

# Emancipation Proclamation

*By the President of the United States of America*

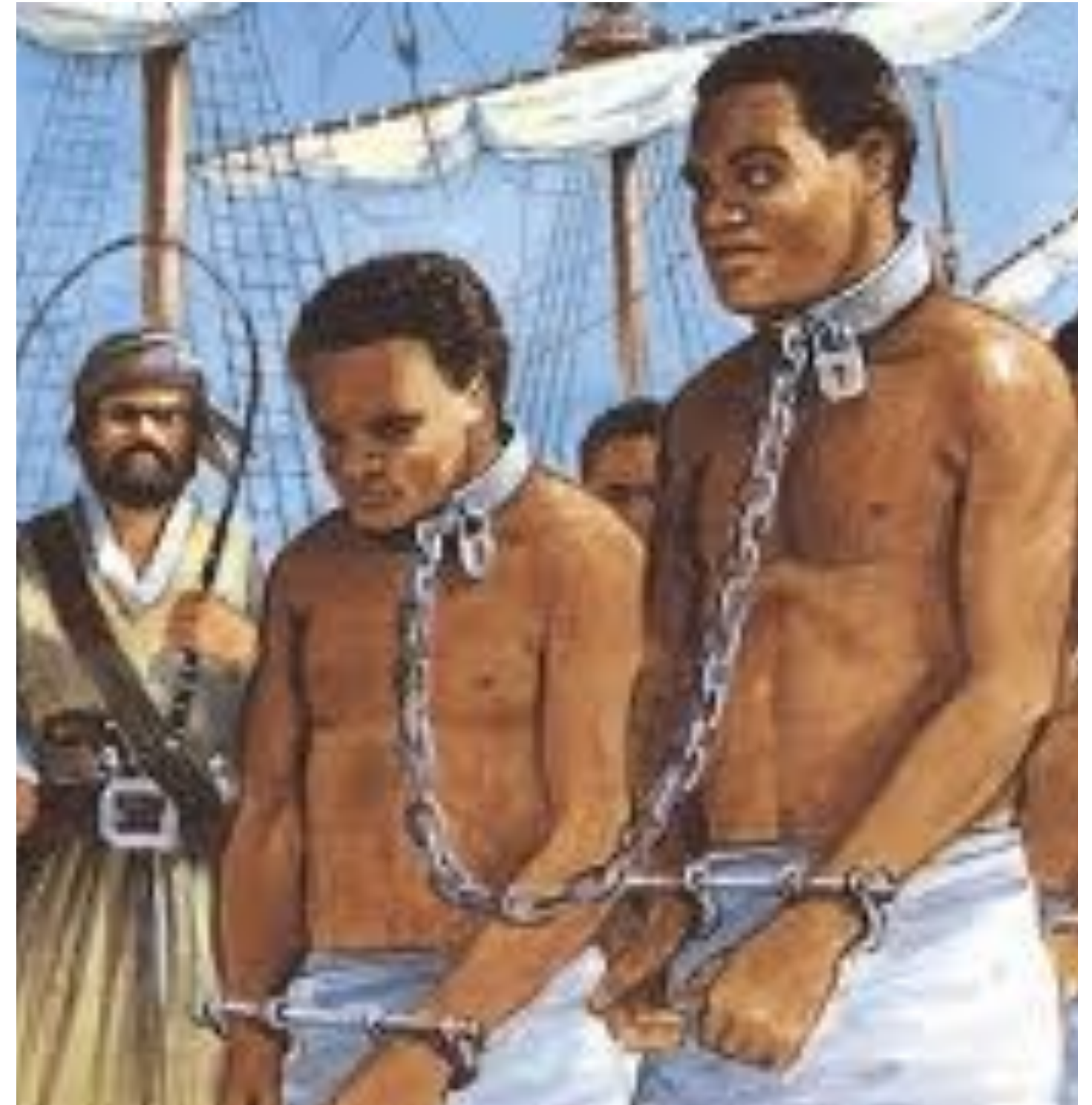
## *A Proclamation*

*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...."*

# SLAVERY

Foundation for a New Nation





**United States Department of The Interior**  
**National Park Service**  
**Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park**  
**1207 Emery Highway**  
**Macon, Georgia 31217-4399**



5620-2020

Ref.: Slavery in the United States

Dear Sir/Madame:

The 2020 Black History Month programs presented at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park will be different from those done in the past. My plan is to do an interpretive program on a series of selected eras in American history associated to people of color, to enlighten and educate the public. A different program will be presented each weekend in the month of February. The first subject to be covered is Slavery in the United States culminating in it's abolishment after the Civil War. The second era to be covered is Reconstruction and the post Civil War activities of the newly freed slaves. The Third era to be covered is the period from 1896 to 1955 which has been called the Jim Crow era. The next era will be the Civil Rights Era and culminating with the Equal Rights era.

These series of programs relating to the historical eras of American history also included my attempt to come up with a small pamphlet or document on each of the subjects to help the reader to better understand these periods. I realize that all of these subjects are touchy when it come to American History. It is now time that we quit avoiding the discussion of these topics and start having meaningful dialogues as a Nation.

The period of Slavery in the United States began during the colonial period of North America. Slavery was the aftermath of the need of men and women to work the land. White bond servants, paying their passage across the ocean from Europe through indentured labor, eased but did not solve the problem. It was in 1619 when a Dutch ship loaded with African slaves introduced a solution—and a new problem. The hereditary system of enslaving Africans flourished in the New World until 1865. The outbreak of the Civil War forever changed the future of the American nation. The war began as a struggle to preserve the Union, not as a struggle to free the slaves, but many in the North and South felt that the conflict would ultimately decide both issues.... and it did.

Sincerely,

*Lonnie J. Davis*

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Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park  
Cultural Resources Specialist/Historian



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Abolitionists were a divided group. On one side were advocates like Garrison, who called for an immediate end to slavery. If that was impossible, it was thought, then the North and South should part ways. Moderates believed that slavery should be phased out gradually, in order to ensure the economy of the Southern states would not collapse. On the more extreme side were figures like John Brown, who believed an armed rebellion of slaves in the South was the quickest route to end human bondage in the United States.

