



Virginia Slaves

See Page 2

# AMERICANS *Becoming* TODAY

THE SLAVE TRADE



Virginia Legislation

See Page 5

## Newsline

### ATTEMPTS TO END THE SLAVE TRADE IN VIRGINIA, BRITAIN, AND THE UNITED STATES

1769: Virginia's first nonimportation agreement, drawn up by George Mason, contains a provision against the importation of slaves and the purchase of imported slaves.

1772: House of Burgesses enacts a prohibitive tariff on the importation of slaves to limit "a Trade of great Inhumanity," but the act is refused royal assent.

1774: Continental Congress adopts a resolution banning the importation of slaves and the participation of Americans in the slave trade, resolutions adopted by Virginia counties condemn the slave trade, and the Virginia Association orders an end to further slave imports.\*

1775: Dunmore's Proclamation offers freedom to slaves willing to desert rebel owners and fight for the crown; about 800 in Virginia accept the offer in late 1775 and 1776.

1776: The Second Continental Congress bans slave imports "into any of the Thirteen United Colonies" as a war measure.

1776: Declaration of Independence is adopted by Congress without Jefferson's clause accusing the king of violating human nature's "most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere."\*

1778: The House of Commons in Britain appoints a committee to investigate the state of the slave trade.\*

1779: Granville Sharp tries to persuade Anglican bishops to oppose the slave trade.\*

1783: British Quakers form two committees to work against the slave trade: one an informal publicity group and the other an official committee of London Meeting for Sufferings. An official Quaker petition to end the slave trade is presented to Parliament.\*

1783: American Quakers petition Congress to prohibit the slave trade.\*

1787: Constitutional Convention agrees to count three-fifths of a state's slave population in apportioning representation, to forbid Congress from ending the slave trade until 1808, and to require that fugitive slaves who cross state lines be surrendered to their owners. The Continental Congress enacts the Northwest Ordinance, prohibiting slavery in the territories north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River.\*

1788: The London Society helps to organize a national petition campaign against the slave trade. Parliament passes a law reg-

[Continued on Page 6]

## BRITAIN ENDS THE SLAVE TRADE! 25 MARCH 1807 AN ACT FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE



British Coat of Arms

### ANNO QUADRAGEISIMO SEPTIMO GEORGI II. REGIS

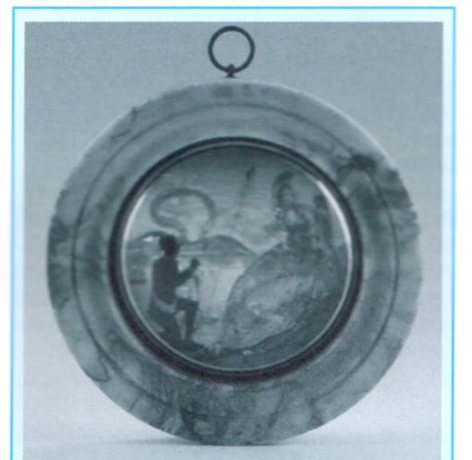
Whereas the Two Houses of Parliament did, by their Resolutions of the tenth and Twenty-fourth days of June One Thousand eight hundred and six, severally resolve, upon certain Grounds therein mentioned, that they would, with all practicable Expedition, take effectual Measures for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade in such Manner, and at such Period as might be deemed advisable And whereas it is fit upon all and each of the Grounds mentioned in the said Resolutions, that the same should be forthwith abolished and prohibited, and declared to be unlawful; be it therefore enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That from and after the First Day of May One thousand eight hundred and seven, the African Slave Trade, and all manner of dealing and trading in the Purchase, Sale, Barter, or Transfer of Slaves, or of Persons intended to be sold, transferred, used, or dealt with as Slaves, practiced or carried on, in, at, to, or from any Part of the Coast or Countries of Africa, shall be, and the same is hereby utterly abolished, prohibited, and declared to be unlawful; and also that all and all manner of dealing, either by way of Purchase, Sale, Barter, or Transfer, or by means of any other Contract or Agreement whatever, relating to any Slaves, or to any Persons being removed or transported either im-

House of Lords

mediately or by Trans-shipment at Sea or otherwise, directly or indirectly from Africa or from any island, Country, Territory, or Place whatever, in the West Indies, or in any part of America, not being in the Dominion, Possession, or Occupation of His Majesty, to any other island, Country, Territory, or place whatever, in like Manner utterly abolished, prohibited, and declared to be unlawful; and if any of His majesties Subjects, or any Person or persons resident within this United Kingdom, or any of the Islands, Colonies, Dominions, or Territories thereto belonging, or in His Majesties Occupation or Possession, shall, from and after the Day aforesaid, by him or themselves, or by his or their Factors or Agents or otherwise howsoever, deal or trade in, purchase, sell, barter, or transfer, or contract or agree for the dealing or trading in, purchasing, selling, bartering, or transferring of any Slave or Slaves, or any Person or persons intended to be sold, transferred, used, or dealt with as a Slave or Slaves contrary to the Prohibitions of this Act, he or they so offending shall forfeit and pay for every such Offence the Sum of One hundred Pounds of lawful Money of Great Britain for each and every Slave so purchased, sold, bartered, or transferred, or contracted or agreed for as aforesaid, the One Moiety thereof to the Use of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and the other Moiety to the Use of any Person who shall inform, sue, and prosecute for the same.

