

TIMELINE OF SLAVERY IN AMERICA 1501-1865

1501

African Slaves in the New World Spanish settlers bring slaves from Africa to Santo Domingo (now the capital of the Dominican Republic).

1522

Slave Revolt: the Caribbean Slaves rebel on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, which now comprises Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

1562

Britain Joins Slave Trade. John Hawkins, the first Briton to take part in the slave trade, makes a huge profit hauling human cargo from Africa to Hispaniola.

1581

Slaves in Florida Spanish residents in St. Augustine, the first permanent settlement in Florida, import African slaves.

1612

The first commercial tobacco crop is raised in Jamestown, Virginia.

1619

Twenty slaves in Virginia Africans brought to Jamestown are the first slaves imported into Britain's North American colonies. Like indentured servants, they were probably freed after a fixed period of service.

1626

The Dutch West India Company imports 11 black male slaves into the New Netherlands.

1636

Colonial North America's slave trade begins when the first American slave carrier, Desire, is built and launched in Massachusetts.

1640

John Punch, a runaway black servant, is sentenced to servitude for life. His two white companions are given extended terms of servitude. Punch is the first documented slave for life.

1640

New Netherlands law forbids residents from harboring or feeding runaway slaves. **1641**
The D'Angola marriage is the first recorded marriage between blacks in New Amsterdam.

1641

Massachusetts is the first colony to legalize slavery.

1643

The New England Confederation of Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven adopts a fugitive slave law.

1650

Connecticut legalizes slavery.

1652

Rhode Island passes laws restricting slavery and forbidding enslavement for more than 10 years.

1652

Massachusetts requires all black and Indian servants to receive military training.

1654

A Virginia court grants blacks the right to hold slaves.

1657

Virginia passes a fugitive slave law.

1660

Charles II, King of England, orders the Council of Foreign Plantations to devise strategies for converting slaves and servants to Christianity.

1662 Hereditary Slavery Virginia law decrees that children of black mothers “shall be bond or free according to the condition of the mother.”

1662

Massachusetts reverses a ruling dating back to 1652, which allowed blacks to train in arms. New York, Connecticut, and New Hampshire pass similar laws restricting the bearing of arms.

1663

In Gloucester County, Virginia the first documented slave rebellion in the colonies takes place.

1663

Maryland legalizes slavery.

1663

Charles II, King of England, gives the Carolinas to proprietors. Until the 1680s, most settlers in the region are small landowners from Barbados.

1664

New York and New Jersey legalize slavery.

1664

Maryland is the first colony to take legal action against marriages between white women and black men.

1664

The State of Maryland mandates lifelong servitude for all black slaves. New York, New Jersey, the Carolinas, and Virginia all pass similar laws.

1666

Maryland passes a fugitive slave law.

1667

Virginia declares that Christian baptism will not alter a person's status as a slave. **1668**

New Jersey passes a fugitive slave law.

1670

The State of Virginia prohibits free blacks and Indians from keeping Christian (i.e. white) servants.

1674

New York declares that blacks who convert to Christianity after their enslavement will not be freed.

1676

In Virginia, black slaves and black and white indentured servants band together to participate in Bacon's Rebellion.

1680

The State of Virginia forbids blacks and slaves from bearing arms, prohibits blacks from congregating in large numbers, and mandates harsh punishment for slaves who assault Christians or attempt escape.

1682

Virginia declares that all imported black servants are slaves for life.

1684

New York makes it illegal for slaves to sell goods.

1688

The Pennsylvania Quakers pass the first formal antislavery resolution.

1691

Virginia passes the first anti-miscegenation law, forbidding marriages between whites and blacks or whites and Native Americans.

1691

Virginia prohibits the manumission of slaves within its borders. Manumitted slaves are forced to leave the colony.

1691

South Carolina passes the first comprehensive slave codes.

1694

Rice cultivation is introduced into Carolina. Slave importation increases dramatically.

1696

The Royal African Trade Company loses its monopoly and New England colonists enter the slave trade.

1700

Pennsylvania legalizes slavery.

1702

New York passes An Act for Regulating Slaves. Among the prohibitions of this act are meetings of more than three slaves, trading by slaves, and testimony by slaves in court.

1703

Massachusetts requires those masters who liberate slaves to provide a bond of 50 pounds or more in the event that the freedman becomes a public charge.

1703

Connecticut assigns the punishment of whipping to any slaves who disturb the peace or assault whites.

1703

Rhode Island makes it illegal for blacks and Indians to walk at night without passes.