Harriet Tubman was another fugitive slave and prominent abolitionist. She was active in the Underground Railroad, the clandestine network of safe houses and abolitionists that helped escapees reach freedom in the North. In the late 1850s, she assisted Brown in his planning for the disastrous raid on a federal arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

The threat of an armed revolt alarmed Americans on both sides of the debate over slavery. In the 1860 presidential election, voters chose Republican Party candidate Abraham Lincoln. The senator from Illinois was opposed to slavery but cautious about supporting the abolitionists. Thirty-nine days after Lincoln's inauguration, the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, which marked the onset of the U.S. Civil War.

The Civil War, which ultimately liberated the country's slaves, began in 1861. But preservation of the Union, not the abolition of slavery, was the initial objective of President Lincoln. He initially believed in gradual emancipation, with the federal government compensating the slaveholders for the loss of their "property." But in September 1862 he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that all slaves residing in states in rebellion against the United States as of January 1, 1863, were to be free. The Civil War became, in effect, a war to end slavery.

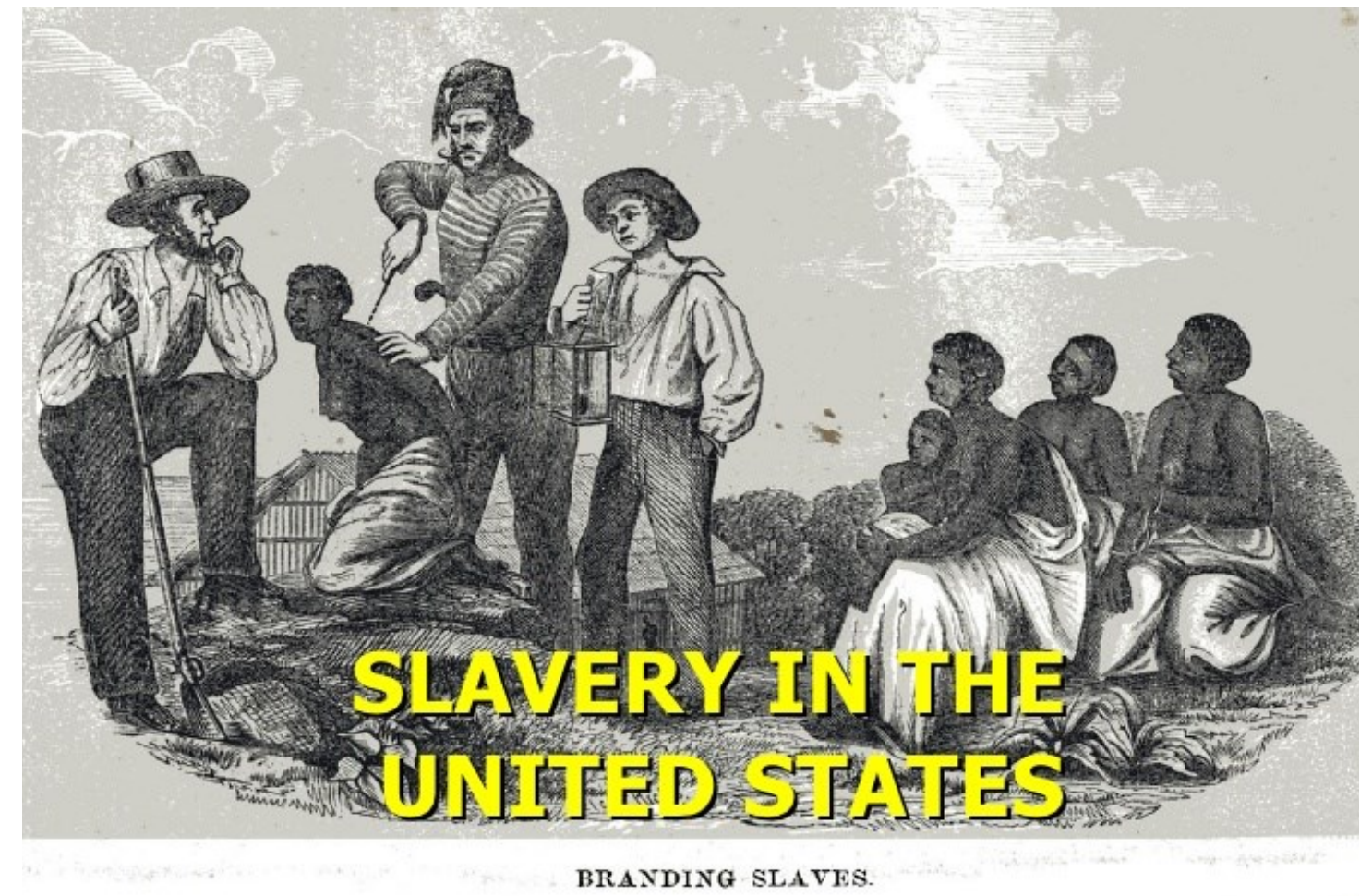
**As a result of the Union victory in the Civil War and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1865, nearly four million slaves were freed.**

# SLAVERY

## Foundation for a New Nation

### Overview

Slavery was practiced throughout the American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and African slaves helped build the new nation into an economic powerhouse through the production of lucrative crops such as tobacco and cotton. By the mid nineteenth century, America's westward expansion and the abolition movement provoked a great debate over slavery that would tear the nation apart in the bloody Civil War. Though the Union victory freed the nation's four million slaves, the legacy of slavery continued to influence American history, from the Reconstruction era to the civil rights movement that emerged a century after emancipation.

