Now my father was de purties' black man you ever saw. Name was John Jones Littleton. Had a long thin nose like a white man, an' had de lovelies' white teef, an' hones' chile, de purties' mouf. Father could make anything. Made dat ches' over dere in de corner. White folks been trying to buy it, but ain't gonna sell it to no white folks, 'cause dey treated my father so mean. Ole Marsa Littleton used to beat father all de time. His back was a sight. It was scarred up an' brittled fum shoulder to shoulder. Ole Marse didn't like father always whittlin' wid his jackknife. Wanted him to work in de fiel', same as de other slaves.

Father got beat up so much dat arter while he run away an' lived in de woods. Used to slip back to de house Saddy nights an' sometime Sunday when he knowed Marse and Missus done gone to meetin'. Mama used to send John, my oldes' brother, out to de woods wid food fo' father, an' what he didn't git fum us de Lawd provided. Never did ketch him, though old Marse search real sharp.

Father wasn't de onlies' one hidin' in de woods. Dere was his cousin, Gabriel, dat was hidin' an' a man name Charlie. Niggers was too smart fo' white folks to git ketched. White folks was sharp too, but not sharp enough to git by ole Nat. Nat? I don't know who he was. Ole folks used to say it all de time. De meanin' I git is dat de niggers could always out-smart de white folks. What you git fum it?

[It seems likely that the above reference to "old Nat" is to Nat Turner.—Ed.]

Mrs. Louise Jones (b. ca. 1855)
501 Clinton St., Petersburg, Va.
Interviewer: Susie R. C. Byrd
Date of interview: February 12, 1937
Source: Va. State Lib.

I couldn't tell you how long I been here, but I was here fo' dis here Petersburg Depot was built. Bread an' born in Dinwiddie County. I b'long to Louis Merriday. From dat I fell to his daughter, Mary Sydnor. All us slaves was 'vided up; yes, chil' some o' 'em sol' 'way fo' the ole heads died. Lord! Lord! Dem times was times! Um, um! Yes, honey when ole mass an' mistess pas' out, things change. Dey start 'vidin' us slave up 'mongst de heirs.

I uster set on a pallet an' tend to de babies. Yes, some dem white babies an' nigger babies too would cry. . . .

No, I didn't have uh bit o' whippin' on my back; no more than my grandma gimme. Mistess didn't 'low it.

Slaves was sol' like dis. Dey carry dem to de block. Dis block was where dey was put on an' sol' to the highes' bidder; you know like people sell cattle, horses an' cows. Dem was sad times. Some times we would hear de white folks plan de sale an' call slave names dat dey want to carry to de block de day b'fo'. Den honey, we prayed, sang an' call on my God dat we git good massa an' mistess. You know, honey, some

mistess an' massas was mean to dey slaves an' dey would beat 'em. Den de poor things would run away.

When I was a slave I didn't know what church was. We talk to God an' prayed by ourselves jes' wharever we was workin'. 'Course de white folks didn't hear us. Chil', look right now I can hear some o' dem mournful voices; 'specially brother John. He would always sing an' pray. Um! Um! He was sol', den I los' track o' him. De man dat bought him took his slaves 'way down South. Dat's right fer, ain't it?

...

My mistess slaves, like lan' an' property, went to de heirs. An' when things was settle up dey didn' give me "sweat off de black cat's eye." No didn' gimme nottin'.

Slaves call demselves married when dey jump over uh broom stick. But I was married by a preacher.

...

War

I 'member the very night de soldiers took Petersburg, I recollec' 'twas jes' 'bout de breakin' o' day. We lived on Canal Street. I could hear de guns. All o' a sudden three soldiers 'peared an' start knockin' an' beatin' on de door, askin' if our white folks was good to us. If we had said "no" dem Yankees would a-kill mistess and massa.

Dem soldiers dey kep' comin' to town 'til night. Mother made coffee an' I toted water from de spring. De soldiers would give me money. Man, sir, when dey lef' I had uh whole hat full o' money. Do you know my daddy took all my money. No, didn't give me one brass cent. Chil' like, I cried an' jes' bellowed 'til old lady spank me. Dat was a spankin' I 'member 'till dis day.

When Yankees came to a store dey would break it open, an' give you all you could toat. Dey broke into smoke houses an' dey would throw de bigges' hams, whole meat sides, an' de lak. Flour, meal, corn, an' everything was yours, and if de niggers didn' git what dey want, 'twas dey own fault.

Charlotte Brown (b. ca. 1855)
Woods Crossing, Virginia
Interviewer: Unknown

Date of interview: Unknown

Source: *Negro in Virginia*, published version, p. 212

De news come on a Thursday, an' all de slaves been shoutin' an' carryin' on tell ev'ybody was all tired out. 'Member de fust Sunday of freedom. We was all sittin' roun' restin' an' tryin' to think what freedom meant an' ev'ybody was quiet an' peaceful. All at once ole Sister Carrie who was near 'bout a hundred started to talkin':

Tain't no mo' sellin' today,

Tain't no mo' hirin' today,
 Tain't no pullin' off shirts today,
 Its stomp down freedom today.
 Stomp it down!

An' when she says, "Stomp it down," all de slaves commence to shoutin' wid her:

Stomp down Freedom today—
 Stomp it down!
 Stomp down Freedom today.

Wasn't no mo' peace dat Sunday. Ev'ybody started in to sing an' shout once mo'. Fust thing you know dey done made up music to Sister Carrie's stomp song an' sang an' shouted dat song all de res' de day. Chile, dat was one glorious time!

Source: Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, eds., *Weevils in the Wheat*, pp. 66-67, 185-187, 58-59; see also Berlin, ed., *Remembering Slavery*.

1936 and 1939—The Novel and Film *Gone with the Wind*

With the release of a digitized version of the film *Gone with the Wind* in the summer of 1998, Americans across the country have become reacquainted with this cinematic melodrama. While the black roles in the film seem acutely stereotypical today, when the film was originally released they were actually an improvement over the typical celluloid portrayals of slaves and freedpeople. David O. Selznick's film version was considerably more moderate, in fact, than Margaret Mitchell's novel. Selznick reacted against the image of nineteenth-century racial issues in the South epitomized by D.W. Griffith's 1915 film, *Birth of a Nation*. Griffith's film, while a major technological and artistic advance for the infant film industry, set extremely low initial standards for the visual media's portrayals of African-Americans. Celebrating the post-Civil War Ku Klux Klan as a brotherhood of chivalrous freedom fighters, *Birth of a Nation* mocked the ambitions of freedpeople with crude stereotypes. While Selznick was able to advance from Griffith's racist vulgarity, *Gone with the Wind* still endorsed many of the stereotypes that made up the "plantation myth." As portrayed in the film, owners were paternalistic, kindly and caring toward their slaves. The slaves, in turn, were docile, simple-minded, loyal to their owners, and happy with their lot in life. Black and white southerners lived together in a state of mutual harmony and affection until Yankee invaders destroyed the idyll by turning the heads of freed slaves with impossible promises of social, economic, and political equality. Despite the strength of several of the black roles in *Gone with the Wind*, the endorsement of so many demeaning stereotypes attracted considerable opposition to the movie from within the black community.

In the following discussion, Thomas Cripps reviews the major roles played by African-Americans in *Gone with the Wind* and places the film in historical perspective.

Malcolm X grew into manhood with a vivid memory of *Gone with the Wind*. As a teenager, he went to see the film in his Michigan hometown: "I remember one thing that marred that time for me. . . . I was the only Negro in the theatre, and when Butterfly McQueen [Prissy] went into her act, I felt like crawling under the rug." In December 1939, a few weeks earlier, 300,000 Atlantans, most of them white, had filled the streets for the premiere that simultaneously celebrated the release of the movie and a revival of Southern consciousness. Wherever Margaret Mitchell's 1000-page novel was sold and wherever the movie version played, the story was the same: audiences were divided along racial lines.

But to see *Gone with the Wind* only as the center of a racial debate is to miss much. In addition to its obvious socially divisive ingredients of sectionalism and racism, it contained elements calculated by its makers, Mitchell and producer David O. Selznick, to temper and modulate high-running racial feelings. Indeed, their half-formed liberal assumptions that contributed to the political texture of the film anticipated the more sharply focused racial liberalism of World War II.

...

The book's reception by the American public and critics pointed toward its eventual success as a film but also toward the problems Selznick faced in producing it. Sales ran into the millions, as friendly critics praised it as a vast tapestry of antebellum Southern life. And yet on the flanks of the great audience were critics for whom *Gone with the Wind* was a failure: on the right, doctrinaire Southerners expecting a reflowering of the old myths; on the left, critics joining in Malcolm Cowley's blast at the refurbishing of "the plantation legend." Selznick's job as a producer necessarily included taking into account the spectrum of criticism with a view to bringing a Southern novel into the center of American popular opinion.

For Selznick and the first of his scriptwriters, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Sidney Howard, the initial task was to shift the perspective of the film toward their own liberal politics. As Selznick wrote in a memorandum, "I, for one, have no desire to produce an anti-Negro film either. In our picture I think we have to be awfully careful that the Negroes come out decidedly on the right side of the ledger." Such liberalism helped eliminate a Ku Klux Klan episode. "I personally feel quite strongly that we should cut out the Klan entirely," wrote Selznick; otherwise, the film "might come out as an unintentional advertisement for intolerant societies in these fascist-ridden times."

Their best liberal intentions lacked consistency, however. Howard, for example, as a way of praising Mitchell's honesty, used an old Southern term that was insultingly nettlesome to blacks: her blacks were "the best written darkies, I believe, in all of literature . . . the only ones I have ever read which seem to come through uncolored by white patronizing." In another instance, Selznick insisted that "the picture must not emerge as anything offensive to negroes," or throw "too bad a light on even the negroes of the reconstruction period." A typical solution was to reconstruct a rape scene by making "the negro little more than a spectator," which put aside rather than solved the problem of how to depict the free and politically and socially assertive blacks of Reconstruction.

Selznick and Howard also shared an ignorance of the details of plantation life and the slavery system, which they hoped to correct by hiring a consultant. At first, they sought Mitchell herself as a historical adviser but, failing that, turned to two white Southerners whom Mitchell had recommended: Wilbur Kurtz, an Atlanta architect, and Susan Myrick, a reporter for the *Macon Telegraph*. Earlier, Selznick had approached Walter White of the NAACP to join them as adviser but without success.