[Continued on Page 5]

House of Commons



"Britannia Set Me Free" Medallion DS 1995-360

To commemorate the 200th anniversary of Britain's ending of the slave trade on March 25, 1807, this issue focuses on the powerful effect the British colonial slave trade had on individuals, families and communities within the mainland colonies of the British empire in North America. After the Revolution the new republic found its greatest struggles were related to the consequences of that trade. The United States Congress followed in 1808 by ending the Atlantic slave trade. The consequences of that trade remain.

## SLAVERY AND THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

### 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.

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## VIRGINIA TODAY SNAPSHOT

### Destinations of the Atlantic Slave Trade

British North America	500,000
Spanish America	1,500,000
British Caribbean	3,000,000
French Caribbean	4,500,000
Brazil	6,000,000

\*Estimates from David Brion Davis, *Slavery in the Colonial Chesapeake*



Bracelets and chain



## VIRGINIA SLAVES

### THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE AND THE SETTLEMENT OF VIRGINIA

Lorena Walsh

Before the W.E.B. DuBois slave trade project historians could not with any certainty identify the African place of origin for forced African migrants. Without that crucial information it was not possible to consider the dynamic cultural interactions among African peoples in the New World.

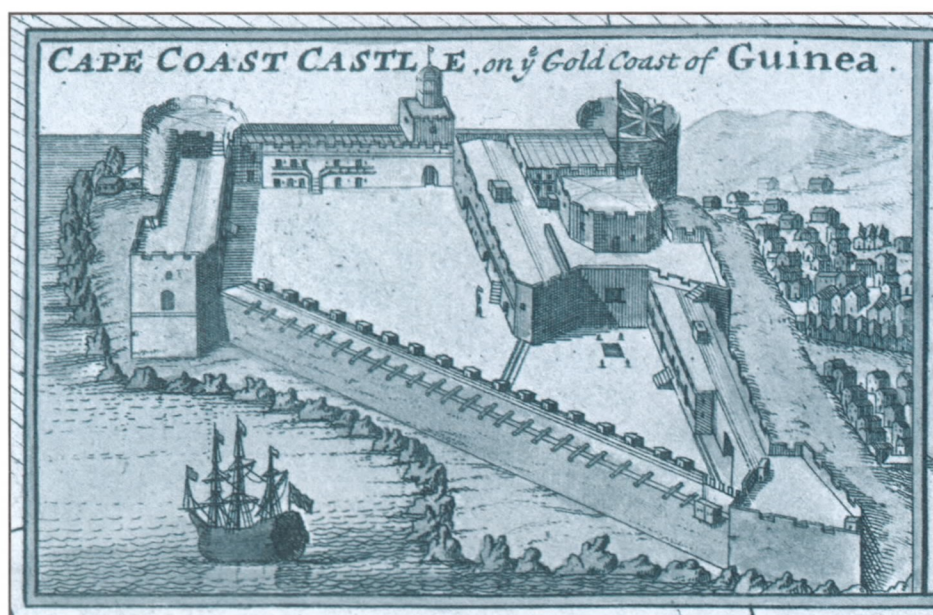
The new information on forced migration patterns requires serious questioning of previously accepted conclusions. Better evidence about the origins of forced migrants affords no more than a beginning, but even this is a significant advance . . . [by] the simple fact of knowing in advance the geographic origins of most migrants. Virginia district naval office records give reasonably solid answers about the slave trade for most parts of the colony throughout the 18th century. The evidence for the lower and upper James tends to support the older arguments for random mixing, while that for most of the older Tidewater tends to support arguments for much more homogeneity among forced migrants than has previously been supposed.

In general, the regional trade in slaves within Virginia more often concentrated rather than dispersed ethnic groups. London and Bristol traders favored the York River, while Liverpool and out-port shippers were more active along the Rappahannock and South Potomac rivers. Given that London, Bristol, and Liverpool traders concentrated their trades on differing sources of supply within Africa, this alone would result in different ethnic mixes among slaves arriving in the various naval districts . . . Bristol ships delivered primarily Gambian and Windward and Gold Coast slaves to the Rappahannock River, while marketing most of their Biafran cargo on the York.

. . . Established slave owners probably preferred to purchase additional hands from ethnic groups with whose cultures and ways they were already vaguely familiar over ones coming from totally unfamiliar ethnic groups. Chance choices of naval district that shippers made at the turn of the 18th century may have served to establish long-term trading patterns. The powerful Carter family's stated preference for Gambian or Gold Coast slaves, for example, coupled with their bad experience with one shipment of sickly and unfamiliar Angolans and subsequent refusal to accept further consignments from that region may have been sufficient to influence the overall composition of the Rappahannock trade.

With the exception of the York district, to which large planters throughout the colony went at times to buy new workers, the numbers of slaves imported annually into the Rappahannock, South Potomac, and lower and upper James rivers were small enough to be absorbed mostly by purchasers living along these rivers and in their immediate vicinity. Moreover, since sales usually commenced within a week after a ship arrived, it was surely primarily local buyers who had sufficient advance notice to travel to the sale or arrange for an agent to attend it. The majority of slaves sent to the smaller naval districts likely remained within the area of the rivers on which they disembarked.