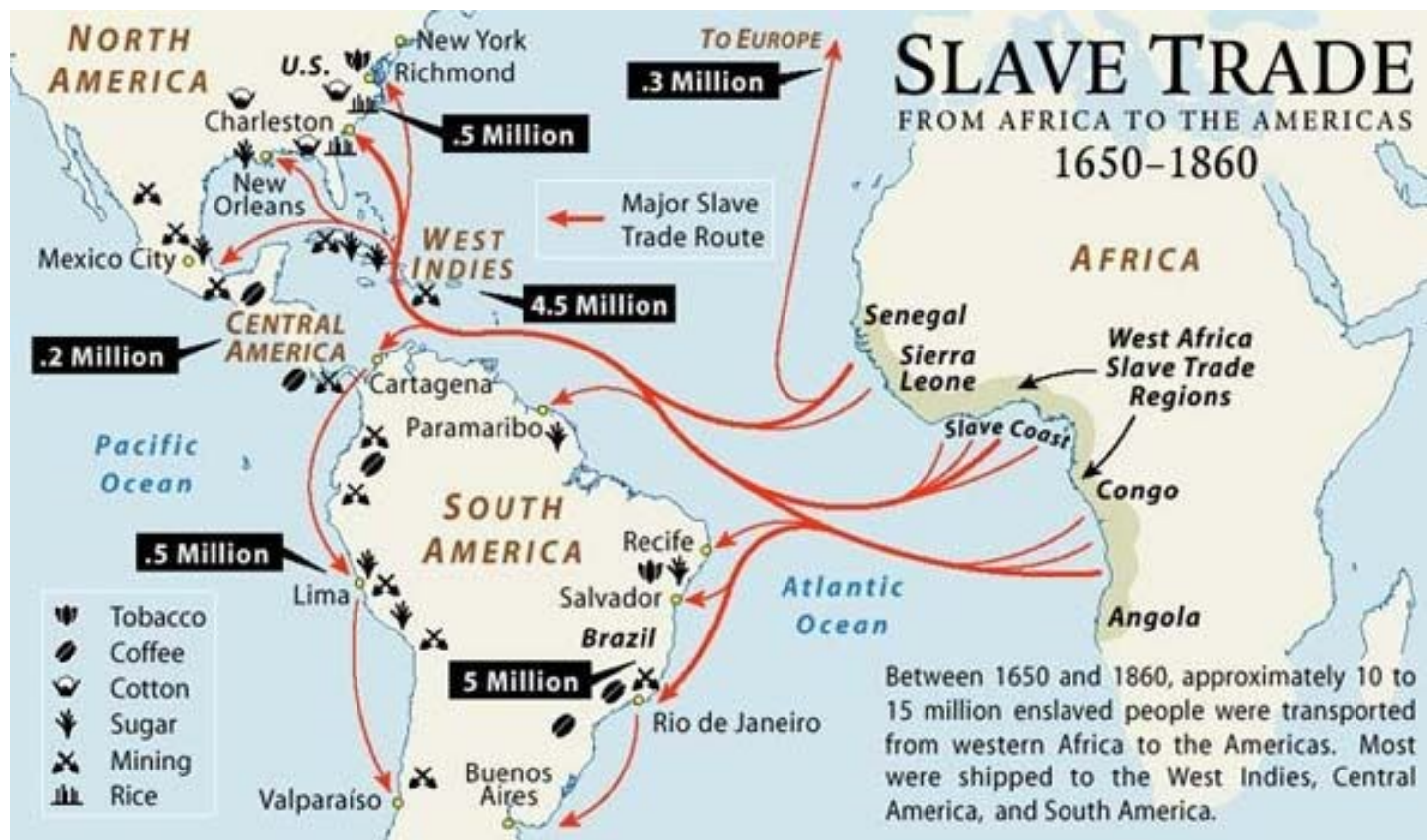


After the Revolutionary War, the new U.S. Constitution tacitly acknowledged the institution of slavery, counting each slave as three-fifths of a person for the purposes of taxation and representation in Congress and guaranteeing the right to repossess any “person held to service or labor” (an obvious understatement for slavery).

### A Developing Institute of Slavery

Slavery has existed for thousands of years throughout the world. From the Greeks to the tribes of Africa, from Europe to the peoples of both American continents – all practiced slavery in one form or another. When European settlers in America used the forced labor of Indians and Africans it was not new, however, the system developed into a unique institution with unique horrors.

Initially the Spanish, French and English used Indian and African slaves as well as indentured servants – laborers who promised to work for a contracted number of years. Some Africans arrived in this capacity and were released when their contract expired. But the majority were brought against their will on slave ships. In the eighteenth century planters in the southern colonies of North America began to prefer African rather than Indian slaves. Africans were not as affected by European, or even tropical, diseases as were Native



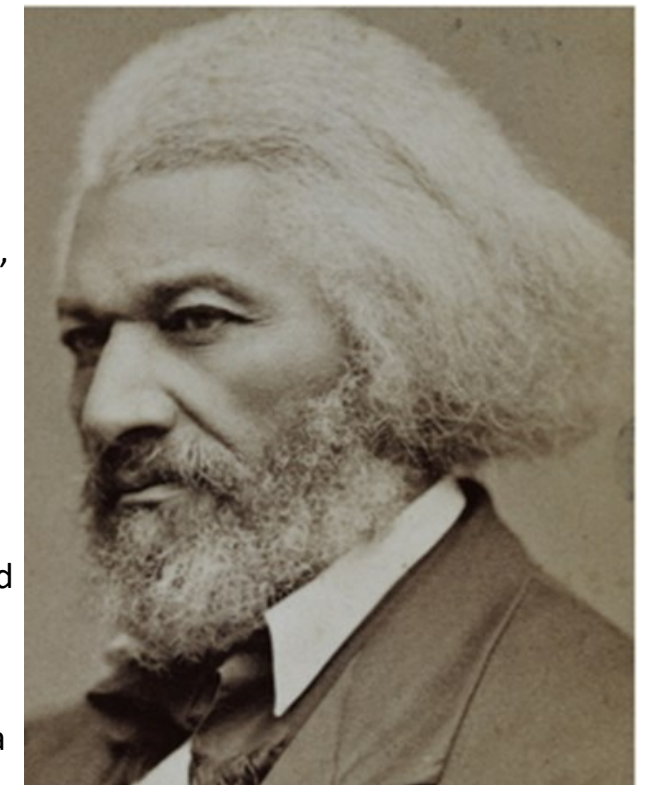
### Abolition and Abolitionists

From the 1820s until the start of the U.S. Civil War, abolitionists called on the federal government to prohibit slave ownership in the Southern states. The practice of slavery is one of humankind's most deeply rooted institutions. Anthropologists find evidence of it in nearly every continent and culture dating back to ancient times and even the Neolithic period of human development. In Europe, the first significant efforts to ban human trafficking and abolish forced labor emerged in the eighteenth century.

African slaves supplied the free labor that helped the British Empire prosper for much of the eighteenth century. The practice took hold in the English colonies in North America, too. Before, during, and after the American Revolutionary War, several of the original 13 British colonies abolished slavery. The agricultural-based plantation economy of the Southern colonies like Virginia and the Carolinas required a large labor force and that need was met via slavery.