Kurtz, a Northerner by birth and an avid Civil War buff, counseled on manners, dress, architecture, weaponry, and ambience--and eventually on black accents, garments, and society. His carefully worded memoranda, augmented by his reading of black historian William Still's *Underground Railroad*, provided details of plantation activity, equipage, and personnel that black critics could not effectively challenge. In Tara's washyard, for example, he missed nothing: the little Negro girl who swept it; the old pipe-smoking woman who presided over the boiling clothes in the iron washpot; the black boy who stoked the fire and fetched the water. Every black resident of Tara was the subject of a sketch. Not only Mammy, Pork, Dilcey, and Prissy, but also the cobblers, wheelwrights, barbers, drivers, herders, flyswishers, and black foreman received at least a line of type. As the Civil War came to Atlanta, drying up the labor pool, Kurtz's memoranda caught the motley black labor gangs marching in their tatters through the city, pickaxes on their shoulders, under the eyes of the old men of the Home Guard. Yet Kurtz's point of view, like that of Mitchell and Selznick, was of a narrow gauge that missed details such as whips and chains--no surviving memorandum recorded them.

...

Although Selznick International turned out one of the great events of film history, for blacks *Gone with the Wind* remained an ambiguity caught between old dying black images and as yet unformed new images. While no Klansmen appeared, neither did a single rebellious slave or black soldier. No black characters shared any emotional bonds, except those of loyalty to whites, and those few who left the plantation in favor of freedom were depicted as shantytown renegades. Yet Mammy grew from her stolid presence on Mitchell's pages into a heroic, rocklike figure on whom the defeated whites relied. Other blacks, though lacking depth, conveyed a plodding resilience and warmth. Thus, if McQueen's comic bits caused blacks to wince, other actors maintained a studied dignity that pleased black audiences and confounded black critics.

Predictably, leftists branded such accomplishments as no more than bourgeois opportunism and damned the entire production as a racist tract. Throughout the winter of 1939-40, the *Daily Worker*, led by its critic, David Platt, nagged at the movie. The organ of the American Communist Party deviated only once from its persistent campaign, when Howard Rushmore gave it a mixed review flecked with a few admissions of merit. . . .

The broad center of Negro opinion represented in the monthlies either generally admired the film for its modest revisions of ancient stereotypes or considered it an irrelevancy. [W.E.B.] DuBois, for example, dismissed it as a "conventional provincialism about which Negroes need not get excited." *Crisis* shared his view, pointing out that the film "eliminated practically all the offensive scenes and dialogue so that there is little material, directly affecting Negroes as a race, to which objection can be entered." The Urban League's *Opportunity* made no direct reference to the movie. . . .

Newspaper critics dismissed the servile roles as predictable elements of a period film and hailed each break with old convention as a triumph. The *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, for example, admired the modernity of the relationship between Rhett and Mammy. Several critics agreed that “there was no reason for Negroes to feel indignant about this film.” A few, like Lillian Johnson in the Baltimore *Afro-American*, even found it “magnificently done” and “truly the greatest picture ever made.”

Thus, at the height of national excitement over *Gone with the Wind*, organized blacks spoke with many voices, ranging from the temperate responses of the NAACP and the black press to the barely controlled rage of the black left that spoke through the *Daily Worker* and the National Negro Congress. As though accommodating the breadth of the spectrum, the black press sometimes balanced hostile critics by running their columns in tandem with friendlier observers or by printing readers’ letters that reflected the range of praise and calumny or by running “boilerplate” generated by wire services and studio press agents as counterweights to negative stories filed by staff writers.

Almost always, this evenhandedness extended to balancing rave reviews against equally kind words for the black protesters and pickets who sometimes marked local premieres. In Washington, Cleveland, Richmond, Norfolk, and other cities, local theaters held dressy premieres that attracted opposites--formally dressed black bourgeoisie and the black protesters whose picket lines they crossed, sometimes guiltily. . . .

. . .

What did all this mean to blacks? What social forces were released and symbolized by *Gone with the Wind*? Most significantly, the film clearly was not a revival of the mystical, repellent, *Kulturkampf* image conjured among blacks by *Birth of a Nation*. On the contrary, it foreshadowed a decline in racism of that sort, a decline seen in the integrity of the film's black actors, their recognition by the white community, and the related black-led victory over the *Birth of a Nation* remake project. . . .”

Source: Cripps, "Winds of Change: *Gone with the Wind* and Racism as a National Issue," pp. 137-152.

1954—C. Vann Woodward on the History of Jim Crow in the South

While many Americans can identify slavery, the Civil War, segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement as significant events in American history, they often have little sense of the relationship of these events to each other. Indeed, people born since the elimination of Jim Crow even confuse slavery and segregation. In 1954, C. Vann Woodward delivered a series of lectures at the University of Virginia in which he outlined the history of segregation in the South and argued that Jim Crow laws were not immutable laws of nature but the result of human decisions made at the turn of the nineteenth century. He demonstrated that, relative to the first half of the twentieth century, there had been considerable flexibility in race relations during the two decades after the Civil War. Woodward published the lectures as *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* in 1955 and came out with revised editions in 1966 and 1974. As he had hoped,

the book generated substantial scholarship on the history of segregation. Although dated in its use of the term “Negro” and in its tendency to underestimate the agency of black Americans in the struggle against segregation, the book remains a classic work of historical insight into race relations.

Woodward sought to provide Southerners with an informed historical context so they could better evaluate the rapid changes in race relations underway in the region during the mid-twentieth century. The first selection below, which comes from Woodward’s introduction, places the development and demise of de jure segregation within the context of Southern history as a whole. The remaining selections, which come from the first chapter, entitled “Of Old Regimes and Reconstructions,” sketches the relationship between slavery and segregation.

The people of the South should be the last Americans to expect indefinite continuity of their institutions and social arrangements. Other Americans have less reason to be prepared for sudden change and lost causes. Apart from Southerners, Americans have enjoyed a historical continuity that is unique among modern peoples. The stream of national history, flowing down from seventeenth-century sources, reaches a fairly level plain in the eighteenth century. There it gathered mightily in volume and span from its tributaries, but it continued to flow like the Mississippi over an even bed between relatively level banks.

Southern history, on the other hand, took a different turn in the nineteenth century. At intervals the even bed gave way under the stream, which sometimes plunged over falls or swirled through rapids. These breaks in the course of Southern history go by the names of slavery and secession, independence and defeat, emancipation and reconstruction, redemption and reunion. Some are more precipitous and dramatic than others. Some result in sheer drops and falls, others in narrows and rapids. The distance between them, and thus the extent of smooth sailing and stability, varies a great deal.

Considerably the longest of the stretches of relative stability between major historic faults over which Southern history flows has been that since the break that goes under several names, among them Redemption, or the Compromise of 1877. It will doubtless occur to some that in fixing upon this period as the longest I may have overlooked the ‘Old South’—the South of the Cotton Kingdom and plantation slavery. But the Old South, so far as the Cotton Kingdom was concerned, was ‘old’ only by courtesy, or to distinguish it from a ‘New South.’ Purely on the ground of longevity the Old South did not really last long enough in the larger part of the region to deserve the name ‘old.’ And in some states it scarcely attained a respectable middle age. By comparison with the Old South, the New South, already well past the three-score-and-ten mark, is very old indeed. There is, in fact, reason for believing that its life span fell somewhat short of the three-score-and-ten years, that its demise may now be recorded, and that the so-called ‘New’ South should really be regarded as one of the several ‘Old’ Souths.

Lacking the tradition of historical continuity possessed by their fellow countrymen, more familiar through experience with the shifting fortunes of history, Southerners have less reason to expect the indefinite duration of any set of social institutions. Their own history tells them of a well-established society whose institutions

were buttressed by every authority of learning, law, and constitution, supported by the church, the schools, and the press, and cherished devotedly by the people. In spite of all this they know that this old order and its institutions perished quite completely. It was replaced by a new order that had behind it all the authority and confidence of a victorious North, a Constitution newly revised by the victors, and the force of the national army. The social and political changes were inspired by a North that was in a revolutionary mood, temporarily determined to stop at nothing short of a complete and thoroughgoing reformation. Yet this new order disappeared even more swiftly than its predecessor and was in turn replaced by a third, now crumbling before our eyes.

Each successive regime in the South had had its characteristic economic and industrial organization, its system of politics, and its social arrangements. It is difficult to assign priority of importance to any one aspect of a particular regime, for all aspects were part of a whole and it is hard to imagine one without the other. The peculiarity most often used to distinguish one order from another, however, has been the relation between races, or more particularly the status of the Negro. This is not to contend that the Negro's status has been what one historian has called the 'central theme' or basic determinant of Southern history. There is in fact an impressive amount of evidence indicating that the Negro's status and changes therein have been the product of more impersonal forces. Such forces have been discovered at work behind the conflicts that resulted in the overthrow of slavery, the frustration of the Lincoln and Johnson plan of Reconstruction, the overthrow of Reconstruction, and the foundation of the new order. In fixing upon the Negro's status and race relations, therefore, I am not advancing a theory of historical causation but adopting common usage in characterizing the successive phases of Southern history.

The phase that began in 1877 was inaugurated by the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, the abandonment of the Negro as a ward of the nation, the giving up of the attempt to guarantee the freedman his civil and political equality, and the acquiescence of the rest of the country in the South's demand that the whole problem be left to the disposition of the dominant Southern white people. What the new status of the Negro would be was not at once apparent, nor were the Southern white people themselves so united on that subject at first as has been generally assumed. The determination of the Negro's 'place' took shape gradually under the influence of economic and political conflicts among divided white people—conflicts that were eventually resolved in part at the expense of the Negro. In the early years of the twentieth century, it was becoming clear that the Negro would be effectively disfranchised throughout the South, that he would be firmly relegated to the lower rungs of the economic ladder, and that neither equality nor aspirations for equality in any department of life were for him.

The public symbols and constant reminders of his inferior position were the segregation statutes or 'Jim Crow' laws. They constituted the most elaborate and formal expression of sovereign white opinion upon the subject. In bulk and detail as well as in effectiveness of enforcement the segregation codes were comparable with the black codes of the old regime, though the laxity that mitigated the harshness of the black codes was replaced by a rigidity that was more typical of the segregation code. That code lent the sanction of law to a racial ostracism that extended to churches and schools, to housing and jobs, to eating and drinking. Whether by law or by custom, that ostracism extended

to virtually all forms of public transportation, to sports and recreations, to hospitals, orphanages, prisons, and asylums, and ultimately to funeral homes, morgues, and cemeteries.