1705 Slaves as Property Describing slaves as real estate, Virginia lawmakers allow owners to bequeath their slaves. The same law allowed masters to “kill and destroy” runaways.

1705

The Virginia Slave Code codifies slave status, declaring all non-Christian servants entering the colony to be slaves. It defines all slaves as real estate, acquits masters who kill slaves during punishment, forbids slaves and free colored peoples from physically assaulting white persons, and denies slaves the right to bear arms or move abroad without written permission.

1705 New York declares that punishment by execution will be applied to certain runaway slaves.

1705

Massachusetts makes marriage and sexual relations between blacks and whites illegal.

1706

New York declares blacks, Indians, and slaves who kill white people to be subject to the death penalty.

1706

Connecticut requires that Indians, mulattos, and black servants gain permission from their masters to engage in trade.

1708

The Southern colonies require militia captains to enlist and train one slave for every white soldier.

1708

Rhode Island requires that slaves be accompanied by their masters when visiting the homes of free persons.

1708

Blacks outnumber whites in South Carolina.

1710

New York forbids blacks, Indians, and mulattos from walking at night without lighted lanterns.

1711

Pennsylvania prohibits the importation of blacks and Indians.

1711

Rhode Island prohibits the clandestine importation of black and Indian slaves.

1712

Pennsylvania prohibits the importation of slaves.

1712 Slave Revolt: New York Slaves in New York City kill whites during an uprising, later squelched by the militia. Nineteen rebels are executed.

1712

New York declares it illegal for blacks, Indians, and slaves to murder other blacks, Indians, and slaves.

1712

New York forbids freed blacks, Indians, and mulatto slaves from owning real estate and holding property.

1712

In Charleston, South Carolina slaves are forbidden from hiring themselves out.

1715

Rhode Island legalizes slavery.

1715

Maryland declares all slaves entering the province and their descendants to be slaves for life.

1717

New York enacts a fugitive slave law.

1723

Virginia abolishes manumissions.

1724

French Louisiana prohibits slaves from marrying without the permission of their owners.

1730-1750

The number of male and female slaves imported to the North American British colonies balances out for the first time.

1731

The Spanish reverse a 1730 decision and declare that slaves fleeing to Florida from

Carolina will not be sold or returned.

1732

Slaves aboard the ship of New Hampshire Captain John Major kill both captain and crew, seizing the vessel and its cargo.

1733

Quaker Elihu Coleman's A Testimony against That Anti-Christian Practice of MAKING SLAVES OF MEN is published.

1735

Under an English law Georgia prohibits the importation and use of black slaves.

1735

Georgia petitions Britain for the legalization of slavery.

1735

Louis XV, King of France, declares that when an enslaved woman gives birth to the child of a free man, neither mother nor child can be sold. Further, after a certain time, mother and child will be freed.

1738

Georgia's trustees permit the importation of black slaves.

1738

Spanish Florida promises freedom and land to runaway slaves.

1739

Slaves in Stono, South Carolina rebel, sacking and burning an armory and killing whites. Some 75 slaves in South Carolina steal weapons and flee toward freedom in Florida (then under Spanish rule). Crushed by the South Carolina militia, the revolt results in the deaths of 40 blacks and 20 white. The colonial militia puts an end to the rebellion before slaves are able to reach freedom in Florida.

1740

South Carolina passes the comprehensive Negro Act, making it illegal for slaves to move abroad, assemble in groups, raise food, earn money, and learn to read English. Owners are permitted to kill rebellious slaves if necessary.

1740

Georgia and Carolina attempt to invade Florida in retaliation for the territory's policy toward runaways.

1749

Georgia repeals its prohibition and permits the importation of black slaves.

1751

George II repeals the 1705 act, making slaves real estate in Virginia.

1758

Pennsylvania Quakers forbid their members from owning slaves or participating in the slave trade.

1760

New Jersey prohibits the enlistment of slaves in the militia without their master's permission.

1767

The Virginia House of Burgess boycotts the British slave trade in protest of the Townsend Acts. Georgia and the Carolinas follow suit.

1770

Escaped slave, Crispus Attucks, is killed by British forces in Boston, Massachusetts. He is one of the first colonists to die in the war for independence.

1772

James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's writes the first autobiographical slave narrative.

1773

The first separate black church in America is founded in South Carolina.

1773

Slaves in Massachusetts unsuccessfully petition the government for their freedom.

1773

Phillis Wheatley becomes the first published African-American poet when a London publishing company releases a collection of her verse.