In the New England states, many Americans viewed slavery as a shameful legacy with no place in modern society. The abolitionist movement emerged in states like New York and Massachusetts. The leaders of the movement copied some of their strategies from British activists who had turned public opinion against the slave trade and slavery.

In 1833, the same year Britain outlawed slavery, the American Anti-Slavery Society was established. It came under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison, a Boston journalist and social reformer. From the early 1830s until the end of the Civil War in 1865, Garrison was the abolitionists' most dedicated campaigner. His newspaper, *The Liberator*, was notorious. It was limited in circulation but was still the focus of intense public debate. Its pages featured firsthand accounts of the horrors of slavery in the South and exposed, for many, the inhumane treatment of slaves on American soil. Garrison was a close ally of Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave whose 1845 autobiography became a bestseller.



Frederick Douglass  
(Photo: Encyclopedia Britannica)

Although most slaves worked on plantations and medium-size farms, they could be found in all segments of the southern economy. In 1850, some 75 percent of all slaves were engaged in agricultural labor. The 350,000 slaves in 1850 who were not domestics and agricultural laborers worked as lumberjacks and turpentine producers in the Carolinas' and Georgia's forests; gold, coal and salt miners in Virginia and Kentucky; boiler stokers and deckhands on Mississippi River steamships; toilers on roads and railroads construction gangs in Georgia and Louisiana; textile laborers in Alabama cotton mills; dock workers in Savannah and Charleston; and tobacco and iron workers in Richmond factories.

### The Plantation System

The plantation system came to dominate the culture of the South, and it was rife with inequity from the time it was established. In 1606, King James I formed the Virginia Company of London to establish colonies in America, but when the British arrived, they faced a harsh and foreboding wilderness, and their lives became little more than a struggle for survival. So, to make settling the land more attractive, the Virginia Company offered any adult man with the means to travel to America 50 acres of land. At the encouragement of the Company, many of the settlers banded together and created large settlements, called hundreds, as they were intended to support one hundred individuals, usually men who led a household. These settlements were much like the colonies themselves. The wealthy aristocrats who owned them established their own rules and practices. The settlements required a large number of laborers to sustain them, and thus laborers were imported from Africa. African slaves began arriving in Virginia in 1619.

The term "plantation" arose as the southern settlements, originally linked with colonial expansion, came to revolve around the production of agriculture. Though wealthy aristocrats ruled the plantations, the laborers powered the system. The climate of the South was ideally suited to the cultivation of cash crops, and King James had every intention of profiting from the plantations. Tobacco and cotton proved to be exceptionally profitable. Because these crops required large areas of land, the plantations grew in size, and in turn, more slaves were required to work on the plantations. This sharpened class divisions, as a small number of people owned larger and larger plantations. Thus, the wealthy landowners got wealthier, and the use of slave labor increased.

Americans. Also, since the African slaves were separated from their home by a vast ocean, they were less likely to run away. The European planters (in North and South America) also depended on the agricultural knowledge and experience that the slaves brought from Africa to make the plantations of sugar, indigo, rice, etc. a success.

Among the thousands of ships crossing the Atlantic in the eighteenth century, slave ships were the most numerous. After the Peace of Utrecht, the slave trade to the southern colonies expanded sharply. The generation after 1730 saw the largest influx of African slaves in the colonial period, averaging about 5,000 a year. During the period from 1700 to 1775 more than 350,000 African slaves entered the American colonies.

Even as the traffic in slaves peaked, religious and humanitarian opposition to slavery arose. Of those opposing slavery, the Quakers were most objected on moral grounds since the late seventeenth century. Among most of the religious groups their idea was based on their belief that slavery contradicted the Christian concept of brotherhood and the enlighten notion of the natural equality of all humans which planted the idea of abolitionism. This concept grew in the 1750s due to the large influx of people coming to the American colonies to avoid religious persecution.

Initially the use of Africans as slaves did not take on the racial characteristics we are familiar with from the 1800s. The racial justification developed gradually throughout the seventeenth century. When Africans first arrived in the North American British colonies in 1619 (and for several decades thereafter) being African did not automatically mean being a slave. Some Africans served set periods, like indentured servants, or were freed at a certain age, though most did remain in servitude for life. Black and white servants (particularly in the Chesapeake region) often worked side by side, sharing a common labor experience. Legal code defining slavery by race began to emerge in the 1660s and 1670s.

Slave owners saw their rights over their labor force threatened by issues such as slaves claiming freedom based on religious conversion, or debates over the status of children born



Slaves Working in the Fields

of mixed parentage. This led to an increase in codification and the emergence of a racial justification. By the end of the seventeenth century the laws became increasingly more discriminatory, and pushed for the separation of the races. These laws, whether the cause or the result of social feelings, corresponded with an increase in derogatory racial attitudes toward blacks even among the white laborers who had once related closely with black workers. In less than eighty years slavery in the British colonies of North America shifted from an undefined system of labor to a codified racially based system of hereditary slavery.

With the expanding work force of slaves, the American colonies grew rapidly between 1700 and 1750. Churches, schools, and towns all symbolic of a developing society was based on slave labor. The Americas were now taking on the

appearance of no longer being a harsh frontier. This change saw an influx of more European women thus balancing out the sex ratio and the beginning of stable family lives through the colonies. The one-fifth of population of the colonies was bound in chattel slavery and the American Indians were still hanging in limbo. The colonial Americans in 1750 were reaching a trying time and was approaching an era of challenges and future decisions that will change history.

The King George's War which lasted from 1744 to 1748 which was fought between France and England was listed as the fourth largest and most significant war for the empire in the seventeenth century. Known as Seven Years War, The French and Indian War, and the Great War for Empire, this global conflict in part represented a showdown for control of North America between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River. At the end of the wars, the American colonies were redefining themselves but the cost of the wars required heavy taxes to be levied on the colonies.

In 1764, the British Parliament pushed several bills that in combination pressed hard on the struggling economy of the colonies. First came the Sugar Act, this was followed by the Currency Act and eventually the Stamp Act in 1765. The taxation of these Acts infuriated the colonies, there were riots and protest all over the America. In order to challenge parliamentary authority, The Stamp Act resistors politicized their communities and established leaders.