The new Southern system was regarded as the 'final settlement,' the 'return to sanity,' the 'permanent system.' Few stopped to reflect that previous systems had also been regarded as final, sane, and permanent by their supporters. The illusion of permanency was encouraged by the complacency of a long-critical North, the propaganda of reconciliation, and the resigned compliance of the Negro. The illusion was strengthened further by the passage of several decades during which change was averted or minimized. Year after year spokesmen of the region assured themselves and the world at large that the South had taken its stand, that its position was immovable, that alteration was unthinkable, come what might. As late as 1928, Professor Ulrich B. Phillips described the South as 'a people with a common resolve indomitably maintained—that it shall be and remain a white man's country.' And that conviction, he observed, 'whether expressed with a frenzy of a demagogue or maintained with a patrician's quietude, is the cardinal test of a Southerner and the central theme of Southern history.' Whether it was the 'central theme' or not, both demagogue and patrician continued to express it in varying degrees of frenzy or quietude.

Yet in the face of apparent solidarity of Southern resistance to change, a resistance that continued to receive firm and eloquent expression in some quarters, it has become increasingly plain that another era of change is upon the South and that the changes achieved or demanded are in the very area traditionally held most inviolable to alteration. Not since the First Reconstruction has this area been invaded from so many quarters, with such impatience of established practice and such insistent demand for immediate reform. Beginning earlier, but reaching full momentum only in the decades since the Second World War, the Second Reconstruction shows no signs of having yet run its course or even of having slackened its pace.

It had not one but many sources. Perhaps the most conspicuous was the United States Supreme Court and its succession of dramatic decisions down to 1954. But in addition there were many others, including the pressure and propaganda organizations for civil rights—both Negro and white, Northern and Southern. There were also executive orders of Presidents, acts of Congress, policy decisions of federal agencies, actions by labor unions, professional organizations, churches, corporation executives, and educational leaders. Perhaps the most unusual agencies of radical change were the officers of the army, navy, and air force, acting under orders of both Democratic and Republican administrations. The Second Reconstruction, unlike the old, was not the monopoly of one of the great political parties. Behind these conscious and deliberate agencies of change were such great impersonal forces of history as lay behind emancipation, the First Reconstruction, and Redemption. They included economic revolution, rapid urbanization, and war—war in a somewhat new dimension, called total war.

The Second Reconstruction addressed itself to all the aspects of racial relations that the first one attacked and even some the First Reconstruction avoided or neglected. These included political, economic, and civil rights. Few sections of the segregation code have escaped attack, for the assault has been leveled at the Jim Crow system in trains, buses, and other common carriers; in housing and working conditions; in restaurants,

theaters, and hospitals; in playgrounds, public parks, swimming pools, and organized sports, to mention a few examples. The attack has also been carried into two areas in which the First Reconstruction radicals made no serious effort: segregation in the armed services and in the public schools.

...

The long experience of slavery in America left its mark on the posterity of both slave and master and influenced relations between them more than a century after the end of the old regime. Slavery was only one of several ways by which the white man has sought to define the Negro's status, his 'place,' and assure his subordination. Exploitation of the Negro by the white man goes back to the beginning of relations between the races in modern times, and so do the injustices and brutalities that accompany exploitation. Along with these practices and in justification and defense of them, were developed the old assumptions of Anglo-Saxon superiority and innate African inferiority, white supremacy and Negro subordination. In so far as segregation is based on these assumptions, therefore, it is based on the old pro-slavery argument and has its remote ideological roots in the slavery period.

In most aspects of slavery as practiced in the ante-bellum South, however, segregation would have been an inconvenience and an obstruction to the functioning of the system. The very nature of the institution made separation of the races for the most part impracticable. The mere policing of slaves required that they be kept under more or less constant scrutiny, and so did the exaction of involuntary labor. The supervision, maintenance of order, and physical and medical care of slaves necessitated many contacts and encouraged a degree of intimacy between the races unequalled, and often held distasteful, in other parts of the country. The system imposed its own type of interracial contact, unwelcome as it might be on both sides.

...

Segregation in complete and fully developed form did grow up contemporaneously with slavery, but not in its midst. One of the strangest things about Jim Crow was that the system was born in the North and reached an advanced age before moving South in force. Without forgetting evils peculiar to the South, one might consider Northern conditions with profit.

By 1830 slavery was virtually abolished by one means or another throughout the North, with only about 3500 Negroes remaining in bondage in the nominally free states. No sectional comparison of race relations should be made without full regard for this difference. The Northern free Negro enjoyed obvious advantages over the Southern slave. His freedom was circumscribed in many ways, as we shall see, but he could not be bought or sold, or separated from his family, or legally made to work without compensation. He was also to some extent free to agitate, organize, and petition to advance his cause and improve his lot.

For all that, the Northern Negro was made painfully and constantly aware that he lived in a society dedicated to the doctrine of white supremacy and Negro inferiority. The major political parties, whatever their position on slavery, vied with each other in

their devotion to this doctrine, and extremely few politicians of importance dared question them. Their constituencies firmly believed that the Negroes were incapable of being assimilated politically, socially, or physically into white society. They made sure in numerous ways that the Negro understood his 'place' and that he was severely confined to it. One of these ways was segregation, and with the backing of legal and extra-legal codes, the system permeated all aspects of Negro life in the free states by 1860.

...

In the South the traumatic experiences of Civil War, invasion, defeat, emancipation, occupation, and reconstruction had profound and complex—sometimes contradictory—effects on racial relations. The immediate response to the collapse of slavery was often a simultaneous withdrawal of both races from the enforced intimacy and the more burdensome obligations imposed by the old regime on each. Denied the benefits of slavery, whites shook off its responsibilities—excess hands, dependents too old or too ill or too young to work, tenants too poor to pay rent. Freedmen for their part often fled old masters and put behind them old grievances, hatreds, and the scene of old humiliations. One of the most momentous of racial separations was the voluntary withdrawal of the Negroes from the white-dominated Protestant churches, often over white protest, in order to establish and control their own separate religious institutions. In these and other ways the new order added physical distance to social distance between the races.

The separations were not all voluntary. Whites clung unwaveringly to the old doctrine of white supremacy and innate Negro inferiority that had been sustained by the old regime. It still remained to be seen what institutions or laws or customs would be necessary to maintain white control now that slavery was gone. Under slavery, control was best maintained by a large degree of physical contact and association. Under the strange new order the old methods were not always available or applicable, though the contacts and associations they produced did not all disappear at once. To the dominant whites it began to appear that the new order required a certain amount of compulsory separation of the races.

...

Racial relations of the old-regime pattern often persisted stubbornly into the new order and met head-on with interracial encounters of an entirely new and sometimes equalitarian type. Freedman and white man might turn from a back-door encounter of the traditional sort to a strained man-to-man contact of the awkward new type within the same day. Black faces continued to appear at the back door, but they also began to appear in wholly unprecedented and unexpected places—in the jury box and on the judge's bench, in council chamber and legislative hall, at the polls and the market place. Neither of these contrasting types of contact, the old or the new, was stable or destined to endure for very long, but for a time old and new rubbed shoulders—and so did black and white—in a manner that differed significantly from Jim Crow of the future or slavery of the past.

...

It would be wrong to exaggerate the amount of interracial association and intimacy produced during Reconstruction or to misconstrue its character and meaning. If the intimacy of the old regime had its unhappy and painful aspects, so did that of the new order. Unlike the quality of mercy, it was strained. It was also temporary, and it was usually self-conscious. It was a product of contrived circumstances, and neither race had time to become fully accustomed to the change or feel natural in the relationship. Nevertheless, it would be a mistaken effort to equate this period in racial relations with either the old regime of slavery or with the future rule of Jim Crow. It was too exceptional. It is impossible to conceive of innumerable events and interracial experiments and contacts of the 1860s taking place in the 1900s. To attempt that would be to do violence to the nuances of history.

Source: Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, pp. 3-12, 17-18, 22, 25-26, 29.

1957—The Novel and “Blaxploitation Film” *Mandingo*

The term “blaxploitation film” refers to a genre of low-budget, highly stereotypical movies produced in the 1960s and 1970s featuring black actors. Although the movies earned the “blaxploitation” label by including little of artistic merit, they did represent a significant break in Hollywood depictions of black Americans. Unlike the previous movie portrayals of agreeable, unthreatening African-Americans, lead characters in blaxploitation films were independent, intelligent, and aggressive (often violently so), and struggled against various forms of racist oppression. Most of the movies were set in the northern urban ghetto, but some, such as *Mandingo*, focused on the rural South. *Mandingo* the novel was mainly a low-brow, exploitive rip-off of William Faulkner’s studies of the dark, violent underside of Southern race relations, particularly *Absalom, Absalom*. *Mandingo* set the fashion for sexually charged, romance-novel portrayals of the plantation South. The movie version, starring Perry King and Ken Norton, equaled the book’s artistic quality. The following discussion from the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* argues that despite their low standards, both book and film created an influential image within popular fiction of a sadistic plantation South.

Mandingo, a novel written by Kyle Onstott (1887-1966) and originally published by Denlinger's, a small Virginia publishing house, significantly recast the portrayal of the antebellum South in American popular fiction. The widely popular 1957 work, which one reviewer called “a slimy mess,” eschewed the moonlight-and-magnolias vision of the Old South in favor of an image liberally spiced with violence, racism, and miscegenation. The plot centered on the Maxwells, Warren and his son Hammond, and their interactions with slaves and neighbors. The Maxwell estate, the fictional Falconhurst Plantation, was, to quote the book, “the most unusual plantation in Alabama.” The unique nature of Falconhurst derived from its cash crop: instead of cotton or some other staple, slave breeding provided the Maxwells with a marketable commodity.

The *Mandingo* storyline, which became the standard for plantation fiction ever since, had Hammond Maxwell court and marry Blanche Woodford, a stereotype of the belle on the pedestal. Although Blanche was attractive, Hammond continued to lust after young slave women. Rejected by Hammond, Blanche sought sexual gratification with Mede, the pure Mandingo breeding stud whose only responsibilities on the plantation were impregnating slave women and wrestling for the amusement of his owners. When Hammond discovered the liaison between Blanche and Mede, he sadistically murdered both of them. In the world of Falconhurst Plantation it was acceptable for white men to share sexuality with black women, but it remained a sin of the gravest sort for a black man to so much as look at a white woman with desire in his eyes.