The slave trade of the lower James (and of the lower Delmarva Peninsula, which this district also served) differed from that of all the other naval districts. Few soils in these places were suitable for tobacco and, by about 1700, most planters had dropped the staple entirely, turning instead to the production



*Cape Coast Castle, Guinea*

of naval stores, timber, cider, small grains, corn, and livestock, as well as to subsistence farming. The number of households owning slaves was low compared to better-endowed areas. Moreover, both plantation and labor-force sizes were comparatively small. Fewer than 1,000 slaves disembarked in this district between 1698 and 1730. These newcomers were incorporated into an existing black population that included Africans shipped earlier from the West Indies and the descendants of slaves, primarily from West Central Africa, imported by Dutch traders before 1660. After 1730, when the local economy experienced better times, the number of human imports increased. The 5,673 slaves who arrived in the lower James between 1731 and 1774 likely ended up in the port towns of Norfolk and Hampton and on new

and Creoles acquired through marriage or inheritance from relatives living in other parts of Virginia and in Maryland.

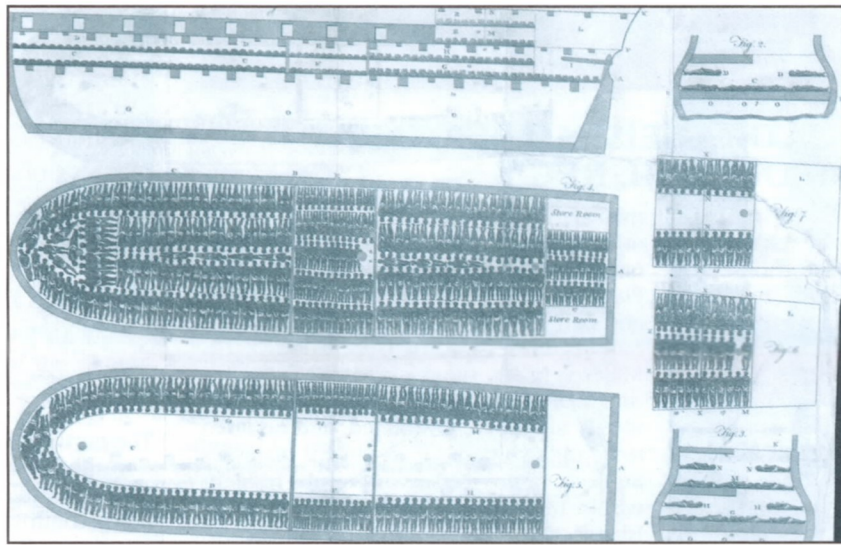
The upper James district was the last area in Virginia to which substantial numbers of Africans were transported. Just over 300 slaves entered that district before 1731, and large direct shipments from Africa became common only after 1735. Ten years later the upper James emerged as the leading slave entrepôt in the colony. By the 1760s, this district received nearly two thirds of all incoming Africans, by then transported almost exclusively by Bristol and Liverpool traders. These slaves came in roughly equal proportions from the Windward and Gold coasts, the Bight of Biafra, and West Central Africa, with lesser numbers taken from Senegambia and Sierra Leone. The evidence

for widely mixed origins is persuasive, since port of embarkation is specified for two thirds of imported Africans.

These newcomers were dispersed throughout the Southside and the central Piedmont, where they joined a combination of native-born and African slaves forced to move west from throughout the Tidewater. Improving prices for upland tobacco encouraged planters to expand labor forces rapidly in the interior. Although new arrivals were initially dispersed among small, far-flung quarters, the proportion of blacks in the local population increased rapidly. Moreover, sex ratios, both

among Africans and transplanted Creoles, were more evenly balanced than had been the case in the Tidewater earlier in the century. Finally, during the period of initial settlement, many slaves enjoyed greater autonomy than in the Tidewater, living on quarters with no resident master and sometimes no overseer. Conditions for family formation were thus quite favorable. Whether these same conditions fostered the continuation of specific languages and customs or the development of specific ethnic identities is less clear. The concentration or mixing of groups likely differed considerably from one estate and one locality to another. In some Piedmont neighborhoods, large communities of slaves were transferred virtually intact from earlier Tidewater neighborhoods . . .

Until the middle of the century, however, more than 80 percent of imported Africans disembarked in the York and Rappahannock rivers. There, planter wealth and political power was most concentrated,



*"Plan of an African Slave Ship"*

farms on the North Carolina border; some were probably eventually sent further west to expanding Southside tobacco farms. Most slaves arrived in the lower James in small lots as ancillary cargo on small ships plying the West Indian trade. During the 18th century, the mean number of slaves per ship was only 12. Virginians were most prominent in this island trade, closely followed by West Indian shippers. The origins of most of the slaves are obscure, since nearly three quarters are recorded as coming from Barbados, Jamaica, Bermuda, Antigua, Nevis, St. Kitts, and other West Indian locations. The majority were probably recently-shipped Africans for whom no ready market appeared in the islands. The lower James probably also received a disproportionate number of more seasoned, chronic troublemakers sold out of the islands as punishment. Fewer than 1,000 arrived directly from Africa; the half of these whose origins were specified came, with one exception, either from Senegambia or the Windward and Gold coasts. Consequently the slave population in the lower James region was likely the most ethnically diverse of any in Virginia. In addition, conditions in the lower James were the least favorable for maintaining specific African cultural practices.