Slave Sales

In the 20 years preceding the Civil War, the South's economy grew slightly faster than the North's. Personal income in 1860 was 15 percent higher in the South than in the prosperous states of the Old Northwest. The cotton gin was fundamental to this economic growth, wedding the southern economy to cotton production for a century and stimulating the expansion of slavery into vast new territories.

Most cotton farmers planted "long staple" cotton prior to the invention of Eli Whitney's cotton gin in 1793. After the cotton gin, the "short staple" variety which could grow anywhere in the South, predominated. But only large plantation owners could afford to buy gins and purchase the fertile bottomlands of the Gulf states. Thus the plantation system and slavery spread with the rise of cotton.

Although corn was a larger crop than cotton in total acreage, cotton was the largest cash crop and for that reason it was called "king". In 1820 the South became the largest producer of cotton, and from 1815 to 1860 cotton represented more than half of all American exports. Cotton was not only the mainstay of the southern economy, but also was a crucial link in the national economy.

The supply of cotton from the South grew at an astounding rate, soaring from 461,000 bales in 1817 to 1.35 million bales in 1840, to 2.85 million bales in 1849 and 4.8 million bales in 1860. In the period from 1817 to 1860, cotton production jumped over tenfold. This rapid growth was stimulated by the world's demand, especially from English textile mills. The availability of new lands, a self-reproducing supply of cheap slave labor, and low-cost steamboat transportation on the rivers helped to keep cotton king.



African slaves working in the cotton fields

### The Dependency on Slavery

The rapid increase in the number of slaves, from 1.5 million in 1820 to 4 million in 1860 paralleled the growth of the southern economy and its dependence on the slave labor system. Economic growth and migration southwestward changed the geographic distribution of slaves thus hindering the cause of abolition.

parents, sisters, brothers, and aunts, even if they did not live on the same plantation. Mothers and their children invariably lived on the same plantation.

According to Annie, who lived on Travis Huff's plantation in Bibb County, the presence of slave visitors was not encouraged. Sometimes, however, young black men would sneak in the cabin at night – usually coming through the windows – to visit with their sweethearts. She also recalled that gifts of handkerchiefs and earrings were smuggled in, strictly against the rules of the master and hush money was given to the children to keep them from tattling. Most slave families lived in one or two-room cabins, usually made of logs, making up the “quarters” lined up behind the “Big House.” Undoubtedly, the kind of cabin the slave families lived in varied from master to master.



Slave Cabins

### King Cotton

The vast region of the antebellum was not a massive society filled with large cotton plantations worked by hundreds of slaves. The realities of the South and slavery were much more complex. Large-plantation Agriculture was dominant, but most southern whites were not slaveholders, much less large planters. Most southern farmers lived in dark, cramped, two room cabins. Cotton was a key cash crop in the South, but it was not the only crop grown there. Some masters were kindly, but some were not; some slaves were content, but most were not.

There were many Souths, encompassing several geographical regions, each with a different economic bases and social structures. The older Upper South of Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Kentucky grew different staple crops from those grown in the newer, Lower or “Black Belt” South that stretched from South Carolina to eastern Texas. Within each state, moreover, the economies differed between flat, coastal areas and inland, up country forests and pine barrens. A still further diversity existed between these areas and the Appalachian highlands of northern Alabama and Georgia, eastern Tennessee, and Kentucky, and western Virginia and North Carolina. Finally, the cultural and economic life of New Orleans, Savannah, Charleston and Richmond differed dramatically from that of rural areas of the South. But although the South was diverse, agriculture dominated its industry commerce.

To manage the colonies more effectively, the Pitt-Grafton ministry that the king appointed in 1767 obtained new laws to reorganize the customs service, established a secretary of state for American affairs, and installed three new vice admiralty courts in the port cities. Still hard pressed for revenue, the ministry also pushed through Parliament the Townshend duties on paper, lead, painters' colors and tea. This was followed by the Quartering Act of 1765 which required public funds for support of British troops garrisoned in the colonies since the end of the Seven Years War.

In Boston, on March 5, 1770 British troops fired on a crowd that was protesting by heckling the troops. When the smoke cleared, five bloody patriots lay on the ground, including Crispus Attucks. Attucks's life prior to the day of his death is still shrouded in mystery. Although nothing is known definitively about his ancestry, his father is thought to be Prince Yonger, a slave who was brought to America, while his mother is thought to be Nancy Attucks, a Natick Indian. Attucks was the first to fall, thus becoming one of the first men to lose his life in the cause of American independence. His body was carried to Faneuil Hall, where it lay in state until March 8, when all five victims were buried in a common grave. Attucks was the only victim of the Boston Massacre whose name was widely remembered.



Crispus Attucks.  
(Photo: Encyclopedia Britannica)

After the “Boston Massacre” from 1770 to 1772, opposition to English policies subsided for a time. Things changed in 1772 that created a furor in the colonies and parliament response was the Tea Act in 1773. The final spark to the revolutionary powder keg was stuck in early 1775 when British General Thomas Gage assumed governorship of Massachusetts and occupied Boston with 4,000 troops. Under orders to arrest the leaders of the Boston insurrection 700 redcoats were sent to seize colonial arms and ammunition in Concord. Gage did not realize that the colonist had learned of the plan and intercepted the British soldiers at Lexington by “Minutemen”.

In the spring of 1775, the Revolutionary War begun and the “Declaration of Independence” which was the driving document for the colonists also gave hope to the enslaved African slaves. The war lasted for seven years, the longest in American history and held that record until the Vietnam war nearly two centuries later. The dream of independence from foreign rule and the use of politics to solve problems and achieve goals clashed over the explosive issue of slavery.

During the American Revolution, some 5,000 black soldiers and sailors fought on the colonist side. After the Revolution, some slaves—particularly former soldiers—were freed, and the Northern states abolished slavery. But with the ratification of the Constitution of the United States, in 1788, slavery became more firmly entrenched than ever in the South. The Constitution counted a slave as three-fifths of a person for purposes of taxation and representation in Congress (thus increasing the number of representatives from slave states), prohibited Congress from abolishing the African slave trade before 1808, and provided for the return of fugitive slaves to their owners.