Wildly inaccurate from a historical perspective, *Mandingo* nevertheless remains one of the most popular plantation novels of all time. It is still in print, was made into a film in 1975, spawned scores of imitations, and, at last count, had inspired eight sequels. Collectively known as the “Falconhurst Series,” *Mandingo* and its sequels sold at least 30 million copies through 1980. Onstott's son once said that *Mandingo* had no significance and that it was “like eating peanuts.” Because of the book's overwhelming influence upon popular fiction, however, the mass understanding (or, rather, mass misunderstanding) of the nature of the antebellum South and of the American slave system has been greatly shaped by Onstott's vision of the Old South as a miasmic wasteland of vast plantations on which both masters and slaves engaged in orgiastic sex and sadistic violence.

Source: Geist, “*Mandingo*,” 3:221-222.

1977—The Television Drama *Roots*

In the 1960s, writer Alex Haley began a twelve-year quest to learn more about his maternal ancestors. He traced his lineage back to his fourth great-grandfather, Kunte Kinte, who had been kidnapped by slave traders in Gambia, West Africa, in 1767. Based on his research, Haley wrote the novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976). The book became a best-seller, won a Pulitzer Prize, and inspired the influential television drama, *Roots*. Both novel and miniseries depicted slavery as a cruel labor system. A new set of negative images of black Americans had been emerging in the national media since the 1960s – particularly focusing on the supposed laziness, immorality, and criminality of African-Americans. In response, *Roots* emphasized the strong familial ties and will to survive that developed among the oppressed. The following selection from the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* provides an overview of the phenomenal success of *Roots* and reviews the controversies surrounding its portrayal of slavery.

Roots, a landmark event in the history of television and in the media portrayal of the South, was based on Alex Haley's 1976 best-selling book of “faction” (Haley's words for his blend of fiction and history). Haley recounted his family's descent from Kunta Kinte, an African stolen into slavery in the 1760s. The 12-hour, ABC teleplay was presented on consecutive evenings, 23-30 January 1977.

Roots dramatized the social history of slavery and its impact on both master and slave as seen through the eyes of four generations of Haley ancestors. Never before had a mass audience been treated to such a realistic—and controversial—representation of slavery. Kinte, kidnapped from an Africa too idyllic in its portrayal, endured the debilitating passage on a slave ship only to be faced with additional cruelty while adjusting to enslavement on a Virginia plantation. He was viciously whipped until he renounced his African name in favor of “Toby,” and after he made an abortive escape attempt, his foot was severed by poor-white slave catchers. Over the generations, Kinte's progeny faced rape, beatings, family separations, insensitive masters, and numerous instances of degradation and racist brutality. Even after emancipation Haley's ancestors were tormented by sadistic Klansmen and the vagaries of the sharecropping system. Yet in the face of all this, their sense of familial continuity and pride endured and ultimately triumphed.

The success of the “miniseries” was enormous. ABC programming director Fred Silverman had scheduled the series over consecutive evenings for fear of low ratings, but he need not have worried. A.C. Nielson estimated that about 130 million Americans saw some portion of *Roots*. Astonishingly, the audience for the final episode was nearly half the population of the United States. Each program ranked in the top 13 most-viewed programs of all time, with the 30 January episode ironically unseating the 1976 telecast of *Gone with the Wind* for first place. Thus, *Roots*' neoabolitionist version of southern history symbolically and literally replaced the romantic and apologetic moonlight-and-magnolias imagery, which undoubtedly reached its zenith in *Gone with the Wind*. There is considerable disagreement over the cause of the unprecedented interest in *Roots*. Coming in the wake of the bicentennial celebrations, *Roots* may have touched a responsive chord in an audience predisposed to an interest in history. Haley's emphasis on tracing his family's origins, and his successful, though painstaking, efforts to uncover a personal heritage clouded by generations of enslavement demonstrated that genealogy was a fruitful and rewarding pursuit; thousands of Americans, urged on by *Roots*, began seeking their own family histories. Finally, as several television critics noted, *Roots* was a very gripping drama that synthesized several popular television formulas; the presentation, with its similarities to television soap opera particularly evident, was simply very fine television entertainment.

It is more difficult to assess the cultural meaning of the *Roots* phenomenon. Some, particularly black intellectuals, charged that *Roots* merely provided a rather painless means to expiate white guilt tied to generations of racism without confronting the audience with the complex of issues that continues to bedevil race relations in this country. Others criticized *Roots* as a corrective that went too far, a version of the past in which white characters were stereotyped even as earlier media presentations had stereotyped black characters and had trivialized the situations they faced. Although the audience was certainly treated to vivid and brutal scenes depicting slavery as a dehumanizing situation (*Time* magazine referred to *Roots* as “middle-of-the-road *Mandingo*”), many critics argued that slavery was even worse than the teleplay suggested. For example, slave quarters were depicted as rather more substantial and comfortable than most slaves would have known; then, too, the life of the field hands—the most common of American slaves—was almost totally missing from the presentations.

Still other observers worried that *Roots* had the uncanny impact of strengthening traditional stereotypes of black people, especially those that suggested a tendency toward resignation to misfortune and mistreatment. One black scholar, Robert Chrisman, noted that the final message of *Roots* seemed to suggest that survival by any means is the ultimate goal of life. The episodes certainly demonstrated the manner in which the slaves adopted masks in certain situations (some referred to this as “Tomming”), and it may indeed have been possible for viewers to misinterpret this intentional posturing as personal weakness rather than as attempts to “put one over on the master.”

The success of *Roots* led naturally to a sequel. Although Haley's book rapidly skimmed over the post-1880 years, he agreed to cooperate with executive producer David L. Wolper and producer Stan Margulies—both of whom worked on the original project—to develop *Roots: The Next Generations*. This 12-hour continuation, telecast 18-25 February 1979, was not as successful as the original but nonetheless fostered considerable viewer interest. *Roots II* remained the story of one family, but it was a bit more conscious of connecting the Haley history to social and cultural issues. Both miniseries were repeated on network television, were widely viewed in syndicated rerun and as part of college and public school courses, and were distributed in scores of other nations. Together these telecasts represent one of the most important forces in shaping the popular images of the American South in media history.

Source: Geist, "Roots," 3:232-234.

June 28, 1978—Justice Thurgood Marshall's Dissent in *Regents of the University of California v. Allan Bakke*

In the mid-1970s, the first major legal challenge to race-based affirmative action programs was made by Allan Bakke, a white applicant to the medical school of the University of California who was refused admission. Bakke sued, arguing that the admission of applicants of color with lower grade point averages and test scores constituted racial discrimination under the terms of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and other applicable legislation. The Supreme Court, which ruled on the case in 1978, did not offer a unified majority opinion, but did hand down Justice Lewis Powell's decision that while rigid racial quotas like the one being used by the University of California were unconstitutional, other mechanisms employed to consider race in the admissions process might be legal. Thurgood Marshall, the Court's first black Justice and the long-time leader in American civil rights law, wrote a dissenting opinion that defended affirmative action programs. Marshall argued that the long history of racial oppression in America had left blacks, despite better protection for their civic rights in recent years, in such a state of economic and social inferiority that vigorous state action was fully justified in remedying it. The following selection from Marshall's opinion summarizes the history of racial oppression in the United States beginning with slavery, and bitterly recalls the complicity of past Supreme Courts in upholding or encouraging it.

Three hundred and fifty years ago, the Negro was dragged to this country in chains to be sold into slavery. Uprooted from his homeland and thrust into bondage for forced labor, the slave was deprived of all legal rights. It was unlawful to teach him to read; he could be sold away from his family and friends at the whim of his master; and killing or maiming him was not a crime. The system of slavery brutalized and dehumanized both master and slave.

The denial of human rights was etched into the American colonies' first attempts at establishing self-government. When the colonists determined to seek their independence from England, they drafted a unique document cataloguing their grievances against the King and proclaiming as "self-evident" that "all men are created equal" and are endowed "with certain unalienable Rights," including those to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." . . .

The implicit protection of slavery embodied in the Declaration of Independence was made explicit in the Constitution, which treated a slave as being equivalent to three-fifths of a person for purpose of appointing representatives and taxes among the states. The Constitution also contained a clause ensuring that the "migration or importation" of slaves into the existing states would be legal until at least 1808, and a fugitive slave clause requiring that when a slave escaped to another State, he must be returned on the claim of the master. In their declaration of the principles that were to provide the cornerstone of the new Nation, therefore, the Framers made it plain that "we the people," for whose protection the Constitution was designed, did not include those whose skins were the wrong color

The individual States likewise established the machinery to protect the system of slavery through the promulgation of the Slave Codes, which were designed primarily to defend the property interest of the owner in his slave. The position of the Negro slave as mere property was confirmed by this Court in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, holding that the Missouri Compromise – which prohibited slavery in the portion of the Louisiana Purchase Territory north of Missouri – was unconstitutional because it deprived slave owners of their property without due process. The Court declared that under the Constitution a slave was property, and "[t]he right to traffic in it, like an ordinary article of merchandise and property, was guarantied to the citizens of the United States." The Court further concluded that Negroes were not intended to be included as citizens under the Constitution but were "regarded as beings of an inferior order ... altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect"

B

The status of the Negro as property was officially erased by his emancipation at the end of the Civil War. But the long awaited emancipation, while freeing the Negro from slavery, did not bring him citizenship or equality in any meaningful way. Slavery was replaced by a system of "laws which imposed upon the colored race onerous disabilities and burdens, and curtailed their rights in the pursuit of life, liberty, and property to such an extent that their freedom was of little value." Despite the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, the Negro was systematically denied the rights those amendments were supposed to secure. The combined actions and inactions of the

State and Federal Government maintained Negroes in a position of legal inferiority for another century after the Civil War.

The Southern States took the first steps to re-enslave the Negroes. Immediately following the end of the Civil War, many of the provisional legislatures passed Black Codes, similar to Slave Codes, which, among other things, limited the rights of Negroes to own or rent property and permitted imprisonment for breach of employment contracts. Over the next several decades the South managed to disenfranchise the Negroes in spite of the Fifteenth Amendment by various techniques, including poll taxes, deliberately complicated balloting process, property and literacy qualifications, and finally the white primary.