South Potomac was the least important and most poorly documented Virginia destination. Only 2,202 slaves are recorded as disembarking there, and in many years, no ships carrying slaves arrived . . . Potomac River soils were capable of growing only inferior Oronoco tobacco and most local planters lacked both the wealth and mercantile connections that better-situated planters could command. The basin's enslaved labor force was probably relatively diverse. Larger planters such as Washington and Mason built up their workforces from varying combinations of refuse slaves imported from the West Indies, of newly arrived Africans purchased in South Potomac or across the river in Maryland, and from a mix of more seasoned Africans

## VIRGINIA SLAVES

and transatlantic mercantile connections most developed. The source of these fortunes and connections was the more valuable strain of sweet-scented tobacco, which could be raised only on pockets of rich, alluvial soils on the Lower and Middle peninsulas. Moreover, growers of sweet-scented tobacco enjoyed a spate of high prosperity in the early 1700s when Oronoco tobacco prices were sorely depressed. It was primarily these planters who had either sufficient resources or, more commonly, could demand sufficient credit from English tobacco merchants to finance the purchase of large numbers of new African slaves. As a result of peculiar trading patterns, it was on the Lower and Middle peninsulas and in their immediate hinterlands that large numbers of Africans from three specific West African regions were most concentrated.

In the first half of the 18th century, the Rappahannock trade ranked second to that of York. The years of greatest importation were between 1720 and 1745. More than 90 percent of the 9,741 slaves sent there arrived directly from Africa on Bristol—or Liverpool—owned ships carrying 100 or more captives each. This district received the fewest shipments from the West Indies of any of the Virginia naval districts. Of the 56 percent of the Africans whose port of embarkation is known, almost three quarters came from Senegambia and the Windward and Gold coasts. The primary buyers were wealthier planters who owned Tidewater plantations along the major rivers where slaves raised the more valuable sweet-scented tobaccos, as well as newer upland quarters in the Rappahannock hinterland. These slaves may have joined older migrants from the same areas, for in the first decade of the 18th century, Rappahannock planters were the primary buyers of shipments sent by the Royal African Company, most of them arriving from Gambia or the Windward and Gold coasts. After 1745, most Rappahannock basin planters could meet needs for additional laborers from natural increase, and new imports trailed off quickly.

The York naval district was the primary destination for about two thirds of the nearly 50,000 Africans transported to Virginia by 1745. Except for the years 1710 to 1718, when more than 1,000 slaves were shipped from the West Indies, most arrived directly from Africa. Most of these, in turn, likely lived out their lives on the Lower Peninsula and in its hinterlands. An unknown proportion, however, were bought by big planters living in the lower and upper James and on the Rappahannock when their labor needs could not be satisfied from the shipments going to those districts. London traders predominated in the York district at the turn of the century, but then were quickly supplanted by Bristol shippers. Port of embarkation is known for 60 percent of the direct African shipments arriving by 1745. Just over 9,000, or 54 percent, came from the Bight of Biafra, just under 20 percent each from the Windward or Gold coasts and West Central

*[Continued on Page 4]*



*"Fry Jefferson Map," illustrating Virginia's waterways for the slave trade*

## FORUM



## Letter from Rex Ellis and Lorena Walsh

The conference, "The bloody Writing is for ever torn: Domestic and International Consequences of the First Governmental Efforts to Abolish the Atlantic Slave Trade," organized by the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and hosted by the Historical Society of Ghana and the University of Cape Coast at Accra and Elmina, Ghana, August 3–12, 2007, was an outstanding success. It brought together nearly 300 scholars from Africa, North and South America, and Europe. Several formal sessions addressed recent research on the transatlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades, the rise and consequences of British (and Danish) abolitionism, and European perceptions of Africa and Africans. The movement that ended the transatlantic slave trade from West Africa (but which left other slave-trading routes open, and which did not directly lead to attempts to end slavery in Africa, in Asia, or in most of the Americas) had many unintended consequences. Other sessions addressed the effects of abolishing part of the transatlantic trade for Africa and for the Americas. These included, paradoxically, an increase in domestic slavery within Africa, a lack of further economic development, the introduction of other forms of unfree labor in those few areas in the Americas where slavery was abolished early in the 19th century, and, eventually, rationalizations for more direct European interference in African affairs.

Both formal and informal papers and discussions underscored the continuing problems that slavery created in African societies. Ironically, even though mechanisms were put in place to end the slave trade, the legislation began a backlash of illegal trading that continued well in to the 19th century. The conference also evinced that African participation in the slave trade continues to bring discomfort even within the academic community. Many prefer not to discuss the topic since it remains painful and divisive. Descendants of enslaved individuals make up an internal diaspora of forcibly transplanted peoples and still face economic and political disadvantages and negative social stigmas. Tensions remain between groups who historically were enslavers and groups who were victimized. Many Africans idealize the social organization of their localities prior to the transatlantic slave trade and put all the blame on Europeans (and sometimes other Africans) for the violence and social chaos that ensued. Others argue that some African peoples (or at least their rulers) should be held accountable for their historical roles in slave raiding and trading. Some representatives of victimized peoples maintained that apologies and reparations are due not only from Europeans and white Americans, but also from groups within West Africa who traded in and held slaves in the past. Several scholars stated that exchanges between African Americans interested in learning more about their Old World heritage and West African scholars, museum curators, interpreters, and tour operators are changing in how slavery is remembered and interpreted. African American visitors are contributing to a shift from viewing the whole of sub-Saharan Africa as the primary victim of the transatlantic slave trade to recognizing that individual Africans and their descendants were and continue to be victims as well. The Omohundro Institute will post all conference papers on its website.