### African Slaves and the Revolution

African Slaves and free blacks were deeply involved in the Revolution. It has been estimated that between 200,000 and 250,000 soldiers and militia served during the revolution in total, that would mean black soldiers made up approximately four percent of the Patriots' numbers. Of the 9,000 black soldiers, 5,000 were combat dedicated troops. Once the war was under way, they found a variety of ways to turn events to their own advantage. For some, this meant applying Revolutionary principles to their own lives and calling for their personal freedom. For others, it meant seeking liberty behind English lines or in the continent's interior.

During the pre-Revolutionary decade as white masters talked excitedly about liberty, increasing numbers of Africans questioned their own oppression. In the North, some slaves petitioned legislatures to set them free. In the South, pockets of insurrection appeared. In 1765, more than 100 South Carolina slaves fled to the interior, where they tried to establish a colony of their own. The next year, slaves paraded through the streets of Charlestown (Charleston), chanting, "*Liberty, Liberty!*"

In November 1775, Lord Dunmore issued a proclamation offering freedom to all Virginia slaves and servants, "*able and willing to bear arms*" who would leave their masters and join the British forces in Norfolk. Within weeks 500 to 600 slaves had responded. Among them was Thomas Peters, from Wilmington, North Carolina.

Thomas Peters had been kidnapped from the Yoruba tribe in what is Nigeria and brought to North America by a French slave trader. Peters had been first bought in Louisiana circa 1760. He resisted



Thomas Peters  
(Photo: Encyclopedia Britannica)

Not all Blacks in Middle Georgia were slaves, though the exceptions composed less than one per cent of the total black population. Georgia passed a law in 1818 prohibiting Free Blacks from entering the state. The penalty for violation was a \$100 fine and those unable to pay the fine were to be sold as slaves. Those who paid the fine were allowed 20 days to leave the state or suffer prosecution. Free Blacks could not vote; and, in 1829, Georgia passed a law making it illegal to teach them to read and write. They usually earned their incomes as draymen, porters, cooks, farmers, artisans, seamstresses, washer-women and unskilled day laborers.

Many free Blacks were Mulattoes, sometimes the offspring of their former masters. Though many such children remained on plantations as slaves, others were granted freedom. A few, such as Michael Healey's sons and daughters in Jones County, along with Amanda Dickson and the Sayres of Hancock County, had mothers who were a mixture of Indian and Black. These children were openly acknowledged by their fathers and became the heirs of large properties.

During the 30-year period in Middle Georgia's history before the eve of the American Civil War, slaves accounted for more than 99 per cent of the area's black population. At the time, this was the state's largest cotton-plantation district and is considered by many researchers to have been the quintessence of antebellum southern civilization. Prosperous and efficient, these plantations offered their slaves a modicum of independence and a well-defined social life. However, this life was very different from that of the plantation owners and even the less-wealthy white population.

For instance, slave marriages were not legal in Georgia, though various religious denominations in Middle Georgia did recognize them, and the slave codes of Georgia did not recognize a slave father. Therefore, the African-American male was not required by law to fulfill the traditional roles as a man that is as head of his family, sole provider and protector. To be sure, many black Middle Georgia slave fathers, probably a majority of them, lived up to this role in spite of the law.

Catherine Beale, who was a slave in Twiggs County, left an account of her marriage, which suggested some masters gave their consent to marriages between slaves on different plantations. She reported that her husband had to go backwards and forwards, staying with her on Sundays and whenever else he could do so. The majority of slaves could name their



In the early nineteenth century, antislavery appeals all but disappeared from the South, while proslavery arguments increased. In the North, antislavery attitudes were increasingly conciliatory toward slave owners and unsympathetic toward blacks. Most of slavery's critics assumed that the granting of freedom should be done by the owners and not be forced upon them by laws. They also agreed that it should be gradual so as to avoid social turmoil, and that freed blacks should be relocated to colonies in Africa. The American Colonization Society, founded in 1816, typified these attitudes. The society never sent many blacks abroad, but it expressed white anxieties.

Free blacks living in the North did not find their lives much improved by the first stirrings of republican reform. During the half century following independence, strong and growing black communities appeared in northern ports, notably in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Their growth was fed by people coming in from the northern countryside and from the South. On the eve of independence, 4,000 slaves and a few free blacks had called these port cities home; 50 years later, more than 30,000 free blacks did so.

### Slavery in the Old South

As a young slave boy, Frederick Douglass was sent by his master to live in Baltimore. When he first met his mistress, Sophia Auld, she appeared to be *"a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings"*. He was astonished at her goodness as she began to teach him to read. Her husband, however, ordered her to stop because Maryland law forbade teaching slaves to read. In the seven years he lived with the Auld's, young Frederick had to use various strategies to teach himself to read and write, the key to his later escape to freedom.

Douglass' relationship with Mr. Covey, a slave breaker to whom he was sent in 1833 to have his will broken in the notion of being free. Covey succeeded for a time, Douglass reported, in breaking his body, soul and spirit by brutal hard work and discipline. But one hot day in August in 1833, the two men fought a long grueling battle, which Douglass won. His victory, he said, rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. Although it would be four more years before his escape to the North, the young man never again felt like a slave. The key to Douglass' successful resistance to Covey's power was not just his strong will, but rather his knowledge of how to jeopardize Covey's reputation and livelihood as a slave breaker. The oppressed survive by knowing their oppressors.

enslavement so fiercely that his master sold him into the English colonies. By 1770, Peters belonged to William Campbell, an immigrant Scots planter on North Carolina's Cape Fear River, where he toiled while the storm brewed between England and the colonies. Four months after Dunmore issued his dramatic proclamation, Thomas Peters escaped and joined the British-officered Black Pioneers.

The exact number of African slaves and servants such as Peters who sought liberty behind English lines is unknown, but as many as upwards of 20,000 escaped slaves joined and fought for the British army. In contrast to their white masters, Africans saw in England the promise of freedom, not tyranny. From the Virginia slaves who responded to Dunmore's proclamation, a regiment of black soldiers was formed and marched into battle, their chests covered with sashes on which was emblazoned *"Liberty to Slaves"*.

After Lord Dunmore's proclamation of freedom for slaves who joined the British army, the patriots had to consider offering freedom from slavery in exchange for service in the Continental army. When General George Washington saw the brave performance of black soldiers at Bunker Hill, he took action to bring black troops into the Continental army.