Congress responded to the legal disabilities being imposed in the Southern States by passing the Reconstruction Acts and the Civil Rights Acts. Congress also responded to the needs of the Negroes at the end of the Civil War by establishing the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, better known as the Freedmen's Bureau, to supply food, hospitals, land and education to the newly freed slaves. Thus for a time it seemed as if the Negro might be protected from the continued denial of his civil rights and might be relieved of the disabilities that prevented him from taking his place as a free and equal citizen.

That time, however, was short-lived. Reconstruction came to a close, and, with the assistance of this Court, the Negro was rapidly stripped of his new Civil Rights

The Court began by interpreting the Civil War Amendments in a manner that sharply curtailed their substantive protections [I]n the notorious *Civil Rights Cases*, the Court strangled Congress' efforts to use its power to promote racial equality. In those cases the Court invalidated sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 that made it a crime to deny equal access to "inns, public conveyances . . . theaters, and other places of public amusement." According to the Court, the Fourteenth Amendment gave Congress the power to prescribe only discriminatory action by the State. The Court ruled that the Negroes who were excluded from public places suffered only an invasion of their social rights at the hands of private individuals, and Congress had no power to remedy that. "When a man has emerged from slavery, and by the aid of beneficent legislation has shaken off the inseparable concomitants of that state," the Court concluded, "there must be some state in the progress of his elevation when he takes the rank of a mere citizen, and ceases to be the special favorite of the laws" As Justice Harlan noted in dissent, however, the Civil War Amendments and Civil Rights Acts did not make the Negroes the "special favorite" of the laws but instead "sought to accomplish in reference to that race . . . what had already been done in every State of the Union for the White race – to secure and protect rights belonging to them as freemen and citizens; nothing more."

The Court's ultimate blow to the Civil War Amendments and to the equality of Negroes came in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In upholding a Louisiana law that required railway companies to provide "equal but separate" accommodations for whites and Negroes, the Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment was not intended "to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either." Ignoring totally the realities of the positions of the two races, the Court remarked:

We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it.

Mr. Justice Harlan's dissenting opinion recognized the bankruptcy of the Court's reasoning. He noted that the "real meaning" of the legislation was "that colored citizens are so inferior and degraded that they cannot be allowed to sit in public coaches occupied by white citizens." He expressed his fear that if like laws were enacted in other States, "the effect would be in the highest degree mischievous." Although slavery would have disappeared, the States would retain the power "to interfere with the full enjoyment of the blessings of freedom; to regulate civil rights, common to all citizens, upon the basis of race; and to place in a condition of legal inferiority a large body of American citizens."

The fears of Mr. Justice Harlan were soon to be realized. In the wake of Plessy, many States expanded their Jim Crow laws, which had up until that time been limited primarily to passenger trains and schools. The segregation of the races was extended to residential areas, parks, hospitals, theaters, waiting rooms and bathrooms. There were even statutes and ordinances which authorized separate phone booths for Negroes and whites, which required that textbooks used by children of one race be kept separate from those used by the other, and which required that Negro and white prostitutes be kept in separate districts

Nor were the laws restricting the rights of Negroes limited solely to the Southern States. In many of the Northern States, the Negro was denied the right to vote, prevented from serving on juries and excluded from theaters, restaurants, hotels, and inns. Under President Wilson, the Federal Government began to require segregation in Government buildings; desks of Negro employees were curtained off; separate bathrooms and separate tables in the cafeteria were provided; and even the galleries of the Congress were segregated. When his segregationist policies were attacked, President Wilson responded that segregation as "not humiliating but a benefit" and that he was "rendering [the Negroes] more safe in their possession of office and less likely to be discriminated against"

The enforced segregation of the races continued into the middle of the 20th Century. In both World Wars, Negroes were for the most part confined to separate military units; it was not until 1948 that an end to segregation in the military was ordered by President Truman. And the history of the exclusion of Negro children from white public schools is too well known and recent to require repeating here. That Negroes were deliberately excluded from public graduate and professional schools – and thereby denied the opportunity to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, and the like – is also well established. It is of course true that some of the Jim Crow laws (which the decisions of this Court had helped to foster) were struck down by this Court in a series of decisions leading up to *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* Those decisions, however, did not automatically end segregation, nor did they move Negroes from a position of legal inferiority to one of equality. The legacy of years of slavery and of years of second-class citizenship in the wake of emancipation could not be so easily eliminated.

II

The position of the Negro today in America is the tragic but inevitable consequence of centuries of unequal treatment. Measured by any benchmark of comfort or achievement, meaningful equality remains a distant dream for the Negro.

A Negro child today has a life expectancy which is shorter by more than five years than that of a white child. The Negro child's mother is over three times more likely to die of complications in childbirth, and the infant mortality rate for Negroes is nearly twice that for whites. The median income of the Negro family is only 60% that of the median of a white family, and the percentage of Negroes who live in families with incomes below the poverty line is nearly four times greater than that of whites.

When the Negro child reaches working age, he finds that America offers him significantly less than it offers his white counterpart. For Negro adults, the unemployment rate is twice that of whites, and the unemployment rate for Negro teenagers is nearly three times that of white teenagers. A Negro male who completes four years of college can expect a median annual income of merely \$110 more than a white male who has only a high school diploma. Although Negroes represent 11.5% of the population, they are only 1.2% of the lawyers and judges, 2% of the physicians, 2.3% of the dentists, 1.1% of the engineers and 2.6% of the college and university professors.

The relationship between those figures and the history of unequal treatment afforded to the Negro cannot be denied. At every point from birth to death the impact of the past is reflected in the still disfavored position of the Negro.

In the light of the sorry history of discrimination and its devastating impact on the lives of Negroes, bringing the Negro into the mainstream of American life should be a state interest of the highest order. To fail to do so is to ensure that America will forever remain a divided society.

III

I do not believe that the Fourteenth Amendment requires us to accept that fate. Neither its history nor our past cases lend any support to the conclusion that a University may not remedy the cumulative effects of society's discrimination by giving consideration to race in an effort to increase the number and percentage of Negro doctors.

Source: Carson et al., eds., *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader*, pp. 639-646.

1987—Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Toni Morrison did not expect her fifth novel, *Beloved*, to become a best-seller. Based loosely on a true account of an escaped slave woman's experience, *Beloved* is a haunting story about slavery and infanticide that emphasizes the emotional scars left by slavery. The central character is a woman named Sethe. When the book begins, it is 1873 and Sethe, a former slave, lives with her daughter Denver outside of Cincinnati, Ohio. Shortly after Sethe arrived there as a nineteen-year-old fugitive in 1855, she killed her infant daughter and attempted to murder her two young sons when slave catchers showed up to return them all to "Sweet Home," their former plantation in Kentucky. Before Sethe escaped, "Sweet Home" had fallen under the direction of a cruel man

(“schoolteacher”) who viewed and literally treated the slaves as animals. Needless to say, during the eighteen years since her escape, Sethe has attempted to forget the trauma of enslavement and murder, but has not been wholly successful, in large part because her house is occupied by a ghost believed to be the spirit of her murdered baby.

As the book opens, Paul D, another former slave from “Sweet Home,” arrives on the scene. With Paul D, Sethe reluctantly and haltingly recalls her days at “Sweet Home” and her escape from slavery. Paul D, who was sold after his planned escape from “Sweet Home” was uncovered, also relives his past. In addition, he apparently manages to banish the baby-spirit from Sethe’s house. The spirit returns, however, in the form of a young woman named Beloved—the one word that Sethe put on her deceased baby’s gravestone. Yet, at the same time, the character of Beloved is meant to represent an African woman who survived the Middle Passage. (Morrison dedicated her novel to the “Sixty Million and more” who died while waiting to board slave ships or perished during the Middle Passage.) Sethe becomes obsessed with Beloved, but finally reluctantly gives her up and is no longer consumed by guilt over the murder. Having shared their sorrows rooted in slavery, Sethe and Paul D are ready to build a life together as the novel ends.

The following selection takes place after Sethe’s reunion with Paul D. He has suggested that she leave her haunted house, and she thinks about why she could never do that. Her thoughts jump to memories of “Sweet Home,” her former mistress Mrs. Garner, her husband Halle, and her mother-in-law Baby Suggs, whose freedom Halle purchased by working extra on Saturdays, Sundays, and in the evenings.

This house he told her to leave as though a house was a little thing—a shirtwaist or a sewing basket you could walk off from or give away any old time. She who had never had one but this one; she who left a dirt floor to come to this one; she who had to bring a fistful of salsify into Mrs. Garner’s kitchen every day just to be able to work in it, feel like some part of it was hers, because she wanted to love the work she did, to take the ugly out of it, and the only way she could feel at home on Sweet Home was if she picked some pretty growing thing and took it with her. The day she forgot was the day butter wouldn’t come or the brine in the barrel blistered her arms.

At least it seemed so. A few yellow flowers on the table, some myrtle tied around the handle of the flatiron holding the door open for a breeze calmed her, and when Mrs. Garner and she sat down to sort bristle, or make ink, she felt fine. Fine. Not scared of the men beyond. The five who slept in quarters near her, but never came in at night. Just touched the raggedy hats then they saw her and stared. And if she brought food to them in the fields, bacon and bread wrapped in a piece of clean sheeting, they never took it from her hands. They stood back and waited for her to put it on the ground (at the foot of a tree) and leave. Either they did not want to take anything from her, or did not want her to see them eat. Twice or three times she lingered. Hidden behind honeysuckle she watched them. How different they were without her, how they laughed and played and urinated and sang. All but Sixo, who laughed once—at the very end. Halle, of course, was the nicest. Baby Suggs’ eighth and last child, who rented himself all over the county to buy her away from there. But he too, as it turned out, was nothing but a man.

“A man ain’t nothing but a man,” said Baby Suggs. “But a son? Well now, that’s *somebody*.”

It made sense for a lot of reasons because in all of Baby’s life, as well as Sethe’s own, men and women were moved around like checkers. Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn’t run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen, or seized. So Baby’s eight children had six fathers. What she called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children. Halle she was able to keep the longest. Twenty years. A lifetime. Given to her, no doubt, to make up for *hearing* that her two girls, neither of whom had their adult teeth, were sold and gone and she had not been able to wave goodbye. To make up for coupling with a straw boss for four months in exchange for keeping her third child, a boy, with her—only to have him traded for lumber in the spring of the next year and to find herself pregnant by the man who promised not to and did. That child she could not love and the rest she would not. “God take what He would,” she said. And He did, and He did, and He did and then gave her Halle who gave her freedom when it didn’t mean a thing.