Cape Coast Castle



## FOUNDING BROTHERS: THE REVOLUTIONARY GENERATION

Joseph J. Ellis  
Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2001,  
pp. 95–96.

The fullest and most intellectually interesting debate occurred in Virginia. As the most populous state with both the largest slave population (292,000) and the largest free black population (12,000), Virginia's demographic profile looked decidedly southern. Only South Carolina had a higher population of blacks (60 percent to Virginia's 40). But Virginia's rhetorical posture sounded distinctly northern. Perhaps more accurately, the political leadership of the Old Dominion relished its role as the chief spokesperson for the "principles of '76," which placed slavery under a permanent shadow and seemed to align Virginia against the Deep South. Jefferson, it must be remembered, had proposed the abolition of slavery in all the western territories. Madison, though he eventually endorsed the three-fifths compromise, acknowl-



"Portrait of a Man/Virginian Luxuries" Artist unidentified.

Probably New England circa 1825. One side of the painting depicts a portrait of a man while the reverse holds an unexpected and even shocking image: a double portrait entitled "Virginian Luxuries" that shows a master embracing a female slave and a master whipping a male slave.

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection

edged his discomfort with the doctrine, confessing that "it may appear to be a little strained in some points." Most significantly, the Virginians were adamantly opposed to the continuation of the slave trade. Both Madison and his colleague George Mason denounced the Sectional Compromise in the Constitutional Convention that prolonged the trade; Mason eventually voted against ratification in part for that very reason. On the surface, at least, Virginia seemed the one southern state where the ideological contagion of the American Revolution remained sufficiently potent to dissolve the legacy of slavery . . .

What is undeniably clear is that the Virginia leadership found itself in the peculiar position of acknowledging that slavery was an evil and then insisting that there was nothing the federal government could do about it. Mason's vehement opposition to the slave trade rested cheek by jowl with his demand for a constitutional guarantee to protect what he described as "the property of that kind which we have already."

## THE GREAT UPHEAVAL: AMERICA AND THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN WORLD 1788–1800

by Jay Winick  
Harper Collins, 2007

. . . The Founders were about to celebrate the golden age of a new constitution, of Washington, Madison, Hamilton, and Jefferson, to rejoice in the blessings of republicanism and liberty and bask in the dignity of the individual and freedom from government oppression, all the while embracing . . . bondage . . . Didn't the colonists put it aptly before the war when they declared the slave trade "inconsistent to the principles of the Revolution and dishonorable to the American character". . . the revolution was fought as much over the rights of property as the rights of man. Moreover slavery did not carry the stigma that it would to later generations—and no model of a multiracial society existed yet in history . . . Most agreed then, and even do today, albeit with a heavy heart, that whatever tragic consequences for this young country struggling with its national identity, the whole enterprise would have been stillborn had the Founders embraced emancipation . . .

The tragedy is that a number of moderate Southern members themselves were not great believers in the institution, even as they stoutly defended it—again, for the sake of the Union. It was an equal tragedy that many Southern members who were deep humanitarians and some of the most ardent defenders of individual freedom remained woefully blind, or purposely blind, or simply turned their backs on the evils of the institution . . . The delicate balance of America's paradoxes—a republic based on an inherently undemocratic foundation—would haunt the country for nearly eighty years, to be resolved one day in an ocean of tears and blood . . . It is hard for us to imagine their world—and it was the only one they knew. They lacked our perspective. They could not hold up a mirror to the future. And they could only be guided by the past. The South consequently demanded concessions and the North was ready to make them.

IN EVERLASTING MEMORY  
OF THE ANGUISH OF OUR ANCESTORS  
MAY THOSE WHO DIED REST IN PEACE  
MAY THOSE WHO RETURN FIND THEIR ROOTS  
MAY HUMANITY NEVER AGAIN PERPETRATE  
SUCH INJUSTICE AGAINST HUMANITY  
Tablet, Elmina Castle, Ghana



## BIOGRAPHIES

## GRANVILLE SHARP

November 10, 1735–July 6, 1813

Granville Sharp, a devout Anglican and early antislavery writer, worked diligently toward the abolition of slavery in Britain and is best remembered for his role in the Somerset Decision, which was interpreted as outlawing slavery in England. Sharp also investigated the Zong Incident of 1781, when 133 Africans were thrown overboard at sea, exposing the gross inhumanity of the slavery institution. In 1787 he contributed to the founding of a society for the abolition of slavery and the settlement in Sierra Leone for emancipated slaves.



Wedgwood medallion "Am I Not a Man and a Brother"

## WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

August 24, 1759–July 29, 1833

William Wilberforce was a British politician and philanthropist who, from 1787, was prominent in the struggle to abolish the slave trade and then to abolish slavery itself in British overseas territories.

At Cambridge he became a close friend of future prime minister William Pitt the Younger . . . In 1780, both he and Pitt entered the House of Commons, and he soon began to support parliamentary reform and Roman Catholic political emancipation, acquiring a reputation for radicalism that later embarrassed him, especially during the French Revolution, when he was chosen an honorary citizen of France (September 1792) . . .