However, southern states, especially South Carolina, resisted efforts to arm blacks. Only Maryland permitted slaves to enlist, but free blacks joined the armies and navies in Virginia, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Delaware, and Connecticut. Perhaps as many as three-fourths of Rhode Island's Continental troops included slaves who exchanged their service for freedom.

At White Plains, New York, in August 1778, muster rolls for the Continental army recorded 755 blacks. Fifty-eight of them, probably free men, were with the North Carolina Continental Line. Black soldiers were more likely to serve as laborers and craftsmen. They built fortifications, made weapons and ammunition, cleared roads, and shod horses. They also acted as spies, guides, musicians, or servants to white officers.

John Chavis of North Carolina spent three years in the Fifth Virginia Regiment. After the war, he won fame as a



Black Minuteman

Presbyterian minister and teacher of both black and white in Raleigh. In 1832 he declared, **“Tell them that if I am Black, I am a free born American and a revolutionary soldier and therefore ought not to be thrown entirely out of the scale of notice.”**

Blacks who fought with the revolutionaries included Jonathan Overton, who died in 1849 at the age of 101. A newspaper described him as “a soldier of the Revolution” who had “served under Washington, and was at the battle of Yorktown, besides other less important engagements.” Another was Ned Griffen, who was purchased by William Kitchen to serve as his substitute in the army. But Kitchen refused to give the slave his freedom for this service as he had promised. Griffen petitioned the General Assembly, which granted him his freedom “forever hereafter” and gave him the right to vote. There was also the slave James of Perquimans County who served as a sailor on a Continental navy ship. He was captured twice by the British, and both times he “Embraced the Earliest Opportunity in Making his Escape to Return to this Country.” The county court freed him because he had served on an “American Armed Vessel.”

Many blacks looked to the British troops for their liberation. Wherever the British marched, slaves followed. When British General Cornwallis invaded the Carolinas in 1780/1781, slaves flocked to him. British officers put blacks to work in the service of the king’s army performing many of the same duties they carried out in the Continental army.

At the war’s end, several thousand former slaves were evacuated with the British to Nova Scotia, where they established their own settlements. Their reception by the white inhabitants there, however, was generally hostile. By the end of the century, most had left Canada to found the free black colony of Sierra Leone on the west coast of Africa. Thomas Peters was a leader among them.

Many of the slaves who fled behind English lines never won their freedom. In keeping with the terms of the peace treaty, hundreds were returned their former owners. Several thousand others were transported to the West Indies where they were introduced to a harsher institute of slavery on the sugar plantations.

Other blacks took advantage of the war’s confusion to drift away in pursuit of a new life. Some sought refuge among the Indians. Carlos the Second of Spain had issued a royal cedulla in 1696 giving liberty and freedom to any African slave that ran away from the British

Deep South, fraught with long uncertain travel, not knowing who to trust, and always the fear of capture.

Resistance also came from outside, as abolitionists strove to end the slave system. Most abolitionists originated in the northern colonies, and many were white Americans. The movement picked up in 1830, but was not a cohesive unit. Some favored gradual emancipation, some believed slaves should be moved out of the country, others, such as John Brown, encouraged the use of violence to end the evil. Resistance within the slave system and without caused trouble for plantation society, but it took a war to end it.

### Slavery, Free Labor in the South

Early nineteenth century reform made only limited progress of eliminating the twin evils of slavery and racism. The granting freedom of individual slaves by private owners slowed during this period as well. The gradual abolition of slavery in the North, soothed many consciences, while in the South, the spread of cotton increased the value of slave labor. Equally important in shaping white attitudes, however, there were two slave rebellions, one bloody and successful on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola during the 1790s, the other, smaller and unsuccessful but alarming nevertheless, near Richmond, Virginia.

Panic-stricken whites fleeing Hispaniola for their lives carried word to the North American mainland of the black Haitians’ successful rebellion against a French colonial army of 25,000. The news spread terror, especially through the South, where southern whites immediately tighten their black codes, cut the importation of new slaves from the Caribbean, and quizzed their slaves in an effort to root out suspected Haitian revolutionaries. The bloody rebellion and prospect of a nearby island nation governed by blacks frightened northern whites as well.

A second shock followed in the summer of 1800, when another rebellion, this time just outside Richmond, Virginia, was nipped in the bud. Gabriel Prosser, a 24-year old free black, devised a plan to arm, 1,000 slaves for an assault on Richmond. Betrayed by several house slaves, Prosser’s plan failed. No white lives were lost, but scores of slaves and free blacks were arrested, and 25 suspects, including Prosser, were hanged at the personal order of Governor James Monroe.



Planning a Rebellion

militia and U.S. troops confronted the rebellion. Sixty six slaves were killed in the fight and Deslonde along with twenty two slaves were captured. They were decapitated, and their heads stacked along the river. This rebellion is considered the largest slave rebellion in the U.S.

- **George Boxley Rebellion 1815.** George Boxley supposedly received a message from God to free the slaves. He planned on to meet at his home for the rebellion, but a slave told on her owner. The plans were crushed and Boxley escaped and helped runaway slaves in the Underground Railroad.
- **Nat Turner's Rebellion 1831.** Turner and seventy enslaved and free blacks went from house to house, freeing slaves and killed whites. They used knives, hatchets, and axes in order to keep their rebellion quiet. Turner and his rebellion were defeated by a militia. Overall Turner's rebellion killed fifty five white men, women, and children.
- **Harpers Ferry 1859.** John Brown led a raid on a federal armor at Harpers Ferry. He wanted to arm slaves. However, the raid failed as Brown's men either fled or were killed by the local militia. Brown himself was captured and was hanged for treason.

Far more frequent were acts of daily resistance. Slaves sabotaged equipment and purposefully slowed their work. Such actions did not serve to end slavery, but did serve the psychological well-being of the slaves. Slaves also sought to retain their culture, passing down stories, songs, and traditions to their children. Even gathering to have a church meeting or to celebrate a marriage (usually not recognized by law) allowed slaves to retain strength in themselves and their communities despite all that they suffered. A strong will to maintain a cultural identity could not have ended slavery, but did allow slaves to survive.