Sethe had the amazing luck of six whole years of marriage to that “somebody” son who had fathered every one of her children. A blessing she was reckless enough to take for granted, lean on, as though Sweet Home really was one. As though a handful of myrtle stuck in the handle of a pressing iron propped against the door in a whitewoman’s kitchen could make it hers. As though mint sprig in the mouth changed the breath as well as its odor. A bigger fool never lived.

Before she escaped from “Sweet Home,” Sethe sent ahead her two sons and baby daughter to her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, in Ohio. Although six months pregnant and recently sexually assaulted by two white boys (who took the milk out of her leaking breasts while “schoolteacher” made notes) and then whipped so hard that she bit off part of her tongue, Sethe fled shortly after sending her children off. Her husband, Halle, and the other male slaves at “Sweet Home,” however, did not make it out. While en route to freedom, Sethe gave birth to her daughter, Denver. In the following selection, Denver immerses herself in the story of her mother’s escape and her encounter with the young white girl, Amy Denver, who helped deliver the baby.

And to get to the part of the story she liked best, she had to start way back: hear the birds in the thick woods, the crunch of leaves underfoot; see her mother making her way up into the hills where no houses were likely to be. How Sethe was walking on two feet meant for standing still. How they were so swollen she could not see her arch or feel her ankles. Her leg shaft ended in a loaf of flesh scalloped by five toenails. But she could not, would not, stop, for when she did the little antelope rammed her with horns and pawed the ground of her womb with impatient hooves. While she was walking, it seemed to graze, quietly—so she walked, on two feet meant, in this sixth month of pregnancy, for standing still. Still, near a kettle; still, at the churn; still, at the tub and ironing board. Milk, sticky and sour on her dress, attracted every small flying thing from gnats to grasshoppers. By the time she reached the hill skirt she had long ago stopped

waving them off. The clanging in her head, begun as a churchbell heard from a distance, was by then a tight cap of pealing bells around her ears. She sank and had to look down to see whether she was in a hole or kneeling. Nothing was alive but her nipples and the little antelope. Finally, she was horizontal—or must have been because blades of wild onion were scratching her temple and her cheek. Concerned as she was for the life of her children’s mother, Sethe told Denver, she remembered thinking: “Well, at least I don’t have to take another step.” A dying thought if ever there was one, and she waited for the little antelope to protest, and why she thought of an antelope Sethe could not imagine since she had never seen one. She guessed it must have been an invention held on to from before Sweet Home, when she was very young. Of that place where she was born (Carolina maybe? or was it Louisiana?) she remembered only song and dance. Not even her own mother, who was pointed out to her by the eight-year-old child who watched over the young ones—pointed out as the one among many backs turned away from her, stooping in a watery field. Patiently Sethe waited for this particular back to gain the row’s end and stand. What she saw was a cloth hat as opposed to a straw one, singularity enough in that world of cooing women each of whom was called Ma’am.

“Seth—thuh.”

“Ma’am.”

“Hold on to the baby.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Seth—thuh.”

“Ma’am.”

“Get some kindlin in here.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

Oh but when they sang. And oh but when they danced and sometimes they danced the antelope. The men as well as the ma’ams, one of whom was certainly her own. They shifted shapes and became something other. Some unchained, demanding other whose feet knew her pulse better than she did. Just like this one in her stomach.

“I believe this baby’s ma’am is gonna die in wild onions on the bloody side of the Ohio River.” That’s what was on her mind and what she told Denver. Her exact words. And it didn’t seem such a bad idea, all in all, in view of the step she would not have to take, but the thought of herself stretched out dead while the little antelope lived on—an hour? a day? a day and a night?—in her lifeless body grieved her so she made the groan that made the person walking on the path not ten yards away halt and stand right still. Sethe had not heard the walking, but suddenly she heard the standing still and then she smelled the hair. The voice, saying, “Who’s in there?” was all she need to know that she was about to be discovered by a whiteboy. That he too had mossy teeth, an appetite. That on a ridge of pine near the Ohio River, trying to get to her three children, one of whom was starving for the food she carried; that after her husband had disappeared; that after her milk had been stolen, her back pulped, her children orphaned, she was not to have an easeful death. No.

She told Denver that a *something* came up out of the earth into her—like a freezing, but moving too, like jaws inside. “Look like I was just cold jaws grinding,” she said. Suddenly she was eager for his eyes, to bite into them; to gnaw his cheek.

“I was hungry,” she told Denver, “just as hungry as I could be for his eyes. I couldn’t wait.”

So she raised up on her elbow and dragged herself, one pull, two, three, four, toward the young white voice talking about “Who that back in there?”

“‘Come see,’ I was thinking. ‘Be the last thing you behold,’ and sure enough here come the feet so I thought well that’s where I’ll have to start God do what He would, I’m gonna eat his feet off. I’m laughing now, but it’s true. I wasn’t just set to do it. I was hungry to do it. Like a snake. All jaws and hungry.

“It wasn’t no whiteboy at all. Was a girl. The raggediest-looking trash you ever saw, saying, ‘Look there. A nigger. If that don’t beat all.’”

And now the part Denver loved best:

Her name was Amy and she need beef and pot liquor like nobody in this world. Arms like cane stalks and enough hair for four or five heads. Slow-moving eyes. She didn’t look at anything quick. Talked so much it wasn’t clear how she could breathe at the same time. And those cane-stalk arms, as it turned out, were as strong as iron.

“You ’bout the scariest-looking something I ever seen. What you doing back up in here?”

Down in the grass, like the snake she believed she was, Sethe opened her mouth, and instead of fangs and a split tongue, out shot the truth.

“Running,” Sethe told her. It was the first word she had spoken all day and it came out thick because of her tender tongue.

After he was caught trying to escape “Sweet Home,” Paul D was shackled and had a bit placed in his mouth and a spiked collar latched around his neck. In the following selection, he tells Sethe about it, recounting for the first time his experience of being led off the plantation. What had galled him the most was his realization that an ornery rooster was freer than he was.

He wants to tell me, she thought. He wants me to ask him about what it was like for him—about how offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it. She already knew about it, had seen it time after time in the place before Sweet Home. Men, boys, little girls, women. The wildness that shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back. Days after it was taken out, goose fat was rubbed on the corners of the mouth but nothing to soothe the tongue or take the wildness out of the eye.

Sethe looked up into Paul D’s eyes to see if there was any trace left in them.

“People I saw as a child,” she said, “who’d had the bit always looked wild after that. Whatever they used it on them for, it couldn’t have worked, because it put a wildness where before there wasn’t any. When I look at you, I don’t see it. There ain’t no wildness in your eye nowhere.”

“There’s a way to put it there and there’s a way to take it out. I know em both and I haven’t figured out which is worse.” He sat down beside her. Sethe looked at him. In that unlit daylight his face, bronzed and reduced to its bones, smoothed her heart down.

“You want to tell me about it?” she asked him.

“I don’t know. I never have talked about it. Not to a soul. Sang it sometimes, but I never told a soul.”

“Go ahead. I can hear it.”

“Maybe. Maybe you can hear it. I just ain’t sure I can say it. Say it right, I mean, because it wasn’t the bit—that wasn’t it.”

“What then?” Sethe asked.

“The roosters,” he said. “Walking past the roosters looking at them look at me.”

Sethe smiled. “In that pine?”

“Yeah,” Paul D smiled with her. “Must have been five of them perched up there, and at least fifty hens.”

“Mister, too?”

“Not right off. But I hadn’t took twenty steps before I seen him. He come down off the fence post there and sat on the tub.”

“He loved that tub,” said Sethe, thinking, No, there is no stopping now.

“Didn’t he? Like a throne. Was me took him out the shell, you know. He’d a died if it hadn’t been for me. The hen had walked on off with all the hatched peeps trailing behind her. There was this one egg left. Looked like a blank, but then I saw it move so I tapped it open and here come Mister, bad feet and all. I watched that son a bitch grow up and whup everything in the yard.”

“He always was hateful,” Sethe said.

“Yeah, he was hateful all right. Bloody too, and evil. Crooked feet flapping. Comb as big as my hand and some kind of red. He sat right there on the tub looking at me. I swear he smiled. My head was full of what I’d seen of Halle a while back. I wasn’t even thinking about the bit. Just Halle and before him Sixo, but when I saw Mister I knew it was me too. Not just them, me too. One crazy, one sold, one missing, one burnt and me licking iron with my hands crossed behind me. The last of the Sweet Home men.

“Mister, he looked so . . . free. Better than me. Stronger, tougher. Son a bitch couldn’t even get out of the shell by hisself but he was still king and I was . . .” Paul D stopped and squeezed his left hand with his right. He held it that way long enough for it and the world to quiet down and let him go on.

“Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn’t allowed to be and stay what I was. Even if you cooked him you’d be cooking a rooster named Mister. But wasn’t no way I’d ever be Paul D again, living or dead. Schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub.

Sethe put her hand on his knee and rubbed.

Paul D had only begun, what he was telling her was only the beginning when her fingers on his knee, soft and reassuring, stopped him. Just as well. Just as well. Saying more might push them both to a place they couldn’t get back from. He would keep the rest where it belonged: in that tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be. Its lid rusted shut. He would not pry it loose now in front of this sweet sturdy woman, for if she got a whiff of its contents it would shame him. And it would hurt her to know that there was no red heart bright as Mister’s comb beating in him.

Sethe rubbed and rubbed, pressing the work cloth and the stony curves that made up his knee. She hoped it calmed him as it did her. Like kneading bread in the half-light of the restaurant kitchen. Before the cook arrived when she stood in a space no wider than a bench is long, back behind and to the left of the milk cans. Working dough.

Working, working dough. Nothing better than that to start the day's serious work of beating back the past.

In the following selection, Sethe relates to Paul D how sweet her successful escape from slavery had been. He in turn is prompted to think of his days on a chain gang in Georgia, where he slept in a tiny cell and was brutally treated by the guards. Sethe tries to explain why she could not let her children return to "Sweet Home," as she relives the day she killed her daughter.

"I don't have to tell you about Sweet Home—what it was—but maybe you don't know what it was like for me to get away from there."

Covering the lower half of her face with her palms, she paused to consider again the size of the miracle; its flavor.