Wilberforce's strong desire for the abolition of slavery was derived in part from evangelical Christianity, to which he converted in 1784 and 1785. In 1787 he assisted in the founding of a society for the "reformation of manners," called the Proclamation Society (to suppress the publication of obscenity) and the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade—the latter more commonly called the Antislavery Society. He and his associates Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, Henry Thornton, Charles Grant, Edward James Pliot, Zachary Macaulay, and James Stephen were first called the Saints and afterward (from 1797) the Clapham Sect, of which Wilberforce was the acknowledged leader. In the House of Commons, Wilberforce was an eloquent and indefatigable sponsor of antislavery legislation. He achieved his first success on March 25, 1807, when a bill to abolish the slave trade in the British West Indies became law. This statute, however, did not change the local position of persons enslaved before its enactment, and so, after several years in which Wilberforce was concerned with other issues, he and Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton urged (from 1821) the immediate emancipation of all slaves. In 1823 he aided in organizing and became a vice president of the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British dominions—again, more commonly called the Antislavery Society. Turning over to Buxton the parliamentary leadership of the abolition movement, he retired from the House of Commons in 1825; the Slavery Abolition Act he had sought was passed one month after his death.

[Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2002]

# VIRGINIA SLAVES

Virginia Slaves *Continued from page 2*

Africa, and two additional twentieths from Senegambia and Madagascar . . .

Studies of some of the careers of individual Lower Peninsula planters demonstrate that a significant proportion of the new Africans purchased in the 1720s and early 1730s remained on Lower Peninsula estates. Through the mid 1730s, larger planters still had to buy new African hands of working age in order to staff recently established ancillary Tidewater farms, as well as to open new ones farther west. This need ended quite abruptly in the 1740s, when enough Creole children were coming of age to replace dying and aging Africans, and slave imports into the York basin rapidly diminished.

Evidence about the patterns by which larger York and Rappahannock planters assembled enslaved work forces in the first third of the 18th century further bolsters arguments for the likely concentration, on individual Tidewater estates, of slaves drawn largely from a single ethnic group. Elite planters coming of age at the turn of the century almost invariably inherited ample land and some slaves as gifts or bequests from their parents as well as from the dowries their wives brought to their marriages. The inherited and dowery slaves were almost never enough to fully exploit the inherited Tidewater lands, much less additional undeveloped acres farther west. However, the planters' substantial starting assets provided collateral against which British tobacco merchants readily extended credit for purchasing additional slaves. Although most bought only one, two, and seldom more than four slaves from individual ships, they nonetheless acquired their adult labor forces within a span of no more than 10 to 15 years, either through design or because their adult careers ended in an early death . . . More usually; however, there were no further augmentations, aside from natural increase, until the next planter generation came of age. Temporarily concentrated local purchases increased the probability that many of the new Africans on a given estate would originate from the same geographic area, and this probability was further enhanced by temporal concentrations in the African trading regions of London, Bristol, or Liverpool suppliers.

Furthermore, if a number of wealthy young planters living in particular neighborhoods came of age at roughly the same time, a likely outcome of sequential European settlement in the Chesapeake, their individual estate-building strategies could unwittingly result in larger concentrations in new African neighborhoods from one or two West African areas. Then, even isolated, recently arrived Africans were likely to find members of their own nation on adjacent plantations if not on their home

Slavery . . . *Continued from page 1*

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]



"Ship in Storm" Artist unknown

quarters. This seems indeed to be what happened on the Lower Peninsula in the first third of the 18th century. The possibility, evoked by William Byrd II in 1736, of the region evolving into a colonial "New Guinea" was a result of individual actions that collectively produced a patchwork of localized concentrations of just one or two ethnic groups on larger estates. For example, on the Peninsula south of Williamsburg and on other plantations just across the York and James rivers around 1750, there were perhaps 200 Africans, who had arrived in the 1710s, 1720s, and early 1730s, living on five separate estates and numerous ancillary quarters owned by the Burwell family. Many of these newcomers shared both common geographic origins in the Bight of Biafra and more recently developed connections with longer

established African and Virginia-born Burwell family slaves, as well as similar origins with other new Africans arriving at about the same time on adjoining plantations. However on the nearby Custis plantations, whose owner commenced buying new Africans a few years later than the Burwells, Angolans dominated.

Local conditions, including unbalanced adult sex ratios, occasional severe plantation discipline, an unhealthy environment, and possible conflicts between recently-arrived Africans and more privileged Creole slaves did not favor sustained family formation until the 1740s. On the other hand, local circumstances did permit the continued or reconstituted use of African languages and other African customs, as well as the transmission to later generations of significant parts of their African history.

# THE TRADE

Until the practice [to limit the inheritance of property to a specified succession of heirs] was abolished after the American Revolution, elite gentry inheritance strategies, especially common in the York and Rappahannock districts, unintentionally afforded the largest and most ethnically concentrated enslaved communities more settled places of residence and more generational continuity than most Chesapeake slaves.

It is still too early to uncritically accept arguments that the slave culture or cultures of portions of any one North American colony developed primarily from one or two West African sources. Collective knowledge of early modern West African history, both in general and for particular regions, remains too scanty to sustain widely shared consensus. But growing evidence for a trade whose geographic and temporal complexities can be unraveled for both sending and receiving localities certainly encourages careful attention to more particular transatlantic ethnic continuities than has previously seemed possible or probable.