1774

The First Continental Congress bans trade with Britain and vows to discontinue the slave trade after the 1st of December.

1774

Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Georgia prohibit the importation of slaves.

1774

Virginia takes action against slave importation.

1775

The slave population in the colonies is nearly 500,000. In Virginia, the ratio of free colonists to slaves is nearly 1:1. In South Carolina it is approximately 1:2. **1775**

Georgia takes action against slave importation.

1775

Abolitionist Society Anthony Benezet of Philadelphia founds the world's first abolitionist society. Benjamin Franklin becomes its president in 1787.

1775

In April, the first battles of the Revolutionary war are waged between the British and Colonial armies at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts. Black Minutemen participate in the fighting.

1775

In July, George Washington announces a ban on the enlistment of free blacks and slaves in the colonial army. By the end of the year, he reverses the ban, ordering the Continental Army to accept the service of free blacks.

1775

In November, Virginia Governor John Murray, Lord Dunmore, issues a proclamation announcing that any slave fighting on the side of the British will be liberated.

1776

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, members of the Continental Congress sign the Declaration of Independence.

1776

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers, forbids its members from holding slaves.

1776

Delaware prohibits the importation of African slaves.

1777

Vermont is the first of the thirteen colonies to abolish slavery and enfranchise all adult

males.

1777

New York enfranchises all free propertied men regardless of color or prior servitude.

1778

Rhode Island forbids the removal of slaves from the state.

1778

Virginia prohibits the importation of slaves.

1780

Delaware makes it illegal to enslave imported Africans.

1780

Pennsylvania begins gradual emancipation.

1780

A freedom clause in the Massachusetts constitution is interpreted as an abolishment of slavery. Massachusetts enfranchises all men regardless of race.

1783

American Revolution Ends Britain and the infant United States sign the Peace of Paris treaty.

1784

Abolition Effort Congress narrowly defeats Thomas Jefferson's proposal to ban slavery in new territories after 1800. **1790**—First United States Census Nearly 700,000 slaves live and toil in a nation of 3.9 million people.

1793

Fugitive Slave Act The United States outlaws any efforts to impede the capture of runaway slaves.

1794

Cotton Gin Eli Whitney patents his device for pulling seeds from cotton. The invention turns cotton into the cash crop of the American South—and creates a huge demand for slave labor.

1808

United States Bans Slave Trade Importing African slaves is outlawed, but smuggling continues.

1820

Missouri Compromise Missouri is admitted to the Union as a slave state, Maine as a free state. Slavery is forbidden in any subsequent territories north of latitude 36°30'.

1822

Slave Revolt: South Carolina Freed slave Denmark Vesey attempts a rebellion in Charleston. Thirty-five participants in the ill-fated uprising are hanged.

1831

Slave Revolt: Virginia Slave preacher Nat Turner leads a two-day uprising against whites, killing about 60. Militiamen crush the revolt then spend two months searching for Turner, who is eventually caught and hanged. Enraged Southerners impose harsher restrictions on their slaves.

1835

Censorship Southern states expel abolitionists and forbid the mailing of antislavery propaganda.

1846-48

Mexican-American War Defeated, Mexico yields an enormous amount of territory to the United States. Americans then wrestle with a controversial topic: Is slavery permitted in the new lands?

1847

Frederick Douglass's Newspaper Escaped slave Frederick Douglass begins publishing the North Star in Rochester, New York.

1849

Harriet Tubman Escapes After fleeing slavery, Tubman returns south at least 15 times to help rescue several hundred others.

1850

Compromise of 1850 In exchange for California's entering the Union as a free state, northern congressmen accept a harsher Fugitive Slave Act.

1852

Uncle Tom's Cabin Published Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel about the horrors of slavery sells 300,000 copies within a year of publication.

1854

Kansas-Nebraska Act Setting aside the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Congress allows these two new territories to choose whether to allow slavery. Violent clashes erupt.

1857

Dred Scott Decision The United States Supreme Court decides, seven to two, that blacks can never be citizens and that Congress has no authority to outlaw slavery in any territory.

1860

Abraham Lincoln of Illinois becomes the first Republican to win the United States Presidency.

1860

Southern Secession South Carolina secedes in December. More states follow the next year.

1861-65

United States Civil War Four years of brutal conflict claim 623,000 lives.

1863

Emancipation Proclamation President Abraham Lincoln decrees that all slaves in Rebel territory are free on January 1, 1863.

1865 Slavery Abolished The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution outlaws slavery.