"I did it. I got us all out. Without Halle too. Up till then it was the only thing I ever did on my own. Decided. And it came off right, like it was supposed to. We was here. Each and every one of my babies and me too. I birthed them and I got them out and it wasn't no accident. I did that. I had help, of course, lots of that, but still it was me doing it; me saying, *Go on*, and *Now*. Me having to look out. Me using my own head. But it was more than that. It was a kind of selfishness I never knew nothing about before. It felt good. Good and right. I was big, Paul D, and deep and wide and when I stretched out my arms all my children could get in between. I was *that* wide. Look like I loved em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn't love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn't mine to love. But when I got here, when I jumped down off that wagon—there wasn't nobody in the world I couldn't love if I wanted to. You know what I mean?"

Paul D did not answer because she didn't expect or want him to, but he did know what she meant. Listening to the doves in Alfred, Georgia, and having neither the right nor the permission to enjoy it because in that place mist, doves, sunlight, copper dirt, moon—everything belonged to the men who had the guns. Little men, some of them, big men too, each one of whom he could snap like a twig if he wanted to. Men who knew their manhood lay in their guns and were not even embarrassed by the knowledge that without gunshot fox would laugh at them. And these "men" who made even vixen laugh could, if you let them, stop you from hearing doves or loving moonlight. So you protected yourself and loved small. Picked the tiniest stars out of the sky to own; lay down with head twisted in order to see the loved one over the rim of the trench before you slept. Stole shy glances at her between the trees at chain-up. Grass blades, salamanders, spiders, woodpeckers, beetles, a kingdom of ants. Anything bigger wouldn't do. A woman, a child, a brother—a big love like that would split you wide open in Alfred, Georgia. He knew exactly what she meant: to get to a place where you could love anything you chose—not to need permission for desire—well now, *that* was freedom.

Circling, circling, now she was gnawing something else instead of getting to the point.

"There was this piece of goods Mrs. Garner gave me. Calico. Stripes it had with little flowers in between. 'Bout a yard—not enough for more 'n a head tie. But I been wanting to make a shift for my girl with it. Had the prettiest colors. I don't even know that you call that a color: a rose but with yellow in it.

For the longest time I been meaning to make it for her but do you know like a fool I left it behind? No more than a yard, and I kept putting it off because I was tired or didn't have the time. So when I got here, even before they let me get out of bed, I stitched her a little something from a piece of cloth Baby Suggs had. Well, all I'm saying is that's a selfish pleasure I never had before. I couldn't let all that go back to where it was, and I couldn't let her nor any of em live under schoolteacher. That was out."

Sethe knew that the circle she was making around the room, him, the subject, would remain one. That she could never close in, pin down for anybody who had to ask. If they didn't get it right off—she could never explain. Because the truth was simple, not a long drawn-out record of flowered shifts, tree cages, selfishness, ankle ropes and wells. Simple: she was squatting in the garden and when she saw them coming and recognized schoolteacher's hat, she heard wings. Little hummingbirds stuck their needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings. And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nonono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them. Over there. Outside this place, where they would be safe. And the hummingbird wings beat on.

Source: Morrison, *Beloved*, pp. 22-24, 29-32, 71-73, 161-163.

1997—Annette Gordon-Reed's *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*

In 1997 Annette Gordon-Reed published a thorough analysis of the controversy over whether or not Thomas Jefferson had a long-term sexual relationship with Sally Hemings, a mulatto slave who was his deceased wife's half-sister, and fathered five children by her. A legal scholar, Gordon-Reed reviewed how historians have treated allegations of the liaison, which first surfaced during Jefferson's lifetime. She determined that most historians who had discussed the subject in depth had failed to give all of the evidence surrounding the controversy due consideration. In particular, she argued that the oral history of the Hemings family had been routinely dismissed by historians who claimed that no relationship existed.

Believing that only DNA research could settle the matter, Gordon-Reed did not set out to prove or disprove that a liaison took place, but to present as strongly as possible the evidence that supports the possibility of a long-term affair, including Madison Hemings's claim to be the son of Thomas Jefferson, Israel Jefferson's corroboration of Madison Hemings's statement, John Hartwell Cocke's statement that Jefferson had a slave mistress, James Callender's assertion corroborating Madison Hemings's statement, Hemings's conceptions and Jefferson's proximity, the resemblance of Sally Hemings's children to Thomas Jefferson, Jefferson's indulgent treatment of Sally Hemings's children, and the freeing of Sally Hemings.

The following excerpts from Gordon-Reed's book summarize her arguments about historical treatment of

the issue and review some of the evidence in favor of a relationship between Jefferson and Hemings.

When all of the items of evidence offered to support Thomas Jefferson's involvement with Sally Hemings have been examined, it appears that the standard for judging them has been manipulated. As a result, the quantum of evidence that exists to support the notion has been seriously underestimated. At the same time, an alternative theory--that the Carr brothers were responsible--has been offered to counter the claim that Jefferson fathered Hemings's children, and the worth of the evidence cited to support that claim has been overestimated. By comparing historians' treatment of the two theories, one can assess the wisdom of trusting their pronouncements that Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings were not involved in a long-term relationship. The extent to which individual prejudices and preferences influence the writing of history also becomes evident.

Proponents of the Carr brothers theory and opponents of the notion that Jefferson fathered Sally Hemings's children have had their say to the fullest extent. The opposing viewpoint, for fairness' sake, needs to be summarized. This is done not to prove or disprove the allegation definitively, because I do not believe that can be accomplished through this medium. Nor do I believe that definitive proof is required, for it is plainly not the case that all things taken as historical truths are based upon what could be called definitive proof. The purpose of this summary is to try to present the strongest case to be made that the story might be true. Doing this serves to demonstrate the lack of seriousness and care with which Jefferson scholars approached the task of considering this issue. As a result of their efforts over the past thirty-odd years, members of the public who know anything at all about this matter probably believe that the sum total of the evidence that supports the story is:

1. The statement of a disgruntled office seeker who invented the story that Thomas Jefferson had a slave mistress.
2. The memoirs of a simpleminded black man induced by a northern carpetbagger to say that he was the son of Thomas Jefferson.
3. Fawn Brodie's assertion that she thought that Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings had a long-term liaison because Thomas Jefferson used the word *mulatto* an inordinate number of times in the travel diary he kept on a trip through Europe after Sally Hemings joined him in Paris in 1787.

But that is not all there is.

Items Supporting the Assertion That Thomas Jefferson Fathered Sally Hemings's Children

Madison Hemings's Claim to Be the Son of Thomas Jefferson

As we approach the beginning of a new century, it is time to lay to rest the allegation that an individual who had been involved with the abolitionist movement either invented the notion that Madison Hemings was the son of Thomas Jefferson or put Madison Hemings up to saying that he was. That myth, dubious to begin with, can now be established as having no historical validity.

A newspaper report shows that as early as the 1840s, three decades before S.F. Wetmore interviewed Madison Hemings, the alleged parentage of Eston Hemings and

Madison Hemings was spoken of in the area of Ohio where the two men lived. There are reports of conversations that members of the community had with Eston Hemings about the matter during that same period. Eston Hemings was a celebrity there as the leader of a small band, before he left Ohio for Wisconsin in 1852. The talk of his parentage arose, not as part of an abolitionist strategy, but for the same reason that people gossip about celebrities today: curiosity about the private lives of entertainers.

Not only did Madison Hemings claim to be Jefferson's son; his brother Eston did as well. The evidence indicates that the claim was made long before S.F. Wetmore made contact with Madison Hemings. Eston Hemings had left Ohio and been dead almost twenty years before Wetmore arrived in Pike County. Moreover, oral history from both men's families, individuals who had lost touch with one another from one side vaulted over the color line, establishes that this story was a part of Hemings family history and did not originate with S.F. Wetmore.

...

Hemings's Conceptions and Jefferson's Proximity

Hemings's pattern of conceiving children (and not conceiving them) can be tied to Jefferson's presence at and absences from Monticello. Jefferson can be placed at Monticello during the time periods when Sally Hemings conceived each of her children. This is an item of circumstantial evidence that should be weighed along with the items of direct evidence. It is only circumstantial because even if we know that this [is] true, there are additional steps of reasoning or items of information that must be advanced before those circumstances can be said to prove the proposition.

There is no evidence placing the other putative lovers of Hemings--the Carr brothers--at Monticello during the relevant time periods when the children would most likely have been conceived, although the Carr brothers did live in the vicinity of the plantation. Hemings never conceived a child when Jefferson was not in residence at Monticello. During the years that she was having children, Jefferson was often away from Monticello for many consecutive months, usually between six to eight months at a time. This raises the questions of why over a fifteen-year-period the Carr brothers were unable to father children during those months, and why they regained that capacity to do so only upon Jefferson's return to Monticello, even for short visits. The improbability of that scenario advances the circumstantial evidence about the relationship between Jefferson's presence at Monticello and Hemings's conceptions of children toward proof of Madison Hemings's proposition.

...

The Treatment of Sally Hemings's Children

One of the first things anyone would want to know is whether Jefferson treated the children of Sally Hemings any differently. When one says differently, one means to ask if they were treated any better. The answer appears to be yes. With Sally Hemings's children, Jefferson seems to have strayed from his work plan for young slaves. Madison

Hemings stated that until they were put to a trade, he and his siblings spent their time running errands or with their mother. There is no evidence that Beverley Hemings, the son who would have been eligible to work in Jefferson's nail factory when he turned ten, did so before he was listed as a tradesman at age twelve. Jamey Hemings, son of Sally Hemings's sister Critta and grandson of Elizabeth Hemings, did work in the nail factory, one of the most debilitating tasks on the plantation. Instead, Beverley, Madison, and Eston went to early apprenticeships with the best slave artisan at Monticello, John Hemings.

Beverley was seven years older than Madison and ten years older than Eston, and at the appropriate time Jefferson made the same decision for each one, despite the passage of years. It seems as though Jefferson had a definite plan for these young people that did not vary. Harriet Hemings did not begin to work as a weaver until age fourteen, four years after other girls on the plantation. Even though these four people were individuals, they were also part of a single unit, a group of siblings.

The timing of the freeing of Sally Hemings's children tracks strongly with the alleged promise that Madison Hemings said Jefferson made to Hemings about when her children would be freed. The strongest evidence for a relationship between Jefferson and Hemings is what happened to Hemings's children. They all left Monticello at age twenty-one or, in the case of Beverley, two years after his twenty-first birthday, the same year that Harriet Hemings turned twenty-one. Beverley's delay may provide an answer to the concern about whether the extremely paternalistic Jefferson would have sent a twenty-one-year-old woman who had lived on a farm all of her life off alone to a big city. Jefferson's records indicate that Beverley left in 1822 before Harriet; she may have been sent to meet her older brother.