[Source: Lorena S. Walsh, "New Findings about the Virginia Slave Trade" From *The Interpreter*]

## COASTAL ORIGINS OF AFRICANS IMPORTED INTO VIRGINIA BY NAVAL DISTRICT

YEARS	TOTAL AFRICAN SLAVES	AFRICAN REGION OF ORIGIN							
		Unspecified	Senegambia	Sierra Leone	Windward & Gold Coasts	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West Central Africa	Madagascar
<b>York</b>									
1698-1703	1,481	1,332	0	0	0	0	57	92	0
1704-1718	3,045	1,544	0	0	398	0	1,103	0	0
1719-1730	10,956	2,665	311	0	1,468	0	5,067	436	1,009
1731-1745	12,037	5,301	703	0	279	0	3,135	2,619	0
1746-1760	3,509	654	331	0	486	0	1,107	931	0
1761-1774	255	218	37	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	31,283	11,714	1,382	0	2,631	0	10,469	4,078	1,009
<b>Rappahannock</b>									
1704-1718	682	76	606	0	0	0	0	0	0
1719-1730	2,743	1,165	108	0	145	0	859	0	466
1731-1745	3,048	1,647	1,271	0	0	0	130	0	0
1746-1760	957	260	160	0	200	0	0	337	0
1761-1774	2,098	1,747	81	0	90	180	0	0	0
Total	9,528	4,895	2,226	0	435	180	989	337	466
<b>South Potomac</b>									
1704-1718	105	105	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1719-1730	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1731-1745	1,169	823	346	0	0	0	0	0	0
1746-1760	277	0	80	0	0	0	197	0	0
1761-1774	143	0	143	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,694	928	569	0	0	0	197	0	0
<b>Upper James</b>									
1704-1718	42	0	0	42	0	0	0	0	0
1719-1730	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1731-1745	2,253	1,756	102	0	0	0	395	0	0
1746-1760	5,339	449	278	427	350	0	3,195	640	0
1761-1774	5,994	946	604	0	1,369	0	1,052	2,023	0
Total	13,628	3,151	984	469	1,719	0	4,642	2,663	0
<b>Lower James</b>									
1704-1718	157	157	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1719-1730	94	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1731-1745	705	70	276	0	199	0	160	0	0
1746-1760	328	130	181	0	0	0	17	0	0
1761-1774	583	400	123	0	60	0	0	0	0
Total	1,867	851	580	0	259	0	177	0	0

Notes:

African ports of embarkation are grouped into regions as defined in the W.E.B. Du Bois dataset. Windward and Gold Coast are combined, since the two were often coupled in the sources.

## STATE ACTIONS

### STATES' REACTIONS TO THE SLAVE TRADE

#### 1777 TO 1799

- 1777: Vermont's constitution makes slavery illegal.
- 1780: Pennsylvania adopts a gradual emancipation law.
- 1784: By a narrow margin, Congress votes against Jefferson's proposal to ban slavery from all western territory after 1800.
- 1784: The Quakers and others found the "Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, for the relief of free Negroes and for improving the condition of the African Race." Such societies remain outside the mainstream of early republican America.
- 1784: Virginia Quakers decree that Friends who own slaves must free them.
- 1787: South Carolina enacts a temporary prohibition on slave imports. Rhode Island responds to Quakers' petitioning and forbids its citizens from participating in the slave trade.\*
- 1788: Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania prohibit participation in the slave trade.\*



"Drawing of the slave quarter at Carter's Grove"

- 1789: Delaware forbids its citizens from engaging in the slave trade.\*
- 1792: Kentucky is admitted as the first slave state.
- 1798: Georgia prohibits further slave importation\*
- 1799: New York state adopts a law for gradual emancipation.\*

[Source: *Enslaving Virginia Resource Book*]  
[\*Source: David Brion Davis, *The Problem with Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, Cornell University Press, 1975, pp. 23–35]

#### Opinions

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.

Source: *The Papers of George Mason*, ed. Rutland, 3:1086.

#### Slavery and the United States Constitution

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]

#### Newsline

- ulating the conditions of the slave trade.\*
- 1789: In Parliament, William Wilberforce introduces twelve resolutions against the slave trade, a subject eloquently debated in the House of Commons; despite a flood of petitions, the House of Commons insists on hearing further evidence, after which it turns to other matters.\*
- 1790: The United States population: 4,000,000 people, including 650,000 slaves.
- 1790: Both the Quakers and the Pennsylvania Abolition Society petition Congress to use its full powers to discourage slavery and the slave trade; the petitions evoke angry debate and attacks on the Quakers by congressmen from the Deep South. In Richmond the Virginia Abolition Society is formed.\*
- 1791: Massive slave revolution in French colony of St. Domingue.
- \*1793–1830: The great transformation of slavery in the United States was the shift in the expansion of slavery from the Upper South to the Deep South and Southwest in order to settle new lands for cotton cultivation after the invention of the cotton gin. There was a great forced migration causing much suffer-