Perhaps the most notable form of resistance was the act of running away. Most Americans are familiar with the Underground Railroad in some form or another. This network of guides and safe houses helped thousands of slaves escape to freedom in the North. But not all runaways were organized. Many had to rely on vague information learned from other slaves about directions to travel.

In the early years of American slavery, long before the Underground Railroad, many escaped slaves sought refuge among local Indian tribes or even among the Spanish who occupied Florida into the nineteenth century. During the Revolutionary War the British offered freedom to slaves of rebelling Americans. Running away was dangerous, particularly in the

colonies and made their way to Spanish-held Florida was still applied. The Upper Creeks of Georgia and the Seminoles of Florida generally welcomed them. Their reception by the Lower Creeks and Cherokees, however, was more uncertain. Some were taken in but others were returned to their white owners in return for bounties, while still others were held as slaves with Indian masters. Numerous African slaves made their way north, following rumors that slavery had been abolished there. Whatever their destination, thousands of African slaves acted to throw off the bonds of slavery.

Fewer African slaves fought on the colonist side than on England's, because the colonist were not eager to see slaves armed. Of the African slaves who served the Patriot cause, many received the freedom they were promised. The patriotism of countless others, however, went unrewarded.

By the end of the American Revolution, slavery had proven unprofitable in the North and was dying out. Even in the South the institution was becoming less useful to farmers as tobacco prices fluctuated and began to drop. However, in 1793 Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin; this device made it possible for textile mills to use the type of cotton most easily grown in the South. Cotton replaced tobacco as the South's main cash crop and slavery became profitable again. Although most Southerners owned no slaves at all, by 1860 the South's "peculiar institution" was inextricably tied to the region's economy.

The former colonies had now won their freedom from England and was struggling to create a new country—The United States of America. Initially wanting to create a new Monarchy with George Washington as the newly appointed king. This idea was shot down because it was proposed to make a new style of government, a government of the people, for the people and by the people. A democratic society where there would be a governing body elected by the masses. This new government was addressing issues and among these was the issue of slavery. Southern patricians determined to maintain a privileged, slavery based agrarian order; lower and middle class southern whites generally committed to black slavery though resentful of the patricians' social pretense and ardent proponents of political equality whereas the Northern artisans dedicated to honest toil, political autonomy, and their own economic interest saw no need for slavery.

### The System In Practice

Under the hereditary system of slavery life was physically and psychologically difficult. Field hands toiled

from sun up to sun down among tobacco, indigo, rice and cotton. Skilled slaves worked as carpenters and blacksmiths and seamstresses. The skilled laborers often had more freedom, sometimes being hired out to businesses in cities or on other farms where they could earn extra wages. House servants cooked for the owners, rising early to prepare breakfast and staying up late with the rest of the house staff to clean up after dinner parties. Work, whatever the work, required long hours. Though some slaves, such as those hired out, had a certain amount of freedom of movement, most were restricted. Even children were put to work cleaning, running errands for the master's children, etc. Masters had the right to discipline their slaves and punishment took many forms and not all physical. Some masters used the threat of sale to earn submission.

Slaves were also subject to psychological difficulties. Though many states did not recognize slave marriages, most masters willingly allowed slaves to perform marriage ceremonies. Married slaves, particularly with children, were less likely to run away. And with marriage came an increase in the slave population – an increase in property. Brutal treatment at the hands of slaveholders, however, threatened black family life. Slaves lived with the constant fear of being sold away from their loved ones with no chance of reunion. Enslaved women, whether married or single, experienced sexual exploitation at the hands of slaveholders and overseers.

In the nineteenth century the growing demand for sugar and cotton increased the need for slaves in the Lower South. After the slave trade from Africa ended in 1808, a domestic slave trade developed to move surplus workers to the Deep South. New Orleans, Louisiana, became the largest slave market, followed by Richmond, Virginia; Natchez, Mississippi; and Charleston, South Carolina.

Between 1820 and 1860 more than 60 percent of the Upper South's enslaved population was "sold South." Covering 25 to 30 miles a day on foot, men, women, and children marched south in large groups called coffles. Women were bound together with rope; the men were chained around their necks and handcuffed in pairs.

## Resistance

Resistance to slavery is most dramatically displayed through rebellions and uprisings, but

these large-scale violent acts were relatively few throughout the history of slavery in North America. These are the most prominent uprisings:

- **New York Revolt 1712.** The 1712 revolt was an uprising in New York City. There were twenty three African slaves. In the revolt nine whites were shot, stabbed, or beaten to death and six were injured. Unlike the plantations in the South, New York City was a perfect place for African slaves to form a conspiracy. Slaves lived next to each other, which made it easy for them to communicate with each other. Seventy blacks were put in jail, six committed suicide, twenty seven were put on trial of which twenty one were burned to death.
- **Stono Rebellion 1739.** An epidemic weakened the power of slaveholders, and the slaves saw it as a chance to fight back. The revolt was led by Jemmy, an Angolan slave. Jemmy and twenty African slaves met near the Stono River and marched down the road and seized weapons and ammunition at the Stono River Bridge. Along the way they burned seven plantations and killed twenty whites. They also recruited more slaves on the way and their numbers were up to eighty. However, they were eventually suppressed by a mob of plantation owners and slave-holders, under the command of Lieutenant Governor, William Bull. The captured slaves were decapitated and their heads were spiked along the road.
- **New York Insurrection 1741.** The insurrection was plotted by slaves and poor whites in New York. They set a series of fire in Lower Manhattan. They set fire on Fort George, the governor's house. They wanted to burn the city, kill the white men, and elect a new king and governor. Before the insurrectionists were burned or hanged, they named about fifty other co-conspirators. All the suspects were convicted in a show trial and many were hanged or burnt. Exactly how many is uncertain, but some of the remains might've been buried at the New York Burial grounds.
- **Gabriel's Rebellion 1800.** A revolt that planned to attack Richmond. Two slaves betrayed the conspiracy and told their masters. The state then called for a militia and the conspiracy collapsed. Gabriel again was betrayed by a fellow conspirator for the reward on Gabriel's capture. Gabriel and his two brothers were hanged.
- **Louisiana Territory Slave Rebellion 1811.** Charles Deslondes led five hundred slaves down the Mississippi River Road, and along the way killed two whites and burned plantations. A



Slave Coffle