That these four siblings' freedom was tied to their coming of age is significant because Jefferson freed no other slave in this fashion. The other people he freed were older men who had rendered valuable services to him over the years. Jefferson's freeing of Harriet Hemings, the lone female among the group, was carried out under circumstances that suggest a high degree of involvement on his part. The only female slave that Jefferson ever freed was the daughter of Sally Hemings.

...

The Freeing of Sally Hemings

It is unclear how Sally Hemings obtained her freedom. Madison Hemings did not mention any promise on the part of Jefferson to free her, simply saying that shortly after Jefferson's death, he and his brother took their mother to live with them. Perhaps her freedom was never an issue. In any event, it is not difficult to understand why it would make more sense for Sally Hemings's freedom to be achieved through informal means. Why reopen a scandal in so spectacular a fashion as putting Sally Hemings's name in Jefferson's will, when the desired result could be achieved by other means? The most important thing that Jefferson did in his will with respect to the Hemingses was to ensure that Madison and Eston would have the legal right to remain in Virginia. They could work and move about without fear of exile. Their freedom and status gave protection to

their mother, who by the standards of the day was an old woman and therefore much less likely to be bothered.

...

Jefferson and Hemings: The Public View

At various times since James Callender first published the allegation that Sally Hemings was Thomas Jefferson's mistress, historians and commentators have noted with dismay that Americans appeared to be on the verge of accepting the story as a part of history. Henry Randall, in his three-volume biography of Jefferson published in 1858, voiced the concern that the story was "beginning to pass into pseudo 'history.'" During the 1950s and 1960s, as blacks began to question the available version of United States history, they looked to the testimony of blacks as a way of creating a more balanced view of that history. Madison Hemings's statement, along with those of various other descendants of the Hemings family, provided that kind of evidence. With the appearance of these statements, the story of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings gained currency among some blacks and other supporters of the idea that history should include the perspectives of blacks and other minorities. Douglas Wilson has noted that college professors of today are surprised to find that their students accept the story of the Jefferson-Hemings relationship as fact.

Indeed, it appears that there have been, probably from 1802 until today, a number of Americans who want to believe the story is true. Randall's statement, the reemergence of the story in the 1960s, and the speed with which Fawn Brodie's biography of Jefferson and Barbara Chase-Riboud's novel about Sally Hemings flew off the bookshelves support this. For whatever reason, the desire to believe this story persists.

While writing this book, I had a conversation with a journalist who had written a critical review of the movie *Jefferson in Paris*, which accepted the truth of the Jefferson-Hemings liaison. After he had, without realizing it, confirmed all of my suspicions about the way members of the public have been misled about this story, he asked me why I thought that the story had survived, despite all efforts of Jefferson scholars to kill it. I could only reply that I didn't know why members of the public seem so attached to the story. I said something about metaphors and Jefferson as representative of the American psyche at given periods in history, basically a quick version of Merrill Peterson's *Jefferson Image in the American Mind*.

After more thought on the matter, I have come to the conclusion that one answer to this question, with different components, stands out to me. It seems that some people may believe in the Jefferson-Hemings liaison because they have a particular view of human beings, and they seem determined to see Thomas Jefferson as a part of the species both as a slaveholder and as a man. It is possible that most people do not accept the romantic vision of the southern slaveholding gentleman that some modern historians claim to discount but rely upon much more than they may realize. The image of a set of gentlemen with particularly heightened sensibilities and characters is hard to reconcile with these men's involvement with a degrading and cruel social and economic system. This does not mean that there was no such thing as a southern gentleman. It means that even those who fit that term were human beings in whom the capacity for good and for

bad was always present and those capacities must be considered in light of the society in which they lived.

Source: Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, pp. 210-229.

1998—DNA Evidence Links Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings

In late October 1998 Eugene A. Foster and others issued a report on the findings of their study to determine if Thomas Jefferson fathered any or all of Sally Hemings's children. Foster notes that "Because most of the Y chromosome is passed unchanged from father to son, apart from occasional mutations, DNA analysis of the Y chromosome can reveal whether or not individuals are likely to be male-line relatives. We therefore analysed DNA from the Y chromosomes of: five male-line descendants of two sons of the president's paternal uncle, Field Jefferson; five male-line descendants of two sons of Thomas Woodson; one male-line descendant of Eston Hemings Jefferson; and three male-line descendants of three sons of John Carr, grandfather of Samuel and Peter Carr. No Y-chromosome data were available from male-line descendants of President Thomas Jefferson because he had no surviving sons.

The following essay by Eric S. Lander and Joseph J. Ellis appears in the November 5, 1998 issue of the journal *Nature*.

Almost two hundred years ago Thomas Jefferson was alleged to have fathered a child by his slave Sally Hemings. The charges have remained controversial. Now, DNA analysis confirms that Jefferson was indeed the father of at least one of Hemings' children.

For two centuries Thomas Jefferson's legacy has been haunted by the first U.S. presidential sex scandal—the charge of an illicit relationship with his mulatto slave Sally Hemings. From the day the story broke in a Richmond newspaper in 1802, 'Tom and Sally' has become the longest running mini-series in American history. Because the evidence was all circumstantial, no authoritative resolution has been possible. Until today, that is. On page 27 of this issue, Foster *et al.* report that DNA testing of Y chromosomes offers strong evidence that Jefferson fathered at least one of Hemings' children.

The saga begins in the mid-1780s in Paris, where Jefferson served as ambassador to France after the death of his wife. Sally Hemings, then 14 years old, was sent to accompany Jefferson's youngest daughter to Paris in 1786. There is no evidence of what transpired there, but Hemings returned to the United States with Jefferson in 1789, and she eventually bore at least five children, starting with Tom in 1790 and ending with Eston in 1808.

At least three pieces of evidence support a relationship with Jefferson and Hemings. First, several of the children bore a striking physical resemblance to Jefferson. Second,

Sally's fourth child, Madison, testified late in life that Sally had identified Jefferson as the father of all her children. Finally, Jefferson was in residence at this mansion in Monticello in Virginia at the time when each of the children was conceived. But many historians have expressed doubts, and Jefferson family tradition has implicated a maternal cousin as the likely father.

To a geneticist, the obvious solution—short of exhuming the principals—is to compare Y chromosomes from modern-day male-line descendants. Most of the Y chromosome is passed intact from father to son, so it can be used to trace paternal lineages. However, such studies require enough polymorphic markers (small regions of DNA that vary among individuals) so that Y chromosomes can be distinguished by the haplotype (set of specific variants) that they carry. Researchers from several laboratories have identified a collection of suitable markers from the Y chromosome over the past two years, and this collection is now fuelling an explosion in male-line genetic studies.

Foster *et al.* examined a haplotype containing 19 polymorphic markers. Jefferson's haplotype (inferred from male-line descendants of his paternal grandfather) seems to be quite rare, inasmuch as it was not seen among a sample of 670 Europeans or 1,200 people worldwide. The authors found that this rare haplotype matches that of Eston Hemings' male-line descendant. The probability of such a match arising by chance is low—safely less than 1%. Together with the circumstantial evidence, it seems to seal the case that Jefferson was Eston Hemings' father.

Interestingly, Jefferson's haplotype does not match male descendants of Sally's first son, Tom Woodson. The simplest explanation is that Jefferson was not Tom's father. An alternative explanation would require non-paternities among Tom's offspring. The jury remains out with respect to Sally's other children, but the burden of proof has clearly shifted.

Nothing in Foster and colleagues' study, and nothing in the vast historical literature, sheds any light on the character of the relationship between Jefferson and Sally Hemings. Was it, as his contemporary critics charged, a tale of lust and rape? Was it, as several twentieth-century scholars and novelists have suggested, a love story rooted in mutual affection? Or was it something in-between? These questions are open to endless interpretation but, in a broader sense, the new findings give blacks and whites alike an opportunity to confront a largely secret, shared history.

Politically, the Thomas Jefferson verdict is likely to figure in upcoming impeachment hearings on William Jefferson Clinton's sexual indiscretions, in which DNA testing has also play a role. The parallels are hardly perfect, but some are striking. Both 'improper' relationships involved women about 28 years younger—although there is a world of difference between a slave and master at the close of the eighteenth century, and a White House intern and a married man at the end of the twentieth. Both presidents seem to have engaged in politically reckless conduct; in Jefferson's case, fathering Eston six years after allegations appeared in the national press. And both offered evasive denials to the charge. In 1805 the Massachusetts legislature staged a mock impeachment trial of

Jefferson, citing several grievances including the accusations about Sally Hemings. Jefferson acknowledged one charge (propositioning a married woman in his youth), but asserted that all the others were false. Otherwise he remained silent, leaving denials to political supporters and family. Nor did the scandal affect Jefferson's popularity. He won the 1804 election by a landslide, and his abiding position was that his private life was nobody else's business, and should have no bearing on his public reputation.

Foster and colleagues' findings renew questions about Jefferson's tortured position on slavery. If Jefferson's relationship with Hemings began in the late 1780s, it would mean that he began to back away from a leadership position in the anti-slavery movement just around the time that his affair with Sally Hemings started. Jefferson's stated reservations about ending slavery included a fear that emancipation would lead to racial mixing and amalgamation. His own inter-racial affair now personalizes this issue, while adding a dimension of hypocrisy.

Over the past 30 years, research into Jefferson has cast a shadow over his credibility as America's prophet of freedom and equality. Recent work has also emphasized his massive personal contradictions and his dexterity at playing hide-and-seek with himself. The new evidence only deepens the paradoxes. Jefferson is, with Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, one of America's secular saints. His face looks out from the nickel, the two-dollar bill, the memorial near the Tidal Basin, and Mount Rushmore. His unique capacity to project inspirational words and ideas onto American public life has made him all things to all people. As an icon, Jefferson's legacy has been reinterpreted by every generation. Now, with impeccable timing, Jefferson reappears to remind us of a truth that should be self evident. Our heroes—and especially presidents—are not gods or saints, but flesh-and-blood humans, with all the frailties and imperfections that this entails.

Source: Foster *et al.*, "Jefferson Fathered Slave's Last Child" and Lander and Ellis, "Founding Father" in *Nature*.

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