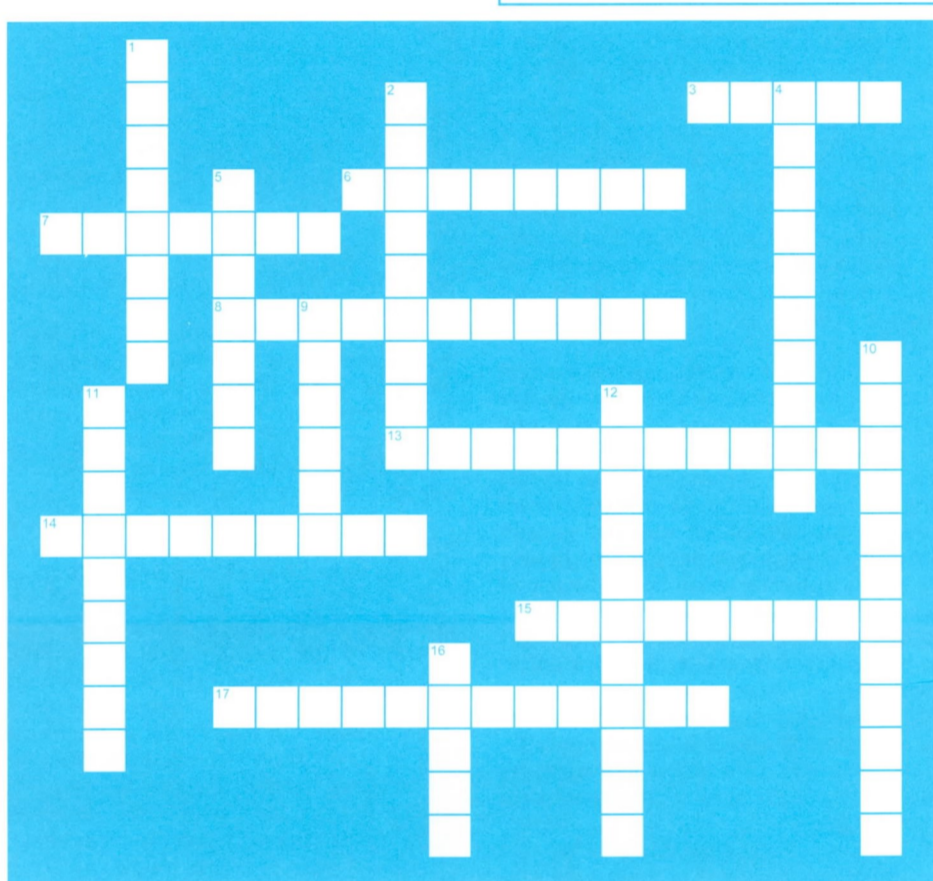
ing and disruption of slave families and community life.

1793: In the House of Commons, Wilberforce loses by eight votes on a motion to introduce a bill abolishing the slave trade. The House of Commons also rejects a bill outlawing the British slave trade to foreign markets. There is a marked decline in popular antislavery zeal and in the Abolition Committee's funds.\*

1796: Wilberforce's bill for abolition of the slave trade is defeated by four votes in the House of Commons which in 1795 had rejected his motion by a wide margin.\*

1804: St. Domingue rebels established the independent Republic of Haiti; constitution outlaws slavery. The brutal violence of the long civil war in St. Domingue entrenched white fears of slave revolt and free blacks in the United States.\*

1804: A revival of antislavery trade agitation occurs. A bill for abolition, proposed by Wilberforce, is passed by the House of Commons, but William Pitt's cabinet postpones debate in the House of Lords, arguing that there is not sufficient time to hear evidence.\*



#### ACROSS

3. Virginian who denounced Constitutional Convention's prolonging of slave trade.
6. First slave state admitted to Union after Revolution.
7. Religious group who worked against the slave trade.
8. This river carried settlement and slaves to the lower South.
13. Pennsylvania adopted gradual plan for this in 1780.
14. Virginian who proposed abolition of slavery in western territories.
15. Ordinance that prohibited slavery north of the Ohio.
17. Virginia river favored by Liverpool slave shippers.

#### Down

1. Appellation of a mid-Atlantic peninsula.
2. Secured abolition bill in House of Lords.
4. Region of origin of some slaves arriving directly from Africa.
5. This state's 1777 constitution outlawed slavery.
9. 1778 Virginia legislation banned importation of these.
10. Slavery sticking point for delegates deliberating this founding document.
11. Slaves enjoyed less autonomy here than in other Virginia regions.
12. Introduced abolition bill in the House of Commons.
16. English abolitionist who sympathized with Revolution in America.

Continued from page 1

1806: Pitt's death leads to the Ministry of All the Talents, and to secret government collaboration with the abolitionists. Parliament passes a law ending the British slave trade to foreign countries as well as to captured or ceded colonies. Parliament also overwhelmingly approves a resolution by Charles James Fox that the entire slave trade should be abolished but no immediate action follows.\*

1807: In the House of Lords, Lord Grenville secures passage of a bill abolishing the slave trade; the measure receives the crown's approval after passing by an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons.\*

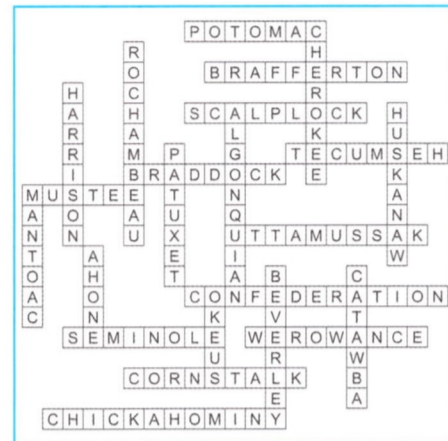
1808: United States Constitution's ban on slave imports goes into effect, as does the British Abolition Act's prohibition of British participation in Atlantic slave trade.

1834: Parliament abolishes slavery in the British Caribbean colonies.

[Source: *Enslaving Virginia Time Line*]  
[\*Source: David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770–1823*, Cornell University Press, 1975]

## STATE ACTIONS

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